SUSTAINABILITY AND UTOPIANISM: AN ETHNOGRAPHY OF CULTURAL CRITIQUE

IN CONTEMPORARY INTENTIONAL COMMUNITIES

by

JOSHUA PETER LOCKYER

(Under the Direction of Peter Brosius)

ABSTRACT

Intentional community building is a phenomenon of socio-cultural resistance with a deep, cross-cultural history. It has been most prevalent in the nations of the Global North where people have sought ways to respond to changes wrought by the development of industrial capitalist political economies. In intentional communities, they have responded by joining together to live according to values different from those of the predominant society, to create small-scale cooperative or communal political economic institutions and alternative production and consumption rationalities. Interdisciplinary scholars have typically described intentional communities as utopian in nature, but they have disagreed with regards to the transformative potential of such utopian undertakings, their ability to successfully achieve the goals they set for themselves and their utility as sites for social science research. This research builds on recent theorizations of intentional communities to suggest that they are of increasing relevance to contemporary social and environmental problems and of increasing utility to social scientists wishing to engage with potential solutions to those problems. Most prominently, it empirically tests a recent conceptualization of intentional communities as explicit forms of cultural critique similar to the cultural critiques implicit in much of anthropological knowledge production.

Through participant observation in two intentional communities in western North Carolina, analysis of ethnographic interviews conducted there and analysis of the communities' political economic institutions, it reveals how contemporary intentional communities are manifestations of cultural critique. These cultural critiques consist of two components: epistemological critiques of dominant ideologies and institutions and cross-cultural juxtapositions through which alternative ideologies and institutions are created. Through the articulation of the concept of developmental utopianism, this research asserts that the processes of cultural critique and utopian striving inherent to intentional communities are ongoing processes that cannot be evaluated solely within the boundaries of individual intentional communities. It also suggests that through the ethnography of cultural critique in places such as contemporary, sustainability-oriented intentional communities, anthropologists might be able to navigate some of the epistemological and methodological challenges that have confronted the discipline in the wake of the science wars and in our quest to address social and environmental problems.

INDEX WORDS: Anthropology, Arthur Morgan, Communalism, Communitarianism, Community, Consensus Decision-Making, Cultural Critique, Ecovillage, Intentional Community, Land Stewardship, Land Trust, North Carolina, Permaculture, Renewable Energy, Social Movements, Sustainability, United States of America, Utopian Community, Utopianism

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to the members of Celo Community who originally inspired this research and graciously welcomed me into their lives, and to the members of Earthaven Ecovillage who have shown me what it means to be truly dedicated to the pursuit of a more just and sustainable world.

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CHALLENGE OF SUSTAINABILITY

The solution to these environmental problems lies within us and is closely tied to our choices. The solution must begin with the individual and a commitment to resist the forces of global consumerism in favor of a concern with the planet as our home – now at risk due to policies that fail to give value to environmental goods and services. ... I have emphasized the importance of human agents, i.e. individuals, in making a difference through their choices. But the individual alone cannot adequately win this battle with the well-organized interests that have since World War II led us in an unsustainable path. Individuals and organizations must come together to bring about institutional change through changes in priorities, in how we set prices and assign value, and in building a society where trust and community are more important than having a larger vehicle or a larger home. [Moran 2006:166]

More than ever, we need a clearer vision of humanity's capacity to think as well as to act, to confront reality not only as it is but as it should be if we are to survive this, the greatest turning point in history. [Bookchin 2005:12-13]

The primary gift of ecovillages to the wider sustainability family [is] the impulse to move beyond protest and to create models of more sane, just and sustainable ways of living. [Dawson 2006:38]

*   *   *

These quotations suggest that moving towards sustainability will necessarily be a utopian process, one in which human agents must be increasingly involved in critiquing predominant ideologies and institutions and in developing emancipatory alternatives. Contemporary ecovillages and sustainability-oriented communities are places where this process has begun. This work is an examination of how two particular intentional communities are engaged in this process. An ethnographic examination of Celo Community and Earthaven Ecovillage is situated within the larger sustainability-oriented intentional communities movement, within

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contemporary theorizations of intentional community, and relative to anthropological literatures on community, sustainability and cultural critique. In the following introduction, I introduce the sustainability challenge, the problem and promise of utopianism, and the potential of intentional communities as framed by my research question.

Symptoms of a Crisis

The world faces a growing number of social and ecological crises that are manifestations of the increasing spatial and temporal scales of tragedies of the commons (Burger et al. 2001): global climate change; loss of biodiversity; peak oil and other resource depletions; widespread poverty and disease; uneven distribution of wealth; uneven access to resources and political power; and armed conflicts at both local and global levels. The effects of these problems, presently concentrated in what is called the Global South, will increasingly be experienced in the Global North as well. These social and environmental problems, symptomatic of the fact that we have exceeded the Earth's capacity to support the global human population at current levels of consumption and social inequality, have led to an evolving discourse regarding the social, ecological, political, economic and spiritual dimensions of sustainability. Within this discourse there is an emerging argument that overcoming these problems will require a remarkable flowering of human imagination, collective ingenuity and cultural will. A growing number of scholars and civic leaders are suggesting that achieving sustainability will require a utopian effort. In the following, I argue that this effort might be better characterized as cultural critique, a concept that, as it is developed below, imbues individuals and communities with agency as they not only critique the existing society but also build alternatives to the ideologies and institutions that characterize it.

Brundtland and Beyond: The Sustainability Rhetoric

An indication of the growing salience of the sustainability discourse within scientific, policy and popular arenas is the number of references to sustainability in a variety of different databases and search engines. The National Academy of Sciences lists 312 references under the sustainability heading, the Library of Congress 385 and the United Nations 24,300. A Google search for the term yields over 38,000,000 references. Clearly, sustainability is a topic of growing interest and significance. One way to examine this discourse is to look at the way it is framed in a number of international documents.

Although there is still no commonly accepted, concise definition of the term *sustainability*, it has been a subject of international deliberation since as early as 1972 when the United Nations Environment and Development Commission met in Stockholm, Sweden. The Stockholm meeting was the first in a series of United Nations meetings focused on the issue of sustainability. The 1987 U.N. sponsored Brundtland Report, *Our Common Future*, put forth a definition of sustainable development that is still in common use today. According to this report, sustainable development is "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (World Commission on Environment and Development 1987). The report points to the need for broad social change and its definition of sustainable development includes the key component of cross-generational equity. However, some have argued that the report, with its emphasis on continued economic development, stops far short of advocating true sustainability. For example, Escobar, citing the Brundtland report, concludes that "… the sustainable development discourse purports to reconcile two old enemies – economic growth and the preservation of the environment – without significant adjustments to the market system" (Escobar 1996:49). Thus the concept of

sustainable development put forth in the Brundtland Report is a paradox for it proposes a continuation of the model of economic development that created the sustainability crisis in the first place.

Subsequent efforts to address the sustainability challenge have failed to recognize the incompatibility between continued economic growth, social equity and ecological preservation. In 1993, the United Nations Environment Programme adopted Agenda 21 which defines sustainability on two main fronts: "social and economic dimensions" and "conservation and management of resources for sustainable development" (United Nations Environment Program 2006). Agenda 21 makes a more realistic attempt to confront the complexity of the sustainability challenge by indicating that all humans are stakeholders in the attempt to create a more sustainable world. It suggests "strengthening the role of major players" including women, youth, indigenous communities, NGOs, local authorities, workers and trade unions, the scientific and technological communities and farmers. Agenda 21 identifies numerous means for implementing its recommendations within the economic, technological, scientific, educational, national and international arenas. Finally and most significantly for my argument, Chapter 28 of Agenda 21 specifically points to the role of local communities in achieving sustainability. Indeed, Agenda 21 resulted in a variety of initiatives at the local level (Lafferty and Eckerberg 1998). However, the bulk of Agenda 21, like the Brundtland Report, is focused on rhetorically linking ecological sustainability and social equity with continuing neoliberal economic expansion and global free trade.

The most recent and inclusive international document that addresses the sustainability challenge is the Earth Charter. The first draft of the Earth Charter was begun at the U.N. Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. Under the guidance of Maurice Strong (Secretary General of

the Earth Summit), Mikhail Gorbachev and committees of hundreds of international consultants and thousands of advisors, the Earth Charter developed into an international consensus document in 2000. The Earth Charter breaks from both the Brundtland Report and Agenda 21 by more extensively articulating the idea that achieving sustainability will require major socio-cultural change. The Earth Charter is clear about the complexity of the situation that humanity faces and about the massive challenges that must be addressed if sustainability is to be achieved. Although it does not directly suggest that currently dominant, growth-oriented political economic models must be abandoned, it does not adhere to the illusion that the status quo can be maintained. The Earth Charter begins by pointing out that "we stand at a critical moment in Earth's history, a time when humanity must choose its future" as we are faced with significant environmental and social crises (Earth Charter International 2006). It goes on to suggest that

> fundamental changes are needed in our values, institutions and ways of living … Our environmental, economic, political, social and spiritual challenges are interconnected … we must decide to live with a sense of universal responsibility, identifying ourselves with the whole Earth community as well as our local communities. [Earth Charter International 2006]

The main body of the Earth Charter defines commitments to preserving cultural and biological diversity; creating social justice and equity; and encouraging peaceful, participatory and democratic societies so that future generations will inherit a better world. It presents numerous actions required to achieve these goals. The Earth Charter's conclusion is utopian in tone, suggesting an imaginative reworking of cultural values and institutions. It states that achieving the goals it presents

> requires a change of mind and heart. It requires a new sense of global interdependence and universal responsibility. We must imaginatively develop and apply the vision of a sustainable way of life locally, nationally, regionally and globally … we must find ways to harmonize diversity with unity, the exercise of freedom with the common good, short-term objectives with long-term goals. [Earth Charter International 2006]

The argument presented in this document points to a fundamental tension between the real and the ideal that is brought to the fore within the sustainability discourse. This tension lies at the heart of the concept of utopia, suggesting that sustainability is a utopian challenge.

The Utopian Challenge of Sustainability

The increased sustainability rhetoric discussed above has, for the most part, not been matched by earnest actions at local, state or international levels. At the highest levels, sustainability theory has not translated into sustainability practice despite increasing scientific consensus that the scenarios listed in the opening paragraph of this chapter do pose real and dire threats to humanity. Institutional statements in favor of sustainability have not led to institutional sustainability practice. What the foregoing discussion of sustainability suggests is that for sustainability to become a truly transformative paradigm, dominant political economies and their models of economic development must be transformed by centering the imperatives of social equity and ecological preservation and stewardship. In other words, the argument is made that the sustainability challenge cannot be met by promoting continued neoliberal economic development that is more ecologically sensitive. From this perspective, sustainability must manifest political-economic institutions and processes that interact with ecosystems in ways that ensure all people of current and future generations have access to clean and healthy environments and the basic resources needed for human well-being.

A growing number of scholars suggest that striving for sustainability must become a more grassroots process, one in which local communities and local efforts for environmental and social justice will play more pivotal roles. Agyeman's concept of just sustainability highlights the pivotal role of justice and equity within sustainability discourses. Agyeman asserts that

> If sustainability is to become a process with the power to transform as opposed to its current environmental, stewardship, or reform focus, justice and equity issues need to be incorporated into its very core. … Our present green or environmental orientation of sustainability is basically about tweaking our existing policies. Transformative or just sustainability implies a paradigm shift that requires sustainability to take on a redistributive function. To do this, justice and equity must move center stage in sustainability discourses, if we are to have any chance of a more sustainable future. [Agyeman 2005:6]

For Agyeman, just sustainability is a paradigm that encourages a global awareness for framing local policies and practices. Just sustainability, with its four main areas of concern – quality of life, present and future generations, justice and equity and living within ecosystem limits – is a frame of reference for bridging the gap between environmental justice discourse and sustainability discourse. Agyeman believes that such a bridging frame is needed because environmental justice is a more populist, community-based, or bottom-up narrative whereas sustainability is a narrative of top-down governance, one that emerges from government institutions and the academy. In Agyeman's view, just sustainability is a more "communitarian" discourse that has the promise of promoting local action and community involvement in the imperatives of sustainability. Agyeman suggests that true sustainability cannot be achieved through top-down institutional action alone; local communities must also be involved.

Succinctly echoing the Earth Charter's utopian tone, Jude Fernando, professor of international development and social change at Clark University, states, "Without … a counterhegemonic utopian vision, it is impossible to create the necessary conditions for sustainable development" (2003:27). Why does realizing sustainability require a counterhegemonic utopian vision? According to Fernando, a utopian vision is necessary because sustainability is fundamentally incompatible with the hegemonic "ideology and institutional parameters" of industrial capitalism especially as they are manifested in the discourse of development. Sustainability requires "the practice and articulation of an alternative vision of

political economy, as well as a politically strong commitment to realizing it" (Fermando 2003:6).

For Fernando, the debate about sustainability is really a debate about the nature of the global social order, a debate in which the predominant forces of capitalism, the state and NGOs are all implicated in their support for the maintenance of an unsustainable status quo. The current order is unsustainable due to patterns of consumption and inequality that arise from current production and social relations and the cultural logic and power relations that sustain them. A utopian vision of sustainability would question these patterns of consumption and inequality, their justifying cultural logics and the power relations that maintain them. It would imagine and enact alternatives to them. For such a vision, Fernando, drawing on Bebbington (1997), suggests that we look not only for a "metanarrative of an alternative political economy" but also to "islands of sustainability", places where "counterhegemonic intellectual and material practices" are being experimented with.

Similar to the local involvement suggested by Agenda 21, Fermando's reference to "islands of sustainability" suggests that local communities have a significant role to play in both the utopian vision and material practice of sustainability. And like the Earth Charter, Fernando's call for utopian counterhegemony suggests the development of sustainable designs that do not represent a totalizing vision. This utopian vision of sustainability, enacted at the community level, would be more emancipatory, recognizing the value of diversity in local institutions and practices of sustainability. The difficulty for sustainability advocates in a global context is the need to combine an encompassing utopian vision for changing unsustainable global forces with the enactment of this utopian vision at the local level where diversity of practices is necessitated by local cultural and ecological circumstances. How can utopian projects for sustainability

combine a global vision of solidarity and responsibility with locally appropriate and emancipatory forms of practice?

The Problem and Promise of Utopia

There are inherent problems with invoking the concept of utopia in the service of sustainability; the concept of utopia has been imbued with pejorative connotations. On the one hand, utopianism is viewed as hopelessly romantic. In this view, utopians are dreamers and visionaries. They imagine schemes for social perfection, but their utopian visions lack appropriate methods for analyzing current problems and practical means of moving forward. On the other hand, utopian visions are seen as dangerous because they are employed in the promulgation of totalitarian projects. Visions of utopia have too often been used to justify oppression, domination and even genocide. Utopianism, in the form of totalizing visions, has been used to perpetrate the worst of evils. Using these perspectives as a starting point, utopianism is not a useful trope for addressing the sustainability challenge.

In examining the genesis of the concept of utopia, alternative and emancipatory connotations emerge. In this view, utopianism becomes a potential-laden and transformative way to frame discussions of human agency and sustainability. Coined by Sir Thomas More as the title to his critique of theocratic domination in England, the word utopia encapsulates the desire for an ideal society, the impossibility of realizing it and the tension thus generated (More 1997[1516]). The word's Greek roots eutopia and outopia mean, respectively, the good place and no place – perfection and its impossibility (Levitas 1990). The word utopia identifies the fundamental tension between the real and the ideal and suggests that one can endeavor to overcome this tension. More's work is a probing, nuanced, incisive analysis and indictment of the ideologies and institutions that maintained an oppressive English theocracy. It is also a detailed description

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of an alternative society, one that is peaceful, cooperative, egalitarian, communitarian, and tolerant of religious differences. Arthur Morgan (1946) put forth significant evidence to suggest that, far from imaginary and hopelessly romantic, More's alternative society was based on a first-hand account of Peruvian Inca society provided to him by a sailor who had been stranded there. The fact that More was ultimately executed by the King of England for refusing to recant his views suggests that the idea of utopia is potentially emancipatory; it threatened a dominant and oppressive regime that sought to maintain its hegemony by stamping out agentic responses such as More's work.

Much of the scholarship of the last several decades regarding the topic of utopianism suggests that utopianism should be reconsidered for its transformative and emancipatory potential (de Geus 2002, Harvey 2000, Jacoby 2005, Levitas 1990 Ricoeur 1986, Rusen et al. 2005, Sargent 2006, Schehr 1997). These works point to utopianisms as emancipatory tools and transformative processes rather than to utopia or utopias as ideal ends. Utopianism as *process* invokes critical faculties, hopes, desires and the actions that arise from them. Utopianism as process imbues humans with agency. It empowers grassroots actors to take action in order to confront the oppression of hegemonic cultural forms. Utopianism as process is manifested in local-scale attempts to overcome the tension between the real and the ideal. In this view, utopianism is not totalitarian, but emancipatory and transformative.

Utopianism as process emerges as an alternative way of framing responses to the sustainability challenge. The correlation of utopianism with human agency and the distinct possibility that the original formulation of the word utopia was based upon a real and critical cross-cultural comparison suggests fundamental affinities between the idea of utopianism and the concept of cultural critique as it was articulated by Marcus and Fischer (1986). Marcus and

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Fischer's treatment of the concept of cultural critique will be discussed in much greater detail in chapter four, but a brief introduction is provided here. Marcus and Fischer assert that cultural critique is a main characteristic of anthropological knowledge production. They suggest that cultural critique consists of two components – epistemological critique and cross-cultural juxtaposition. Epistemological critique involves deconstructions of dominant ideologies and power structures. Cross-cultural juxtaposition consists of comparisons across cultural boundaries, comparisons that enable the anthropologist to demonstrate that equally valid (and potentially more just and sustainable) ideologies and institutions are possible. Most significantly for my argument, Marcus and Fischer suggest that a fundamental task for ethnography is the discovery and representation of actual cultural critiques as they are articulated and enacted by citizens in everyday contexts. Marcus and Fischer's description of ethnographic cultural critique suggests that the world is full of cultural critics engaged in the utopian process of revisioning and recreating the world. In their attempts to construct alternatives to critically evaluated, dominant ideologies and institutions, these cultural critics, these utopians, present anthropologists with a unique window on human agency. Ethnographic cultural critique is an opportunity to examine utopian struggles for transformation that take place at the locus of the tension between the real and the ideal. Thus, an ethnography of cultural critique represents an equally powerful and potentially emancipatory, transformative way to examine community-based attempts to address the sustainability challenge.

Gandhi as Analog: Utopian Experiments in Culture

One of the closest historical analogs for the sustainability challenge is the confrontation of Gandhi and "Gandhian utopians" with the forces of colonialism, materialist competition and spiritual oppression in India. Anthropologist Richard Fox's examination of Gandhism's

"experiments with truth", of Gandhi and his follower's attempts to confront dominant cultural beliefs and practices and to create cultural change, is a prime example of an ethnography of cultural critique. Fox's cultural history of Gandhian activism traces the forces of resistance and creativity that Gandhi and his followers engaged in and inspired both prior to and after Indian independence. The story of Gandhi and of Gandhian activism that Fox tells, much like the stories we need if sustainability is to be achieved, is a truly utopian and counterhegemonic story. Fox characterizes Gandhi and Gandhians as "social experimentalists, struggling with new visions of culture" (1989:6). Fox approaches his analysis of Gandhian utopia by asking,

> Are utopian visions and the visionaries who create them effective agents of cultural innovation? … Do the individual's intentions (conscious and goal-directed thought and action), when they are utopian and run counter to the existing culture, play an enabling role in cultural innovation? Or, conversely, do existing systems of cultural meaning so coerce or compel individuals into certain behaviors and beliefs that active human authors cannot affect or enable cultural innovation? [Fox 1989:10-11]

Throughout his analysis Fox confronts the fundamental anthropological question of human agency: are humans always constrained by existing cultural and material conditions or might individuals (or groups of them) break free from cultural bondage to create truly innovative cultural manifestations? Fox's work centers attention on the tension between the real and ideal in human affairs, a tension that is of fundamental interest to anthropologists.

Upon examining the culture history of Gandhian utopia, Fox finds some middle ground between agency and determinism and thus holds hope for the power and effectiveness of utopian strivings:

> I believe this culture history shows how new sets of cultural meaning develop as human actors originate ideas about their society out of cultural meanings already constituted and then experiment with these ideas. Such ideas, which … I call utopian visions or utopian dreams or simply utopia, contest the present and conceive a revolutionized future. As individuals labor to implement utopia, existing material conditions and cultural meanings – or, in other words, the social

inequalities encoded in the existing culture – define [and] limit, but do not completely compel the outcome; rather they can enable still more cultural innovation brought about by intentional human action. [1989:16]

Fox recognizes that Gandhi and the various Gandhian utopians who attempted to implement his vision were only partially successful in manifesting their cultural innovations. Gandhi's overall image of an independent, self-sufficient, nonmaterialist and peaceful India was ultimately not achieved, but new avenues for cultural experimentation were opened up for future generations. Satyagraha, or nonviolent resistance, became a widely employed tool of cultural protest and many still hold to other Gandhian ideals to this day as they work for emancipation both in India and beyond. For Fox, as for Gandhi, the success of utopian visions lies in the processes of intentional cultural critique, imaginative resistance and the dialectic these actions create. The degree to which the utopian vision comes to actual fruition is dependent upon the particular relationships between cultural hegemony and individual intentions in particular times and particular places. Fox's conclusion is that utopian ideals are worth striving for, even if they likely won't be entirely realized. The tension between the real and the ideal that lies at the heart of utopian strivings is a powerful nexus for both action and analysis.

Fox's analysis of Gandhian activism further validates the utility of the concept of utopianism; it reveals how Gandhi and Gandhian activists were effective, to a degree, in their resistance to hegemonic cultural forces and in their experimentation with alternatives. Further, Fox's elaboration of the concept of utopia supports my argument that utopianism is a process; Gandhian activism is constituted by a large network of human agents engaged in ongoing processes of resistance and experimentation that arise from and continually rearticulate utopian visions. Fox's work "is a history of a complex set of cultural meanings in a specific society – Gandhian utopia in twentieth-century India – and how that set of meanings came to compel

belief and practice over the last half-century and how it continues to enable social experimentation today" (1989:8). Gandhian experiments with truth did not end with the realization of utopia, but the process of utopian strivings continues as an emancipatory force.

In his treatment of Gandian activism, Fox also suggests that utopianism must continually be renewed at the grassroots level for its emancipatory potential to maintain its vitality. Fox reveals how Gandhian utopianism faded and was coopted by dominant ideologies as it confronted the practicalities of politics and nation-building in a newly independent India. However, he also reveals that Gandhi's utopianism gained new force and was employed in emancipatory projects by grassroots activists who responded to the dilution of Gandhian utopian visions. This suggests two things about utopianism as process. First, it suggests that utopianism's emancipatory potential is a function of the scale at which it works. Gandhi's utopian vision, translated into the narrative of Hindu nationalism, came to be employed by the forces of domination. However, in the hands of grassroots activists, it maintained its emancipatory potential.

Second, it suggests that the transformative and emancipatory potential of utopianism diminishes as utopian projects come into confrontation with hegemonic cultural forces. As India became an independent nation amongst nations, Gandhi's radical ideals lost their transformative potential. However, Fox's analysis also suggests that this potential may be recovered; the force of utopianism may be reinvigorated as new grassroots actors rearticulate and build upon previous utopian visions. This is a fundamental component of the utopian process, one that I will elaborate upon further when I build upon Pitzer's innovative theorization of intentional communities (1989) to articulate the concept of developmental utopianism. This process can be seen in the development of the contemporary intentional communities movement and, more specifically,

within the specific historical relationship between the two intentional communities where I conducted my research. As the utopianism of older intentional communities fades, the results of their utopian endeavors become starting points for the utopian strivings and cultural critiques of newer communities.

The above analyses of the sustainability challenge and of the problem and potential utility of the concept of utopia prompt a series of questions. Are there contemporary utopian experimentalists struggling with new visions of culture, engaging in critical opposition and practical action against current hegemonies with the goal of achieving a more just and sustainable world? Have their utopian critiques and opposition been enabled by previous utopian visions whose effects are still reverberating as a testament to human agency? Will the utopian intentions of these human agents result in more just and sustainable outcomes? If sustainability, like an India free of oppression and foreign rule, is dependent upon utopian visions, cultural critique and experimentation then such questions seem at least worth exploring. In the following, I suggest that contemporary, sustainability-oriented intentional communities are places where the fundamental tension between the real and the ideal are explicitly confronted as human agents seek to address the sustainability challenge.

Intentional Communities and the Utopian Challenge of Sustainability

Many contemporary social movements are, through their various aims and actions, striving to address the utopian challenge of sustainability: environmental movements of various shades in various places, social and environmental justice advocates, the peace movement, the World Social Forum, the Zapatista National Liberation Army and the Fair Trade movement among others. However, one social change phenomenon, one group of loosely networked local movements for cultural change has more consistently been labeled as *utopian* and has more

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explicitly adopted an emphasis on encompassing visions of and local actions for sustainability than many others: intentional communities. Contemporary sustainability-oriented intentional communities are groups of people joined together in cooperative living and critical opposition to unsustainable ideological and political economic forces. While intentional communities, by their nature as place-based, economically cooperative social entities, have always been potential exemplars of sustainability in practice, the increasing salience of sustainability as an explicit goal of contemporary intentional communities places them in the vanguard of utopian sustainability visionaries. In this sense, contemporary sustainability-oriented intentional communities, like Fox's Gandhian utopians in their time and place, manifest experiments with culture that challenge hegemonic cultural forces that create and maintain the unsustainable situation we face today. In their endeavors and as the process of developmental utopianism plays out, they are increasingly building on the utopian efforts of their predecessors.

My conception of sustainability-oriented intentional communities – also referred to as ecovillages – is congruent with the ways in which Fox analyzes Gandhian utopianism. Their endeavors are applicable to the ways in which the sustainability challenge was defined above. In other words, sustainability-oriented intentional communities and ecovillages, with all of their multifaceted approaches to sustainability – cooperative community governance, cooperative land ownership and stewardship, bioregional networking, peace and social justice activism, self-reliance, voluntary simplicity, green building, alternative energy and technology, permaculture – are experimenting with cultural innovations for sustainability. Based on a shared global awareness of contemporary problems and a shared sense of responsibility for them, they are developing ways of living that reconcile equity, environment and economics. These communities are finding ways to address commonly held environmental and social justice concerns in the

context of their local political, economic and social activities. They are actively addressing the utopian challenge of sustainability in their everyday lives.

Introduction to the Research Question

My research stems from a desire to determine who is actually moving beyond the sustainability rhetoric and taking responsibility for the hard work of creating more just and sustainable cultural systems. My interest in intentional communities extends to the current, global upsurge in the number of sustainability-oriented intentional communities, but my awareness of these communities initially arose from my introduction to my research sites. I was especially intrigued by a visit to Celo Community during my first year of graduate work at the University of Georgia. When I visited Celo Community in the winter of 2000, I participated in a semi-formal gathering of some community members on a Saturday night. They were gathered to discuss advertising and patterns of over-consumption in American society. After watching a video on the subject, discussion turned to what they could do about these trends in their own lives. I paused in my ignorance to wonder just what kind of place this was. Upon further investigation I discovered that Celo Community is a 70-year-old intentional community whose members are united in a common endeavor to steward their 1,200 acres of collectively owned land in an environmentally sensitive manner through the use of consensus-based democratic self-governance processes. I soon discovered that Celo Community, while unique, is far from an anomaly. In fact, Celo, with its emphasis on environmental stewardship and local, democratic governance, is a forerunner of a much larger global movement of sustainability-oriented intentional communities.

The current growth in intentional community building, my visit to Celo Community and my desire to locate groups of people engaged in addressing the sustainability challenge sparked

for me a general question that is at the heart of this research: *Why do people join intentional communities?* Are they motivated by the kinds of utopian visions and cultural critiques that the arguments presented above suggest are increasingly necessary to address the sustainability challenge? Was my experience that first evening in Celo representative of the reasons people came to the community? As I explored the idea of addressing these questions through ethnographic research, my thoughts were informed by Susan Brown's (2002) work. Her theorization of intentional communities as forms of cultural critique similar to those framed by Marcus and Fischer (1986) in their attempts to rethink the anthropological enterprise helped me to develop my approach to the research and the question that would frame it. Drawing on Marcus and Fischer, Brown's work suggests that intentional communities share with anthropology a critical orientation to the predominant culture of industrial capitalism and a utopian effort to demonstrate that alternatives to the status quo are possible. In other words, intentional communities, like much of anthropology, are engaged in forms of epistemological critique and cross-cultural juxtaposition. However, the cultural critiques of intentional communities differ from those of anthropology because they are enacted through lived practice rather than through intellectual theorization. In this sense, they are potentially more powerful.

As I began the process of researching Celo, I discovered a previous ethnographic account of the community. In his dissertation (1969) and a subsequent book published posthumously in 2001, George Hicks characterizes Celo as a utopian experiment that failed when the community chose to shift their focus from what he perceived as a broad-based utopian vision to the sustainable stewardship of their 1,200 acre landholding. My initial interpretation of Celo Community, an interpretation that sprang from that first Saturday night meeting, seemed to contradict Hicks's interpretation of the community. Through reading the works of Brown and

Hicks and through a greater understanding of anthropology's critical nature and emancipatory potential, I formulated my research question: *Are intentional communities enactments of cultural critique?* If I found that intentional communities were indeed enactments of cultural critiques, as Brown posited, it seemed like research in intentional communities could open an important window on the nature of human agency. If intentional communities are expressions of cultural critiques espoused by their members, research within them seemed an ideal opportunity to examine how people confront the tension between the real and ideal, a tension that is of fundamental interest to anthropologists and also at the heart of the sustainability challenge. This work, based upon my research in Celo Community, Earthaven Ecovillage and the broader intentional communities movement over the last several years, is an attempt to answer this question.

Sustainability, Utopianism, Intentional Community and Cultural Critique:

Overview of the Dissertation

In this work, I integrate the concepts of sustainability, intentional community, utopianism and cultural critique. These concepts reflect the critical function of anthropological research and knowledge production envisioned by Marcus and Fischer in their 1986 work *Anthropology as Cultural Critique: An Experimental Moment in the Human Sciences*. Marcus and Fischer's conception of cultural critique, like the concepts of utopia, sustainability and intentional community, calls for understanding of and experimentation with cultural alternatives as a response to critical assessments of the hegemonic status quo. While Marcus and Fischer's conceptualization of cultural critique is applied to anthropological knowledge production, my reading of their work, in combination with that of Brown (2002), leads me to intentional communities as groups of cultural experimentalists that more effectively engage with the work of

cultural critique in both theory and practice (a combination that Marcus and Fischer point to as key to effective cultural critique). The cultural critiques and utopian visions of intentional community members are too often dismissed by analysts who reject the idea of utopianism as irrelevantly romantic or inherently dangerous. The current analysis suggests that the members of intentional communities live their lives at the site of tension between the real and the ideal. As such, intentional communities should be of significant interest to anthropologists.

In addition to my ethnographic research in Celo Community, Earthaven Ecovillage and the broader intentional communities movement, I draw upon a number of different literatures to build my theoretical argument throughout the course of this work. The second chapter provides an introduction to intentional communities and an overview of the contemporary, sustainability-oriented intentional communities movement. It situates these communities in relation to environmental anthropology's concerns with community, natural resource use and sustainability and suggests that intentional communities provide unique contexts in which to examine these concerns. Chapter three provides an overview of theoretical approaches to understanding intentional communities within the communal studies literature, especially with regard to the variable ways that the label *utopian* is used to characterize intentional communities. It reveals a growing recognition of the transformative power of intentional communities and an effort to retrieve the concept of utopianism from those who have characterized it pejoratively. It equates utopianism with cultural critique and suggests that the transformative potential of utopianism, manifested in the process of developmental utopianism, must be understood as it plays out within the broader scope of the intentional communities movement rather than only within individual intentional communities. Chapter four explores Marcus and Fischer's *Anthropology as Cultural Critique* (1986) in detail, especially as it is applied by Brown (2002) to the study of intentional

communities. In this chapter, I examine the implicit presence of cultural critique in the work of anthropologists and reveal how ethnographic accounts of intentional communities and other movements bring to light the transformative and emancipatory work of cultural critique at the grassroots level. Chapters two through four will conclude with discussions of Celo and Earthaven. These discussions will simultaneously provide explicit reference points for the theoretical perspectives developed in the body of the chapters, help me build my overall argument regarding intentional communities and gradually introduce Celo and Earthaven to the reader.

Chapter five begins by exploring the challenges faced by anthropologists attempting to navigate among constructions of social science as objective, critical, or activist in nature. The challenge presented by these constructions grows from the suggestion that critical or activist research prioritizes personal politics over sound methodology and is thus incompatible with scientific, objective research. By staging a dialogue between D'Andrade, invoked here to represent the objectivist position, and Marcus and Fischer, I suggest a way to navigate this impasse. Objective and critical or activist research are not necessarily mutually exclusive if research sites are strategically chosen, these choices are acknowledged and a degree of methodological objectivity is maintained throughout the course of research and analysis. I suggest that engaging in ethnographic cultural critique as Marcus and Fischer suggest, for example by examining intentional communities as potential forms of cultural critique, represents one way forward. In choosing this path, we must be transparent about our choices and our methods. To this end, I operationalize cultural critique and explain the methods I used to look for it. The second half of chapter five details the methods I used in my research on and analysis of

intentional communities, keeping in mind the preceding discussion of methodological challenges and opportunities.

Chapters six through eleven constitute a comparative ethnographic examination of Celo Community and Earthaven Ecovillage. In these chapters, I directly address my research question by examining the data I gathered. Chapters six through nine provide overviews of the history and current state of each community, demonstrating how cultural critiques and utopian visions were active forces in the creation and development of the communities. In chapter ten, I examine whether or not community members invoke cultural critiques in order to explain their decisions to join the communities. Chapter eleven examines how the current institutional structures and everyday activities of Celo and Earthaven can be understood, in part, as outcomes of the cultural critiques and utopian visions that influenced the development of each community. Analyses of these institutions and activities provide us with cross-cultural juxtapositions that demonstrate the transformative and emancipatory potential of intentional communities as they manifest their utopian visions and cultural critiques. I also analyze these institutions and activities in terms of their implications for social justice and ecological sustainability and show how they become more effective through the historical process of developmental utopianism through which Celo and Earthaven are connected.

My aim in this work is to reveal that contemporary intentional communities represent powerful and effective cultural critiques that engage both theory and practice in the construction of possible alternatives to predominant ideologies and institutions that so often lead to unjust and unsustainable outcomes. Contemporary, sustainability-oriented intentional communities are increasingly directing their critically motivated practice towards the utopian goal of sustainability. This process involves learning from and building upon past utopian experiments

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in intentional community; it must be understood in contexts larger than those presented by the boundaries of individual communities. This process simultaneously enables intentional communities to become more sustainable social entities and to more effectively address the sustainability challenge. Finally, I wish to suggest that anthropologists and other social and natural scientists interested in effectively engaging with contemporary social and environmental problems should find ways to collaborate with intentional communities. Intentional communities, as social experiments taking place at the juncture between the real and ideal, represent unique opportunities for academics to engage the sustainability challenge and the critical and utopian endeavors that, it is increasingly argued, are required to effectively address it. These modes of engagement might enable anthropologists to navigate significant epistemological and methodological challenges and opportunities at a time when transformative and emancipatory social science research is increasingly required. They might also enable communities to be more effective in striving for their goals. Such engagements entail establishing collaborative partnerships between academe and sustainability-oriented intentional communities.

Chapter 2

OVERVIEW OF SUSTAINABILITY-ORIENTED INTENTIONAL COMMUNITIES

People have to become cooperative. People, all humans, to be sustainable we have to get out of our egotism. The ecovillage movement is worldwide but yet it really is specific to the West because we're the ones that are egotized and separated out. I mean every village in Africa's an ecovillage. They already know how to cooperate. We're the ones that have forgotten it. There's a level of transformation of lifestyle that doesn't involve just actions. We have to change our personalities. We have to become more cooperative. We have to start thinking about the whole rather than about ourselves. We need to have the welfare of the whole at stake because that's what is at stake.

And Earthaven is a place where that's being worked out?

Yeah. And so how do we do that as the egotistical bourgeoisie individuals that we are? We have to practice. It's not something you just have an idea about and then you start doing it. We have to put ourselves in an arena where that's what we're trying to do every day. And by direct conscious intention, take actions to change. That's what Earthaven is all about. [interview in Earthaven Ecovillage 6-30-05]

*   *   *

The exchange above is from an interview I conducted during my research in Earthaven Ecovillage. It demonstrates that the members of Earthaven Ecovillage believe that fundamental cultural changes are required if sustainability is to be achieved. Indeed, "creating a holistic, sustainable culture" is their stated goal. Presented here, this exchange foreshadows the following discussion of contemporary, sustainability-oriented intentional communities and the ways in which they might be situated in ongoing debates about the role of communities in addressing the sustainability challenge.

*   *   *

In the following, I discuss some reasons why intentional communities are a natural nexus for anthropologists concerned with the disjuncture between rhetoric and practice when it comes to sustainability. I provide an overview of intentional communities and the increasing emphasis on sustainability within the intentional communities movement. In contemporary, sustainability-oriented intentional communities, social and environmental concerns have become anchors for the cultural critiques and utopian strivings that underlie intentional community building. I draw upon scholarly analyses of contemporary intentional communities and upon data I gathered, including materials produced by the members of intentional communities and related communitarian organizations, in order to portray the salience of sustainability for contemporary intentional communitarians.

Following the discussion of sustainability-oriented intentional communities, I situate anthropology as a discipline concerned with communities and sustainability. I draw upon scholarly research on the role of communities in conservation and sustainable resource use, revealing an ongoing dialectic regarding the confluence of communities and sustainability. Hardin's tragedy of the commons scenario and the ensuing debates it inspired are presented as an allegory for this dialectic and the challenges posed by the concept of sustainability. In response to this dialectic, I suggest that intentional communities deserve special attention within this conversation for a number of different reasons. I end with introductions to Celo Community and Earthaven Ecovillage that situate these communities as examples of sustainability-oriented-intentional communities.

Intentional Communities: More Than Hippie Communes

If American society holds a common image of intentional communities, it is the image of the "hippie commune" from the 1960s and early 1970s. The image is likely to be of a group of

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long-haired, tie-dye wearing youths lazily communing, sharing everything, including perhaps most prominently drugs and sex. At its most positive, the image might be associated with a bygone era of youthful experimentation and idealistic social activism. At its worst, the word commune might elicit an image of the compound of David Koresh and the Branch Davidians going up in flames in Waco, Texas in 1994 or the memory that Charles Manson led a cult-like commune in a spree of vicious murders in 1969. Thus, the idea of intentional community for many Americans has, at best, an uneasy or ambivalent connotation. Unfortunately, these common images are not accurate representations of the diverse kinds of people and social arrangements that characterize intentional communities or of the long history of intentional community building around the world that scholars of intentional community have documented. Nor do these images allow one to comprehend the sincerity, pragmatism, critical thinking and creativity that members of contemporary intentional communities bring to their community building endeavors, especially as they seek to find ways to live more sustainably. The image of the commune more often leads to easy dismissal of intentional communities than to serious consideration of their potential significance.

In delineating the kinds of groups that scholars call intentional communities, I have borrowed from Timothy Miller, professor of religious studies at the University of Kansas and 1999 recipient of the Distinguished Scholar Award from the Communal Studies Association. Although the following definition is my own, most of its components are drawn from Miller's work (see Miller 1999). An *intentional community* is a group of people who have deliberately and voluntarily chosen to live together in adjoining geographic proximity in order to achieve some common purpose or goal that arises in response to critical assessments of the dominant culture. Most often, they approach their attempt to ameliorate perceived social problems with

consciously devised socio-cultural, political, economic or spiritual alternatives in mind. Such a group is invariably characterized by self-awareness as a group, a sense of separation from the dominant culture and the sharing of cultural norms and values. Within the group there is a high degree of personal interaction, some amount of economic sharing and some level of altruism or suppression of individual choice in favor of the good of the group. Finally, the group must include five or more individuals not all of whom are related by blood. Setting the lower limit at five individuals is necessarily arbitrary. However, I follow Miller's suggestion (1999) that it takes at least five to constitute the "critical mass" of a community.

I want to draw attention to the *intentional* aspect of intentional communities because it ties the various types of communitarianism together and because it is the descriptor of choice for both communitarians and scholars (Kozeny 2005, Van Wormer 2006).

> It makes sense to define communitarianism not so much in terms of form as in terms of impulse, of motivation. When people choose to live together and share at least some of their resources for the common good or for the betterment of the world, something communal has happened. Once the prime impulse has proceeded to be embodied in a particular outward form, we are talking details. [Miller 1998:xix]

Scholars have created typologies of intentional communities according to a number of different criteria – secular vs. religious, urban vs. rural, communal vs. cooperative, charismatic leadership vs. democratic governance – but most of these dichotomies actually represent continuua and *intentionality* remains the uniting characteristic. *Intentionality* signifies that people are choosing to orient their lives and livelihoods around particular goals or values and that these goals or values differ from those prevalent in the dominant society. This intentionality also results in attempts to construct alternative social, political and economic institutions within the community that will translate goals and values into practical and effective action.

The etymology of the term *intentional community* reflects the salience of intentionality amongst communitarians. The term is indirectly connected to the founder of Celo Community, Arthur Morgan. Morgan's interest in the small community as the primary unit of human socio-cultural evolution and his belief that the integrity of the small community was threatened by the development of modern, industrial society inspired him to promote the revitalization of the small community in the United States starting in the 1930s. In addition to founding Celo Community in 1937 and Community Service, Inc. (a center for dispersing information on small communities) in 1940, he also encouraged the members of small, cooperative communities around the United States to gather together to support one another. To this end he founded the Small Community Conference and, in the late 1940s, organized a gathering of several recently initiated cooperative communities including Celo. The participants in this group saw themselves as leaders of a movement for a new society. They initially chose the name Inter-Community Exchange, but upon reflection noted that the intentionality of their community building efforts and their ability to provide fellowship for each other were the most salient characteristics of their undertaking. In light of this, they renamed their organization the Fellowship of Intentional Communities.

Today's Fellowship for Intentional Community (the "of" has been changed to "for" in order to be inclusive of those who are not actual members of intentional communities) provides a definition similar to, if less rigorous than, the one delineated above:

> An "intentional community" is a group of people who have chosen to live or work together in pursuit of a common ideal or vision. Most, though not all, share land or housing. Intentional communities come in all shapes and sizes and display amazing diversity in their common values, which may be social, economic, spiritual, political and/or ecological. Some are rural; some urban. Some live all in a single residence; some in separate households. Some raise children; some don't. Some are secular, some are spiritually based and others both. For all their variety though, the[se] communities … hold a common commitment to living cooperatively, to solving problems nonviolently and to sharing their experiences with others. [Fellowship for Intentional Community 2004:7]

As is apparent, this definition of intentional community encompasses a greater diversity of forms than the absolute communalism often associated with the image of the "hippie commune" that is such a prevalent American stereotype.

Adopting this broad definition of intentional community allows us to view intentional community building as a socio-cultural phenomenon with deep historical roots and a diversity of forms that stretch across cultural boundaries, but has a common aim of constructing cooperative, local-scale, alternative cultural models. Historians of intentional community trace the phenomenon back over 2,000 years, most often to groups who sought freedom of spiritual practice. Bill Metcalf identifies Homakoeion, founded by Pythagoras in what is now southern Italy around 525 BCE, as the first intentional community. In Homakoeion, several hundred individuals sought to create the ideal society through communal ownership and mystical, intellectual practices (Metcalf and Christian 2003, Metcalf 2004).

Some point to earlier communities in India, but the Essenes of Israel, a monastic sect of some 4,000 eschatological Jews who lived, ate, worked and worshipped communally starting during the second century BCE, are more commonly accepted as the first documented intentional community. Living communally at Khirbat Qumran on the Dead Sea, the Essenes wrote the Dead Sea Scrolls. Some biblical scholars believe that Jesus of Nazareth lived in this commune and that early Christianity was shaped by his experiences there (Metcalf and Christian 2003, Metcalf 2004). The communal living aspect of Christianity is carried on today by activist intentional communities such as Koinonia Partners and Jubilee Partners in Georgia, by Catholic Worker communities throughout the U.S. and by Hutterite colonies in the U.S., Canada and elsewhere.

Intentional communities flowered throughout Europe in the 12th and 13th and again in the 16th and 17th centuries, some of which, growing out of the second Protestant Reformation, survive today as the Anabaptist Amish, Hutterites and Mennonites. From the 17th through the 19th centuries, the Americas provided particularly fertile ground for Europeans who sought freedom from religious persecution and oppression, relief from the social effects of incipient industrial capitalism and, following the Enlightenment, the opportunity to perfect social life according to a variety of utopian designs. Communal studies scholars recognize a number of different waves of intentional community building in America growing from a number of different impulses. Zablocki (1980) identifies four surges of intentional community building in American history: the colonial period (1620-1776), the Shaker influx (1790-1805), the utopian socialist period (1825-1848) and the turn of the century (1890-1915). Many scholars also recognize an outburst of community building following the Great Depression that included both citizen and government initiated projects (Conkin 1959, Miller 1998) and another in the 1960s (Miller 1999). Kanter (1972) identifies three distinct types of critical impulses that are associated with different surges of intentional community building: religious (mainly associated with the colonial period and the Shaker influx), politico-economic (the utopian socialists, turn of the century and post-Great Depression) and psychosocial (the 1960s).

Elsewhere, Australia and New Zealand saw flurries of intentional community building beginning in the 19th century and continuing to this day (Sargisson and Sargent 2004). The kibbutzim became a fundamental component of Israel's nation building project in the early part of the 20th century and they survive today in altered, less strictly communal form (Spiro 1956, 2004). Distinct histories of intentional community building are also recognized in Canada, Japan,

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India and many nations of Europe and Latin America (Christensen and Levinson 2003, Metcalf 2004).

Despite this history and diversity, most people in the U.S. derive their consciousness of intentional communities from the great proliferation of such communities during the countercultural movements of the 1960s and 1970s. Miller (1999) suggests that there were several thousand communities with several hundred thousand members in the 1960s and 1970s. He documents the diversity within this period of intentional community building, characterizing the communities of this time as extremely heterogeneous, collectively representing "a colorful and eccentric episode in American culture" (1999:xxvi). Yet at the same time, Miller recognizes that the communes of the 1960s and 1970s were "firmly rooted in the American communal tradition" (1999:1).

While the "hippie communes" of the 1960s and 1970s are the most readily recognized manifestation of "modern" intentional community building in the U.S. and represent perhaps the most prodigious flowering of intentional communities in any historical era, numerous intentional communities currently exist throughout the world and are increasingly interconnected with each other through organizations, publications, conferences and communication networks. Perhaps more significantly, the number of contemporary intentional communities is growing, spurred by the birth of the ecovillage and cohousing movements in the last decades of the 20th century. These contemporary communities have learned from the long history of intentional community building efforts and are overcoming some of the problems that often led to the demise of historic intentional communities. Contemporary communities are experimenting with new forms of participatory democratic governance and conflict resolution. They are finding ways to balance privacy, individualism and diversity with community involvement, social cohesion and unity of

purpose (Meltzer 2001). These new communities involve their members from the start in community design. They are also continuing common intentional community activities such as experimenting with local scale economic activities and economic cooperation. However, in contemporary intentional communities, these endeavors arise from more recent concerns with ecological sustainability and social justice. As these innovations are put into place, they make intentional community a more viable option rather than simply an alternative and they demonstrate that intentional communities can help address the challenges posed by the concept of sustainability (Meltzer 2005).

Sustainability in Contemporary Intentional Community Building:

Cohousing and Ecovillages

Dear Communities,

It is obvious to me that "sustainability," … is not ... separable from "cooperation." For example, allegedly "sustainable" ecosystems … appear to be primarily cooperative systems. I am certainly not alone in suggesting that whatever "sustainability" they evidence is largely due to considerable cooperative activity among their elements. Meanwhile, much of the "unsustainability" that I observe in our dominant cultures appears to stem primarily from a lack of cooperation and collaboration, a lack of community.
    … I think "cooperative living" is a very important experience to be promoting, publishing about and focusing on, in all its various forms. It is among the most neglected, seldom-considered and seldom-practiced skills in our dominant cultures. It is also one of the most essential skills for "sustainability". [Shinerer 2006:5]

The quotation above, taken from a letter to the flagship publication of the Fellowship for Intentional Communities, illustrates the degree to which sustainability has become a subject of great interest within contemporary intentional communities movements. It also illustrates a belief within the movement in the fundamental connection between cooperative, intentional community living and sustainability. Recent developments within intentional communities movements, including the birth and expansion of cohousing and the Global Ecovillage Network, bear this

observation out. The limited amount of social science research within these and other intentional communities provides further evidence that many intentional communities are active nexuses for critical social experiments that seek more just and sustainable alternatives to dominant cultural values and social institutions.

A. Cohousing Communities

Recent scholarship on contemporary cohousing communities emphasizes that the concepts of community and sustainability are intertwined (Meltzer 2005). Meltzer chose to study cohousing communities not only because their design features have explicit sustainability components such as those promoting energy efficiency, reduced consumption and recycling. Cohousing presents an appropriate scale – between the level of the individual family and the municipality – within which people can more effectively live according to their values and control the degree of social cohesion within which they are enmeshed.

> Cohousing has developed in direct response to perceived *social* problems of the late twentieth century – personal alienation and the breakdown of community, in particular. Therefore, cohousing offers an opportunity to investigate what we now understand to be the ecological interconnectivity of the social and environmental dimensions of sustainability [at the local level]. [Meltzer 2005:15]

Meltzer argues for "greater recognition of the importance of community in the process of attitudinal change and behavioural change toward social and environmental responsibility" (2005:4). His argument, supported by ethnographic research in cohousing communities in multiple countries, is that the connection between sustainability and community is created by four different factors that are characteristic of cohousing communities: community design, social interaction within the community, social support within the community and a shared sense of identity with the community. In cohousing communities, Meltzer finds that people find support and reinforcement in their immediate social environment when it comes to choices about more

socially just and ecologically sustainable ways of living. Most importantly, these factors function together to enable a greater sense of empowerment whereby community members gain greater direct access to social capital and material resources and thus greater awareness of and control over the circumstances of their lives and livelihoods.

Today, cohousing may represent the fastest growing and most accessible sector of the intentional communities movement. McCamant and Durrett (1994) identify six distinguishing characteristics of cohousing communities: participatory process, intentional neighborhood design, extensive common facilities, complete resident management, non-hierarchical structure and separate income sources. In cohousing communities, people are directly involved in the design and democratic governance of their communities. People share some aspects of production, consumption and maintenance of common space and resources while having independent incomes and dwelling spaces. Cohousing communities seem to have struck a balance between individualism and communalism, privacy and community involvement and social diversity and unity of purpose that has made them a fairly attractive option to the mainstream (Meltzer 2001, 2005).

Durrett (2003) traces the origins of the cohousing movement back to the efforts of Jan Gudmand-Hoyer. In 1964, Gudmand-Hoyer returned to Denmark from graduate school at Harvard where he studied utopian communities in the U.S. such as Shakertown, Drop City and Twin Oaks. Upon his return, he sought to describe a social structure that would fall somewhere in between the all inclusive communalism of these utopian communities and the single family homes more prevalent in industrial societies of the North. His description entitled "The Missing Link Between Utopia and the Dated One-Family House" drew a lot of interest and set the stage for the evolution of cohousing. Thus, actual cohousing arrangements originated in Northern

Europe in the 1970s: in Denmark (*bofaelleskaeber*), the Netherlands (*central wonen*) and Sweden (*kollektivhuser*). As a response to social problems of late 20th century industrialized society, cohousing communities grew from the foundation of European and American communes of the 60s and 70s and earlier. However, as alluded to previously, they adapted in certain ways so as to be more replicable, sustainable and attractive to the mainstream.

In the 1980s, cohousing was introduced and adopted in North America, thanks in large part to the first edition of McCamant and Durrett's book (1988). In the 1990s and early 2000s, cohousing spread to Australia, New Zealand, Japan and Korea. In each different context, changes in architectural form, specific financial arrangements and social intent occurred while the overall approach to cooperative, participatory and more sustainable living remained (Meltzer 2005). Across these various contexts, cohousing remains a predominantly urban phenomenon.

B. The Global Ecovillage Movement

Similar to Meltzer's account of cohousing communities, recent scholarship on the global ecovillage movement distinguishes it from historic intentional communities based on the symbiosis between community building and the creation of more sustainable ways of living. Describing the ecovillage movement, Kirby (2003) asserts that it represents a "social critique" of the individualism and consumerism so characteristic of Western societies and, particularly the United States. The ecovillagers Kirby studied believe that these cultural trends are destroying both community and the environment and this social critique serves as a locus for community building. Kirby is explicit in this regard:

> In investigating the intersection of personal considerations and social and environmental concerns that result in involvement in contemporary community building projects … both a critique of the existing social mode and a proposed solution to the problems as identified begins to emerge. [2003:325]

What exactly is an ecovillage? Much like the more general term *intentional community*, the ecovillage concept is difficult to define succinctly. Albert Bates, a regional secretary of the Global Ecovillage Network, traces the origins of the term to the late 1970s, but notes that it did not come into widespread use as a concept until the early to mid 1990s (Bates 2003). In the late 1970s, the term came into use independently in three different places. In Hendersonville, North Carolina, the staff of the magazine *Mother Earth News* used the term "eco-village" to refer to an educational center they were creating based around alternative energy systems, green building and organic gardening. In Gorleben, Germany, a group of anti-nuclear activists tried to build a small, ecologically based village on a nuclear waste disposal site which they called *okodorf* (ecovillage). In Denmark, a group of intentional communities sought to move beyond cohousing to a more environmentally conscious form of cooperative communal living. They called their group *Landsforeningen for Okosamfund* (Danish Ecovillage Network).

In the late 1980s, Robert and Diane Gilman of Washington state had been gathering stories of communities creating a more sustainable culture and publishing them in a magazine called *In Context*. In 1990, Hildur and Ross Jackson, a Danish and Canadian couple who formed an environmentally-oriented charitable organization called Gaia Trust, asked the Gilmans to compile the information that they had gathered for a report that was entitled *Ecovillages and Sustainable Communities*. Within this report, the Gilmans defined an ecovillage as "A human-scale, full-featured settlement in which human activities are harmlessly integrated into the natural world in a way that is supportive of healthy human development and can be successfully continued into the indefinite future" (cited in Dawson 2006:13). Despite the impossibly high standards set by this description, this is still the most commonly used definition of the term *ecovillage*. With this recent definition in mind, the Global Ecovillage Network recognizes some

pre-existing communities as exemplars of the ecovillage model: Yoff, Senegal (dating from the 1400s), Solheimer, Iceland (established in 1930), Camphill Communities (1930s – present), Tanamalwila, Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement, Sri Lanka (1970s), Reserva Integral Sasardi, Colombia (1985), The Farm, Tennessee (1970), Huhuecoyotl, Tepoztlan, Mexico (1973) and Sirius, Massachusetts (1978).

With the Gilman's report as a foundation, the Gaia Trust convened a series of meetings that led to the formal inauguration of the Global Ecovillage Network (GEN) in 1994. In 1995, GEN, with funding and support from the Gaia Trust, further developed its organizational structure by forming three regional secretariats that still exist today: Europe and Africa, Asia and Oceania and the Americas. Since its founding, GEN has developed connections with a variety of local organizations: traditional organizations already working for sustainable development (the Sarvodaya Shamadana Movement of Sri Lanka), existing networks of intentional communities that have chosen to focus their efforts on environmental issues and sustainability (the Green Kibbutz Network) and new collections of activists and sustainability-oriented communities (the Russian Ecovillage Network, the Japanese Ecovillage Network).

In addition to its regional and local activities, GEN is involved in sustainability issues at the national and international levels. In June of 2000, the United Nations Economic and Social Council officially recognized GEN as an NGO with Special Consultative Status in the area of sustainable development. Through the Findhorn Foundation in Scotland and the recent establishment of an outpost in Brazil, GEN is affiliated with the United Nations Institute of Training and Research (UNITAR) as part of an international network of sustainability training centers under the International Training Centre for Local Authorities/Actors network (CIFAL). In addition, GEN will be working with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural

Organization (UNESCO) throughout the Decade of Education for Sustainable Development. Partly as a result of GEN's efforts, in January 2002 Senegal adopted ecovillages as one of the building blocks of a national sustainable development strategy. The government of Senegal provides financial and administrative support to the national network of ecovillages exemplified by Colufifa and Eco Yoff (Jackson and Svensson 2002).

C. The Numbers on Sustainability-oriented Intentional Communities

Tim Miller (2005) discusses a number of reasons that he has struggled to compile an accurate database of intentional communities. Because it is difficult to provide a concise definition of sustainability, intentional community, or ecovillage, it is also very difficult to provide concrete data on the number of sustainability-oriented intentional communities. Even if one were able to provide a concise definition of these terms, the ability to compile accurate numbers is complicated by several other factors. The intentional communities movement is constantly in flux with new communities forming and old ones dissolving or transitioning to new forms. Although there are a number of central databases maintained by the Fellowship for Intentional Community (FIC) and GEN, these databases rely on self-reporting by communities and many communities may not be aware of the existence of the databases, or, for a variety of reasons, they may not wish to be included.

Linda Joseph and Albert Bates reflect on the difficulty of determining what exactly constitutes an ecovillage, saying:

> There may be, among the more than 15,000 identified sustainable community experiments, no single example of an "ecovillage" in the sense of a full-featured human community … The discrepancy between the dream and the reality of sustainability is an important ongoing topic for all ecovillage activists to explore. [2003:24]

Despite these difficulties, GEN and FIC reports and databases provide some idea of the number of sustainability-oriented intentional communities. A recent pamphlet produced by GEN claims the following: "Global Ecovillage Network (GEN) [is] an organization comprising more than 13,000 eco-settlements on every continent on the planet" (Global Ecovillage Network - Europe n.d.). A search of GEN's online directory of ecovillages on September 21, 2006 provides a more modest estimate of the number of ecovillages: 153 in the Americas, 147 in Europe and Africa and 49 in Asia and Oceania for a total of 349 globally (Global Ecovillage Network 2006). A significant number of ecovillages listed in the directory describe themselves as "forming", so the number could be even lower. The vast discrepancy in these numbers is the result of varying definitions and sometimes overly idealistic estimates. However, the fact remains that there is a significant and growing number of ecovillages around the world.

The FIC Communities Directory, which focuses mostly on North America, but includes all other regions of the world as well, can be searched in a number of different ways to target sustainability-oriented intentional communities. However, it does not provide an explicit category for ecovillages. The online directory includes 1,643 listings as of September 21, 2006. Of those 1,643 listings, 168 use the term "ecovillage" in their description and 321 use the term "sustainable". If one accepts that growing a significant portion of the food consumed by the community is an appropriate indicator of sustainability, the directory can be searched for those communities which grow 50% or more of their food, resulting in a total of 497 listings (Fellowship for Intentional Community 2006). While none of these criteria provide exact numbers and while the self reporting nature of the directory may generate numbers that are more idealistic than accurate, such searches of ecovillage and intentional community databases do

indicate that there is a high degree of sustainability orientation within the intentional communities movement.

Similarly, it is difficult to establish how many cohousing communities there are at any one time as there are always new groups in formation. However, because cohousing is more precise in form, more developed as a mainstream model and more organized as a movement at both professional and grassroots levels, one can locate some more definite figures on the number of cohousing communities. As of September 21, 2006, the Cohousing Association of the United States lists 199 cohousing communities, including those in the process of formation, within the U.S (Cohousing Association of the United States 2006). As indicated previously, cohousing communities exist in a number of other countries as well, suggesting that the total number of such communities is much higher worldwide.

While it is difficult to ascertain the number of extant sustainability-oriented intentional communities such as ecovillages and cohousing, it is even more difficult to determine the degree to which the number of intentional communities is growing. However, an examination of previous and current Communities Directories published by the Fellowship for Intentional Community indicates that intentional communities increased from 304 in 1990 to 614 in 2005 (Schaub 2005). The current number is even higher if one refers to the online version of the directory which listed 1,643 communities in late 2006. This appears to be the most significant increase in the number of intentional communities since the 1960s and 1970s. However, these communities remain relatively under-analyzed and under-theorized within the social sciences and particularly within anthropology.

Anthropology, Communities and Sustainability

Human communities and ecological sustainability have long been at the heart of anthropological research. Ecological and environmental anthropologists in particular focus on the ways in which power distribution intersects with the use of natural resources in human communities. Anthropologists have pointed to the ways in which local communities' institutions foster sustainable resource use and have used these examples in critiques of unjust and unsustainable development programs and cultural trends. However, increasingly nuanced understandings of the complexity of local communities and recognition of the increasing penetration of the global political economy into local spheres have led anthropologists to question conceptions of communities as loci of sustainability. Following brief and limited overviews of the concepts of community and sustainability in the work of anthropologists, I suggest that research in and partnerships with contemporary, sustainability-oriented intentional communities represent opportunities to advance anthropology's interests in community and sustainability.

A. Community and Anthropology

Several recent works have situated community as a primary theoretical concept and site of social scientific and anthropological inquiry and engagement (Creed 2006a, Hyland 2005) and as a main component of anthropological concerns with social justice and ecological sustainability (Brosius, Tsing and Zerner 2005). Creed (2006b) characterizes the idea of community as an obsession, a concept in need of interrogation and critical examination. We must understand the various ways in which the notion of community is employed and the ideological work that it performs. Following James Scott (1998), Brosius (2006a) suggests that the idea of community is a simplification, enabling governments and transnational organizations to make people and

places more legible for the purposes of large-scale modernist projects such as development and conservation. In contrast, the review of intentional communities above suggests that both scholars and citizen-activists are increasingly explicit about the use of the concept of community with regard to intentional communities. The intentional community concept identifies locally-based, self-selected social groups deliberately employing community, as both concept and practice, to create alternative cultural models. These alternative models are based on shared values and goals that arise from critical perspectives of predominant cultural values and institutions.

Despite concerns with the construction of community as a concept, community persists as a basis for theory building, critique, policy and engagement in the social sciences. Community has long been a locus of anthropological research. Although the concept of community has expanded to include social groups not located in particular geographical places, local communities continue to be primary sites for anthropological fieldwork. With increasing globalization, anthropologists have sought to understand the impact of outside forces on local communities and the ways in which local communities respond to these forces. In light of this, there remains a strong belief in the importance of local communities and a concomitant effort to enable, empower and engage them (Hyland and Bennett 2005).

Despite this long standing interest in community, anthropological engagements with intentional communities have been few and far between (some exceptions include Anders 1990; Bennett 1967, 1974, 1996; Brown 2002a; Hicks 2001; Munch 1971; and Spiro 1956, 2004). In a recent review of the concept of community, Creed characterizes intentional community building derisively as "romantic" and "utopian", suggesting that the endeavors of intentional communities "ran the risk of generating all the horrible negative elements of rural communities" in their

efforts to "actualize [community] in a territorially defined location." Thus, intentional communities, he concludes, are "potentially retrograde and utopian" (Creed 2006c:34). Following the discussion of the potentially problematic nature of the concept of utopia and the accompanying articulation of the concept of cultural critique I presented in the introduction, I wish to examine the possibility that it might be otherwise. I wish to suggest that intentional communities through their cultural critiques, utopian visions and small-scale social experiments might manifest emancipatory, just and sustainable social projects. This examination will, I believe, point to intentional communities as potential partners in academic research. Anthropologists wishing to combine theory and practice in an effort to address concerns with social justice and ecological sustainability should consider conducting research in intentional community contexts.

B. Community and Sustainability in Anthropology

The idea of community has repeatedly been invoked in the work of anthropologists and other social scientists concerned with addressing social justice and ecological sustainability concerns. In their review of community-based approaches to conservation, Brosius, Tsing and Zerner observe that such approaches

> are based on the premises that local populations have greater interest in the sustainable use of resources than does the state or distant corporate managers; that local communities are more cognizant of the intricacies of local ecological processes and practices; and that they are more able to effectively manage those resources through local or "traditional" forms of access. In insisting on the link between environmental degradation and social inequity … NGOs and their allies [in the social sciences] have sought to bring about a fundamental rethinking of the issue of how the goals of conservation and effective resource management can be linked to the search for social justice for historically marginalized peoples. [1998:158]

A full review of work in this vein would include a plethora of scholars, practitioners and activists from a diversity of disciplines, organizations and geographical locations. I will forgo such a

review here and focus instead on the debate regarding the tragedy of the commons, using it as an allegory for the larger issues at hand. The commons debate and literature is illustrative of many of the issues that arise when communities are invoked in an effort to bring social justice and ecological sustainability concerns to totalizing practices such as economic development and conservation. Congruently, a main aspect of sustainability-oriented intentional communities, one that arises from the shared critiques and values of their members, is the creation of institutions for the joint, democratic management of commons resources. Thus, these communities represent places where issues of sustainability implied by the tragedy of the commons scenario can be explored.

Garrett Hardin's story of the tragedy of the commons – the parable of the goat herder who increases his herd in his own immediate economic self-interest without consideration for the effects of increased grazing on fellow herders, future economic production, the well-being of future generations, or the pasture ecosystem – has served as an entry point for examining the role of community in environmental sustainability (Hardin 1968). Hardin's conceptualization of humans as *Homo economicus*, as rational, calculating, self-interested individuals, held that human economic activity invariably leads to resource overexploitation unless incentives are imposed by state regulation or private individual ownership. His work was seen as justification for the disenfranchisement of indigenous and traditional communities whose institutions of ownership and usufruct would be replaced by state and market systems.

Responses to Hardin's tragic scenario focused on the role of communities. A group of scholars and a body of literature conglomerated under the banner of the International Association for the Study of Common Property to examine Hardin's claims. These scholars pointed out that human economic behavior is not conducted in isolation, but rather within the context of

communities where behavior is constrained by ongoing relationships with other community members. Studies by anthropologists and other social scientists revealed that human communities such as small-scale agricultural societies, pastoralists and hunter-gatherer groups were sometimes characterized by sustainable relationships with their natural environments because they had developed institutions – systems of rules and norms – that manifested cooperative economic activity, restraint on individual economic behavior and an emphasis on the long-term common good (Baland and Platteau 1996; Berkes 1989, 1999; Bromley 1992; Gibson and Koontz 1998; McCay and Acheson 1987; Netting 1981; Ostrom 1990; Ostrom, Gardner and Walker 1994; Peters 1994). These depictions of communities as environmental stewards were seized upon by states and international organizations in efforts to increase the effectiveness of conservation and development programs. When local communities often did not respond to these opportunities as expected, it became clear that some assumptions about local communities were more romantic than realistic.

Recent scholarship has challenged such romantic notions of community, pointing out that communities are more accurately characterized by internal hierarchical power structures and by individuals of heterogeneous characteristics, backgrounds, values and interests than by egalitarianism and universally shared norms. Today communities are more likely to be mobile, shifting, diverse and constrained and influenced by political economic forces much larger in scope and scale than they are to be small-scale, spatially and socially bounded, autonomous groups. Nor, it is argued, are the traditional and indigenous communities characterized as sustainable necessarily conservationists in the sense that they have intentionally adopted active management plans with the goal of promoting sustainable resource use (Agrawal and Gibson 2001; Brosius, Tsing and Zerner 1998, Li 1996; McCay and Jentoft 1998; Oates 1999; Zerner

1994). These studies have problematized the role of community in conservation and sustainability, suggesting that we must be attuned to the nuances, contexts and heterogeneity of local communities.

Intentional Communities and the Sustainability Challenge

While these critiques are no doubt appropriate and have led to productive theory building and policy relevant research, I hold that intentional communities by their very nature merit special attention; that while these critiques may accurately characterize all communities, intentional communities often come closer to the romantic vision of community described above than is commonly the case in non-intentional communities. Intentional community members are self-selected ideological comrades who come together to live according to and act upon shared values and goals that have been made explicit. Intentional communities are becoming more egalitarian, shedding authoritarian or chaotic arrangements for democratic processes such as consensus decision-making. Contemporary sustainability-oriented intentional communities in particular are committed to stewarding local places and to living as global citizens concerned with social equity and ecological sustainability. As such, intentional communities might have significant contributions to make as we seek ways to address the challenges posed by the sustainability concept. But first, we must bring intentional communities back into the discussion; they must be articulated as a topic worthy of consideration.

Perhaps due to past shortcomings, intentional communities have been widely regarded as marginal and quixotic social phenomena (Creed 2006c). One might suggest that intentional communities are ephemeral, pointing to any number of communities that disintegrated or never made it past the planning stage; aside from the Hutterites and the kibbutzim, few intentional communities have sustained themselves over time. Like state-based communism, intentional

communities have been dismissed as utopian failures, albeit on a much smaller scale. In light of the challenges posed by concerns with ecological sustainability and social equity, perhaps they should be reconsidered. Intentional communities – social projects often defined by their goals of creating alternative cultural models – seem poised to contribute to efforts to meet the sustainability challenge.

I argue this case based on three sets of factors. First, contemporary intentional communities are adopting an increasingly explicit emphasis on ecological sustainability and social equity as core values. This tendency has deep historical roots, but it became more prominent beginning with 1960s communes and has reached new levels with development of the Global Ecovillage Network beginning in the mid 1990s. Second, intentional communities, both individually and as social movements, have learned from the mistakes of past communitarians and have become more organized and practical. The result is that intentional communities are themselves becoming more democratic, longer-lived and more easily replicable social models. Finally, sustainability-oriented intentional communities are defined by a commitment to developing alternative cultural models within the places they inhabit. These endeavors are based upon shared values, knowledge and skills, local-scale economic activities, economic networking and economic sharing and cooperation. These characteristics of sustainability-oriented intentional communities, in many ways reminiscent of the romantic notion of community described above, can be conducive to greater ecological sustainability and social equity.

The increasingly explicit emphasis of many intentional communities on the social equity and ecological aspects of sustainability were outlined above in the discussion of the development and increasing numbers of cohousing communities and ecovillages. Many of the people who participate in cohousing and ecovillages seek to take greater responsibility for the social and

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ecological impacts of their lifestyles by creating and joining intentional communities with other people who share their values and concerns. However, as Gibson and Koontz (1998) demonstrate in their study of two intentional communities, shared values do not necessarily translate into positive outcomes unless effective institutions are developed to facilitate the translation of ideals into results. Thus, in seeking to create more sustainable cultural models, intentional communities have faced the challenge of developing political and economic institutions that effectively translate their sustainability values into action.

In the political arena, intentional communities have availed themselves of the lessons offered by past intentional communities in order to develop more effective institutions for community governance. Previous intentional communities organized around the utopian blueprints and authoritarian leadership of charismatic individuals or the anarchic and chaotic forms that often characterized the "hippie communes" often disintegrated. In contrast, contemporary intentional communities are creating more practical institutions through the incorporation of deliberate, participatory processes of community conceptualization, design, membership screening and governance. Demands for rigid ideological conformity and authoritarian control are giving way to accommodation of diversity within institutions that facilitate economic cooperation and a broad range of sustainability-oriented activities. Intentional communities, both individually and as a social movement, recognize that coincidence of values and norms and adherence to a collectively held vision are more likely to be achieved through participatory processes and other democratic institutional structures. For example, Charles Fourier's intensely planned phalanxes (see Guarneri 1997) and Stephen Gaskin's initial individual authority over The Farm community (see Fike 1998) are being replaced by cohousing and ecovillages which are designed by residents through participatory processes according to the

desires of members and the practicalities of local political economies. On the other hand, where many of the hippie communes of the 1960s struggled with a lack of defined membership criteria or decision-making structures (Miller 1999), many contemporary communities are adopting common governance structures and membership screening processes where decisions are made by consensus, community values and processes are made explicit and community members have the opportunity to dialog and self-select.

These developments are supported by an emerging group of consultants whose experience as community builders, community members and consensus facilitators is increasingly demanded by intentional communities seeking sound governance structures, processes and models upon which to build (see Christian 2003a, Fellowship for Intentional Community 2005 and *Communities* magazine). As this shift occurs, communities are designed in such a way as to balance individualism, privacy and diversity with social cohesion, community involvement and unity of purpose. As a result, communities are becoming more adaptable and sustainable social structures. Recent scholarship on contemporary intentional communities (Meltzer 2001) suggests that such innovations are necessary if intentional communities are themselves to be sustained and if they are to serve as viable options for the general public rather than as alternatives to the mainstream.

Building sustainable economic institutions is a greater challenge for intentional communities, but there have been promising developments. In his overview of the ecovillage movement, Dawson (2006) notes a number of challenges that sustainability-oriented intentional communities face. Global economies of scale disadvantage intentional communities in terms of immediate economic efficiency. Building local and regional networks that are inclusive of non-member neighbors requires an immense amount of effort and social skill. Convincing

government officials that local-scale economic activities and networking, including projects in which intentional communities are already involved, are productive ways to address concerns for local economic development and well-being is a challenge given taken-for-granted assumptions about what constitutes sound development. There are a vast number of ways in which intentional communities seek to develop more sustainable economic institutions. The fact that not all of these activities are strictly economic in nature reflects the idea that achieving sustainability will require broader cultural changes. Reviewing these issues takes us back to the tragedy of the commons debate described above and to a consideration of the connections between social community and ecological sustainability.

Sustainability-oriented intentional communities, in their particular localities, strive for some degree of economic self-reliance. They strive to obtain their basic material needs within a smaller geographic area than is true for individual households dependent upon and integrated with modern, global, industrialized political economies. Self-sufficiency is rarely, if ever, achieved entirely within intentional communities, but some part of the community's material economy is obtained from within the community itself or from within a local or regional sphere. Within these spheres, community members cooperate with various producers and consumers with whom complementary knowledge, skills and products can be traded, bartered and shared. Contemporary sustainability-oriented intentional communities are developing local scale economic activities and networking in a wide variety of arenas: alternative energy production, appropriate scale technologies, organic farming and community supported agriculture, local and bioregional networking, alternative currencies and local exchange and trading systems (LETS), natural building, permaculture design and voluntary simplicity and decreased consumption (Miller 2001).

These developments all lead toward greater self-reliance, more efficient use of natural resources, decreased ecological footprints and overall greater ecological sustainability, but they also have social effects. Such local-scale economic activity entails social familiarity; when one has direct knowledge of those with whom one lives and conducts economic exchange, it creates the opportunity to develop trust and social predictability and to comprehend more directly the consequences of one's economic choices. Trust, social predictability and understanding the consequences of economic behavior are essential characteristics for the functioning of community and for the protection of resources that are commonly held or upon which there is a common dependence.

Closely related to local economic activities, is the fact that sustainability-oriented intentional communities are characterized by some degree of economic communalism, of commonly held property and collective consumption. Within these communities, economic communalism exists along a continuum, from communities that own their land or buildings together to those that share all of their income and property. Owning property in common means that institutions – rules and norms, common understandings and reciprocal roles – must be devised in order to comprehend the value of the commons and maintain them for future use. This requires that each person must consider the common good of the group rather than just individual desires in making consumptive choices.

In reality, total agreement in these regards is very difficult to achieve. Many communities have succumbed to the fact that people have different degrees of dedication to maintaining common property and that some are more than willing to "free ride" on the hard work of others rather than commit to the common good. This is Hardin's classic dilemma – the tragedy of the commons. Working out successful systems of common property and collective consumption

depend upon cooperation and a common awareness of the consequences of economic behavior. When such arrangements are created, individuals can share consumptive resources and overall patterns of consumption can be reduced as individuals learn to share. This is a fundamental challenge faced by all intentional communities and particularly by sustainability-oriented intentional communities. It is a challenge that contemporary communities, having learned from the past, are becoming better at addressing.

As a result of local-scale economic activities and economic cooperation, intentional communities gain a greater sense of place. Being rooted in a place entails a sort of geographical social continuity that is not generally characteristic of today's hypermobile, industrialized world. Recall the basic definition of intentional community – intentional communities are bounded within particular geographic locales. A community established in a particular place, especially if it is a relatively stable community persisting over multiple generations, can achieve greater awareness of the functioning of ecological systems and of the community's embeddedness within those systems. This is especially true when the community is striving for greater self-reliance through the direct production and knowledge of the conditions of food production, its costs and its consequences. If such direct ecological comprehension is achieved, it can lead to greater respect for one's dependence on natural ecosystems and to subsequent efforts towards preservation and conservation of ecological resources and services upon which there is a common dependence. Cross-generational rootedness in place has rarely been achieved by intentional communities, but the fact that they do set out to put down roots in particular places remains a salient feature.

The general characteristics of intentional communities discussed above create the strong potential for intentional communities to contribute solutions to the sustainability challenge.

Many intentional communities are increasingly oriented around shared sustainability values and are attracting people with the knowledge and skills to address these concerns. As sustainability-oriented intentional communities become more smoothly functioning, democratic and enduring social structures, they also gain popular relevance. More democratically organized sustainability-oriented intentional communities become an increasingly attractive option as people seek ways to live according to very widely held environmental and social justice values (Kempton et al. 1995). Local scale economic activities and economic sharing and cooperation in the form of community supported agriculture, bioregional networking and collective land ownership lead not only to a greater sense of community but also to more sustainable outcomes. The decreased consumption that results from such activities has equity and social justice implications as pressure on natural resources is relieved and more equitable distribution is made possible both locally and globally.

I have presented an argument that contemporary sustainability-oriented intentional communities are addressing the sustainability challenge in a variety of ways. This begins with the intentionality of intentional communities, the collective decisions of people to live together and act on shared critiques, ideals and values to create alternative models. In sustainability-oriented intentional communities, a variety of social experiments result from these collective decisions. These experiments include participatory governance and community design processes and a great variety of institutions for cooperative economic behavior. These social, political and economic institutions have the potential to create not only greater ecological sustainability and social equity, but also the development of greater social bonds based upon trust, mutual understanding, cooperation and shared knowledge. Even if these communities fail to achieve all of their goals, their attempts to do so situate them as unique entities, striving to address the

sustainability challenge by acting at the disjuncture between sustainability rhetoric and sustainability action. They also suggest themselves as nexuses for theory building and practical action for interdisciplinary scholars concerned with sustainability.

An Introduction to Celo Community and Earthaven Ecovillage

Located in the Appalachian Mountains of western North Carolina (see maps on following pages), Celo Community and Earthaven Ecovillage are examples of contemporary sustainability-oriented intentional communities. Celo Community was founded in 1937 by Arthur Morgan, a communitarian philosopher and pioneering educator and engineer. Celo's 80 plus adult members and their families collectively own, govern and steward 1,200 acres of forest, agricultural and residential land. Earthaven Ecovillage was founded by a dozen people in 1994 and today consists of 60 plus members dedicated to creating and demonstrating a sustainable way of living on their collectively owned 320 acres. The founding of Celo Community predates the current wave of sustainability-oriented intentional community building, but an examination of it, especially when it is considered in the larger contexts of history and intentional communities movements rather than as an isolated utopian project (i.e. when it is considered within the process of developmental utopianism), is productive for thinking about contemporary intentional communities and sustainability issues. The current ethnographic analysis of Celo Community and Earthaven Ecovillage reveal the themes of cultural critique, utopianism and the development of more sustainable institutions and practices as deep currents running through their cultural histories.

Celo Community's utopianism and cultural critique arose in the wake of the Great Depression and the context of World War II before the discourse of sustainability rose to prominence. Celo's founder, Arthur Morgan, was inspired by the literary utopia *Looking Backward 2000-1887* (Bellamy 2000) written by a socialist critic of industrial capitalism.

Figure 1: Map of western North Carolina and Region
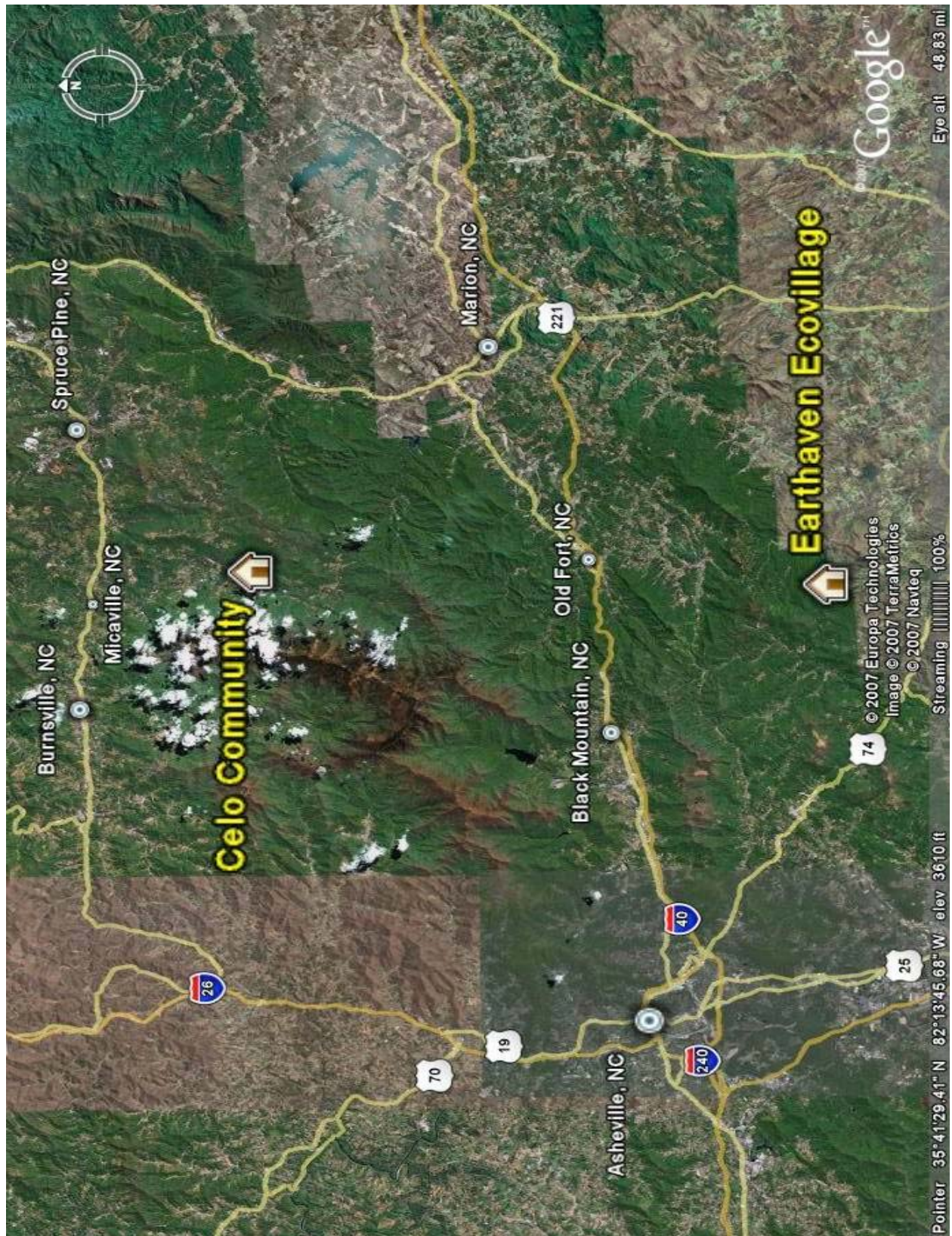
Figure 2: Map of Celo Community, Earthaven Ecovillage and Vicinity

Morgan has been labeled a utopian himself for his lifelong effort to promote the revitalization of small communities (Talbert 1987). Morgan saw Celo as an experiment in small community that he believed might help to address some of the problems with industrial capitalism that were made apparent by the Great Depression. He wanted to create opportunities for economic self-reliance by making land available to people suffering the economic and social effects of the Great Depression. Morgan did not impose an ideological framework or structure upon the community; rather he allowed it to develop as an organic experiment in intentional community, enabling the members to cooperatively articulate the community's goals, values and institutions as they saw fit.

Celo's cultural values and political economic institutions were given their initial form by pacifist conscientious objectors, Quakers and spiritual community seekers who came to the community during the 1940s and early 1950s. These values and institutions, while still maintaining much of their original form, have transformed over time, often in response to the shifting currents of mainstream American society. Most notably, the community adopted a new sense of purpose with the environmental awareness and back-to-the-land activism of the 1960s and 1970s. By the late 1960s, the community had shifted away from an initial emphasis on small-scale cooperative economic self-sufficiency to a focus on environmental stewardship through collective ownership of land and consensus decision-making in community governance. While Hicks (1969, 2001) has interpreted this gradual shift as a utopian failure, I suggest that Celo, through the process of developmental utopianism characteristic of the contemporary intentional communities movement, is of direct relevance to the utopian challenge of sustainability.

At 70 years of age, Celo Community maintains this emphasis on collective stewardship and cooperative, participatory community governance. The community's approximately 80 adult members constitute one of the longest standing intentional communities in the United States. Celo's members own their 1,200 acres of land collectively and have developed a deep familiarity with its topographical and ecological features. They have developed an elaborate plan for living on, utilizing and stewarding the land. In this plan, they have set aside 300 acres of permanent wilderness and wildlife corridors in order to protect ecologically significant portions of the land. Certain portions of the land are valued for the biodiversity they foster and some spots, such as the Wildflower Cove, are recognized as sacred. Celo's members obtain usufruct rights to their small individual landholdings from the larger corporate community of which they are a part. Decisions regarding community business, membership and stewardship of collectively held land and individual smallholdings are made by a Quaker-inspired process of consensus at regularly scheduled community meetings.

Aside from the collective ownership and stewardship of land and associated community buildings, the members of Celo Community are not joined together in any common economic or activist enterprise. However, Celo Community does provide a context for a variety of individual and small group endeavors that are of great relevance to the sustainability challenge. Many homes in Celo are designed for energy efficiency and some have unique, sustainability-oriented architectural features that have been profiled in the alternative press. In contrast to many homes being built in the U.S. today, most homes in Celo are small and simple. Passive solar orientation is a general requirement of the design process as all house plans must be approved by the community. Many homes are outfitted with photovoltaic solar power systems, some of which feed excess electricity back into the regional electric grid. Local-scale agriculture is common in

Celo; many households have home gardens or share common space set aside for agricultural activities. One member of Celo operates a community supported agriculture business. His subscribers include official community members and other local residents. Celo provides support for initiatives spearheaded by individual members. For Example Rural Southern Voice for Peace promotes environmental protection and peaceful conflict resolution by bringing together factions in local communities to listen to each other, see each other's wisdom and find common ground so that inclusive, positive, sustainable solutions can be created. Celo Community has attracted a number of like-minded people to the region who share the social and environmental values of the community, but have chosen not to become official community members. Thus, Celo's influence extends far beyond the official property boundaries to a much wider social community. Additionally, Celo has also provided inspiration and served as a model for other intentional communities such as Earthaven Ecovillage.

Founded in 1994, Earthaven Ecovillage is the product of more recent times. Earthaven had not one founder but many, a group who brought together diverse experiences and inspirations and a common commitment to model a more ecologically sustainable, socially just and spiritually fulfilling way of life where people could feel more connected to nature, to spirit and to each other. Earthaven's vision for itself is very much an extension of Celo's past endeavors. In fact, an individual who has, at different times, been a member of both Celo Community and Earthaven Ecovillage helped to found Earthaven and to articulate its goal of "creat[ing] a holistic sustainable culture." Despite the similarities and historical connection between the two communities, the salience of the sustainability challenge is much stronger at Earthaven than at Celo.

In setting up the structures of their intentional community, the members of Earthaven looked to other intentional communities including Celo for successful models. Earthaven's structures of land tenure and community governance are, in fact, very similar to and inspired by those developed by Celo Community. However, Earthaven is attempting to go beyond a common commitment to collective land stewardship through communal governance. They are attempting to develop a "village-scale" economy based on the perception that their participation in an increasingly global political-economic system is unjust, unsustainable and unfulfilling. Using the community as a common base, Earthaven's members are engaged in a number of experiments with the aim of greater local and regional self-reliance, more satisfying lifestyles and more just and sustainable outcomes on local and global levels. In addition to consensus decision-making and collective land stewardship, they are experimenting with alternative currencies, community supported organic agriculture, local energy and biofuel production, permaculture design, natural building and bioregional networking among many others. Earthaven Ecovillage is also explicitly intended to be a demonstration center for modeling a more sustainable culture. As such, visitors are an almost permanent fixture at Earthaven. Regular tours of the community and workshops on a variety of subjects allow people to gain familiarity with Earthaven in the hopes that others will join them or be empowered to undertake similar endeavors where they live. In these terms, the contrast between Celo and Earthaven is striking; at Celo one almost cannot tell they have entered an intentional community whereas at Earthaven one is greeted at the property boundary by a street sign that says "Another Way."

Earthaven grows out of Celo's earlier utopian efforts directly through particular historical connections and indirectly through the larger development of critical resistance both in popular American culture and within the evolution of intentional utopian communitarianism. Thus,

where a previous ethnographic researcher characterized Celo as a utopian failure, I wish to show here that, much like Gandhian utopians, Celo's communitarians have, through the process of developmental utopianism, set the stage for further developments and have provided a foundation for true social change towards greater sustainability. Whether or not Earthaven will succeed in creating their vision of a sustainable culture and village-scale economy is unanswerable at this point, but it is doubtful that they would have been as successful as they have been without having the examples of previous intentional communities such as Celo to build upon. This is the promise of contemporary sustainability-oriented intentional communities and of the process of developmental utopianism – they are willing to experiment and to fail, in the hope that if they do not achieve their goals, others within the movement and beyond will be able to learn from and build upon their attempts.

Both of these communities – Celo and Earthaven – are moving targets, streams characterized by changing courses and volumes as they at once are constrained by and carve through the surrounding topography of society, be it the resistant granite of larger political economic institutions or the porous limestone of popular cultural values. Each community, like overall intentional communitarianism, has experienced ebbs and flows as different periods have brought greater enthusiasm or disillusionment, influxes of new members or departures of current ones and different challenges or opportunities posed both by internal community dynamics and by the relationship between community dynamics and larger socio-cultural forces and political economic structures. Each community is the outcome of the decisions, values and intentions of dozens of individual community members, both current and former, with varying backgrounds, motivations, aspirations and perspectives on their community building endeavor. As such, it is impossible to capture either community in a snapshot. An attempt will be made here to splice

together various snapshots of these multifaceted communities into something more like a panorama or collage. This task is imminently challenging, but the attempt must be made nonetheless, just as many of the members of these communities recognized their endeavors as necessary attempts at constructing a better world in the face of insurmountable obstacles.

Chapter 3

THEORIZING INTENTIONAL COMMUNITIES:

RECOGNIZING THE RELEVANCE OF UTOPIANISM

Utopian thinking today requires no apologies. Rarely has it been so crucial to stir the imagination into creating radically new alternatives to every aspect of daily life. ... My concern is not with utopistic "blueprints" (which can rigidify thinking as surely as more recent governmental "plans") but with the dialogue itself as public event. [Bookchin 1982:432]

I don't think utopia is a possibility. I don't think it's the goal. ... We're in process and utopia implies an end. And to me, that's a pitfall, to think that we're going to get to an end. Then it can become "end justifies the means." The means are the end, if you want to get really simplistic about it. [interview in Celo Community 11-9-04]

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These quotations point to the significance of utopian striving as opposed to the realization of specifically designed utopias. Intentional community members recognize that what is significant about their endeavors is the fact that they are engaged in a process of utopian striving for a better world. They don't expect to achieve utopia as such. Indeed such a belief could be dangerous. This sentiment is an appropriate entrée for the following discussion about the ways in which intentional communities have been understood by various theorists. This discussion reveals a distinct effort to recognize the transformative potential of utopian striving enacted in intentional communities and to retrieve the concept of utopianism from previous dismissals.

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In this chapter I provide an overview of the scholarly literature on intentional communities, drawing especially on key works and theoretical trends in the communal studies

literature. This overview focuses particularly on the use of the label *utopian* as a definitive characteristic of intentional communities, widely employed to portray them in either a positive or negative light. This overview will reveal that intentional communities as utopian endeavors are increasingly recognized for their significance based upon an appreciation of the human agency that they manifest and the recognition of their emancipatory potential as a social movement. I insert my perspective into this overview of intentional community theory by integrating the concepts of utopianism and cultural critique and by articulating the concept of developmental utopianism.

I will end by introducing my own critique of previous ethnographic research undertaken in Celo Community in the 1960s and published recently under the title *Experimental Americans: Celo and Utopian Community in the Twentieth Century* (Hicks 2001). My critique rejects Hicks' pronouncement of Celo Community as a utopian failure for their decision to emphasize sustainable land stewardship as the common mission of the community. Instead, I locate this shift as the foundation for broader cultural critiques and utopian strivings for sustainability characteristic of the recent history and progression of the intentional communities movement. This discussion, in combination with the one that concluded the previous chapter, will set the stage for more in-depth ethnographic descriptions and analyses of Celo Community and Earthaven Ecovillage.

The Concept of Utopia

Intentional communities have been a subject of theorization and academic investigation for some time. This body of literature extends from the work of Marx and Engels (1948, 1989) to contemporary treatments by Pitzer (1989), Schehr (1997) and Brown (2002). The trend within this literature is a movement from Marx and Engels' dismissive tone to one more appreciative of

the potential of intentional communities, one more concerned with understanding their broader impacts and the significance of their endeavors from their own point of view. A linear, evolutionary theoretical frame inspired by Marx and Engels has had long-lasting influence on theorists of intentional community and of social movements more generally. As a result, we see intentional communities portrayed as static historical phenomena irrelevant to broader historical progressions, an emphasis on success and failure in the analysis of intentional community life cycles and an inability to effectively comprehend intentional communities using theoretical frameworks that privilege overt political action aimed at transforming state level policies. Recent works, grounded within developments in contemporary social theory, take a more dynamic approach to theorizing intentional communities. They recognize them as subaltern forms of resistance that can only be understood through theoretical innovation. These recent works have led to richer theoretical insights and have recognized intentional communities as social agents whose diverse endeavors are capable of influencing larger historical, cultural and political economic forces and of contributing to solutions to contemporary social and environmental problems.

Utopia has been a key concept in the characterization and analysis of intentional communities (Berry 1992, Bestor 1950, Hine 1966, Holloway 1966, Infield 1955, Kanter 1972, Kesten 1993, Miller 1998, Pitzer 1997, Sargisson and Sargent 2004, Schehr 1997, Sutton 2004). As discussed before, the word utopia was coined by Sir Thomas More as the title to his 1516 critique of theocratic hegemony and oppression in England. Utopia encapsulates the desire for an ideal society, the impossibility of realizing it and the tension thus generated. The word's Greek roots eutopia and outopia mean, respectively, the good place and no place – perfection and its

impossibility. The concept of utopia represents a fundamental characteristic of human condition – the tension between the real and the ideal and the inability to completely transcend that tension.

Humanity has produced a great volume of utopian visions including literary utopias and actual social projects. Indeed, fundamental visions of modernity – the free market, state-based socialism, development, neoliberalism and free trade – are utopian in nature; they suggest mechanisms for eliminating the world's ills and creating a perfect society. Such utopian visions may be conservative or progressive, suggesting reversion to an idealized traditional past or arguing for vast social changes that evolve towards perfection. They may be employed to justify either domination and oppression or emancipatory politics. They may have vast and unforeseen consequences especially when they are translated into large scale, totalizing and hegemonic projects. Intentional communities, whether based on conservative or progressive visions, are utopian projects that are more limited in scale, although they may seek to instigate broader changes. Theorists of intentional communities have varied in the extent to which they recognize the relevance of such utopian endeavors, but contemporary theorists are increasingly advocating the significane of utopianism.

The Relevance of Utopianism

Although Marx and Engels admired utopian socialist contemporaries and intentional community founders such as Robert Owen and Charles Fourier for their overall visions of more egalitarian societies, they viewed intentional community building in a negative light (Bestor 1950, Hine 1997, Schehr 1997). They believed that utopian socialist experiments in intentional community did contain some enlightening elements, especially with regard to the fact that they envisioned class divisions disappearing, but overall they were seen as impeding social progress. Marx and Engel's references to the utopian socialists were generally derisive in tone. They

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believed that the vision of "cooperation of all classes in communal experiments that would demonstrate the evils of the capitalist system while extolling the advantages of cooperation" were hopelessly naïve, a distraction from the necessarily violent class revolution that would be required if the capitalist class was to be overthrown by the proletariat (Hine 1997:419).

For Marx and Engels, the utopian socialists were precursors of a truly transformative scientific socialism. Because they did not see class revolution as the mechanism for the erasure of class differences and social evolution, they were ignorant of the inevitable historical forces in play. For this the utopian socialists and their experimental communities were condemned:

> They reject all political and especially revolutionary action; they wish to attain their ends by peaceful means and endeavor, by small experiments, necessarily doomed to failure and by the force of example, to pave the way for the new social gospel. … The practical measures proposed … point solely to the disappearance of class antagonisms. … These proposals, therefore, are of a purely utopian character. [cited in Bestor 1950:11]

> Historical action is to yield to their personal inventive action, historically created conditions of emancipation to fantastic ones and the gradual, spontaneous class-organization of the proletariat to an organization of society especially contrived by these inventors. Future history resolves itself, in their eyes, into the propaganda and the practical carrying out of their social plans. [cited in Bestor 1950:14-15]

In their vision of universal social transformation, "the utopian socialists were viewed by Marx and Engels as peculiar and often ridiculous" (Schehr 1997:36). Thus, for Marx and Engels, utopian intentional communities were predestined for failure because they failed to follow the process of 'scientific' socialism in their endeavors to create social change.

Shortly after the era in which Marx and Engels condemned intentional communities, scholarly writers began to recognize the value of intentional communities in demonstrating that alternative forms of social life were possible. Notable overviews of American intentional communities included Charles Nordhoff's *Communistic Societies of the Unitied States: From*

Personal Visit and Observation (1875) and Arthur Bestor's *Backwoods Utopias: The Sectarian Origins and the Owenite Phase of Communitarian Socialism in America, 1663-1829* (1950). Based upon visitation, observation and archival research in intentional communities, these works moved toward presenting an ethnographic portrait of intentional communities, resulting in the evaluation that some such communities had constructed viable social systems. However, the fact that most of these communities did not last long was not lost on these authors, resulting in the perception that they were entirely exotic social entities, static communities that were separate from the main currents of social history. Intentional communities were soon to be outmoded by larger social forces.

Bestor's account of intentional communities in America from 1663 to 1829, while not attempting to address communities that were in existence at the time of his writing, presents intentional communities as historical relics. Bestor recognizes that "these enterprises had in common ... the idea of employing the small experimental community as a lever to exert upon society the force necessary to produce reform and change" (1950:3). However Bestor dismisses the possibility that such ideas, manifested in intentional communities, might have anything to contribute to the changes that were taking place at the time of his writing.

> No one at present would suggest that such experiments hold the clue to the future social structure of the world. In the past half-century or so, the small co-operative community has seemed backward- rather than forward-looking, a plan to stabilize life at a simpler level than that of contemporary society. [1950:2]

Thus Bestor, like Marx and Engels before him, condemns intentional communities to the dustbin of history. He suggests that they became irrelevant at the time of the Civil War "when the large scale march of industrial enterprise began to render obsolete as economic units the small communities on which the communitarians had pinned their hopes" (1950:229). Again,

intentional communities, viewed from a perspective that envisions large scale, linear social transformation, are seen as irrelevant and regressive.

More recent studies have viewed intentional communities as natural laboratories to which social scientists could turn for scientific research on cooperation, commitment and social interaction (Infield 1955, Kanter 1972, Zablocki 1980). In this regard, Kanter was explicit:

> In addition to providing a historical and sociological perspective on the contemporary commune movement, the study of utopian communities in America can also contribute to the understanding of social life in general. Communal orders represent major social experiments in which new or radical theories of human behavior, motivation and interpersonal relations are put to the test. Social science has rarely had "laboratories" of the scale and scope of utopian communities. [Kanter 1972:viii]

Kanter sought to determine why communities stayed together or fell apart. In her study of a sample of 30 communal utopias in existence between 1780 and 1860, Kanter identified six commitment-building mechanisms that led to success or failure. Most significant because of the degree of attention paid it by other scholars, was Kanter's use of longevity as an indicator of success or failure. Kanter chose to label as successful those communities that survived more than a human generation, 25 years in her calculation. This soon became a widely employed standard against which to judge the success or failure of intentional communities.

Thus, Kanter's suggestion that "…if communal ventures can combine into politically and socially significant units, they may have the potential to bring about social reform and to perform valuable change functions for the rest of society" was tempered by the idea that they would not be effective if they did not survive beyond an arbitrarily selected amount of time (Kanter 1972:225). In Kanter's sample, most intentional communities did not survive past the 25 year yardstick and were thus judged as unsuccessful and of limited transformative potential.

In addition, Kanter held that contemporary utopian communities were of diminishing significance compared with those of past periods. "By and large, contemporary communes encompass fewer visions of social reconstruction, fewer hopes for permanence, fewer people, fewer demands on those people and fewer institutions than did the utopian communities of the nineteenth century" (Kanter 1972:166). Thus, while Kanter and other theorists of the time recognized intentional communities and their utopian visions as laboratories for examining socio-cultural processes and as potential change agents, their conclusions pointed to the difficulties these utopian communities faced in their quest to create any lasting change and suggested that because of these challenges, they were of diminishing significance.

Zablocki's study of intentional communities (1980) represents a sort of middle ground between previous studies that focus on success and failure through a linear, evolutionary framework and more recent works that ascribe to intentional communities, regardless of their longevity, greater transformative potential and that generate hermeneutic interpretations through ethnographic methods. Indeed, Zablocki dismissed longevity as a criterion for distinguishing successful communities from unsuccessful ones. His study is based upon extensive ethnographic fieldwork in combination with a longitudinal historical survey of a large sample of intentional communities. However, Zablocki did not adequately recognize intentional communities as forms of popular resistance capable of producing broader social change. He suggested that the intentional communities of the 1960s and 1970s represented a movement that died out within ten years. Zablocki failed to recognize that many communities from this era continued well beyond that time period or that intentional communities from this time influenced the wider society in a number of significant ways (Miller 1999).

Perhaps the most significant illustration of this is Zablocki's conclusion that communitarian movements share with revolutionary movements the psychological symptoms of alienation. However, in intentional communities, this alienation is expressed as confusion and escapism rather than being directed toward political action or manifested in the forms of critique and human agency.

> The alienation of communitarian movements does not lead to class consciousness and class struggle. On the contrary, it is expressed as ideological confusion and is manifested at the individual level as the inability to make choices among a plethora of attractive alternatives.
>   The communitarian strategy is to escape from alienation by achieving consensus within a circumscribed social microcosm. [Zablocki 1980:25]

Moreover, Zablocki went on to conclude that once in the microcosm of intentional community, individuals are unable to overcome their individualism to achieve consensus on ideals and action. Absent the periodic intervention of charismatic leaders, intentional communities are doomed to failure by the inability of individuals to agree. Thus, like Marx and Engels, Zablocki unfavorably contrasted intentional communities with revolutionary movements. And like Kanter, Zablocki suggested that without the imposition of mechanisms from above to encourage commitment, intentional community members are unable to effectively join together, even for escapism, much less for the purpose of resistance. Again, intentional communities and their members are denied their agency, their ability to create change.

A. Contemporary Theorizations of Intentional Community

Contemporary theorizations of intentional communities grow from dissatisfaction with previous analyses. The most recent and influential scholarly work on intentional communities sheds previous linear, evolutionary frameworks and emphases on success and failure. Contemporary theoretical treatments seek to gain a greater understanding of the process of utopian striving by recognizing the dynamism and agency of intentional communities, their

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ability to have long lasting effects beyond their utopian and communal phases and the degree to which intentional communities are networked with each other and other social movements (Pitzer 1989, 1997; Schehr 1997; Brown 2002). This work holds that intentional communities have been dismissed as "free-floating bits of cultural ephemera", not given consideration as socio-cultural phenomena whose "complex interconnections can be studied systematically and traced over time" (Boyer 1997:ix-x). This scholarship shows how intentional community building has ebbed and flowed over the course of history and has tied these ebbs and flows to particular historical events, most notably the periodic shifts and crises characteristic of the industrial capitalist economy (Berry 1992). It notes that intentional communities can no longer be seen as isolated from national and global political economic systems as they could even a century ago; rather they are engaged in a dialectic with such forces, influencing them and being constrained by them at the same time (Janzen 1981, Bennett 1974).

Recent work recognizes that intentional communities have not been evaluated on their own terms. "Seldom have the efforts of those who chose the communal way been judged on their own merits, from the point of view of what they were trying to accomplish and how well they succeeded from their own perspectives" (Pitzer 1997:5). The most recent scholarship holds that, in the analysis of intentional communities subjective judgment and attempts at objective evaluation have often precluded more interpretive and contextual understandings. It suggests that increased understanding of these "subaltern" (Schehr 1997) forms of resistance can be created through ethnographic research. Ethnographic accounts of intentional communities have presented more empathetic portraits of intentional communities and the collective motivations, beliefs, aspirations and achievements of their members (Anders 1990), reserving judgments regarding historical relevancy and success or failure in favor of hermeneutic and

phenomenological accounts. However, ethnographies of intentional communities have been few and far between (see also Borowski 1984 who, however, echoes Kanter and Zablocki's conclusion in analyzing the community she studied).

In the remainder of this chapter, I will focus on two scholars working within the contemporary communal studies tradition: Pitzer (1989, 1997) and Schehr (1997). (Anthropologist Susan Brown's conceptualization of intentional communities (2002) will be considered in detail in the next chapter). Pitzer's articulation of the concept of "developmental communalism" had perhaps the most widespread impact on the study of intentional communities since Kanter's work in 1972. Pitzer's work is an attempt to move beyond the success-failure dichotomy and its emphasis on longevity as an indicator of success, an approach that had characterized so much of previous intentional community theorizing. According to Pitzer,

> Developmental communalism is the process of adopting communal living and collective economies as useful, perhaps essential, arrangements during a formative stage of social, political, religious or reform development and of altering or abandoning communal forms, economies and practices in response to subsequent challenges and needs. [Pitzer 1989:69]

Pitzer's developmental communalism focuses on the dynamic nature of intentional communities, recognizing intentional communities as processes rather than entities, as means for change rather ends in themselves. I quote Pitzer at length to demonstrate the ways in which his concept has been employed:

> Developmental communalism ... encourages a shift in the focus of scholarly attention from the internal factors that produce or inhibit longevity of the communal structure itself to a consideration of the entire history and influence of the movements of which communalism is a single facet. … We can gain new appreciation for the movements which have developed beyond their communal stages to solve the divisive problems caused by the influx of new members or the coming of new generations no longer inspired by the charismatic leaders and intense ideological narratives that drove the original members to the disciplines and sacrifices, as well as the psychological, social and economical support of intentional community. We can begin putting the terms "success" and "failure" to

> better use, if we choose to use them at all. Success and failure can be used to measure the extent to which original and long-range goals are achieved and people inside and outside movements are benefited rather than to suggest how long a communal framework is maintained. [Pitzer 1989:70]

That developmental communalism has been successful in achieving the aims that Pitzer set for it is evident in Pitzer's edited volume (1997) wherein leading scholars in communal studies focused their attentions upon reinterpreting a good number of "America's Communal Utopias" within the wider contexts of history and society. These collected works demonstrate that the utopian endeavors of intentional communities and their members, contrary to conventional accounts of them, have had lasting influence in society even after the communities themselves dissolved or shifted to more conventional modes of social organization.

In a similar vein, the work of sociologist Robert Schehr (1997) seeks to instigate a more widespread recognition of the agency of utopian communities and their members, citing them as perhaps "the penultimate social movement." His critique of the vast body of social movement literature demonstrates that social movement theorists, constrained by theoretical boundaries, have been unable to recognize the significance of intentional communities. The forms of resistance characteristic of intentional communities challenge existing assumptions about the nature of social movements. Rather than recognizing the relevance of intentional communities, previous theorists have, in the tradition of classical Marxist theory, viewed the utopianism of intentional communities as regressive, an impediment to the transformative potential of social movements.

Schehr characterizes intentional communities as subaltern forms of resistance that social theorists interested in engaging with contemporary problems and social movements must seek to adequately conceptualize and understand. He establishes intentional communities within the body of theory on social movements by focusing on the various ways in which they perform

resistance at the level "the lifeworld" and within civil society. The lifeworld, a concept developed by Husserl, Heidegger and Habermas among others, roughly translates to the anthropological conception of culture. The lifeworld encapsulates taken-for-granted and shared beliefs, meanings, customs and values that guide everyday practices, social interactions and identity construction.

Schehr reviews the various schools of theory regarding social movements – collective behavior, resource mobilization and new social movement theory – that have formed the basis for analyzing intentional communities. He moves beyond these analyses by bringing in perspectives from chaos theory and poststructuralism and by building on the work of Laclau and Mouffe (1985), Cohen and Arato (1992), Deleuze and Guattari (1987), Alberto Mellucci (1995, 1994, 1990, 1988), Alain Touraine (1988, 1985) and James Scott (1990). Schehr recognizes a perpetual tradition of intentional communitarianism in American history, but he also notes a transformation in intentional community building starting in the 1960s and manifesting itself especially in more recent intentional communities established since the 1980s. This transformation is due to changed social, cultural and political economic conditions in the wider society. It has come about because the members of intentional communities perceive themselves as part of a social movement or a number of interrelated social movements.

This transformation is characterized by a number of changes in intentional communities in general that are recognizable when contemporary communities are juxtaposed against historic intentional communities in existence prior to the 1960s. As I have alluded to elsewhere, these changes – smaller size, more egalitarian forms of social organization and governance, an emphasis on economic self-reliance, a balance between communalism and privacy and increased networking and outreach both with other intentional communities and with the wider society –

have enabled intentional communities to become more effective in their utopian endeavors. Notably, Schehr's articulation of these changes is based upon the work of two intentional communitarians who themselves recognized these transformations in their overview of intentional community building in the United States, *Builders of the Dawn* (McLaughlin and Davidson 1990).

Contemporary intentional community members, like their counterparts in the new social movements, are engaged in reconstructing identity through intra- and inter-personal processes as well as activities that are political in nature. However, the difference is that these reconstructions and activities take place within everyday activities as they are manifested in the social life of intentional community contexts. Like previous intentional communities, contemporary communities are engaged with the entirety of social existence and in this they maintain a planetary consciousness. However, their efforts at resistance are not overtly political; rather they seek changes in everyday life in ways that do not conform to dominant cultural, political and economic narratives or theories of resistance. They are not engaging in resistance within the political arena of the state, but rather within and amongst themselves and their "lifeworlds". This activity encompasses a number of dimensions: community self-governance, interpersonal interaction, myth-making, production and consumption, spirituality, education and child rearing amongst many others. Schehr concludes that the multifarious practices of contemporary intentional communities should "be viewed not as 'utopian' transgression, but rather as a radical recognition of the inherent power of juxtaposition" (1997:163). In other words, Schehr forces a reconsideration of the utility of utopian striving for creating social change. Utopian experiments in intentional community perform the useful work of juxtaposing what might be with what is. They do this on a small scale through voluntary and deliberate participation.

Schehr's ultimate conclusion is that social theorists, especially those concerned with ameliorating contemporary problems, must embrace the utopianism of contemporary intentional communities for its transformative and emancipatory potential, rather than deriding it because it does not fit within their theoretical boxes.

> While ICs [intentional communities] have traditionally been ignored in the classical social movement literature, largely for their "utopian" constitution, it is precisely this utopian component that I argue is crucial to a successful social movement. Simultaneously granting the persistence of resistance within civil society and recognition of a utopian vision for the future, make ICs the ideal social movement entity. … a culture without a utopian vision would be dead because it would have no vision for the future. [Schehr 1997:174]

Thus for Schehr, in contrast to many previous theorists of intentional communities and like Pitzer, intentional communities must be examined not in terms of whether they succeed in creating utopias, but rather in terms of the process of striving for their utopian visions.

The most recent theoretical treatments of intentional communities maintain an emphasis on their utopian nature, but these works seek to revive utopianism and intentional communities in the wake of previous dismissals. Recent scholarship understands utopianism as it is manifested in intentional communities not as a romantic, naïve, or unscientific quest for perfection; but rather as a fundamental characteristic of the human condition, of the desire to experiment with alternative models in the face of the alienation, inequality, domination and discontent characteristic of global, industrial, capitalist society. It also recognizes that, like Gandhi's utopian vision and the many individuals who carried it forward (Fox 1989), communitarian utopians will face the paradox of not being able to extricate themselves entirely from their connections to the ideologies and institutions they critique (Bennett 1974). The members of contemporary intentional communities are acting at the disjuncture between the real and the ideal.

Developmental Utopianism and Cultural Critique in Contemporary, Sustainability-Oriented Intentional Communities

The present work is a modest attempt to build upon recent trends in theorizing intentional communities. Through an in-depth analysis of two particular intentional communities, one quite old and the other much newer, and a broader understanding of contemporary sustainability-oriented intentional communities, I wish to reveal how contemporary utopian communitarians, building upon the foundations laid by previous utopian communities, are responding through cultural experimentation to the sustainability challenge. In doing so, I follow on the evidence presented earlier that we are witnessing a new wave of sustainability-oriented intentional community building, one that is of increasing relevance to a world facing dire social and ecological challenges.

In my analysis of Celo Community and Earthaven Ecovillage, I would like to build upon Pitzer's innovative articulation of the concept of developmental communalism, but take it in a slightly different direction. For Pitzer, developmental communalism is both a process of change through which the communal structures adopted by intentional communities during their initial stages are altered and a lens for more effectively and accurately analyzing intentional communities in scholarly treatments of them. I would like to introduce the concept of developmental utopianism as both a process by which the original utopian visions toward which intentional communities set out fade or are altered and a frame of reference for more effectively understanding the transformative potential of intentional communities in scholarly analyses of them.

As an analytical lens, developmental communalism encourages us to evaluate intentional communities not by the extent to which they are able to maintain their forms of communal

organization. This is a symptom of the old success-failure mode of analysis, epitomized in the work of Kanter (1972), that Pitzer believes blinds us to the ways in which the effects of intentional communities are manifested outside of their communal social and economic structures. Rather, we should evaluate intentional communities by the extent to which the efforts of their members to engage with each other communally have broader transformative effects over the course of history and within broader social movements of which individual communities are only single components. We must recognize that intentional communities are most effective when they have the ability to change their forms in response to new circumstances, challenges and opportunities that inevitably arise over the course of a community's history.

Developmental communalism is a process in which the adoption of communal social organization in intentional communities is an initial strategy, a "means" or a "method" of achieving larger goals rather than an ultimate end (Pitzer 1989). In this process, communal social organization is a tool for creating broader change; it is a tool that "is sometimes altered creatively or abandoned altogether for more relevant organizational strategies as new circumstances and opportunities arise, both preserving and perhaps invigorating the original movement ... and its long term objectives" (Pitzer 1989:70). This flexibility in strategy and means is significant because those who insist on strict adherence to the original communal structures "usually witness the decline and death of their larger ideological movements, whereas those who develop beyond an early communal phase to more pliable social, economic and administrative forms usually see their causes not only survive but flourish" (1989:68). Developmental communalism is thus an adaptive process. In this process, the intentional community continues on toward its goals in altered, less communal form or perhaps it dissolves altogether and its goals and achievements take effect as part of broader social movements that the community itself has contributed to.

In articulating the process of developmental utopianism, I place a similar emphasis on the utopian idealism of intentional communities, an idealism that is often most forceful at the time intentional communities are founded. Just as communal arrangements often serve as strategies employed by intentional communities to achieve long term goals, utopian visions encapsulate the goals that intentional communities set out to achieve. I focus on the tendency for the force of utopianism to diminish within individual intentional communities rather than upon the tendency for communities to shift away from their initial communal social organization. However, in many senses the two probably significantly overlap, an initial period of highly salient utopianism being correlated with an initial high degree of communalism. In other words, my suggestion is that many, though certainly not all, intentional communities begin with a strong sense of utopian idealism, often manifested in the strategies of social and economic communalism. However, this utopian idealism becomes less urgent over time as the practicalities of daily life, the incorporation of new community members, interactions with the wider society in which broader historical changes are occurring and a variety of other emergent circumstances, challenges and opportunities compel or otherwise result in a moderation of the original utopian ideals. Just as some aspects of social or economic communalism may remain as a community shifts away from a strictly communal phase, elements of the original utopian idealism will likely remain in evidence in the community, perhaps even as the foundation of the community's vision. They may not be the driving forces that they once were, but the visions and their partial realization may remain salient for community members and can have a lasting impact outside of the boundaries of the original community.

This points to a second component of the process of developmental utopianism which also follows from Pitzer's work. Pitzer asserts that emphasis should be shifted from "the

communal structure itself to a consideration of the entire history and influence of the movements of which communalism is a single facet" (1989:70). While utopian ideals within individual community contexts often diminish or are moderated because of a variety of circumstances, those original utopian ideals and the innovations that they enabled may also reverberate within new intentional community building projects that are part of larger movements. These reverberations may be apparent through direct historical linkages among communities. Or, they may be more obscure as diverse utopian communitarians, disconnected in time and space, mold their own utopian visions and community building efforts by drawing upon an increasing variety of sources available to them in the context of the information age and the growing, but still loose, networks of intentional community movements.

Developmental utopianism as an analytical lens allows us to understand the ways in which the force and focus of utopian striving in intentional communities changes or fades in response to broader circumstances, opportunities and challenges posed by historical events and influxes of new members into the community. In this view, intentional communities are no longer to be evaluated as successes or failures based only on the degree to which they achieve their original utopian visions. Developmental utopianism shifts the frame of analysis to broader movements and historical forces within which intentional communities and their individual utopian visions are only single components. Developmental utopianism recognizes that achieving a completely transcendent utopia is impossible, but it also recognizes the transformative and emancipatory potential of the ongoing process of utopian striving that plays out across the generations, historical eras and the boundaries of individual intentional communities. Utopian striving is seen as a manifestation of human agency that is always

somewhat constrained by larger cultural, historical and material forces even as it is partially successful at creating cultural change.

Building on Pitzer's concept of developmental communalism to a articulate a process of developmental utopianism will be useful as we compare Celo Community and Earthaven Ecovillage and challenge Hicks' interpretation of Celo as a failed utopia. In my ethnographic examination of these communities, we will see how the original utopian vision that underpinned Celo's founding has lost some of its salience and only been partially realized. Many of Celo's current members do not hold to utopian visions with the same force as did the community's founder and its first members. However, Celo's members have, over the course of the community's long history, managed to create and maintain unique social, political and economic institutions that are partial realizations of the original utopian vision. Further, Celo and the successful models it created have served as inspirations and foundations for newer utopian community building projects, in this case for Earthaven Ecovillage.

In examining the concept of utopia and exploring its utility, I have suggested, following Pitzer (1989) and Fox (1989), that utopianism is more productively understood as a *process* or method rather than a finished product or an end. That is, the effectiveness of utopianism should not be defined in terms of whether or not a particularly defined utopian vision is achieved and maintained by a particular group of people. Utopia is not the end by which utopianism is to be judged. Rather, utopianism should be understood for its enduring and renewable emancipatory potential. With reference to intentional communities, developmental utopianism is a frame of reference for the creation of and engagement with alternative cultural models in ongoing attempts to transcend the dominant cultural reality. Developmental Utopianism is the process of

imagining and attempting to manifest more ideal social forms within both individual intentional communities and broader social movements.

Those engaged in the process of utopianism do not act in a vacuum. They are inevitably surrounded by predominant social forms and cultural forces that often come into conflict with the more ideal models that they attempt to manifest. Intentional communitarians may be directly responding to critiques of predominant forms and forces and the ways in which they conflict with their utopian ideals, or they may simply be acting upon a longing for another world. Whatever the case may be, they must inevitably confront predominant realities in their attempts to create alternative cultural models. The hegemonic social forms and cultural forces of the extant society constitute the milieu in which utopian communitarians are immersed and from which their utopian endeavors spring. Even if utopianism is not accompanied by an explicitly expressed cultural critique, the process of utopian striving inherently involves a confrontation with the hegemony of the predominant culture.

In concluding his examination of Gandhian utopianism and the extent to which Gandhi and his followers attained the ideals that they strove for in the face of hegemonic cultural forces, Fox invokes three different metaphors to explain the roles that individual utopians might play in generating culture change: the butterfly, the ant and the grasshopper.

> We know that cultural innovation occurs, often in response to individual human intentions and purposeful action. We also know that cultural understandings are compelling and condition human intention and action. An ant image of humanity recognizes the compelling character of existing cultural beliefs on the individual. The butterfly image asserts the power of human intention and purposeful action to break free from this cultural conditioning. How to reconcile the two? [Fox 1989:266]

Fox believes that his analysis of the ongoing process of Gandhian utopianism suggests a middle path between cultural determinism represented by the ant metaphor and the individual agency

represented by the butterfly. To illuminate this path, Fox invokes the metaphor of the grasshopper.

> This chronicle of Gandhian utopia recommends another image of the individual and cultural innovation: that of the grasshopper. There are individual leaps, not flights, of cultural innovation, but they are of short duration, and they are propelled by bouncing off the resistance offered by the dominant cultural beliefs. The cultural innovation produced by human utopian intentions is therefore never fully free from the existing culture, but by the same token it is never fully compelled by existing cultural beliefs. Furthermore, human utopian intentions, like grasshoppers, intend to move forward, yet as they bounce up against cultural resistance, they sometimes inadvertently fall back in the same spot or only barely go forward. At other, perhaps especially fortuitous times, human intentions, again like grasshoppers, bounce off the existing culture and then bound ahead of it, appearing almost to fly free as they traverse much new ground (Fox 1989:272-273).

I believe that Fox's grasshopper metaphor only a partially captures the process of developmental utopianism that I seek to articulate. The grasshopper does effectively point the way to a middle path between cultural determinism and individual agency as humans confront and attempt to transcend dominant realities. The grasshopper makes clear how both cultural determinism and individual agency are in play at one and the same time. The grasshopper represents the individual utopian or perhaps even the individual utopian community in its confrontation with the tension between the real and the ideal. Both the individual communitarian and the individual community are at the same time constrained by larger cultural forces and partially transformative in their individual agency. They may make some advances, but as individuals or individual social entities they are limited in the degree to which they can transcend the dominant realities.

The grasshopper methaphor, therefore, does not capture the dynamic and ongoing nature of the process of developmental utopianism because the grasshopper is not empowered by the intellectual process of learning and experimentation grounded, as they are, in knowledge of

history. Nor is it enabled by social processes of networking and sharing. The grasshopper is limited by its own lifespan and its inability to pass along accumulated knowledge and beliefs to other sentient beings. The grasshopper is limited by its individual organismic body. The process of developmental utopianism, playing out as it does across historical eras and across the boundaries of often interconnected intentional communities cannot be explained only with reference to the grasshopper metaphor; it is a more expansive process that crosses the boundaries of individuals, communities and generations through the transmission of knowledge.

As utopian communitarians build alternatives, as they confront and work against hegemonic cultural structures that they recognize either explicitly or only implicitly, the force of the utopian idealism with which they approach their endeavors appears to wane in the face of the practicalities of daily life that are grounded in predominant realities. For a variety of reasons, the original utopian visions, often clear and potentially realizable in theory, seem harder to obtain and become obscured in the course of the practice of utopian striving. As is evidenced in the disintegration or incomplete nature of so many intentional community projects (Pitzer 1997), original utopian visions often become tempered or moderated. Whether the people that pursue them find the challenge of transcending predominant realities too difficult, whether they become jaded in their attempts at transcendence, whether new community members do not adhere to the same visions, or whether they are simply satisfied by the level of change they were able to create, few if any intentional communities ever fully attain the original visions with which they set forth. The process of utopian striving always seems to be an incomplete process.

However, this is where we must adopt a broader frame of reference for analyzing their utopian striving. As suggested before, utopian projects do not exist in a vacuum. Not only are they surrounded by hegemonic cultural forms, they are also accompanied in their efforts by

others engaged in similar processes of utopian striving. These other utopians are dispersed in space and time to various degrees and they are interconnected to different extents through a variety of activist networks and personal relationships. Thus, the utopian frames of reference with which one project begins and the alternatives that the utopians engaged in that project subsequently develop may be seized upon by new groups of intentional communitarians and employed as springboards for new community building endeavors. The concept of developmental utopianism encourages us to view utopia not as something by which to judge the success or failure of individual intentional communities, but to see utopianism as a potential that is repeatedly rearticulated and built upon over the course of broader historical developments in intentional communities movements. Individual utopians and individual utopian communitarians are at the same time constrained by and partially able to transcend predominant cultural forces, but they may also learn from each other's experiences and build upon each other's partial successes. Within the context of broader utopian movements that exist over many generations, the transformative potential of utopianism may be repeatedly renewed and rearticulated.

Thus it might be on a much broader scale with the history and future development of utopian intentional communities. Many intentional communities over the course of history have disintegrated and their endeavors – both partial successes and complete failures – have been set down in the pages of history and human memory. They become potential lessons to be learned from. Some, inspired by this history and dissatisfied with mainstream life, have attempted new experiments in community. These new experiments also have their successes and failures. However, aided by a diligent attention to history and deliberate learning they move closer to the ideal vision. And even as some intentional communitarians are satisfied with their partial progress, they may inspire new groups to take up where they have left off, to rearticulate their

utopian visions in new contexts using new methods and technologies. Thus intentional community building progresses, over generations and on the basis of a constantly accumulating body of knowledge and examples and an increasingly dense and interconnected network of activists, towards more effective, transformative and transcendent practice. The transformation is never complete because the visions are constantly being rearticulated and the contexts in which the visions are acted upon are constantly changing, but each new community can, if they are looking, find a more effective foundation from which to build.

Finally I would like to clarify the use of the concept of utopia in characterizing intentional communities by integrating it with the concept of cultural critique. It is clear from the discussion above that most scholars in communal studies assert that utopian intentional communities manifest critiques of the wider society and culture in which they exist and that they are defined by their attempts to build alternatives to the values and institutions they critique. Van Bueren and Tarlow emphasize that all utopian communities

> were founded on at least two fundamental precepts. The first was dissatisfaction with some aspect of the dominant culture. ... The second ingredient was an idealistic faith that a better way of life was possible. … As creative responses to unsatisfactory aspects of the dominant culture, all utopian ventures were acts of social resistance that explicitly criticized dominant group values and practices. [2006:1-2]

Similarly and more succinctly, Kirby found that in his analysis of an ecovillage project "both a critique of the existing social mode and a proposed solution to the problems as identified begins to emerge" (2003:325). Theorists of literary and philosophical utopianism also recognize the conjunction between utopia and critique. For example, de Geus' suggests that "ecological utopias represent a most pertinent form of social critique" (2002:1998). The utopian theorist Paul Ricoeur reflects this sentiment more generally: "utopia ... is the arm of critique" (1986:300). Thus, based most often on philosophical arguments and historical studies of intentional

communities, utopian and communal studies theorists have asserted that utopianism and critique are parallel and intertwined processes.

An ethnographic examination of intentional communities enables us to consider whether or not utopianism and critique are synonymous or integrated processes. Examining intentional communities as lived practices compels us to question whether utopian visions are coterminous with cultural critique. Ethnographic research in intentional communities allows us to look closely upon the perspectives of intentional communitarians in the midst of their utopian community building processes. It allows us more direct access, and at a finer grain, to the meanings and significance that members of intentional communities ascribe to their collective endeavors than is available to the historian or the literary philosopher. Ethnographic research allows us to engage utopian communitarians in dialogue so as to better understand their goals and motivations and to observe and participate in the ways in which they attempt to translate their goals and motivations into effective action. Through direct participation in community life and through conversations with the people in these communities we can gain a greater understanding of the potentially complex and nuanced motivations that underpin a striving for a better world and shed greater light upon whether the ideal is always constructed in direct and explicit juxtaposition with the real.

My goal in examining the ways in which the concepts of utopia and cultural critique might be integrated is to situate intentional communities within discussions about the nature of anthropology as a discipline and the utility of anthropological knowledge. In particular, I want to assess Brown's assertion, following Marcus and Fischer's seminal work *Anthropology as Cultural Critique: An Experimental Moment in the Human Sciences* (1986), that "intentional communities ... constitute an important form of cultural critique" (Brown 2002:153). While the

work of Brown and Marcus and Fischer will be discussed in much greater detail in the following chapter, I would like to point out that their works and the assertions they articulate, viewed together, suggest that anthropology and intentional communities perform similar functions of epistemological critique through cross-cultural juxtaposition and that these functions are essentially utopian in nature. If these assertions are correct, the members of intentional communities take positions against particular ideological and epistemological frames that are characteristic of the dominant society. These critical positions are presented not only in the form of rhetoric. Rather they are enacted by directly juxtaposing alternative cultural models that are created within intentional communities with ideological and institutional cultural forms that predominate in society directly adjacent to the communities.

If these assertions are accurate, then in intentional communities we see the direct correlation between utopianism and cultural critique. Both utopianism and cultural critique represent a striving for a world free from the problems that characterize the current one, a striving to overcome the tension between the real and the ideal by manifesting alternative cultural forms. The word sustainability also encompasses this tension. It refers to an ideal that is impossible to achieve but immanently desirable. Within this tension is an inherent critique of the forces that maintain the current state of affairs. Indeed, de Geus correlates the concepts of sustainability, critique and utopia in his article "Ecotopia, Sustainability and Vision," concluding that

> in an era of unfettered, large-scale and irreversible degradation of the environment, there is a need for "counterimages" of an alternative society, one that protects and respects nature. Ecological utopias represent a most pertinent form of social critique; they can truly function as a rich source of ideals [for the creation of a more sustainable society]. [2002:198]

If Brown is correct in her conceptualization of intentional communities, then contemporary sustainability-oriented intentional communities seek to serve the same purpose as de Geus' literary utopias with the important distinction that their "counterimages" are manifested through action rather than only rhetoric and theory.

As I have demonstrated previously, many contemporary intentional or utopian communities have taken sustainability as their goal. If sustainability is a utopian project, as the discussion in the introduction to this work suggests, then it seems appropriate to investigate intentional communities' utopian strivings for sustainability. However, intentional communities have more often been disregarded than they are appreciated for their utopianism. Why is this the case? Is utopian community building only pie in the sky as Marx and Engels suggested? Should we judge sustainability-oriented intentional communities based only upon the extent to which they achieve sustainability over the long term? Should they be judged successful only if they achieve a truly sustainable utopia that transcends the predominant society? Are utopianism and intentional communities relevant to contemporary social and environmental problems? I turn now to my critique of a previous ethnographic analysis of Celo Community, one that characterized Celo as a utopian failure for its decision to adopt sustainable land stewardship as a core component of its utopian vision.

Environmentalism and 'Utopian Failure'?: Hicks' *Experimental Americans: Celo and Utopian Community in the Twentieth Century*

My analysis of intentional communities is based largely on ethnographic research conducted within two particular communities in western North Carolina from July of 2004 through October of 2005: Celo Community (1937 - present) and Earthaven Ecovillage (1994 - present). An important component of my analysis involves discussing a previous ethnographic

treatment of Celo Community by the anthropologist George Hicks: *Experimental Americans: Celo and Utopian Community in Twentieth Century America*. Hicks' work manifests many of the theoretical orientations characteristic of earlier treatments of intentional communities noted above. He views Celo Community negatively for its inability to accomplish its original aim of manifesting a utopia that would lead to total societal transformation.

Hicks defines "utopian communities" as a manifestation of a broader, distinctly American utopian "exceptionalism" characterized by an effort to work out the tensions between individualism and equality in a quest to create a better world for all. Leaving aside this questionable interpretation of American history as a quest for universal human betterment, we can focus on Hicks' definition of "utopian community" and on his analysis of Celo as a particular example of utopian community. That Hicks views cultural critique as an inherent component of utopian communitarianism is apparent from the start of his account of utopian community building in Celo: "The profound dissatisfaction with existing social and cultural arrangements and the associated deficiencies in the character of modern Americans, also nourishes utopian efforts at building improved models of community" (Hicks 2001:23) "… utopians aim … to institute a more perfect equality and to set before the world a model of improved society and culture" (Hicks 2001:24).

Yet, for Hicks, however utopian community builders might strive to create alternative models based on their critique of American culture, they are unable to break free of the bonds of that culture to create true alternatives. Communitarians, in their utopian desire to create alternative cultural models, are destined to fail: "As I try to demonstrate, utopian communitarians are dedicated participants in American culture, regardless of their apparent desire to secede from it" (Hicks 2001:13). Thus, Hicks concludes his account:

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> Although Celo Community fell short of creating a model of a new society and culture, it persisted as a haven for those who felt themselves outcasts and misfits. Members came and went, worthy causes altered from one era to another, opposition to the direction of American life took new forms and Celo did offer a beacon of hope for some Americans. In the end, however Morgan's dream of its destiny as a "master community," a model to be emulated far and wide, remained just that: a dream. [2001:172]

For Hicks, Celo's utopian dream ended when the community members made a collective decision to focus their efforts on environmentally responsible land stewardship. Having cast aside original visions of utopia, the community was left as, at best, a haven for "outcasts and misfits". I contend that this characterization of Celo Community is inaccurate and inappropriate. It rests on a too narrow understanding of the transformative potential of utopianism.

Hicks acknowledges that the founder of Celo Community was not in favor of the utopian label for a number of specific reasons:

> Morgan explicitly rejected *utopian* to describe Celo Community. The word meant to him, as he told me in 1965, "rigid, excessively visionary and planned to the last detail. It ignores the necessity for change as the people involved grow in experience and wisdom." He carefully avoided prescribing detailed goals for Celo; he and the directors "had no formal ideology in mind" for the project. It was to be open-ended, experimental. Criteria for membership and descriptions of potential recruits also lacked specific detail. A broad range of interpretation of these general statements resulted. [2001:76]

Thus, Hicks' conclusion that Celo Community fell short of Morgan's dream of creating new models of society and culture that might be emulated seems as arbitrary and inappropriate as his insistence on judging the community a failed utopia. It is doubtful that Arthur Morgan would be disappointed with the fact that Celo Community survives today as a community characterized by unique forms of land tenure and decision-making that they use to steward their commonly held land. Rather, he would likely be pleased to know that Celo, 70 years later, still functions using the unique institutions created by early community members and that it serves as a model which many contemporary intentional communities are aspiring to and building upon.

Hicks does provide a solid historical account of the development of Celo Community, connecting changes in the community to broader historical currents and relating them to more local events as well. However, perhaps due to the sense in which he employs the term *utopian*, his conclusion that "a separate social system in many ways, now was reduced to the boundaries of commonly owned land" (Hicks 2001:170) seems to be a misinterpretation. When Hicks examines the motivations of early community members, he points to cultural critiques of American society as factors that motivated people to join the community and experiment with new social forms. People sought in Celo Community a "sense of belonging" where they could engage in "experimentation" with people of "common purpose" in the pursuit of "a project of great moral usefulness." Their "efforts were based on a firm rejection of conventional America" (Hicks 2001:113) and "the intention was to create new cultural and social forms as examples for the world" (Hicks 2001:115). Hicks traces these currents in Celo Community from the pacifist activism of the WWII years, through the Civil Rights, nuclear disarmament and anti-Vietnam War movements of the 1950s and 1960s. Community-wide debate regarding the nature of Celo's Landholding Agreement as a fundamentally moral rather than economic instrument and the efforts of a minority faction within the community to establish a greater degree of communalism (efforts that ultimately led to the departure of five families for the more communally organized Bruderhof) also exemplify this theme.

Yet, according to Hicks, these efforts lost some fundamental "utopian" quality with the shift of emphasis to land stewardship that characterized Celo Community in the 1960s and 1970s. Hicks notes how the decade of the 1970s was characterized by an increasing popular interest in communal living, environmental stewardship and sustainability. More specifically for

Celo, rural western North Carolina was a destination for many "back-to-the-landers"; thus Celo found an increasing number of ideological comrades in their midst.

> Gradually, as the decade wore on, the membership's emphasis on its purpose as "a vigorous physical experiment in land management and usage" took precedence over other goals, including that of creating an alternative community which would be widely emulated. Celo began to advertise itself as a "community land trust" and thus asserted its position in a category of increasing relevance in a period of environmental protection, ecological movements and efforts to preserve resources which were generally acknowledged to be nonrenewable. [Hicks 2001:105]

For Hicks, this change in emphasis represented the fizzling of a grand utopian dream. "The vision of the Community as a lonely but vital frontier of social and cultural exploration was less persuasive when its paramount concern was land management" (Hicks 2001:170).

Thus, Hicks sees the shift in emphasis to land stewardship in Celo in the 1970s as the end of a utopian phase during which much greater changes had been sought. However, Celo Community's endeavors to create a community that responded to their critiques and visions appears much more significant from a different perspective taken at a different point in time. Much has changed in the world, the nation, Upper South Toe Valley, Celo Community and in academia since the late 1960s, the time during which most of Hicks' research in Celo Community was conducted, and since 1980, the time at which Hicks' account of the community stops. Most prominently, environmental degradation has increased exponentially and, at the same time, scientific consensus regarding the necessity of stewarding the environment in more sustainable manners lest we be faced with a number of social, ecological and economic crises has become almost complete. At the same time, anthropological interest in environmental issues has grown and our conceptions of how we are to conduct our research and maintain accountability to those people that we study have undergone massive changes. These changes suggest to me that the time is ripe for a reanalysis of Celo Community.

Hicks' dissertation was completed in 1969. His book about the community was published in 2001 and purports to describe the community up until "about 1980, when it became clear that Community members had redefined their project from utopian experiment to stewardship of their land holdings" (Hicks 2001:5). The updated view of the community contained in this book is based on "ten weeks in 1979 (with briefer visits in intervening years)" (2001:5). Although community records indicate that Hicks was present at two community meetings in 1979, no one I spoke with remembers conversing with him during this time, although they do recall him rekindling his friendship with an old community member who had previously served as his primary informant about the community. Hicks passed away four years prior to the publication of his book. Revisions to the manuscript were completed by his students. All of these circumstances leave open questions about the accuracy of Hicks' knowledge and account of Celo.

Since the time of Hicks' research in Celo, the discipline of anthropology has experienced vast changes. Many of these changes were prompted by what is commonly referred to as the crisis of representation. The fact that many of the peoples that anthropologists have written about began talking back and contesting our interpretations and representations of them forced anthropologists to reassess our research methods and our conventions of ethnographic writing. We have been forced to become more accountable to those we research and write about, to share with them the power of representation and authorial authority. And indeed, when I arrived in Celo Community as an eager young researcher, I encountered a community that was guarded. Many of Celo's members had taken issue with Hicks' interpretations of the community, presented in both his dissertation (1969) and his book (2001) and were suspicious of my motivations and goals as an anthropologist.

As a result, it took over four years of rapport-building in Celo before the members of the community granted me permission to use the community's real name in my writing. I established ongoing processes of review and oversight with the community, processes that were negotiated and minuted in community meetings. I met with designated community liaisons throughout the course of my research and established processes and guidelines through which community members could review my writing and the development of my thoughts and interpretations regarding the community. In the interest of broad and representative data collection, I interviewed as many current community members as I could, although a few, for a variety of reasons many of which will remain unknown to me, never would agree to an interview. These processes were guided not only by the concerns of community members but by the institutional review board at the University of Georgia. The power of institutional review boards to govern the relationship between researchers and their human subjects has grown enormously since the 1960s.

Hicks was not held accountable to such processes in the 1960s and it appears that his research methods were questionable when viewed from today's standpoint. In some ways, Hicks was ahead of his time. In a sense, he conducted multi-sited research. In addition to gathering data in Celo Community, he interviewed local residents of the valley and former members of Celo Community. Indeed, Hicks seemed to have somewhat of an affinity for the locals. He wrote a monograph about the local communities (Hicks 1976) and participants in my research indicated to me that he was fond of drinking with a local storeowner. Hicks himself admits that he lived among the locals for a much greater portion of his over two years of research in the area, indicating that after three months in the community's "guest cottage," he rented a house in a local neighborhood (1969:14). With regards to collecting data from locals and former

community members, my research is not as far reaching as Hicks' was and might have been improved by more substantial engagements with these groups.

However, Hicks does not provide us with an indication of the number of community members that he interviewed and engaged with. Thus, we are unable to judge the representativeness of his data. In his dissertation, he indicates that he attended community meetings and social activities, explored the community's historical archives and correspondence, engaged in participant observation and conversations with community members and collected two life histories from community members (1969:11-14). While he indicates that he interviewed local individuals in the nearest town and adjacent rural neighborhood and conducted interviews with sixteen former community members, nowhere does he state that he interviewed actual community members or how many of them he interviewed. Methodological data in Hicks' posthumously released book about the community is even thinner.

This lack of methodological transparency casts doubt on Hicks' interpretations of Celo Community, as does other information that I obtained during the course of my research. By the time I arrived in Celo in 2001, almost the entire membership of the community had changed since the time of Hicks' initial research, suggesting in itself that the community was ripe for reanalysis. However, the two remaining community members who were present during Hicks' research in the 1960s, people who had been there since 1951 and played prominent roles in the community, could not recall ever being interviewed by him. Further, they indicated that Hicks spent most of his time in the community with the community doctor. The community doctor was recruited by Arthur Morgan to serve in the new Community Health Center and did not go through a regular membership screening process. Although he was appreciated for his medical service, his membership and his views were a source of considerable controversy in the

community's first few decades until he eventually withdrew from membership. Hicks himself discusses the controversial nature of this community member and his relationship to the advent of the Celo Health Center and the conflicts that ensued. (See Hicks 2001:99-101, 127-129).

Another of Hicks' main informants about the community was a teenage girl with whom Hicks also spent a considerable amount of time. There is a picture of her in Hicks' book about the local communities (1976). This woman still lives near Celo Community and maintains friendships with a number of community members. In an interview she told me that just prior to Hicks' arrival in the area, her family had been rejected as members of the community because of worries about the family's financial situation and her father's mental health. This woman claims that Hicks depended on her for information even though, to her admission, she could not have provided very objective or accurate information considering her young age and her family's rocky relationship with the community at that point in time.

> K: I would have been fifteen then, when I first started spending time with them [Hicks and his wife]. George invited me over all the time and said I was his best informant and asked me all the sort of behind the scenes things about the community. He'd get me started and then he'd turn on his tape recorder. He'd always do these debriefings with me at the end of the day. When he'd come home, he'd ask me all this stuff about what [the community members] said and what my impression of it was, what they were really like . . . Because he didn't really trust the utopian view, he saw that as just sort of this idealized version of what really went on. Like, when he'd go to community meetings, then he'd come back and he'd tell me who said what, and ask me what was really going on in the meeting. [interview in Celo Community 12-6-04]

Thus, although Hicks clearly claims to be writing about Celo Community, his methods of collecting data about the community do not match standards that contemporary anthropologists adhere to. Current community members' dissatisfaction with Hicks' interpretations (they were not informed by Hicks of his book's impending publication, although the manuscript was accepted for publication prior to his death in 1997) and their guarded reception of me as an

anthropologist are further indication that Hicks' representation of the community should be approached with skepticism.

Aside from methodological issues with Hicks' work, changes in the world around Celo Community indicate that it is an appropriate time for a reanalysis of Celo's significance. Events since the time of Hicks' research encourage such a reinterpretation. Since Hicks left the Upper South Toe Valley, we have witnessed the globalization of the capitalist political economy at an unprecedented pace. This globalization has been accompanied by the rise of the information age, increasing urbanization, a growing gap between the rich and the poor, and widespread ecological degradation. The development of gated communities and economic changes in areas such as western North Carolina have led to the disintegration of traditional rural communities such as those that have always surrounded Celo. The lifestyles of the residents of these traditional communities have undergone massive changes as a result. Place-based communities and their direct connections to their material economy are increasingly being subverted by a hypermobile, capitalist political economy that disembeds people and resources from their local ecological and social contexts. At the time he founded it, Arthur Morgan envisioned Celo Community as a response to forces such as these. Although these trends were nascent at the time, the fact that Celo continues to exist in the midst of their rapid expansion, suggests that the community deserves another look.

In addition, we have seen the ascendance of two waves of intentional community building since Hicks entered Celo Community in the mid 1960s. In the late 1960s and early 1970s there was a vast and unprecedented proliferation of intentional communities throughout the United States and around the world. Celo Community experienced a large influx of members during this time as people sought to turn away from what they saw as unjust, unsustainable, and

unsatisfying trends in the mainstream society. Another wave of intentional community building began in the 1990s. The people involved in this new wave are more explicitly concerned with addressing ecological and environmental issues. These are issues that are directly connected to Celo's focus on environmentally sensitive stewardship of their collectively owned land. Indeed, many of the communities in this new wave of intentional community building have sought models of land tenure such as that developed by the members of Celo Community as a means of helping them address their environmental concerns.

Thus, an alternative perspective, one that focuses on the ways in which political economic institutions created in Celo have been redeployed by other communities through a process of developmental utopianism, reveals that Celo's emphasis on collective land stewardship is of great significance in a world where sustainability has become a fundamental concern and where land degradation simultaneously continues unabated, a world where individuals are increasingly alienated from nature and community and from the ways in which community and nature sustain them. Indeed, Celo's ability to function as a community committed to stewardship of their commonly held land rests solidly on the alternative socio-cultural institutions and practices that Hicks says characterized Celo's utopian community building phase: the community's governing structure including consensus-decision-making and the community's Landholding Agreement. These forms have been seized upon by the members of Earthaven Ecovillage as a foundation upon which to base their utopian endeavors to address the sustainability challenge.

As I demonstrate later, Celo's Landholding Agreement manifests collective rather than individual ownership of land and resources and requires that decisions about the management and stewardship of the land and resources be made through a well-defined process of collective

dialogue and debate. Perhaps most importantly, the way Celo Community governs their collectively held resources explicitly forbids individual profit as a primary motivator for decisions, but rather emphasizes processes of group understanding and shared values of ecological integrity. Taken together, common ownership and stewardship through consensus decision-making represent fundamental breaks with dominant contemporary American (and industrial capitalist) models for the relationships between and among people and between people and productive resources, models that have contributed greatly to growing environmental degradation. Celo has held to and prospered with their alternative models for over 60 years in the midst of exponential increases in profit seeking speculation on land and resources. From this perspective, it appears that Celo Community's long lasting ability to thrive as an intentional community (especially relative to the life span of most intentional communities) does represent the successful "experimentation" with "new cultural and social forms as examples for the world." Whether or not Celo's endurance is a success or failure when judged by the utopian yardstick depends upon the sense in which one employs the concept of utopianism.

Beyond Celo's 'Utopian Failure': Earthaven Ecovillage and the Sustainability Challenge in the Contemporary Intentional Communities

From my perspective, what Hicks interpreted as a failed utopia, a transformation whereby "a separate social system in many ways, now was reduced to the boundaries of commonly owned land" (Hicks 2001:169-170), is actually the foundation for a more contemporary cultural critique and a more forcefully articulated utopian vision of sustainability. This cultural critique is being played out in newer, sustainability-oriented intentional communities that are taking root across the country and around the world. One such community is Earthaven Ecovillage. My research at Earthaven indicates that the members of Earthaven have in fact taken Celo Community's models

of land ownership and consensus decision-making as a base and an inspiration for their own utopian strivings and community building endeavors. A participant in my ethnographic research whom I interviewed multiple times offers a unique perspective on Earthaven's projection of Celo's cultural critique and utopian vision forward into more challenging terrain. Her unique perspective springs from her membership in each community at different periods of time. She first came to Celo Community in the mid 1970s and, after leaving to attend graduate school in the late 1980s, became part of the core group that founded Earthaven Ecovillage and participated in its initial development in the mid 1990s. Then, just after the turn of the 21st century, she became a member of Celo Community for the second time. Some excerpts from my interviews with her are particularly useful in portraying how Earthaven has, through the process of developmental utopianism, taken Celo's enduring experimental model and built upon it.

In our most recent interview, I asked to her to think about Celo and Earthaven and to compare them. Is there a connection between the two communities?

> I know when we started Earthaven, we used some of the documents and borrowed some from Celo, but we also knew that we wanted to take it a step farther. It's much more into sustainability. … I think the ideals that we brought into Earthaven did take it from where Celo left off and took the idealism a step farther. [interview in Celo Community 6-7-06].

Some of the characteristics that the founders of Earthaven borrowed from Celo are the fundamental components of what Hicks identified as the roots of Celo's utopian community building endeavor. Although they have taken slightly modified form at Earthaven, the process of community governance by consensus decision-making and the fundamental connection between membership in the community and institutions of collective ownership and stewardship of commonly held land are basic, defining characteristics of community at Earthaven, just as they are in Celo.

Thus, as this woman mentions, both communities are working out alternative models that might be emulated, but Earthaven, as is appropriate for its time, has placed a much greater emphasis on sustainability.

> I think there are real similarities and I think Earthaven is really trying to do something way beyond where Celo has ever tried to go. The similarity is that in their time, Celo was really trying to be a new model for society and in its time Earthaven is trying to be a new model for society. … The world's in a whole different place now from where it was in the 40s. With scientific evidence, we're much more at a critical point for humanity that we need sustainability. … There's much more of an urgency that Earthaven feels. I think eyes are more wide open as far as what's really happening there than they are at Celo. [interview in Celo Community 6-7-06]

For this community member, Celo's alternative models are still relevant to the current situation where sustainability is of paramount importance. And while she believes that Celo has not gone far enough in confronting the issues at the center of the sustainability challenge, she asserts that it has provided a foundation upon which Earthaven has been able to build to more directly address the sustainability challenge. This historical connection between Celo and Earthaven is a manifestation of what I referred to above as developmental utopianism. The alternative models developed by Celo Community in the early days of their utopian communal experimentation have become springboards for another community that is only beginning to respond to collectively held cultural critiques through utopian striving and intentional community building.

Chapter 4

ANTHROPOLOGY AND INTENTIONAL COMMUNITIES AS CULTURAL CRITIQUE

The task of ethnographic cultural critique is to discover the variety of modes of accomodation and resistance by individuals to their shared social order. It is a strategy for discovering diversity in what appears to be an ever more homogenous world. The cultural critic becomes in effect a reader of cultural criticisms, discovered ethnographically, rather than an independent intellectual originator of critical insight. [Marcus and Fisher 1986:132-133]

The construction of alternative production paradigms, political orders, and sustainability are sides of the same process, and this process is advanced in part through the cultural politics of social movements and communities in defense of their modes of nature/culture. The project of social movements thus constitutes a concrete expression of the search for alternative production and environmental orders envisioned by political ecologists. [Escobar 1998:74-75]

I went away to college not knowing that flour was ground up wheat, not having eaten a single thing in my entire life that I knew where it came from, not having a single idea about how the water that came out of my faucet got there, or where any of the heat in my house came from, where any of the building materials in my house came from or where anything came from. ... What else would I expect from Americans? This is what we were trained to do. We were trained not to behave in a way that takes responsibility for one's economy. That's what America is all about. Look at anything. Distract yourself with anything but figuring out how you're going to take responsibility for the economy that sustains you. I think that's what Earthaven has the potential to do. ... It has the potential to create one's own economy. ... There's something in me, like I feel called to actually clear a farm field and actually engage and witness that brutality and know what it means to farm in a forest ecosystem. [interview in Earthaven Ecovillage 6/2/05]

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These quotations foreshadow the following discussion regarding the ways in which anthropology and intentional communities function similarly as forms of cultural critique. Marcus and Fischer assert that it is a fundamental task of anthropology is not only to present accounts of other cultures as a matrix for making cultural critique possible. This is the

conventional mode of anthropological knowledge production. Moving forward, we must discover and bring to wider light forms of cultural critique that are asserted by everyday citizens who are engaged in analyzing and reshaping society. Escobar suggests that this is just the sort of work in which social movements and communities are engaged. The movements and communities he works with are articulating and enacting alternative political economies that can help address the sustainability challenge. The last quote suggests that the members of contemporary sustainability-oriented intentional communities are doing the same.

<p style="text-align:center">*   *   *</p>

The scholarship on intentional communities reviewed in the previous two chapters suggests that the people who choose to inhabit them are inherently utopians and cultural critics. For over two thousand years and with increasing frequency since the rise of industrial capitalism, people have joined together in the utopian process of creating intentional communities with the goal of constructing alternatives to the status quo. These voluntary social groups have committed themselves to addressing perceived problems such as religious persecution, labor exploitation, gender inequalities, sexual repression, racial discrimination and, more recently the social inequities and ecological degradation that are at the heart of the sustainability challenge. Although the utopian and experimental forms of intentional communities have most often not been enduring, they have by the assertion of their critical voices and alternative practices forced dialogic reexaminations of prevailing cultural norms and social institutions. In other words, intentional communities have practiced an engaged and practice oriented form of cross-cultural juxtaposition that characterizes anthropological ethnography and what Marcus and Fischer call "anthropology as cultural critique".

Yet, few anthropologists have used research in intentional communities to build theory or engage contemporary issues in a practical and applied manner. The minimal attention paid by anthropologists to intentional communities is perplexing. As voluntary, deliberate, experimental, critical, reflexive, utopian and explicitly bounded communities, they represent an opportunity to confront some of the fundamental questions that have been of interest to anthropologists regarding the nature of human agency, culture change and the tension between the real and the ideal. Recall the questions Fox posed in his study of Gandhian utopia. Are individuals compelled by utopian visions capable of promoting cultural change or are they so constrained by pre-existing cultural and material worlds that they cannot create cultural innovation by sheer intention? The role of individual intention (in the context of community) in cultural change is a fundamental anthropological question. Such questions are all the more relevant given the utopian nature of the sustainability challenge.

In the following, I draw on Marcus and Fischer's treatment of anthropology as cultural critique, Susan Love Brown's anthropological perspective on intentional communities as a form of cultural critique and the work of other anthropologists to suggest that intentional communities as engaged forms of cultural critique are worthy of greater attention, analysis and collaborative efforts by an anthropology interested in engaging with contemporary social and environmental problems and in contributing to sustainable solutions to them. Marcus and Fischer's conceptualization of anthropology as cultural critique suggests that the production of anthropological knowledge serves a function that is similar to the utopian endeavors of the builders of intentional communities. In presenting accounts of other cultures, anthropologists simultaneously critique their own society and offer alternatives to the taken-for-granted ideologies and institutions embedded in their society. However, the power of anthropological

cultural critiques only goes so far because they are grounded in the presentation of an exotic other as an alternative. Building on Marcus and Fischer's work, Brown suggests that intentional communities are engaged in similar forms of cultural critique. However, these critiques are more powerful because intentional communities are actively involved in the creation of alternative ideologies and institutions within the society that is the object of critique. As such the cultural critiques of intentional communities are potentially more powerful and emancipatory because they actively manifest the tension between the real and the ideal that lies at the heart of utopianism and cultural critique. More than a discursive presentation of cultural difference, intentional communities are lived manifestations of cross-cultural juxtaposition.

Marcus and Fischer's *Anthropology as Cultural Critique*

Marcus and Fischer's compelling work *Anthropology as Cultural Critique: An Experimental Moment in the Human Sciences*, although published two decades ago, is still strikingly relevant for anthropology in the 21st century; an anthropology challenged by broad theoretical developments and socio-cultural and political-economic shifts. It deals with the ways in which anthropologists confront and portray cultural difference in a world wherein it is increasingly difficult to delineate the boundaries of such difference, a world in which generalizing statements and paradigmatic approaches fail to capture growing cultural complexity. The penetration of global capital into almost every sphere of life and cooptation of cultural difference by profit seeking, hypermobile capital lessens the defamiliarizing shock value of cross-cultural juxtaposition that empowered early anthropological accounts of other cultures. As global political economic forces increasingly come to bear on local contexts, inhabitants of ethnographic locales are simultaneously confronting these same issues and becoming aware of

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the power of self-representation and the ways in which the power of representation had previously been employed by external interests.

How is an anthropologist to approach the situation? Marcus and Fischer suggest ways in which anthropologists might address this predicament while at the same time holding to the anthropological promise, first promulgated through Boasian cultural relativism and more recently through interpretive anthropology, of demonstrating the multiple and equally logical and valid ways in which different societies confront common human conditions and dilemmas. By so demonstrating equally valid and practical cultural alternatives, the anthropologist forces a critical comparison, a cultural critique, of taken-for-granted cultural meanings, values, institutions and practices. This is a project of great emancipatory potential. The alternative perspectives created by cross-cultural knowledge and understanding have the potential to disable taken-for-granted cultural logics that, it has been argued, justify the subjugation of one group by another and of nature by economy (Carr 2004, Moran 2006).

Marcus and Fischer approach anthropological ethnography on a grand scale, one that encompasses much of anthropological history up to and including the contemporary period of postmodernist influence. They trace the beginnings of anthropological cultural critique to the work of Boas and his students in the U.S. as they developed the concept of cultural relativism. They point especially to Margaret Mead as being most notable for her outspoken position as anthropological cultural critic, exemplified early on as she conceptualized her work in Samoa as a tool for reflecting on and changing American culture. In the United Kingdom, Malinowski and Evans-Pritchard pioneered anthropological cultural critique by pointing to the different but equally valid forms of rationality that characterized indigenous societies. Marcus and Fischer point out that these forms of critique were not especially direct, critiquing conditions rather than

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the system that created them. The abbreviated nature of their critique, the fact that the critique extended only to the conditions and not their causes rooted in the larger political economic system, was largely due to the fact that anthropology had yet to develop a sense of its own historical positioning and significance relative to a globalizing political economy.

Marcus and Fischer's argument for new forms of experimental ethnographic writing and the continued development of anthropology as cultural critique is situated within the crisis of representation that confronted anthropology beginning in the 1970s. As the ability to construct nomothetic explanations of human nature came to be increasingly doubted, anthropologists were forced to confront questions about the nature of their discipline and the ethnographic enterprise. Marcus and Fischer explore the development of the conventions of ethnographic writing in anthropology, focusing specifically on the emergence and development of Geertzian interpretive anthropology and on the attempt to account for larger political economic systems and historical forces in ethnographic accounts. Finally, Marcus and Fischer discuss how the interpretive and historical political economic trends in ethnographic writing are being combined in new kinds of ethnographies such as multi-sited ethnography. "Together, both trends of experimentation are reshaping ethnography to take in a much more complex world than it previously assumed – one in which the subject is equally a commentator on the world from which the ethnographer comes" (Marcus and Fischer 1986:109).

Having set the stage of the historical developments in ethnographic writing, Marcus and Fischer move on to explore the ways in which a critical cultural perspective has always been part of the anthropological ethnographic enterprise and of social theory in general. Before exploring the idea of cultural critique within anthropology, Marcus and Fischer point to its precedents outside the discipline, figures many of whom have had a direct impact on anthropology itself:

Marx, Freud, Weber, Neitzche and the Frankfurt School social theorists. Cultural criticism arose to address the changes that were taking place as the societies of Europe and America made the transition to industrial capitalism. Indeed, Marcus and Fischer are explicit in suggesting that an uneasiness about the fundamental changes wrought by industrial capitalism is a primary driving force behind cultural critique.

Moving ahead, Marcus and Fischer point to cultural critique as a motivator for ethnographic research:

> What has propelled many modern anthropologists into the field and motivated resultant ethnographic accounts is a desire to enlighten their readers about other ways of life, but often with the aim of disturbing their cultural self-satisfaction. Thus, as they have written detailed descriptions and analyses of other cultures, ethnographers have simultaneously had a marginal or hidden agenda of critique of their own culture, namely, the bourgeois, middle-class life of mass liberal societies, which industrial capitalism has produced. [Marcus and Fisher 1986:111]

For Marcus and Fischer, anthropology *is* cultural critique.

Anticipating the manner in which I employ cultural critique to the study of intentional communities, I wish to explore more closely what Marcus and Fischer mean by cultural critique and the ways in which it is engaged. In a sense, what I am attempting here is to operationalize cultural critique so that it may be identified ethnographically in research in intentional community contexts. Marcus and Fischer conceive two forms of cultural critique: an epistemological critique of analytical reason, rationality and progress rooted in the Enlightenment and a more direct, empirical critique through the cross-cultural juxtaposition of social institutions and cultural forms. While anthropologists have engaged in both of these forms of critique, Marcus and Fischer suggest that they must be combined to be more effective.

Epistemological critique is a questioning of the assumptions in which an Enlightenment faith in reason, rationality and science is grounded. Epistemological critique questions the ideas

of rationality and progress that provided the foundation for previous anthropological evolutionary sequences and that still anchors a common popular perception that Euro-American culture is superior and more evolved relative to other, especially indigenous, cultures. Epistemological critique demystifies the functioning of power by detecting how received wisdom and cultural meanings arise from and serve to protect certain privileged positions and configurations of power.

> This philosophical critique is most securely grounded in the sociology of knowledge, a questioning of the relation between the content of beliefs and ideas and the social positions of their carriers or advocates. The effect of this style of cultural critique is demystification: it detects interests behind and within cultural meanings expressed in discourse; it reveals forms of domination and power; and thus, it is often posed as the critique of ideology. [Marcus and Fischer 1986:114]

Epistemological critique is a questioning of cultural meaning and received wisdom; it employs Gramscian notions of hegemony and Foucauldian discourse analysis to create understandings of how ideologies are promulgated by the powerful in order to ensure that society functions to further the interests of the powerful. Michel Foucault is, perhaps, the most exemplary proponent of this approach, one who has had an immense impact on contemporary anthropology. Foucault's epistemological critiques, grounded in his analyses of various "regimes of power/knowledge" – madness (1965) and sexuality (1978) being most prominent – have helped make clear the subtle machinations of power that work through "discursive productions." In turn, Foucault's critiques have enabled productive deconstructive analyses of development, to take a most prominent example from anthropology, (Apffel-Marglin and Marglin 1996; Arce and Long 2000; Baviskar 1995; Escobar 1988, 1991, 1995; Ferguson 1990, 1997; Gupta 1998; Hobart 1993; Lennihan 1996).

The other form of cultural critique that Marcus and Fischer point to – cross-cultural juxtaposition – is a more direct critique through the use of empirical examples and has a longer,

more prominent history within anthropology. In its older versions starting as early as the 1920s and 1930s, critique through cross cultural juxtaposition offered three broad critiques based on ethnographic accounts of "primitive" societies: the ecologically noble savage, the importance of the small community and the centrality of spiritual vision. Each of these portraits indicated something that many of us had lost in our own society. In its more recent manifestations, critique through cross-cultural juxtaposition has come to focus on mental health and social equality and the ways in which conspicuous consumption and individualism have become obstacles to both ideals.

> Behind the growth of the market, bureaucracies, large corporations and professional social services, it sees a decline of community and of that sense of individual self-worth necessary to mental health. It charts the relative inequalities of wealth, the concentration or decentralization of decision-making powers, the shifting allegiances to parties and denominations and the dissemination of commodities and choice of life-styles. On the basis of this charting, it argues for or detects alternatives to individualism in both social conditions and ways of thinking about society. This style of cultural criticism is behind much liberal debate over welfare, justice and democratic participation in mass, market-oriented societies; it also informs more radical efforts to reorganize society. [Marcus and Fischer 1986:114-115]

Examples of critique through cross-cultural juxtaposition are numerous in contemporary anthropology (Maybury-Lewis 1992; Mead 1928, 1937, 1939, 1963; Moran 2006; Netting 1993; Schlegel 1998). Taking only one example, Schlegel's (1998) ethnographic account of the indigenous Teduray society in the Philippines juxtaposes an egalitarian, cooperative, spiritual and non-materialistic society with surrounding societies including a modernizing Philippine mainstream and the fully modern United States. Schlegel brings the juxtaposition home through a reflexive writing style that demonstrates how his own values and lifestyle, rooted in the modern West, were transformed by his immersion as an anthropologist in the exotic culture of Teduray life.

Marcus and Fischer recognize that their call for combining these two forms of cultural critique – epistemological and cross-cultural juxtaposition – puts the anthropologist in a difficult position. Merging these two styles of critique, paying attention to both ideology and social life in a single ethnographic project

> requires the cultural critic to be self-critical of the origins of his own ideas and arguments, while delivering interpretations of life in a society of which he, like his subjects, is a full member. In other words, cultural criticism must include an account of the *positioning* of the critic in relation to that which is critiqued and secondly, the critic must be able to *pose alternatives* to the conditions he is criticizing. [Marcus and Fischer 1986:115]

For Marcus and Fischer, these tasks have not been adequately accomplished in the past, relying too much on idealistic, romantic, or *utopian* constructions rather than empirically generated theories or data.

> Cultural critics have proposed a pure, abstract principle or standard against which to measure the contexts of modern life … or they look at the present from the vantage point of a more satisfying past, or they evoke a more promising future, or they see salvation in forms of social life contemporaneous with, but alien to, the West. [Marcus and Fischer 1986:115]

According to Marcus and Fischer, in a world of globalization where there are no pristine others, where modernity has penetrated every manifestation of socio-cultural life to some degree and where such rhetorical strategies are viewed with increasing skepticism by both scholars and the public, more authentic forms of cultural critique must be sought.

It is at this point in their treatment that Marcus and Fischer begin to call for what I am phrasing as 'an ethnography of cultural critique'. The challenge for anthropology is to capture the ways in which cultural critique is playing out on the ground in different societies even as homogenizing forces of global capitalist modernity impinge on local conditions.

> For anthropology, the issue is how to conduct critical ethnography at home by making use of its cross-cultural perspective, but without falling prey to overly romantic or idealist representations of the exotic in order to pose a direct

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alternative to domestic conditions. … This scholarly process is really only a sharpening and enhancement of a common condition globally, in which members of different societies themselves are constantly engaged in this same comparative checking of reality against alternative possibilities. [Marcus and Fisher 1986:117]

The central ideas here are that cultural critique is most powerful when one is able to formulate viable, rather than "romantic," "abstract," "utopian" or "idealistic" alternatives and that people are everywhere engaged in the process of formulating such viable alternatives in their daily lives. Here, I wish to suggest only briefly that "utopian" alternatives deserve reconsideration in light of the discussions of the utility of utopianism and intentional community theorizing in previous chapters. I wish to respond to Marcus and Fischer's dismissal of utopian alternatives by reiterating that much of recent intentional community theorizing is an attempt to recover the idea of utopianism from previous dismissals. The recovery of the concept of utopianism suggests that utopian striving lies at the heart of cultural critique as it is manifested in the attempts of intentional communities to confront the tension between the real and the ideal. In this treatment, utopianism is a significant and valuable phenomenon for a world looking ahead to an uncertain and perilous future.

While Marcus and Fischer maintain their emphasis on the cross-cultural nature of ethnographic cultural critique, they also point out that cultural critique played out on the ground and the ethnographic representation of it need not rely on reference to the exotic other.

What matters, then, is not ideal life elsewhere, or in another time, but the discovery of new recombinant possibilities and meanings in the process of daily living anywhere. Alternatives, then, must be suggested within the bounds of the situations and lifestyles that are the objects of cultural criticism. [Marcus and Fischer 1986:115-116]

In this view, the cultural critique becomes even more viable when it suggests alternatives that arise not purely from reference to the cultural other, but from the imaginative reworking of the cultural materials one is provided with by one's own society, especially as it is positioned within

the web of transnational flows, what Appadurai calls the "global ethnoscape" (1996). Here we are reminded also of Appadurai's assertion that it is imagination's role in social life "through which collective patterns of dissent and new designs for collective life emerge" (1999:3). In a postmodern world, a multitude of cultural elements are available to be drawn on by the imagination in the construction of alternative values and institutions; the question for the ethnographer is how these diverse cultural elements are put to use in the service of cultural critique. Intentional communities appear to represent contexts in which just such questions can be directly confronted.

For Marcus and Fischer, the identification and representation of critical perspectives and projects on the ground – what I am calling an ethnography of cultural critique – is at the same time the realization of an important critical intellectual goal and an affirmation that ethnography can, if an appropriate methodological approach is taken, continue to pursue its emancipatory potential despite the crisis of representation and the polemic of the science wars. The ethnographic interpretation of cultural critique allows the intellectual to maintain his interest in the emancipatory promise of cultural critique while at the same time retaining a commitment to methodological objectivity. Such an approach situates the idea and actuality of cultural difference at home at a time when the appeal of the exotic, primitive other is declining amongst an over-exposed and desensitized public. It also coincides with recent developments in history whereby historical narratives are retold from the subaltern perspective by the subaltern. To illustrate, I quote Marcus and Fischer at length:

> Although intellectuals articulate a critique of society of their own, authentically this critique should come from the working class. A major goal of Marxist cultural criticism is thus to retrieve, or discover, the de facto critique of society embedded in the everyday life experiences of working-class people. … By representing their critique of society, the ethnographer makes the cultural criticism more authentic: it is no longer the critique of the detached intellectual:

rather it is the critique by the subject unearthed through ethnographic engagement. The importance of ethnography is that there are potentially many such critiques and it is for the cultural critic to discover them, represent them, indicate their provenance or incidence and explore their insight and meaning. These, after all, are the sources of diversity in the cultural arena and constitute the everyday, unintellectualized cultural criticism of groups from various perspectives. … The task of ethnographic cultural critique is to discover the variety of modes of accomodation and resistance by individuals to their shared social order. It is a strategy for discovering diversity in what appears to be an ever more homogenous world. The cultural critic becomes in effect a reader of cultural criticisms, discovered ethnographically, rather than an independent intellectual originator of critical insight. [Marcus and Fisher 1986:132-133]

Here, I wish to bring Brown's conceptualization of intentional communities from an anthropological perspective to bear on the argument at hand. Marcus and Fischer mention "countercultural communities" (what Brown and I refer to as intentional communities) briefly in the process of discussing potential sites for the type of ethnographic undertaking that they are suggesting:

Much repatriated anthropology predictably deals with traditional anthropological subjects: kinship, migrants, ethnic minorities, public rituals, religious cults, *countercultural communities*. The most important subject for cultural criticism, however, is not these conventionally defined topics, but the study of mass-cultural forms and, somewhat more tentatively, mainstream middle-class life. These pose the kinds of broader questions addressed by the cultural critics of the 1920s and 1930s about stratification, cultural hegemony and changing modes of perception. [Marcus and Fischer 1986:153, emphasis added]

Following Brown, it is a central premise of my research that "intentional communities … constitute an important form of cultural critique" (Brown 2002:153). Intentional communities are an outlet for many of the frustrations of modern life in the U.S. and elsewhere. They are places where people – working class, middle class, bourgeoisie or otherwise – are enacting their epistemological critiques by creating and participating in cross-cultural juxtapositions. As such, I suggest that intentional communities are, contrary to Marcus and Fischer's suggestion, prime examples of sites where the authentic cultural critiques that Marcus and Fischer seek can be

found. Intentional communities present anthropologists with an opportunity to engage in an ethnography of cultural critique.

Examples of Cultural Critique in Anthropological Research

Over the last two decades, ethnographic research and writing by anthropologists working in many areas has followed lines of theoretical development suggested by Marcus and Fischer in their conceptualization of anthropology as cultural critique. Here, I discuss only two examples: Fox and Starn's conceptualizations of "the midways of mobilization" and Earle and Simonelli's work among the Zapatista's in Chiapas, Mexico. The contributions to Fox and Starn's edited volume *Between Resistance and Revolution* (1997) are particularly good examples. The affinity of their project with that called for by Marcus and Fischer when they suggested we find "unintellectualized cultural critique" and "alternative possibilities" acted out "in everyday life experiences" becomes apparent upon closer examination. Fox and Starn led a group in examining what they dubbed "the midways of mobilization" or

> intermediate forms of mobilization … that tend to be marginalized in the analysis of protest and insurgency" on the one hand, or "the small and often surreptitious, acts of footdragging, false deference, gossip, evasion and pilfering that James Scott dubbed the "weapons of the weak" [on the other]. [Fox and Starn 1997:2-3]

The contributors to Fox and Starn's volume use ethnographic accounts to analyze these "midways of mobilization" where "themes of personal desire, local initiative and human inventiveness must be starting points for analysis of social protest" (Fox and Starn 1997:8). Documenting diverse forms of innovative, mid-range resistance in places as diverse as Columbia (Escobar 1997) and South Korea (Abelmann 1997), Fox and Starn's "midways of mobilization" in many ways parallel the sort of cultural critique I have suggested characterizes intentional communities.

Perhaps an even more direct example of an ethnography of cultural critique in the work of anthropologists is Earle and Simonelli's *Uprising of Hope: Sharing the Zapatista Journey to Alternative Development* (2005). In this work, they document Zapatismo as "a twenty-first century experiment in democracy and development" (Earle and Simonelli 2005:5). *Uprising of Hope* brings together the stories of diverse people with divergent histories who nonetheless share a set of values and a determination to create "a political third space." Bringing together the two forms of cultural critique that Marcus and Fischer lay out, epistemological and cross-cultural juxtaposition, the people in the Chiapas communities studied by Earle and Simonelli share a "sense of disjuncture from the past, a profound distrust of the government based on repeated betrayals, a hope and faith that life can change with sacrifice to the larger social cause and profound love of the campesino smallholder lifestyle" (Earle and Simonelli 2005:6). Their "peaceful civil resistance is a personal, familial and community commitment to resist political, economic and social entrapment that comes with participation in specific government programs and practices" (2005:8). In the course of their resistance, they have "struggled to define and implement alternative models of development and governance using administrative practice derived in part from indigenous customs" (2005:8). Like so many forms of cultural critique, their project is ongoing with outcomes yet to be determined; cultural critique is utopian striving, but it does not lead to utopia.

Another layer of significance that emerges from Earle and Simonelli's work is the changes that working with the purveyors of such deeply committed form of cultural critique requires of anthropological research, theory and methodology. Such an undertaking places the anthropologist at the crossroads of objectivist research, critical inquiry and participatory activism. Earle and Simonelli's work suggests that while the ethnographic examination of

cultural critique does allow one to maintain a degree of methodological objectivity, it also requires one to become personally engaged with the issues at hand and with the ways in which the purveyors of cultural critique experience those issues in their daily lives. These methodological issues will be discussed at greater length in the following chapter. For now, I return to intentional communities and cultural critique.

Brown's *Community as Cultural Critique*

Marcus and Fischer's articulation of cultural critique has been effectively applied to the conceptualization of intentional communities by Susan Love Brown. In a contribution to her own edited volume *Intentional Community: An Anthropological Perspective*, Brown applies Anthony F.C. Wallace's concept of revitalization, Marcus and Fischer's ideas about cultural critique and Donald Janzen's 'intentional community interface' to an understanding of the nature of contemporary intentional communities. This useful anthropological analysis of intentional communities has served as a partial foundation for my own research. It echoes the idea that intentional communities arise out of a critical dissatisfaction with the prevailing cultural forms of the societies in which they exist. Brown's treatment grounds this idea in anthropological terms. Specifically, her use of Marcus and Fischer's articulation of cultural critique makes the ethnographic study of intentional communities relevant to current theoretical debates about the nature of human agency and social change and to methodological debates about creating anthropological understandings of our own culture and the nature of ethnographic representation. Her contribution will be treated in detail below.

Brown ties together the concepts of cultural critique and revitalization by showing that cultural critique is inherent to the revitalization process itself as it was elaborated by Wallace. She holds that revitalization movements are essentially cultural critiques because, according to

Wallace, revitalization movements are unique kinds of culture phenomena characterized by "a deliberate, organized, conscious effort by members of a society to construct a more satisfying culture" (Wallace 1956:265). Using various examples of intentional community including, most prominently, Ananda Cooperative Village in California, Brown shows how intentional communities follow the process that Wallace delineated for revitalization movements in constructing and acting on their cultural critiques. Finally, she notes, following Donald Janzen (1981), that for intentional communities to be successful in creating change based on their critiques, they must develop a way of productively interfacing with the larger society. Those communities that do not do this are doomed to failure.

My interest lies more in her identification of intentional communities as a form of cultural critique than in her identification of them as a form of revitalization movement. While the general premise of the argument is appropriate, one need not identify an intentional community as a form of revitalization movement in order to demonstrate that they constitute important forms of cultural critique. In fact, I disagree with Brown regarding the usefulness of the revitalization concept for understanding intentional communities. A distinct problem arises when one identifies intentional communities as a form of revitalization movement. Wallace posited that revitalization movements most often involve a prophet or charismatic leader and Brown follows this model in her analysis of Ananda Cooperative Village as a revitalistic intentional community.

While Ananda clearly had a charismatic leader, many contemporary intentional communities do not. In fact, it is the very lack of charismatic leadership and a commitment to egalitarian governance that makes so many contemporary, sustainability-oriented intentional communities both intriguing and potentially emancipatory. Indeed it is the lack of charismatic

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leadership that is a root assumption underlying my research question: *Is cultural critique a main motivating factor in people's decisions to join intentional communities?* My preliminary research suggested that many people developed similar critical perspectives out of relatively diverse individual backgrounds. These people made individual decisions to join together in intentional community in order to act on those critical perspectives where no charismatic leadership was involved.

This is a relatively minor point though. Brown's main argument about intentional communities as a significant form of cultural critique, along the lines suggested in 1986 by Marcus and Fischer, still holds. In conceptualizing intentional communities as a form of cultural critique, Brown's main aim is "to understand the way in which people in state societies not only respond to change but through those responses critique their own societies and sometimes change them" (Brown 2002:158). This opens up an important window on identity and agency, on the way in which human beings define their place in the world and seek to create change according to the values that they choose to use to orient their lives. In doing so, it centers attention on the tension between the real and the ideal and on utopian striving and intentional community building as attempts to confront this tension.

With this point, we are reminded of Gramsci's notion of organic intellectuals and the critical role that they must play in cultural change. For Gramsci, organic intellectuals are those associated with the rise of new classes embedded as they are in a particular position relative to larger productive relations. Gramsci's concern is with the role that intellectuals play in the process by which power is produced, reproduced or transformed. They synthesize and articulate an ascendant worldview.

> In Gramsci's eyes, intellectuals are crucial to the process whereby a major new culture, one that represents the world-view of an emerging class, comes into

being. It is intellectuals who transform the incoherent and fragmentary 'feelings'
of those who live a particular class position into a coherent and reasoned account
of the world as it appears from that position. [Crehan 2002:129-130]

Organic intellectuals arise from within the ranks of particular classes and, as such, they have direct access to popular sentiments. It is important to note that organic intellectuals are not so much individuals in elite positions in universities, but rather individuals who are able to articulate particular, emergent worldviews.

Intellectuals speak, as it were, for the fundamental groups in society; ultimately, their polished, articulate accounts of reality are fashioned out of the raw lumps of clay given by the day-to-day experience of those groups' lives. One aspect of the close link between economic realities and intellectuals is that the rise of new classes is associated with the emergence of new types of intellectuals. [Crehan 2002:137]

As such, organic intellectuals are positioned in such a way that they can produce and articulate knowledge to resist and transform hegemonic cultural logics and practices.

In this conceptualization, cultural critique is a tool not just of the anthropologist, the scholar, or the public intellectual, but of the mass of citizens who make up a society. As has been made evident, this is a point that Marcus and Fischer wished to emphasize in their treatment of cultural critique. For them, anthropology as cultural critique gains power from the ability to locate actual critiques out there in the world rather than constructing the critiques from the disengaged position of a public intellectual making cross-cultural comparisons from the armchair. These on-the-ground critiques gain additional power over purely theoretically constructed critiques because they often meet one of the challenges that anthropologists cannot: the construction of actual alternatives in response to the critiques themselves. As this research demonstrates, the study of contemporary intentional communities reveals significant sustainability-oriented cultural critiques, critiques that are embedded in larger critical discourses. These critiques are acted upon by deliberately changing relationships among people, property

and patterns of production and consumption and by creating new kinds of socio-cultural, political-economic and technological institutions and practices. At a fundamental level, this involves reconceptualizing the individual's relationships with the natural and human worlds. It involves consciously choosing to attempt to move away from a position of privilege and domination by trying to take into account how individual decisions and actions affect the greater common good.

Intentional Communities as Cultural Critique in the Work of Anthropologists

How does the work of other anthropologists support or refute the conceptualization of intentional communities as cultural critique? Few anthropologists have given much attention to the topic of intentional communities. Among those who do, almost none of them provide a systematic theoretical treatment. However, it is useful to review some of the ways in which other anthropologists have discussed intentional communities with an eye to whether or not those treatments support the assertions made by Brown and myself regarding intentional communities as forms of cultural critique.

Several distinguished anthropologists including Melford Spiro, John Hostetler and John Bennett have turned their attention to intentional communities at some point in their careers. Although it has not generally been central to their theorizations of intentional communities, these anthropologists have generally recognized that intentional community building is an historical manifestation of cultural critique. For example, Spiro begins his work, *Kibbutz: Venture in Utopia*, by stating "where others were content to perpetuate the cultural heritage of the past, they were motivated to found a new culture – a *kibbutz*" (1956:3). Spiro shows that the kibbutz' fundamental grounding in equality, cooperation and simple living was a deliberately culturally

constructed alternative to predominantly competitive, hierarchical and often wasteful cultural models that were dominant at the time of the Jewish Israeli Zionist diaspora.

The idea of cultural critique is apparent in Hostetler's and Bennett's treatments of intentional community as well. Hostetler's ethnographic monograph *The Hutterites of North America* shows that for the Hutterites, one of several Anabaptist sects, the formation of intentional communities would encompass alternative institutions to those characteristic of the society of which they were so critical. "Instead of reforming the medieval church, the Anabaptists wanted to withdraw from its influences entirely and found voluntary church groups. Their views challenged existing social, economic and political institutions" (Hostetler 1967:1). The Hutterites "wished to establish a Christian-type community in which private property would be abolished and temporal possessions would be surrendered voluntarily by the individual" (Hostetler 1967:2). Finally, in John Bennett's treatment of "the communitarian tradition", he states that he has chosen "to focus on those voluntary communitarian groups that have maintained a clear dissenting, rejecting attitude toward the majority society …" and thus does not include monastic orders in his treatment (Bennett 1974:204). The critical cultural element in Bennett's definition is thus clear as well.

A less well known, but perhaps even more explicit example of the theme of cultural critique in an anthropological treatment of intentional community lies at the heart of Peter Munch's account of the South Atlantic island community of Tristan da Cunha. This ethnography of intentional community as cultural critique is unique in that the community's continued existence following the penetration of the global economy in the mid-20th century rather than the community's initial founding represents a cultural critique of "the ethos of Economic Man" (Munch 1970). The community of Tristan da Cunha was founded in 1817 on an isolated volcanic

island in the middle of the South Atlantic. Tristan da Cunha's economy, initially based on trade with passing ships, shifted to a subsistence economy based on cooperation and selective reciprocity as the advent of steam power shifted the shipping lanes and the island community became more isolated. But with the rapid global expansion of industrial capitalism following World War II, the island community found itself forced to confront choices about whether or not to become incorporated into this larger political economic system.

It was the islanders' reactions to three different interactions with the global cash economy – the attempt to start a fishing industry on the island that would employ the islanders, the construction of a harbor on the island using the islanders' labor and the islanders' evacuation to England for two years following a volcanic eruption in 1961 – that represent cultural critique. These interactions created "a conflict of values … in which the ethos of the Tristan Man was pitched against that of the Economic Man" (Munch 1970:181). In each case, the islanders chose to prioritize their egalitarian social relations and cooperative subsistence economy over the opportunity to fully engage in the industrial capitalist economy through individually contracted labor. Munch portrays the situation following their lengthy evacuation to England:

> Two years of complete submersion in an industrial economy, with tough competition for jobs and material earnings, had indeed changed the Islander's attitude to outsiders but had apparently not had the effect of damaging or replacing the internal social structure of the community with its ethical principles of basic equality, mutual aid and voluntary cooperation along well-established personal relationships in a web of selective reciprocity. If anything, the Islanders had developed a greater awareness of their own identity as "Tristans," and a deeper appreciation of their own way of life as a value to be cherished and preserved, as something that set them apart and made them unique but far from inferior to the man from outside. [Munch 1970:263]

Their collective demand to be returned to the more "primitive" conditions of the island, their rebuff of the opportunity to partake of "progress," was received incredulously by English society

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and media. The islanders did not need to construct an alternative in response to their critique of modern, industrial society; they were already living it in intentional community.

Jentri Ander's analysis of an intentional community on the northern coast of California reveals how contemporary communitarians are motivated by critiques of modern, capitalist, industrial society similar to those that drove Munch's Tristan islanders. Her ethnographic account of Mateel brings into focus specific dimensions of cultural critique, sustainability and intentional community that I have found prominent in my own research. In a book derived from her dissertation research, *Beyond Counterculture: The Community of Mateel*, Anders explores the development of a coherent cultural system within the intentional community of Mateel over the course of fifteen years, a cultural system that has as its central element an environmental ethic born of cultural critique of modern, industrial American society.

The title of Anders' work alone leaves no doubt that cultural critique is inherent to Mateel's community building enterprise: *Beyond Counterculture: The Community of Mateel*. In this regard Anders is explicit:

> Central characteristics Mateelians share with other countercultural movements are: a discontent with mainstream American society and a strong desire to avoid what society held for them. Their actions should be interpreted as efforts "counter" to those aspects of modern, industrialized American society they consider dehumanizing, ecologically unsound, or alienating. It would be a mistake, however, to depict Mateelian culture as … simply an effort to counteract negative elements found in a way of life that had been left behind. What began as a movement of exiles has evolved, through the reversal that shaped countercultural thought, into a series of new approaches to old problems. [Anders 1990:7]

Anders depicts a community-based critical perspective that combines both modes of cultural critique suggested by Marcus and Fischer – epistemological and cross cultural – always with an environmental ethic at its core. As Bodley notes in his forward to the book,

> The significance of the research lies in its basic concern for exploring cultural solutions to some of the most intractable problems of our time: resource depletion, environmental deterioration and a wide range of socioeconomic ills. … Anders describes a cultural system that indeed responds to many of these problems and she considers how such a culture can be created. [Bodley 1990:vii-viii]

Critical of dominant socio-cultural practices, political economic institutions and powerful technologies, Mateelians have created alternative cultural models that enable them to address their critiques. From Anders' account, it appears that these utopian communitarians have been successful in their confrontation with the tension between the real and the ideal.

Drawing on over ten years of ethnographic fieldwork in the community, Anders adeptly walks the line between participant and observer as she portrays the cultural critiques and environmental ethic constructed by the members of the community. Through rich and provocative ethnographic description, she reveals personal and group histories of challenged worldviews, psychological, spiritual and socio-cultural changes and the construction of alternative political, economic, social and familial structures over the course of a single generation as cultural "refugees" came to share a single landscape. Anders shows how Mateelians "hope to bring about the creation of a new culture in which individuals find spiritual and psychological rewards as preservationists and conservers, not as wasteful consumers" (1990:10). In doing so, Mateelians are acting at the disjuncture between the real and the ideal.

> This motif for changing the world by changing the way we communicate with ourselves and with others has become a persistent and repeated theme in Mateelian culture. The expression "you make your own reality" has the status of an adage and the complaints of children and adults are frequently met with this truism. … The first step in rejecting what Mateelians saw as American hypocrisy was to disconnect themselves from the economic system, a process that meant facing unforeseen consequences. [Anders 1990:14-15]

In the process of striving for a new culture, Mateelians reject the derogatory use of labels such as utopians or ascetics. Theirs is a practical journey and their construction of more simple lives for themselves is seen, not as sacrificial, but as fulfilling.

In exploring the creation of a counterculture in the intentional community of Mateel Anders addresses the same sorts of questions that Fox confronts in his examination of Gandhian activism. Where does culture change come from? Can culture change spring as readily from the realm of ideas as from the material realm? For Anders, the most important conclusion of her research is that culture change can come from ideas that exist within the minds of individuals.

> The existence of Mateel and other similar communities is living proof that if one is willing to undergo the pain of changing culture at the level of the individual unconscious, where the basis for most of culture lies and if there are others also trying, culture change in the direction of ecological balance is possible. [1990:286]

As I will show, my research in Celo Community and Earthaven Ecovillage bears this conclusion out. Further, it suggests that this sort of cultural critique is not an isolated phenomenon. An examination of Celo and Earthaven shows how the utopian cultural critiques of one community may reach their limits in one time and place while also providing the foundation for further cultural critiques and utopian strivings in another. This analysis suggests that cultural critique and utopianism are processes not ends, processes that play out across time and space in the context of larger movements embedded in history. This is the process of developmental utopianism that I described in the previous chapter.

I would like to end this section by discussing critical geographer Mike Carr's treatment of the bioregional movement. Carr situates the bioregional movement as a component of civil society, out of which emerges an ecologically-based cultural critique of globalization and its overwhelming tendencies towards economization and bureaucratization of society and human-

nature relations. Although the concept of cultural critique is not as explicitly central to his work as it is to mine, his approach to the bioregional movement is in many ways an analog to my approach to intentional communities. We each see these movements as working for the cultural changes that will be required if we are to meet the sustainability challenge. The similarities between Carr's ideas and my own and between those of bioregionalists and sustainability-oriented communitarians, are clear:

> The stories and examples presented here show that bioregionalists integrate cultural change into the centre of their paradigm of social transformation. Bioregionalists critique conspicuous consumption and they work to implement changes in their lives and those of others, chiefly through horizontal efforts in civil society, building place-based communities and networks that respect ecological limits. [Carr 2004:16]

Carr's treatment of the bioregional movement, based as it is on prolonged participant observation, represents an ethnography of cultural critique, an ethnography of a grassroots social movement striving for sustainability much as I suggest that sustainability-oriented intentional communities are. The fact that there is a great deal of overlap between these two movements (Indeed, Earthaven Ecovillage hosted the Ninth Continental Bioregional Congress) is testament to this very idea.

Cultural Critique in Celo Community and Earthaven Ecovillage

The community building endeavors of Celo, Earthaven and other sustainability-oriented intentional communities embody the components of cultural critique set forth by Marcus and Fischer: combined epistemological critique and cross-cultural juxtaposition, the positioning of the critic relative to the objects of critique and the construction of viable alternatives. The members of contemporary sustainability-oriented intentional communities are increasingly acknowledging their complicity in and hegemonic subservience to socio-cultural and political-economic systems that simultaneously justify and obscure extensive environmental degradation

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and associated social injustices on both global and local scales. The evidence gathered to date to illustrate the dire condition of Earth's ecosystems and associated social inequities need not be recapitulated here. The point is that people in sustainability-oriented intentional communities are constructing viable alternatives to cultural and political economic systems that they perceive as unsustainable and unjust, systems in which they have participated for too long. Having engaged with epistemological critique leading to their decision to seek community life, they are now engaged in creating the cross-cultural juxtaposition, the construction of viable cultural alternatives that, they hope, are more just and sustainable. The alternatives that they are constructing encompass many of the components of human social life and the sustainability equation: politics, economics, agronomy, human-nature interconnections, social relations, governance institutions, worldviews, spirituality, technology, education, knowledge production, mythology.

Perhaps even more intriguing is that in the process of doing so, the members of sustainability-oriented intentional communities like Celo Community and Earthaven Ecovillage are creatively drawing on the components of earlier anthropological cultural critiques that Marcus and Fischer pointed to: the ecologically noble savage, the centrality of small community and the importance of spiritual vision. A quotation from my research here is illustrative.

> Almost [all] indigenous peoples believe that if they stop doing their rituals, if they stop doing their prayers, if they stop going about their walkabouts and re-singing the world into existence, that literally the world would disintegrate. I tend to believe that. And since there's only a few of them left, and we are on the verge of disintegration, I take them at face value. I view mythology as a perfectly valid way of viewing consensual reality, not as mutually exclusive to consensual reality. And most indigenous cultures are very clear that there are substances and powers to sit with and commune with. And we have utterly lost that. [interview in Earthaven Ecovillage 6-5-05]

Based on their critiques, the members of contemporary, sustainability-oriented intentional communities are repositioning themselves with regard to the natural world, acknowledging their place within the sphere of natural resources and services that sustains them and taking an active part in the production of their own subsistence. Intentionally joining together in small communities, collectively governing themselves and developing more intimate social relationships, is an integral component of this revisioning. And, whether it manifests on an individual or community level, whether it is explicit or implicit, this reconnection with nature and with people through community, is often accompanied (or compelled) by a spiritual affirmation.

All of this points to the fact that anthropological discourses and critiques have become public discourses, elements of an expanding cultural universe from which individuals may draw to imaginatively construct alternatives to dominant cultural systems. Anthropological cultural critiques have become part of much broader cultural discourses whereby individuals and groups are recognizing their complicity in hegemonic forces that result in unjust and unsustainable outcomes and taking action to construct viable alternative socio-cultural, political-economic and technological institutions. Direct reference to anthropological discourse or ethnographic accounts is rare (although I have encountered this in my fieldwork); this is a creative process whereby people, recognizing their complicity, are choosing the values upon which to construct a more meaningful and in many cases a more just and sustainable, life. Fundamental to this process is a reconnection with the natural, social, productive and spiritual realms.

It is not always the case that intentional community members have developed elaborate forms of cultural critique nor do decisions to join intentional community necessarily derive from a deep reconnecting with nature, spirit, or community. Members of intentional communities may

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not be consciously seeking to create broader cultural change through lived responses to cultural critique. Their decisions to join the intentional community may be simply a logical outcome of their life experiences rather than the result of a critical examination of broader cultural values and institutions. Indeed amongst Celo's members today, the critical thrust seems only half present. Many of the members of Celo Community that I interviewed did not invoke epistemological critiques to explain their decision to join the community. But this must be accounted for by appealing to history – to the critical cultural work that previous Celo members accomplished in laying the foundation of the community and to the ways in which society both locally and nationally has drifted closer to Celo's positions. By joining Celo one is, whether or not they are fully aware of the radical significance, making a significant break with dominant models that emphasize individualism over community and immediate profit over longer term sustainability. Celo's institutions, evolved over time in response to earlier critiques, manifest commitments to egalitarianism, cooperation, community and place to the detriment of individual profit seeking activities.

In Celo, what was once fairly radical and utopian has now become more accessible on a popular level; many who do not conceive themselves "outcasts," "misfits" or cultural critics have found Celo's alternative models attractive. This is a testament to the success of intentional community as cultural critique and a manifestation of the process of developmental utopianism. One must also recognize that communities such as Earthaven Ecovillage, where the cultural critique is much more explicit and forceful (where the threads of Celo's utopian critiques are being used as the foundation for further endeavors in utopian communitarianism), would likely not be in the position they are in without having learned from and built upon the experiences of communities such as Celo. In Earthaven, all of the members that I interviewed articulated

cultural critiques to explain their decisions to join the community. Earthaven has used Celo's institutions for community governance and land tenure as foundations upon which to build new kinds of alternative cultural models to address their epistemological critiques. Thus in the larger context of the intentional communities movement and through the process of developmental utopianism, Celo's "utopian" dream lives on.

In the chapters that follow, I show how Celo Community and Earthaven Ecovillage as they exist today are the result of a variety of cultural critiques and utopian visions that were articulated and acted upon during different historical eras. Celo grows from Arthur Morgan's critique of modern, industrial society and his utopian vision of the small community, from Quaker critiques of a society based on war and hierarchy and their utopian visions of peace, egalitarianism and spiritual unity and on the back-to-the-land movement's critique of materialism and alienation from nature and its utopian vision of a more simple, fulfilling life lived closer to the natural world. Earthaven grows from similar, but more contemporary critiques of the global political economy and the social injustice, ecological degradation and cultural alienation it creates. It grows from permaculture's cultural critique of capitalist political economies and its utopian vision of more sustainable human communities and from individual members' utopian desires to take greater control of and responsibility for their livelihoods in the context of an interconnected social community. I will also show how Earthaven has built upon the alternative institutions created in Celo to further a unique utopian vision of a sustainable culture. This ethnographic analysis will reveal people making their lives at the juncture between the real and the ideal and will suggest that their endeavors should be taken seriously if critical academics wish to contribute to solutions to the sustainability challenge. It will show how the confrontation with the tension between the real and the ideal plays out, through the processs of

developmental utopianism, across the boundaries of individual intentional communities and within broader social movements that transcend historical eras.

Chapter 5

THEORIZING ETHNOGRAPHIC METHODS:

ANTHROPOLOGY, UTOPIANISM, & CULTURAL CRITIQUE

How does one begin to fill the space between the utopias of the activists, exuberant in speculation if impossible of realization and the monographs of academics, brimming over with tables and case studies but with little relevance to the next district or another resource? How, in other words, does one begin to develop a theoretical framework that will provide a better scientific understanding of society/nature and at the same time be forward-looking, aiding the ambitious 'search for sustainability'? [Guha 1999:104]

At first thought, utopianism and a genuine social science may seem to be incompatible. But they are not. Utopianism is compatible with everything but determinism and it can as easily be the over-all context of social science as can any other creative vision. ... Utopianism, after all, is social planning and planning is indispensable in the kind of world that technology, democracy and high population bring. [Nisbet 1962:xvii]

We must move ... utopistics to the center of social science. Utopistics is the study of possible utopias, their limitations and the constraints on achieving them. It is the analytic study of real historical alternatives in the present. It is the reconciliation of the search for truth and the search for goodness. [Wallerstein1997:1255]

* * *

These quotations are an affirmation of the argument that I have been building. They suggest that utopianism and cultural critique, inherent characteristics of intentional communities, should be a prime subject matter for anthropology and social science research. The following discussion explores how research in intentional communities can help us to confront some of the epistemological and methodological dilemmas that we face as we approach the sustainability challenge. It ends with a description of the ethnographic methods I employed in my research on intentional communities.

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Ethnography and Cultural Critique

The intellectual ferment created by the emergence of poststructural and postcolonial theory raises serious questions for anthropology and the social sciences, especially when these avenues of theory building are constructed in opposition to positivist conceptions of objective social science. The polemic encompassed by "the Science Wars" (Brosius 2006b) places anthropology in a difficult position when it comes to effectively engaging with emancipatory solutions to contemporary problems encompassed by the sustainability challenge. We may agree that both discursive and materialist analyses are equally valid methods that should be combined in attempting to understand the causes of contemporary problems. However, the promotion of particular solutions to those problems is contingent on particular normative judgments as to what is the best way to approach the amelioration of them. While the past and the present are subject to direct empirical examination, future courses of action derive from particular value judgments. Those that advocate for a strictly objective framework for anthropological research believe that normative judgments are not within the domain of appropriate anthropological research and knowledge production. If advocacy is to be held outside of the realm of social science, then how are we to help direct the course of human events to more emancipatory and sustainable outcomes?

This polemic has manifested itself in various constructions of anthropological research as objective, critical or activist in nature (D'Andrade 1995, Scheper-Hughes 1995, Hale 2006) and has raised questions about anthropology's relationship with critical theory and cultural criticism. Scholars such as D'Andrade, who define anthropology as an objective social science, assert that anthropology's authority derives from an ability to separate "objective" and "subjective" accounts. In D'Andrade's view, "*objectivity* refers just to the degree to which an account gives

information about the object being described" (1995:399-400) and avoids any normative judgments about the object under consideration. In this view, any attempt to insert moral evaluations of the author into the description is a detriment to the account's objectivity and authority. In contrast, critical scholars such as Scheper-Hughes prompt us "to imagine what forms a politically committed and morally engaged anthropology might take" (1995:410). The critical scholar is one who argues that we, as authoritative social scientists, have an ethical responsibility to move a critical, moral sensibility to the center of our work. "Those of us who make our living observing and recording the misery of the world have a particular obligation to reflect critically on the impact of the harsh images of human suffering that we foist on the public" (Scheper-Hughes 1995:416). Activist anthropologists such as Hale take this ethical responsibility a step further by suggesting that political and moral commitments to the people we study should determine the nature of the research projects that we design and undertake. "By activist research, I mean a method through which we affirm a political alignment with an organized group of people in struggle and allow dialogue with them to shape each phase of the process" (Hale 2006:97).

There is a great deal of tension within anthropology amongst those who first and foremost position themselves as cultural critics or political advocates and those who insist upon (and hold to the plausibility of) maintaining a neutral, objective stance as social scientists engaging with issues that often have immense political and moral ramifications. In what I have presented thus far, I have suggested that pursuing Marcus and Fischer's calls for an ethnography of cultural critique might enable us to navigate among these positions by deploying ethnography to examine cases of cultural critique and utopianism acted out in everyday life. Indeed, there is not such a great distance between Marcus and Fischer's call for 'an ethnography of cultural

critique' and the position taken by D'Andrade when he advocates for "objective models" as the fundamental basis for anthropological research.

In my previous discussion of Marcus and Fischer's work, I omitted the last line of a long quotation, reserving it for insertion in the current discussion. Here, it bears special attention. "The task of ethnographic cultural critique is to discover the variety of modes of accommodation and resistance by individuals to their shared social order. … *There are, of course, technical problems involved in the ethnographic process*" (Marcus and Fischer 1986:133, emphasis added). Marcus and Fischer are suggesting that we must not only represent, reconstruct and contextualize historically, politically and culturally "the de facto critique of society embedded in the everyday life experiences of working class people"; we must also be able to show that we are not merely constructing within the data gathered from research participants that which we wish to see and prove, that we are not just projecting our own values, morals, politics, or critical positions through our interpretations of the data we as ethnographers gather. "The statement and assertion of values are not the aim of ethnographic cultural critique; rather, the empirical exploration of the historical and cultural conditions for the articulation and implementation of different values is" (Marcus and Fischer 1986:167). Marcus and Fischer are suggesting that we must use sound, objective, replicable ethnographic methods in the ethnographic examination of cultural critique.

On this point Marcus and Fischer and D'Andrade are in agreement. D'Andrade's argument against what he perceives as the ascendant use of "moral models" as a guiding force in anthropology is a seminal response to positions taken by "postmodernists" critical of anthropology's (and science and social science more broadly) perceived complicity in hegemony and oppression. D'Andrade contrasts the "objective models" he favors, models that he believes

function simply enough to describe reality, with the "moral models" employed by "postmodernists", models that function to "identify what is good and bad, to allocate praise and blame and also to explain how things not in themselves good or bad came to be so" (D'Andrade 1995:400). D'Andrade's argument is not that anthropologists should not have moral models, but that moral models (politics) should be kept separate from objective models in the conduct of anthropological research. D'Andrade explicitly notes that his position does not preclude an analysis of critical moral or political positions discovered in ethnographic locales: "Finally, it should be noted that trying to be objective does not preclude investigating other people's subjective worlds" (D'Andrade 1995:400). Set next to Marcus and Fischer's assertion above that ethnographic cultural critique aims not to assert values but to empirically analyze how they are so asserted, we see that Marcus and Fischer and D'Andrade can stand on common ground.

Indeed, my position is that anthropological research on intentional communities allows the anthropologist to employ a high degree of methodological objectivity in the analysis and representation of often explicitly critical cultural perspectives. In this case, the members of the intentional communities are the cultural critics and the anthropologist is working with them to analyze and interpret their cultural critiques and make them audible to the wider world. This is exactly what Marcus and Fischer suggest in their calls for ethnographies of cultural critique – locating, describing and contextualizing the cultural critiques as they are worked out by groups of people in particular historical and cultural contexts.

Ethnographic research in intentional communities thus represents one avenue along which to approach current epistemological and methodological dilemmas. Existing scholarship demonstrates how the intentional communities movement and the communities and individuals that comprise it, are engaged in a form of cultural criticism similar to that suggested by Marcus

and Fischer, but with the advantages that the cultural critiques – in the forms of both epistemological critique and cross-cultural juxtaposition – are articulated by ethnographic subjects and are accompanied by intentionally designed forms of practice that are direct responses to the critiques at hand. These are not the disengaged critiques of the intellectual promulgated from the armchair in the ivory tower of the academy. They are not critiques evoked at the expense of the social scientist's methodological objectivity. Rather, they are the critiques of everyday individuals actively working out solutions to perceived problems in the society in which they are active citizens. They are forms of critique that are available for analysis and further critique.

As indicated previously, recent communal studies literature (Schehr 1997, Brown 2002) suggests that the cultural critiques of intentional community members bear a strong resemblance to the transformative potential of what Gramsci called "organic intellectuals" (Gramsci 1971). The point being made in recent communal studies literature is similar to Gramsci's: for cultural transformation to occur – or alternatively, for a "counter hegemony" to be created – groups of intellectuals must rise from the ranks of the populace and engage in the critical, practical work of cultural transformation. Intentional communities are sites where people are bringing a critical sensitivity to the practical work of cultural change. Many members of contemporary sustainability-oriented intentional communities are critical of the global political economy because they believe it leads to ecological degradation and social inequity. Recognizing their own complicity in the hegemony of the global political economy, they are deliberately and voluntarily changing their relationships to people, property and production and consumption patterns in order to take greater responsibility for the economy that sustains them. This is not a matter of overt political action, but rather a project of fundamental cultural change enacted in

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everyday life. For many intentional community members, this process entails reconnecting with and situating themselves within the larger ecologies of humanity and the natural world. That they do so even as the inertia of predominant cultural forms, productive relationships and government policy often moves in opposition to their endeavors makes their efforts all the more intriguing to the anthropologist.

If this is the case, intentional communities are the types of utopian endeavors that the quotes at the beginning of this chapter suggest should be of fundamental interest to social scientists. They represent an opportunity for social science to be forward looking by exploring the political commitments and moral outcomes that arise from attempts to create alternatives to current conditions. Such sites thus suggest themselves as potentially fruitful arenas for anthropological engagement. Engaging them through academic research is a strategic choice. However, examining them does not entail the assertion of any moral or political models. We must recognize that due to the power ascribed by society to the social scientific enterprise, these critiques gain further power when they are amplified by ethnographers and other social scientists who seek to deconstruct, reconstruct and represent them. In engaging in an ethnography of cultural critique, the anthropologist must, as always, walk the fine line between advocating the political positions of the communities they study as a participant and maintaining a high degree of methodological objectivity as an analytical observer. As such, we must be sure to exercise caution and methodological objectivity in our research.

We must exercise caution against essentializing the subjects of our research in order to meet our own political goals. In our pursuit of the emancipatory project of scholarly engagement with subaltern peoples, we must avoid portraying those that we study as agents of cultural critiques that are in fact our own. We must use sound ethnographic methodologies to unearth the

cultural critiques and demonstrate how they are acted upon. For researchers seeking an authentic cultural critique of global capitalism by working with those at the margins, "it is a seductive idea … that the necessary insights are there in the lives of subjects to be unearthed by careful interpretation" (Marcus 1986:185). Employing a high degree of methodological objectivity helps to guard against this tendency.

Baviskar's account of tribal resistance to development in the Narmada Valley of India reflects her own personal struggle with this tendency. Baviskar relates how she approached her research clinging to the idea that adivasi cultures constitute critiques of development and represent sustainable, alternative social arrangements. She soon realized that adivasi struggles in the Narmada Valley were much more complicated than she imagined. She relates that her "neat theoretical framework linking nature-culture relationships to political critique, action and change, crumbled into an untidy jumble of contradictions" (1995:48). Putting it into perspective, Baviskar concludes,

> At issue here is the difference between the beliefs and practices of adivasis and of those who claim to speak on their behalf. Instead of assuming a congruence between these two sets of ideologies, we have to explore how differences may be united in a synthesis which gains from the normative vision of the intellectuals and, at the same time, incorporates a more realistic view of adivasi life. [1995:238]

At the same time, anthropologists must be cautious when engaging in cultural critique through their research, especially when our critiques are directed at strategic essentialisms employed by the subjects of our ethnographic research. For example, Brosius' discussion of the use of cultural critique in anthropology's "emancipatory project of engagement" with subaltern peoples expresses a cautionary tone in suggesting that we must be aware of the ramifications of our analyses for the people we study. Brosius (1999) exhorts scholars of subaltern environmental and indigenous rights movements to exercise caution with regards to any critiques they might

make of these movements' claims to authenticity. For Brosius, if we are to remain accountable to those movements that we study, we must balance critical assessments of the politics of identity against the realization that our critiques might be co-opted and used to delegitimize emancipatory social movements. "Today, scholars who study these movements are placed in a precarious position. The danger exists that our accounts and critiques may be appropriated by the opponents of these movements and deployed against them" (1999:180). Citing Fabian, Brosius asks,

> For those of us engaged in research on subaltern social movements, then, the question we must pose to ourselves is this: when we engage in critique, do we not go beyond mere complicity and enter into the realm of collaboration with existing structures of domination against those we study? Is critique not a form of betrayal? [1999:193]

Brosius' main point is that we must be aware of the potential consequences of our critiques of the strategic essentialisms employed by subaltern social movements and we must hold ourselves accountable to the subjects of our research.

Keeping in mind these cautionary tales, recognizing that both ethnographers and the subjects of ethnographic research are guilty of projecting false images in the midst of their emancipatory struggles, is it not still possible that critical anthropologists seeking to employ methodological objectivity to actively promote solutions to the sustainability challenge might find common ground with participants in emancipatory and subaltern social movements? The review of the literature on intentional communities presented in previous chapters suggests that this is a distinct possibility. Indeed many contemporary, sustainability-oriented intentional communities actively seek collaboration with the academic world. They wish not only that their projects may gain increasing legitimacy through academic channels. As reflexive movements struggling to assert their agency and to address the tension between the real and the ideal, they

are open to critiques of their endeavors and to methodological engagements that can challenge them and point the way to more effective practice that will enable them to attain their goals.

The process of ethnographic cultural critique may be employed in the study of any type of politically aligned group; the object of cultural critique or the political position advocated by those under study makes no difference to the ability of the ethnographer to apply the method to the situation. What I am saying here is not revolutionary. What I have stated is simply that one can employ methodological objectivity in the ethnographic analysis of moral and political positioning. At the same time, the topics chosen for investigation are inevitably a result of the particular values and interests of the investigator. Such strategic choices can be acknowledged and methodological objectivity can be maintained. One must be open to the possibility that they will not find exactly what they seek to find among the subjects they have chosen to investigate.

My choices to study sustainability-oriented intentional communities and to employ the degree of methodological objectivity inherent in traditional ethnographic methods are strategic ones. My initial investigations suggested to me that the members of contemporary, sustainability-oriented intentional communities are groups of people attempting to address the grave social and environmental problems that also concern so many anthropologists. The fact that my hypothesis that their endeavors were based on well-articulated cultural critiques similar to those promulgated by many critical anthropologists was not confirmed by all of my research participants (as I will show in the following chapters) is confirmation of the idea that methodological objectivity can be employed in the ethnographic analysis of cultural critique. It shows that even when one wishes to discover a certain kind of critique, they can, through the maintenance of methodological objectivity, be open to the possibility that they will not find it.

Operationalizing Cultural Critique

Before moving on to a more in depth discussion of the ethnographic methods I employed, I would like to recapitulate Marcus and Fischer's main conceptualization of cultural critique in order to emphasize the way in which I sought to identify cultural critique in my ethnographic research on intentional communities. Marcus and Fischer identified two kinds of cultural critique – epistemological and cross-cultural juxtaposition – and suggested cultural critique is most powerful when the two are combined. Epistemological critique is essentially a critique of ideology, a critique of the received wisdom that encapsulates the values that give meaning to social lives, a critique that operates by demystifying the functioning of power and the interests served by the promulgation of particular cultural values and practices. Cross-cultural juxtaposition is a more direct and empirical form of critique, a critique that operates by locating and describing exotic social institutions and comparing them with those of our own culture in order to show that less alienating forms of social life are possible.

Finally, Marcus and Fischer emphasize that viable cultural critiques must include a positioning of the critics themselves relative to that which is critiqued and they must pose realistic alternatives to that which is critiqued. In other words, the alternatives that are posed must not be grounded only in romantic idealizations of other cultures or other times that may not translate across cultural boundaries. Rather the alternatives must be practical options that are being enacted today within the bounds of the social contexts that are the objects of critique. Thus, in calling for an ethnography of cultural critique, Marcus and Fischer suggested that people everywhere, dissatisfied with or critical of the given socio-cultural realities, are actively enaged in the creation of cross-cultural juxtapositions. This is

> a common condition globally, in which members of different societies themselves
> are constantly engaged in this same comparative checking of reality against

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alternative possibilities. [Marcus and Fisher 1986:117] Alternatives, then, must be suggested within the bounds of the situations and lifestyles that are the objects of cultural criticism. [Marcus and Fischer 1986:115-116]

Thus, in my operational definition of cultural critique, cross-cultural juxtaposition is not an intellectual or rhetorical activity, but rather an active engagement of human agents with alterntive possibilities within the bounds of the social contexts against which their epistemological critiques are directed.

The main premise of Brown's work is that members of contemporary intentional communities are engaged in just such forms of critique. If so, then intentional communities present anthropologists with the opportunity to engage in 'an ethnography of cultural critique.' I have sought to determine if the members of contemporary, sustainability-oriented intentional communities are engaged in such forms of cultural criticism. In collecting my data I looked at the community's founding philosophies and asked the members of intentional communities about their motivations for joining the communities. Within these narratives, I looked for well articulated forms of epistemological critique in the answers that they provided. I did the same with materials produced by the communities through which they represent themselves to themselves and to the wider world. I looked for ways in which these epistemological critiques (where they did indeed exist) were acted on by creating and engaging in the institutions and material culture characteristic of each community. The idea was that these institutions and material practices, when they spring from articulated forms of epistemological critiques, represent the second form of cultural critique Marcus and Fischer identified – cross-cultural juxtapositions. That is, these institutions and practices, arising from particular epistemological critiques are employed by intentional community members as cross-cultural juxtapositions

enacted within the society that is the object of critique to show the world that alternative, equally logical cultural models are possible.

If one can identify such critiques in ethnographic settings, one has taken steps towards overcoming the dilemmas defined above. One has allowed the groups under study to perform the cultural critiques. Once such critiques are discovered, it is the job of the ethnographer to analyze and accurately reconstruct them. Such ethnographies include not only the analysis of the language of epistemological critique but also institutional analyses of cross-cultural juxtapositioning. If these two forms of cultural critique are identified as operating in conjunction, they represent an important window on human agency and the manners in which human beings confront the tension between the real and the ideal. When these two forms of critique are identified together they indicate that people have voluntarily and deliberately taken fundamental action with the goal of creating change in the world. They signify that humans can intentionally change their relationships with people, property and productive resources based on ideas that arise in confrontation with predominant cultural forms. This is the practice of utopianism. These are the forms of utopianism that the quotes at the beginning of this chapter suggest must come to the center of social science.

Ethnographic Methods in the Current Analysis of Intentional Communities

In seeking to create greater understanding of contemporary intentional communities and people's motivations for joining them, I employed traditional ethnographic methods as the main components of my research design. I conducted approximately fifteen months of comparative ethnographic fieldwork in two functioning intentional communities: Celo Community (1937 - present) and Earthaven Ecovillage (1994 - present), both in western North Carolina. A preliminary period of fieldwork was conducted in Celo Community during April and May of

2001. Subsequently, I lived in Celo Community from July 7 through December 8, 2004 and again from February 2 through March 5, 2005. Similarly, I lived in Earthaven Ecovillage from April 14 through October 14, 2005 and again from May 15 through June 15, 2006. During this time, I employed ethnographic methods including participant observation, in-depth life history interviewing and census taking. While I lived in the communities, I participated in community events as a community member to the extent possible. Thus, while I did not actually take a landholding or site lease or participate in making decisions about community business (these are synonymous with becoming a member of each community) I did live on the commonly held land and I did participate in community meetings, discussions, workdays, celebrations and daily activities.

Through participant observation, I aimed to get a feel for what it is like to live in each community as a member. In Celo, I lived in a fairly modern, convenience oriented house with a couple who were both members (July through December of 2004) and by myself in a two room, sustainably-designed, off-grid cabin that was temporarily available for lease by a departing community member (February through March 2005). The primary social unit in Celo is the individual household and these are roughly organized into neighborhoods. There is a tendency towards simplicity and sustainable technology in households but this is not mandated. Amongst the diversity of individual living arrangements characteristic of Celo, these two combined provided a fairly representative experience of the different degrees to which households are oriented towards simplicity and sustainability.

Similarly, my living arrangements in Earthaven roughly paralleled those that might have been experienced by a community member who has been there since the first few years and during the development of community infrastructure. For the first two weeks of my time in

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Earthaven I lived in a tent in a campground in a centrally located area. For the next five and a half months, I lived in a small "hut" located centrally in the "Hut Hamlet" neighborhood. The hut was approximately six by eight by ten feet with no electricity or running water and was located on a hillside just behind the common kitchen and bathing facilities of the Hut Hamlet neighborhood. During my final month of residence at Earthaven, I occupied a single room unit of a large, multi-unit building with common kitchen facilities that is the first building of a planned four building cohousing neighborhood.

My participation in daily activities reflects the fact that being a member of Celo entails, relative to Earthaven, a lower level of interaction with other community members on any regular basis. Most of my meals at Celo were taken as an individual or as a household although the household where I lived did host frequent meals for friends and neighbors and there were one or two occasions when there were community meals at the Celo Community Center. During my time at Earthaven, I took most of my meals at the common kitchen of the Hut Hamlet neighborhood. This was a membership kitchen within which the number of participants varied during my stay from as few as ten to as many as twenty. Breakfasts and dinners in the kitchen were cooked individually, although frequently in the company of others. All members signed up for dinner cooking and cleaning shifts. One member of the kitchen collected money from all the members for a weekly farmer's market, bakery and grocery trip and some food was provided by the Community Supported Agriculture collective that was farming about half an acre nearby. While most neighborhoods at Earthaven do not have a common kitchen of this type, most all members have been a member of this kitchen for some portion of their residence at Earthaven.

The amount of time I spent participating in community activities at each community differed, there being a much greater amount of time devoted to community-wide activities at

Earthaven than at Celo. In Celo, I attended most community and committee meetings which took place most Wednesday evenings from eight to ten. The general community meeting took place the first Wednesday of each month during this time period. I also spent a good deal of time at the Ten Thousand Things food cooperative which was open for a total of six hours each week (Tuesday afternoons and Saturday late mornings and early afternoons) and often served as a social hub both for members of Celo Community and for neighbors who were members of the coop and the wider community. At Earthaven, there were more community and committee meetings to attend more frequently than at Celo. Earthaven's general community meeting, or Council, was held the second and fourth Sunday of every month from two to six thirty in the afternoon. I spent several hours each week at the White Owl Café, a member-run diner at Earthaven that served evening meals one or two nights each week and that also served as a social hub for both community members and neighbors. At Celo, I participated in voluntary community work projects that take place one Saturday morning each month. At Earthaven I was required to give four hours of labor time (or to buy the equivalent) for each week in residence and, as it is a rapidly developing ecovillage, there were usually plenty of work projects to be involved in. I participated in whatever community-wide celebrations there were in each community. These were slightly more frequent at Earthaven, numbering probably one or two every month.

In-depth life history interviews followed a similar pattern and protocol in each community (see appendix one). I waited to begin interviewing for almost a month at each site in order to establish a level of comfort and rapport that would facilitate meaningful interviews. I asked a similar set of questions during each interview in each community, although the interview protocol did evolve somewhat over time and the exact wording and order of interview questions often changed depending on the context of the particular conversation. In Celo, I often conducted

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simultaneous interviews with married couples or committed partners if they had jointly made the decision to join the community. In Earthaven this was not feasible as most members had come to the community as individuals. Each interview began with a series of questions about each individual's life history moving from childhood and family background through education and post education experiences. The goal was to build up to the members' decisions to join the community and to flesh out particular forces or events in their lives that might have influenced them to seek intentional community living. After discussing the decision to join the community at length, using several different questions as prompts, I moved on to some general questions about their lives as community members and their perceptions of community. In each community, a majority of all community members resident on community land during my stay were interviewed (Celo: N=55, sampling frame = 80 or 69%. Earthaven: N=28, sampling frame = 45 or 62%).

To supplement both in-depth ethnographic research in Celo Community and Earthaven Ecovillage and my intensive survey of the intentional community literature, both academic treatments and personal narratives, I made brief visits to over 25 other intentional communities and to three non-academic and three academic conferences on the topic of intentional communities. The communities I visited were of many different types: from mainstream cohousing groups to egalitarian, income sharing communes, from a small community with only eight members to a community that envisions three thousand eventual members and from communities in the middle of urban areas to communities that could only be reached by miles of dirt road. Although I did not conduct any formal interviews or otherwise gather official data in any of these communities, visits to them helped me to put my research in Celo and Earthaven and my ideas about intentional communities in general in greater perspective. At the non-

academic conferences – The Communities Conference in Twin Oaks community, Virginia; the

Peak Oil and Community Solutions Conference in Yellow Springs, Ohio; and the Continental

Bioregional Congress at Earthaven Ecovillage – I got to hear and speak with a great variety of

communitarians or people who were thinking about joining an intentional community. As a

result of my attendance at three meetings of the Communal Studies Association, all at sites of

historic intentional communities, I learned a great deal about the historical depth of the

intentional community phenomenon and the ways in which academics from a number of

disciplines have attempted to understand it.

In my research, I relied solidly on standard, traditional ethnographic methods: long-term

participant observation and in-depth, semi-structured, life history interviews. These were my

main forms of data collection. However, certain characteristics of intentional communities allow

the ethnographer greater access to their cultural worlds than is often the case with the

communities we have traditionally studied. Intentional communities tend to be very reflexive

about their undertakings. Indeed, reflexivity appears to be an inherent component of their

endeavor. Quoting Van Bueren and Tarlow,

> Many aspects of dominant-culture behavior are motivated by what Clifford Geertz
> (1983:73-93) calls "common sense" – assumptions that do not even rise to the
> fully conscious level. In contrast, utopian behaviors and belief systems [are] more
> deliberately constructed. They departed from societal norms and were very
> consciously chosen, tested and sometimes changed – often daily. Utopians [live]
> what may well be called "the examined life". [2006:3-4]

Reflecting the appropriateness of such a characterization of intentional community life is a quote

from one of my research participants. In response to the question "What distinguishes Celo

Community from mainstream American society?" I received the reply, "It's an examined

existence" (interview in Celo Community 10-19-04).

In the process of trying to create alternative socio-cultural institutions the members of intentional communities are constantly engaged in examining and evaluating themselves, their motives, their decisions and their actions both as individuals and as groups. Even more significant is that this reflexivity is often captured in the form of community documents, explicitly set down for future reference. These documents may take various forms, some of them intended for public consumption so that the community and the individuals that comprise it might explain themselves to the outside world and attract new members. Some are intended for internal consumption so that they may explain themselves to themselves, evaluate their progress towards their goals and evaluate each other. The following is a partial list of the types of documents that I had access to during the course of my research and data analysis: community statements of vision, mission, or goals; individual statements of interest and intent; community-wide rules and procedures and the rationales for adopting them; individual statements of commitment to community vision and rules and procedures; community meeting minutes; individual journals; community websites; pronouncements produced by individuals but intended to provoke community discussion; individually authored articles in alternative journals; and community planning documents and project descriptions.

In other words, intentional communities are constantly engaged in representing themselves both to themselves and to the wider world. Thus, a main form of data collection that I engaged in involved a kind of archival research. Both of the communities that I studied had voluminous amounts of meeting minutes and various community documents stored or posted in common spaces accessible to the community and/or as electronic documents that could be more easily circulated. Engaging with these documents provided significant insight. I will draw on

many of them as I progress through my treatment of Celo Community and Earthaven Ecovillage and of sustainability and contemporary intentional community building.

Finally, as in many other potential ethnographic locales, the members of intentional communities are aware of the problems of representation, of their own power to choose how they should be represented and of my power as a potential representor. Both of the communities I studied were wary of my presence and my motives and a significant amount of time passed before I was able to gain entrée to them. In the case of Celo Community, the rapport-building process lasted for years. This may well have been due in part to community members' dissatisfaction with the way that the community was portrayed in a previous ethnographic treatment (Hicks 1969, 2001). Potential publicity had raised Earthaven's defenses as well. To my consternation, my presence in Earthaven was immediately preceded by a film crew from a British reality TV show who were chased out when it became apparent that they were trying to sensationalize the community. Despite this and because of my willingness to engage in physical labor and the development of strong personal relationships between myself and individual community members, I was still able to develop a good sense of rapport at Earthaven.

I have maintained an ongoing dialogue with the members of each community, making my writing available to them so that they may understand how I am representing them and so that they may provide feedback on my interpretations. To this end and as a manifestation of the methodological objectivity I seek to employ, I organized several focus groups to provide official forums for gathering feedback from community members. While I have not always followed their wishes – sometimes I did not think that their suggestions would result in the most accurate representations (they too have biases) – I hope that this process has enabled me to present a more

balanced account of the communities, to as accurately as possible represent their cultural worlds and where appropriate, their cultural critiques.

In the following chapters, I will turn to an examination of the history, development, institutional structure and common characteristics and practices of each community. The examination of Celo's history reveals that the community was fundamentally influenced during its early years by utopians and cultural critics who came to the community at different times. These utopians and cultural critics shaped the community through their intentions to create alternative ways of living that responded to their critiques of the world. These influences remain much a part of the community today in the form of the community's institutions and its common cultural legacy. An examination of Earthaven's history reveals that it too was founded by utopian cultural critics. Earthaven's founders used Celo's institutions as models and as a foundation for creating further alternatives that responded to critiques and utopian visions that were a product of their own time. In chapter ten, an examination of the current motives and cultural critiques expressed by the members of each community reveals that the driving force of utopianism and cultural critique has diminished amongst Celo's current members, people who have joined a stable and long-enduring community. In contrast, utopianism and cultural critique remain strong in Earthaven, a community that has only recently embarked on its utopian community-building endeavors. This is, in part, a manifestation of the process of developmental utopianism at work. In chapter eleven, I will turn to an in depth examination of the institutions and activities characteristic of Celo and Earthaven. This institutional analysis will reveal how these institutions and activities, growing from the intentions, critiques and utopian visions of the members of each community, might contribute to solutions to the utopian challenge of sustainability.

Chapter 6

A HISTORY OF CELO COMMUNITY

Today, as in the ancient past, the small community is the home, the refuge, the seed bed, of some of the finest qualities of civilization. But just as the precious values of the ancient community were submerged and largely destroyed by empire and feudalism, so the present-day community with its invaluable cultural tradition is being dissolved, diluted, and submerged by modern technology, commercialism, mass production, propaganda, and centralized government. Should that process not be checked, a great cultural tradition may be largely lost. [Morgan 1940:10]

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The upper South Toe River Valley lies in the shadow of Mt. Mitchell, the highest peak in the Eastern United States. It is bounded by the Black Mountains to the west and south and the Blue Ridge to the east. This valley remains relatively isolated from modern, industrial society. Phone service and electricity did not reach the valley until the late 1940s and commercial and urban centers are still conspicuously absent. It was into this setting that Arthur E. Morgan and his associates came in 1937 seeking land to provide the backdrop for an experiment in intentional community. Morgan believed that the small community was fundamental to social well-being and he mourned the decline of small communities in the face of modern industrial development. Much of his life was dedicated to putting his utopian vision of the small community into practice. The founding of Celo Community is a prime example of these efforts. It has become a place that manifests commitments to cooperation, egalitarianism, and place over material competition, individualism and transitory, profit-seeking activities. Upon entering the upper South Toe Valley today, it is not immediately apparent that a 70-year-old experiment in intentional community resides there. However, a closer examination reveals a diverse set of

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people committed to stewarding a large piece of collectively owned land and to living according to a unique set of social institutions that they have developed over time as a manifestation of Morgan's vision of the small community.

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The 70 year history of Celo Community is full of nuances and complexities, the comings and goings of many different people and streams of events and discussions that are often interrelated in ways that are difficult to comprehend. Further, this complex history must be understood within broader historical and socio-cultural contexts. Celo Community today is the outcome of numerous individual decisions that grew out of diverse backgrounds and experiences. It is the culmination of actions that responded to changing political and economic circumstances. Yet, it is a relatively stable, if slowly growing community. It is defined by its commitments to collective land ownership and land stewardship through consensus decision-making, commitments that have their roots in the utopian visions and cultural critiques of Arthur Morgan, Quaker critiques of a violent and hierarchical society and their utopian visions of peace, democracy, equality and simplicity and the back-to-the-land movement's utopian vision of a life lived closer to nature.

The following is an overview of Celo's historical development and current structure. It is based upon my knowledge of the community, distilled over six years of brief visits and shorter periods of intensive ethnographic fieldwork. It is based upon notes from my research, interviews with community members and documents from community archives. In places, I refer to work by Celo's previous ethnographer, George Hicks, to support my points or to fill in holes in my historical outline. Although I disagree with many of Hicks' interpretations of the meaning and

significance of events in Celo's history, I have found that his account of historical events in the community is largely accurate.

I examine Celo Community in terms of the themes I have developed and integrated in previous chapters: intentional community, utopianism, cultural critique and sustainability. Indeed my first visit to Celo in large part inspired this research and led to the construction of my theoretical argument, for it appeared that Celo was a manifestation of intentional community building as cultural critique. However, during the course of my research, it became apparent that Celo's utopianism had faded and that cultural critiques were not invoked with as much frequency or explicit force as they might have been during the community's early years. Although I recognized this, I still did not agree with Hicks' characterization of Celo Community as a utopian failure. Rather, following Pitzer's innovative theorization of the developmental process of intentional communalism, I articulated the concept of developmental utopianism to help explain how the force of utopianism and cultural critique may have diminished among Celo's current members even as utopianism and cultural critique are still manifested in the political economic institutions and cultural values that characterize Celo today. That is, Celo is still fundamentally defined by instiutions of collective land ownership, cooperative community governance and values of ecologically sensitive land stewardship that were developed in the community when utopian striving and cultural critique were forces that were more explicitly driving the development of the community. Although Celo's current members did not invoke cultural critiques or utopian visions as frequently as previous members might have, I believe that they would agree that the main components of this discussion – Arthur Morgan, Quakerism, consensus-based community governance, Celo's land tenure arrangement and Celo's vision of land stewardship – are essential to any conception of Celo Community, that these historical

figures and institutions were possessed of and derived from utopian visions and cultural critiques that still lie at the heart of the community.

Arthur Morgan: Cultural Critique, Utopianism and the Small Community

A proper understanding of the Celo Community must begin with the life and philosophies of its founder Arthur Morgan. Morgan is an intriguing historical figure. Raised in a small family of humble means in rural Minnesota, he became a well known and admired flood control engineer, educator, bureaucrat, writer and philosopher. Throughout his adult life, Morgan was an advocate of life in small communities, believing that the intimate social interactions characteristic of small community contexts led to the development of moral character and a sense of responsibility on the individual level, and to progress and efficiency on the social level. Morgan held that, along with the family, small communities were the fundamental unit of socio-cultural evolution, the key to human progress and the foundation of democratic life. He believed that small communities were being undermined by modern industrial culture and he sought to reinvigorate small community life.

Morgan's biographers (Kahoe 1977, Talbert 1987) emphasize two primary forces that influenced his life: the morality of his Baptist mother and the scientific atheism of his engineer father. These two forces, combined with Morgan's own self-cultivated capacity for critical thinking, resulted in his characteristically utopian way of approaching all of the projects in which he was involved. The overall goal of his life's work was to improve society, to use critical thinking, systematic design and moral guidance to make the world a better place. These characteristics were common to other Progressives of his generation (Talbert 1987). At times Morgan could be paternalistic; he believed that he knew right from wrong and he demanded total devotion from his subordinates. On the other hand, his advocacy of the small community was

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often vague. Morgan's utopianism was grounded in the belief that society could be made better if people were willing to whole-heartedly experiment with alternatives to taken-for-granted cultural beliefs and social institutions. Morgan did not emphasize social perfection as an end, but rather critical thinking and experiments as the means of striving for social improvement. He believed that the small community as a social institution had a pivotal role to play in this utopian striving for betterment.

Morgan's utopianism and his belief in the importance of small community life are evident in almost all of the projects he undertook. In his work as an engineer and bureaucrat on the Miami Conservancy District and the Tennessee Valley Authority, the betterment of local society and the establishment of model communities were always at the forefront of his plans. He created community settings for the laborers on his flood control projects believing that he could simultaneously improve their characters and thus improve society while creating more efficient work forces. The same is true with regards to his presidency of Antioch College where he created one of the first successful work-study programs. At Antioch, he sought to create community on campus by promoting local industries, participatory government and interaction amongst students and teachers. However, his focus on the small community and his utopian desire for the betterment of society is most evident in his writings on community and in the founding of Celo Community and Community Service, Inc.

Morgan's understanding of human community is based on his reading of literature in history, anthropology and rural sociology and upon his own observations as an engineer, educator and bureaucrat. Morgan's essentialist conceptualization of community grows from an idealized picture of the "the ancient village." "Where vestiges of primitive life remain in out-of-

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the-way parts of the earth we find men living in true communities" (Morgan 1942:38). He

believed that during the development of the human species, local population groups

> usually in the form of villages, have been the nearly universal settings of human life. Probably more than 99% of all men who have lived have been villagers. Men have been so deeply identified with this way of living that few societies have long survived its disintegration and disappearance. Man is a small community animal. [Morgan 1957a:12]

To support this view, Morgan quotes George Peter Murdock's work on the Human Relations

Area Files at Yale University.

> The community and the family are the only social groups that are genuinely universal. ... Nowhere on earth do people live regularly in isolated families. Everywhere territorial propinquity, supported by diverse other bonds unites at least a few neighboring families into a larger social group all of whose members maintain face-to-face relationships with each other. [Murdock 1949:79-80, cited in Morgan 1957:20]

> Morgan believed that the small community was the fundamental unit of human cultural

evolution and the "foundation of democratic life" (Morgan 1942).

> For the preservation and transmission of the fundamentals of civilization, vigorous, wholesome community life is imperative. Unless many people live and work in the intimate relationships of community life, there never can emerge a truly unified nation, or a community of mankind. If I do not love my neighbor whom I know, how can I love the human race, which is but an abstraction? If I have not learned to work with a few people, how can I be effective with many? [Morgan 1942:19]

Morgan also believed that the small community was under threat from modern society.

> In an industrial society, where the intimate and refining influences of small communities are rapidly disappearing and where great, centralized, impersonal organizations are in control, [we] may lose many of the values of the old community and may retain its worst features, that of servitude and suppression of individuality.
>   On the other hand, modern "free initiative" such as has prevailed in England and America, through great concentration of economic power has robbed the average man of much of his freedom, but has failed to retain a sense of mutual regard and responsibility. This form of irresponsible power is not the best defense against the evils of totalitarianism.

The problem of community, as of all society, is to save and to enlarge the priceless values of freedom, while yet developing qualities of mutual regard, mutual help, mutual responsibility and common effort for common ends. That is the problem of democracy. [Morgan 1942:280-281]

Morgan referred to community in two different senses: as a quality of social life and as a name for local population groups. He defined community in terms of personal interactions, mutual interests, mutual responsibility and common, coordinated action.

A community is an association of individuals and families that, out of inclination, habit, custom and mutual interest, act in concert as a unit in meeting their common needs. (Morgan 1942:20) A community [exists] through direct personal acquaintance and relationships, in a spirit of fellowship. Its members are people who to a considerable extent have cast their lots together, who share problems and prospects, who have a sense of mutual responsibility and who actually plan and work together for common ends. There must be mutual understanding, respect and confidence. There must be mutual aid – willingness to help in need, not as charity, but simply as the normal mode of community life. There must be a feeling on the part of each individual that he is responsible for the community welfare. There needs to be a common background of experience, a community of memory and association and a common foreground of aims, hopes and anticipations. There must be a considerable degree of unity of standards and purposes. [Morgan 1942:22-23]

A superficial reading of Morgan's work might lead to the impression that he believed one either lived in community or one lived without it. His view, however, was more complex than this.

Whatever romantic notions about community Morgan may have held, he made an effort to consider the complexities of social life in his writings. He understood that some aspects of community exist in large metropolitan areas and in large corporations. He also recognized that the development of urban, industrial society freed people from the banalities and prejudices of life in small communities. Small community was not the ultimate manifestation of a good life and metropolitan life was not necessarily in direct contrast to the small community. For Morgan, community was not just an abstract ideal, but rather was connected to all aspects of social life. In *The Small Community*, he examines community as an evolutionary, cultural and historical

phenomenon and considers it in relation to larger polities and to health, recreation, religion and to larger political and economic units.

Morgan's discussion of the small community in relation to political economies of scale includes a lengthy discussion of what today is called bioregionalism (Sale 2000, Carr 2004). Morgan's discussion of bioregionalism grows from his belief that modern industrial economies were destroying small communities. His discourse encapsulates this critique and emphasizes the idea that more self-reliant communities will be characterized by better cultural life and higher standards of living.

> Economic development in America has been partly arbitrary and accidental. ... There is no wealth created and no over-all good served simply by shipping goods back and forth, when they can as well be produced locally, with increased variety and income for local people. ... Rather than ship unspecialized products back and forth across the country, we shall achieve a higher standard of living by being more nearly locally and regionally self-contained. ... Many a small community could economically supply more if its own food, services and supplies. [Morgan 1942:76]

This discussion suggests that Morgan was thinking about sustainability long before the word was invented or the subsequent discourse arose. It also demonstrates that he understood that the solution to the problems he perceived was not to simply create small communities in isolation. Rather it was to find a way to incorporate the intimate associations, the mutual responsibility and regard and the common endeavors of small communities into the larger fabric of life in a rapidly developing world. His was essentially a utopian vision, a cultural critique cast against the trends of modern American life.

Morgan believed that the most fundamental task that confronted humans in modern industrialized societies was the reincorporation of small community life. He believed that there are three ways to approach revitalizing communities and bringing about social betterment. One is violent revolution. A second is gradual reform of existing communities. The third approach,

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which he advocated most vigorously, is the creation of "intentional communities" where new and better patterns are experimented with (Morgan 1957:139-144). He believed that intentional communities had been unnecessarily dismissed by the general population and that the historical contributions of intentional communities to social progress had been obscured. Morgan believed that the revitalization of small community life could be fostered through the promulgation of intentional communities.

To promote small community revitalization and the establishment of intentional communities, Morgan established Community Service Incorporated. In his book, *The Small Community*, Morgan reflected on the work of this organization:

> Since the establishment of Community Service, Inc., about 15 years ago, we have contended that the face-to-face community is a fundamental and necessary unit of society; that, along with the family, it has been and continues to be the chief medium for transmitting the basic cultural inheritance. ... Because the part which it has played and probably must continue to play in our common life has been much overlooked, we have persistently drawn attention to its importance. [Morgan 1957:3]

Community Service served as an information and networking center for research on the role of the small community and for the promotion of community development and intentional community projects. Community Service continues this role to this day. Its vision and mission is stated clearly on its website. "Community Service is dedicated to the development, growth and enhancement of small local communities. We envision a country where the population is distributed in small communities that are sustainable, diverse and culturally sophisticated" (Community Service, Inc. 3-12-07). Through the involvement of one of Arthur Morgan's granddaughters and her family, Community Service believes that the small community is of even more significance given current sustainability crises. The main thrust of their efforts today is to promote small, self-reliant communities as solutions to the problems that society will face with

the depletion of world oil reserves and what they believe is the coming collapse of the oil economy.

Arthur Morgan's life and work have been the subject of numerous publications (Kahoe 1977; Leuba 1971; Talbert 1987; Purcell 1997, 2000, 2001, 2002, 2003). Many of these works focus on Morgan's idealistic promotion and development of small community models in a variety of contexts. At least one historian labeled Arthur Morgan a utopian (Talbert 1987), noting his similarities with other historical utopians and founders of intentional communities: Robert Owen, Charles Fourier, Count de Saint Simon and Edward Bellamy. However, only Hicks devoted significant effort to the analysis of Arthur Morgan's role in the founding of Celo Community (Hicks 2001). Although Morgan generally did not seek to directly influence Celo Community after its first decade of existence, the community is in many ways a direct manifestation of Morgan's utopianism and his belief in the significance of the small community as the primary center of cultural evolution.

Celo Community as Cultural Critique: Utopian Responses to the Great Depression

In the wake of the Great Depression, doubts about the viability of "the new economic era" were widespread in America (Morgan 1957b:1). Unemployment was rampant and many people's livelihoods, built up on Wall Street, had come crashing down. In addition, more and more people, especially young people, were moving from their hometowns and small communities to industrial and urban centers seeking economic opportunity and cultural variety. Small town, community life was disappearing and along with it, the small farm heritage. One of Morgan's biographers notes that "for [Morgan] ... the depression was clear evidence of the failure of a ruthless, competitive society and indication that the country needed another kind of

foundation. The very survival of modern society seemed to him to require a new system"
(Talbert 1987:123).

For Morgan this economic and socio-cultural climate demanded that his philosophies regarding the importance of small community be put into action through the creation of an intentional community. In the mid 1930s, Morgan was approached by William H. Regnery of Chicago, a wealthy industrialist and owner of a textile mill, who wanted to use some of his fortune "to endow some project of substantial social value" (Miller 1990:71). Morgan suggested that they buy some land where they could "provide a physical setting in which young people might undertake to get footholds in self directed activities" (Morgan 1957b:2) and where they might

> maintain a considerable degree of freedom from the pressures and compulsions of the going economic regime, with the aim of using that freedom to try to orient themselves to the economic world in ways that would be in harmony with what they considered to be fundamental ethical considerations. [Morgan 1957b:1]

Although Morgan and Regnery did not have "any formal ideology in mind", their desire was to allow for a place where like-minded people might live in self-governing proximity and where children might be raised to acquire "personal integrity, considerateness and simplicity of taste" through their social and economic environment (Morgan 1957b:8). In their endeavor to find such a place Morgan and Regnery were joined by Clarence Pickett. As Executive Secretary of the American Friends Service Committee, a Quaker relief and service organization, Pickett shared their concerns about economic trends and community life. He also had appropriate experience, having been involved with the Division of Subsistence Homesteads and the Independence Foundation, respectively government and private organizations dedicated to promoting cooperative community homesteading and self-sufficiency in the aftermath of the Great Depression.

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Where could these three men find a setting for their envisioned community? Where could they translate Regnery's financial endowment, Pickett's concerns and Morgan's vision into a community project that would address the needs of the time? Among the main considerations for the location of his envisioned community were climate, natural setting and character of the neighbors. But most important were the feasibility of agriculture and the possibility for local economic development. Morgan wanted to be sure that the experimental community would not be so close to any urban or industrial centers so as to come under the sway of the economic and cultural currents prevalent in the cities and not so far as to impede all commerce and communication. He wanted the participants in his community to develop their own patterns of life and livelihood as much as possible, without outside influence. Mainly through the efforts of Arthur Morgan's son, Griscom Morgan, a search for suitable land culminated in the purchase of approximately 1,200 acres in the Appalachian Mountains of western North Carolina in 1937.

Arthur and Griscom Morgan located Celo's land with the help of S.T. Henry, one of Arthur Morgan's acquaintances from the nearby town of Spruce Pine, North Carolina. Henry was a local dairy farmer who was, according to Morgan, "well informed on land conditions in the locality" of the South Toe Valley (Morgan 1957b:2). Morgan relates that people in the valley were reluctant to part with their land.

> With very high birthrates in the mountain area there was great pressure for cultivable land. Every nook and corner of such ground was valued. The steep mountainsides were still being cleared for the four or five crops which could be produced before the soil would be washed away. ... The little flat patches of farm land in the valleys were being sold at about the same price per acre as the broad, fertile farms of Illinois. During the depression this was about $100 to $150 an acre ... The abandonment of thousands of these mountain farms, which has since taken place, was not in evidence at that time. [Morgan 1957b:3]

Celo's 1,200 acres were purchased from three local families. One 900 acre parcel had been in the Erwin family for over a century. Ten to fifteen percent of this land had been cleared

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for agriculture and "the usual farming methods of the region had resulted in considerable deterioration" of the soil (Morgan 1957b:3). Some of the rest had been cut for timber, but much of it remained undeveloped. Griscom Morgan located Mr. Erwin in eastern North Carolina and convinced him to sell his property for $20 an acre. "It was the fact of ownership of the Erwin tract as a unit, by a nonresident family which was down in finance, with the present owner growing old and with no son interested in carrying on, and with the buildings and cleared land run down, which caused the land to be available" (Morgan 1957b:3). Upon selling their land to Arthur Morgan, the Erwin family retained a one acre plot of land and a small cabin for use as a summer home, a property that remains with the family to this day.

The remainder of Celo's 1,200 acres was purchased from the Autrey and Ballew families and the number of acres would have been higher had negotiations with the Patton and Hall families not failed. Two members of the Autrey family parted with approximately 153 acres for an average price of $48 per acre. The Ballew family sold four of their eight lots totaling 36 acres for slightly under $8 per acre. The price paid for the Autrey tracts was much higher because they were cleared, flat bottomland whereas the Ballew land was steep and uncleared terrain in the foothills of the Blue Ridge. (Elder 1957).

Looking back at the purchase of Celo's land in 1957, Morgan recounted the advantages and disadvantages that he and Griscom considered. Under advantages, Morgan included size, contiguity and price of the land, aesthetic context, availability of fresh water, availability of timber for community needs and revenue, climate, the character of the neighbors. Disadvantages included the fact that that the soils were in poor condition due to unsustainable farming practices, susceptibility of the area to frost and fog, and perhaps too great a distance from railroads or cities, although Morgan thought it important that some such distance be maintained. Morgan was

also concerned about the land tenure arrangements between current tenants and absentee landlords under which

> the usual terms of lease commonly resulted in sharp conflict of interest between owner and tenant. It was commonly to the tenant's interest to take everything possible out of the land, and not to go to any expense in putting anything back. On the whole, the prevailing tenantry practice was degrading, both to the tenant and to the land. [Morgan 1957b:5]

Thus, Morgan recognized early on that developing an alternative form of land tenure would be a fundamental undertaking of the new community were it to be sustainable. Although Morgan originally intended to include local families as participants in the experimental community he envisioned, it soon became apparent that their values did not coincide with his own values and those that people from outside the region brought to the community. The idea of an experimental, intentional community was foreign to local families, most of whom saw involvement in the community as an opportunity for upward economic mobility. Indeed, many of the locals refered to the community as "the company" during its early years (Hicks 2001). However, Morgan saw the community as a moral alternative to predominant economic trends and did not want participation in it to be used as means of individual monetary gain. Although one local family did formally join and remain in the community, arrangements were ultimately reached with all tenant families for their removal from land that the community now owned.

Utopian Visions and Preliminary Struggles

Morgan's visions for an experimental intentional community that would provide solutions to the problems of the Great Depression and of modern industrial society in general did not immediately gain momentum in the South Toe Valley. There were a series of fits and starts in Celo Community in the late 1930s and early 1940s. Morgan had trouble recruiting participants and those that did participate during this period, be they local residents or people who came from

outside the area, did not share his vision. Agricultural equipment was purchased but the participants were not especially successful in either cultivation or marketing of agricultural products.

Morgan's designs for the community were grand and visionary. In the increasing pace and large-scale organization of American life, Morgan saw the destruction of small community ideals and interaction that he believed were the foundation of human civilization and cultural growth. He wanted to provide a place where a small community could be created that would serve as a model for the establishment of other such communities. Eventually, he thought that through networking, these communities might be a major source of social and cultural revitalization. In a letter, Morgan articulated that he saw Celo as a beginning.

> To a large degree the small community is the key to the future of culture and civilization. In view of the great importance of small communities to the destiny of our country, it is important that there should be a deliberate and conscious design and planning of community life and organization, to the end that the innate great possibilities of the small community be realized. ... Celo Community aims to be one such undertaking. [Morgan 1939:3]

Morgan's designs for Celo Community were vague but not without some detail. In the document quoted above, he describes numerous components – the types of people, the kind of social environment and the numerous options for economic activity with an aim of economic self-sufficiency – that he envisioned for the community. He suggested that working out new forms of governance and land tenure would be necessary in order to balance community and individual interests. Morgan (and Regnery and Pickett who were less directly involved) left the working out of the practicalities of this vision to the people who would live in the community, although he did make suggestions through correspondence and occasional visits.

What awaited the first settlers of the community was undeveloped land. A paved highway ran through the valley, but there was relatively little commerce, even in agriculture. The

purchased land had been poorly managed by the tenants of absentee landlords and there were only about 70 acres of cleared land and two habitable buildings to begin with (Elder 1957:16). The original tenancy agreements of 1938 reflect the idea of rewarding tenants for the improvement of their land holdings in terms of agricultural productivity and habitability by paying for their labor in such efforts and for any improvements that they made if they were to leave the community. At this point, the provisions of any tenure agreement were vague, but Morgan saw the development of such an agreement as a primary concern: "The sorting out of a satisfactory program of land tenure should be one of the early undertakings of the Community" (quoted in Hicks 1969:99). Morgan's vision for the community did not include the granting of deeds to private individuals. The land was to be both site and source for community building and not for individual financial benefit.

At first, Morgan included both local families and people from outside the area in his experiment. The first participants included three or four local men and three Adventist families who came as a result of Morgan's association with the president of an Adventist college in Tennessee. By the end of 1939, all but one of the original participants had left the valley or withdrawn from membership in the community. This chain of events repeated itself again over the next several years; both local families and those that came from other areas did not appear to understand Morgan's aims and became dissatisfied with life in his experimental community. Community managers were brought in to directly oversee the affairs of the community and to provide direction, but there were conflicts over the nature of the community and over the managers' authority. Morgan and others, including the community managers, recruited people to join in the community, but most left either because of inability to get along as a community, or because it was unfeasible to make a comfortable living. The community farming business was

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unproductive, not due to lack of effort, but rather to lack of knowledge and experience and because of the vagaries of the market and nature. Additionally, there just wasn't much of a market for easy start up business ventures in the valley (Elder 1957).

Morgan asked his community managers to recruit people of differing backgrounds and abilities when he could not do the recruiting himself. He wanted people with complimentary skills and abilities to join the community. He also suggested that they create a type of labor exchange system whereby members of the community could trade their skills, services, labor and products amongst themselves to compensate for the inability to establish a solid monetary income. The labor exchange did not last long due to conflicts about the varying quality and reliability of various laborers. Most of the people who were convinced to join in the enterprise, especially recruits from the local population, saw the community as an opportunity for their own economic betterment. While Morgan was dedicated to making the community economically viable, he did not want it to serve as a welfare institution for local people or for settlers from more distant areas. Celo was an experiment in community that required sacrifice and dedication. These were largely absent in the early years as recruits to the community, lacking Morgan's vision, continued to draw down the remains of Regnery's original endowment. They made little progress in terms of economic self-sufficiency or the development of governance or land tenure institutions.

As the United States prepared to enter WWII, the national economy began to recover from the dark times of the Great Depression. As more economic opportunities opened up, it became difficult to attract the type of industrious and ethical person that Morgan sought. As Hicks notes,

> The Community, a child of the Great Depression, was stunted in its anticipated growth by the sudden recovery from that depression. Those who wanted to

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disengage themselves from industrial work and its attendant social life failed to respond to the alternative [Morgan] offered. Changes wrought in United States society by the approaching war, however, were to have important consequences for Celo Community. [Hicks 1969:41]

Celo Community would soon provide a nexus for people who were critical of the direction of American society and saw in the community an opportunity to live according to their values, to create alternative social institutions and to support each other in their endeavors. Some of these newcomers more closely shared Morgan's vision.

Quakers as Cultural Critics: Pacifists Help Build Celo Community

Just as WWII initiated a recovery in the economy, it also instigated a civil movement of conscientious objectors against involvement in the war and the 'war system'. Over 13,000 of these conscientious objectors were sent to Civilian Public Service camps where they exchanged their labor for their service in the American military. One of these camps was located at Buck Creek Gap in the Blue Ridge Mountains near Celo Community. Arthur Morgan visited this and several other such camps and engaged in long discussions about his ideas regarding community with the men he found there. He liked the character of these men and he invited several of them to participate in the activities at Celo Community when they had free time, and to come to the community when their service had been completed. The longest standing member of Celo Community recalls,

> I was one of the last C.O.'s [conscientious objectors] to come here after the war. We spent about five years in other things. These other guys came as soon as they got out of the Civilian Public Service, the alternative service. They had had their aim on coming over here and as soon as they were out, they came right over. It was '46 or '47 they sort of dribbled in. But we didn't get here until '51 because of these other things we had done. [interview in Celo Community 4-17-01]

The pacifist stance of many of the conscientious objectors grew out of their Quaker heritage; peace and nonviolence were fundamental components of their spiritual beliefs. When their terms

in the Civilian Public Service camps were up, some of these conscientious objectors arrived in Celo. Those that brought their Quaker heritage and values to Celo during this time provided a foundation that anchors the community to this day. As Morgan himself was a converted Quaker, many of their perspectives were congruent with his. At this point in Celo Community's development, the critical stances that Quakers adopted towards the predominant culture join Arthur Morgan's philosophies as fundamental cultural building blocks of Celo Community. A brief discussion of Quakerism is thus appropriate at this time.

Quakerism is an emancipatory body of spiritual beliefs and practices whose history dates back over 350 years. Like the Anabaptists, the Seekers and the Diggers, the Quakers came about as a critical response to the Protestant theocracy that ruled in England in the mid 17th century. The Quakers, or Religious Society of Friends as they call themselves, sought emancipation from religious dogma and hegemony. They believed that direct connection with the divine was available to all.

> Although firmly rooted in Christianity, Quakerism has never had a fixed set of theological creeds. Friends have generally felt that it is the reality of a person's religious experience that matters, not the symbols with which she tries to describe this experience. A direct experience of God is open to anyone who is willing to sit quietly and search diligently for it, Quakers believe. There are no prerequisites for this experience, neither the institution of the church, nor its sacraments, nor a trained clergy, nor even the wisdom of the Bible, unless read and illuminated by the Christ Within, or Inner Light. [Bacon 1999:3-4]

Quakers were persecuted in both England and in the New World, but they persisted in their beliefs. They saw the hypocrisy of the church and the disjuncture between religious ideals and empirical realities and they sought to overcome them in their lives. As a result of their beliefs and experiences, Quakers developed strong values of peace, democracy, equality, religious and civil liberty, social justice and simplicity. They seek to put these values into practice in their daily lives. They champion the causes of oppressed groups including Native

Americans, other ethnic minorities and women. They work to improve the lots of prisoners, the elderly, the poor and the mentally ill and they organize to deliver relief to people displaced by wars and political instability (Bacon 1999).

The attempt to live according to their values leads them to protest, to experiment, to assist and to seek to empower those whom they seek to help.

> The programs run by the Quakers are almost all very small. They can properly be regarded as pilot projects, experiments, which, if successful, can be turned over to community groups, to the government, or to the schools for implementation. ... This fact permits Quakers to experiment with new ideas in social change and keeps them in the pioneering frontier of social reform. [Bacon 1999:150]

These experimentalists and pioneering social reformers were just the sort of people that Morgan sought for Celo Community.

A willingness to reform and to experiment were not all that the Quakers brought with them to Celo Community. The Quaker custom of simplicity also fit quite well with Morgan's romantic vision of a small community free from the encumbrances of modern industrial life.

> Quakers avoid conspicuous consumption ... To move one's family halfway across the country in search of a slightly higher salary, a slightly better status, a slightly bigger car, is to be trapped by the unimportant material aspects of life, many Quakers believe. Quakers feel they can keep themselves free – free from making compromises, free to speak their minds ... free to devote themselves to spiritual rather than material growth. [Bacon 1999:222]

These ideals took strong hold in Celo and continue to resonate to this day.

Perhaps the most significant innovation that Quakers brought with them to the community was a tradition of democratic, consensus-based decision-making through which they govern their organizations. This tradition blends spirituality with business in that the process of making decisions that will affect all is felt to be spiritual in nature. The Quaker concept of consensus grows from their belief that the right course of action will be chosen through the process of discussion and debate in which everyone is involved. In this scenario, a minority of

one may be justified in preventing a decision from being made because that one person may hold the right answer (although that person should feel very strongly that this is the case). Quakers do not vote; rather they reach consensus through an "attitude of openness toward other points of view, the patient search for unity beneath diversity, the avoidance of polarization – and the voting that leads to polarization of opposing views" (Bacon 1999:197; for an in depth, ethnographic and historical account of Quaker consensus decision-making see Sheeran 1983). This process of consensus decision-making soon became the basis for community self-government in Celo Community.

A belief in the deeply personal nature of religious experience, commitments to peace, democracy, equality, social justice and simplicity, a willingness to experiment in order to live by their values and a tradition of consensus decision-making are the things that Quakers brought to Celo Community. Through their ongoing presence in the community and through the embedding of their values in the institutions of the community, the Quaker tradition has become a part of Celo Community.

The 1940s and 1950s: Continued Community Development

The mid to late 1940s were pivotal years for Celo Community. Men that had been released from the Civilian Public Service Camps came with their families and created a stable population for the community. In 1945, at the behest of Morgan and Regnery, the Celo Health Center was created to serve both the experimental community and the residents of the valley. Most significantly, it was during this time that community members began striving to take greater responsibility for their own finances and government. To this end, they devised systematic processes for accepting new members, organizing land tenure and conducting community governance. The issues that were raised reflect a growing concern with making the

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community a viable entity and giving it some direction, of creating a balance between individual freedom and mutual responsibility and cooperation in community affairs. To some extent, the fact that these were issues at all reveals the fact that a community was indeed beginning to take shape.

In 1944, the new membership, now consisting of five families, took some tentative steps toward self-organization and self-government. The first community meeting was held on May 17 of that year with all members participating. In 1945, the institution of community manager was terminated in favor of self-government under the direction of the board of directors. The community organized a committee of five to replace the manager and decided to hold community meetings once every month. By the next year, the committee of five had been disbanded in favor of involving all community members in managing community business, making decisions as a group of equals.

The issue of the landholding agreement was taken up in 1944. It was clear from several past experiences that allowing for the granting of simple deeds to tracts of community land would not be viable as it provided incentive for defection from the community, resulting in the fragmentation of community land. At least two member households, in disagreement with the direction of the community, ended their memberships but retained individual possession of the landholdings that they originally obtained from the community. This was seen as a threat to the community. "From the members' viewpoint, the problem lay in creating an agreement which would provide the advantages of outright ownership yet not jeopardize the 'interests of the community as a group" (Hicks 1969:100). Work on the land-holding agreement progressed, albeit slowly. Morgan consulted with lawyers, economists and rural sociologists in his efforts to devise a workable landholding agreement. The document that resulted reflected a balance

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between the rights of individuals and the interests of the community. This document, the Celo

Community Holding Agreement, was adopted by the community in 1946 and to this day still

functions to define the goals and nature of the community. Hicks attests to this:

> It thus gave visible form to their stated goals of Community Organization … Its provisions against exploitation of the land and natural resources and the general belief that exchanges of land between members and the Community should not contain speculative and immoral elements, added some increment of permanence to the Community's boundaries. Far more than defining the geographical boundaries of their experimental group, the Holding Agreement aided in marking off the ideological and cultural borders of the Community. To belong to the Community was to be party to the Holding agreement. [1969:109]

By the end of 1946, there were 8 member families, all the community houses were full

and membership in the community continued to grow. A pamphlet titled 'About Celo

Community' was printed and distributed. The pamphlet described the purposes of the

community:

> To live and work in a small progressive community. To rear children in a wholesome environment where they could become acquainted with nature. To raise some of their own food. To work for themselves – or in small organizations – at callings that would provide simple but adequate living. To cooperate with friends and neighbors in creating a satisfying community life. [Celo Community 1946:2]

It also reflected the fact that the community was still developing, that the members were not

committed to any particular ideology or group enterprise.

> No hard and fast plan has been made. Given a careful selection of members, questions of what the community will do, what plans it will make, how much of cooperative effort there shall be and how much individual enterprise – such problems should be worked out by those living in the community. .. the community does not desire as members persons who are committed to social dogmas and who would try to force them on the community. [Celo Community 1946:7]

It is difficult to tell what effect this pamphlet had in terms of recruiting new members, but

by 1947, the number of families had swelled to 15, initiating a discussion about the number of

people the community could accommodate while still maintaining its town meeting style of governance. Ten of the twelve male community members in 1947 were conscientious objectors to WWII who came from the CPS camps. It was clear that after ten years, the vague outlines of a community that might resemble what Morgan envisioned were beginning to take shape. The community was growing and prospering.

However, the growth and prosperity that did occur was not in terms of tangible financial success, but rather the sentiment that there was a sense of community beginning to take root. Many of the members shared common values and they undertook to manage their affairs and their assets in a more sound and efficient manner. They sold off much of the farm equipment and livestock that they were maintaining at a cost. They began to systematize the collection of taxes and rents rather than relying on Regnery's trust when these could not be met. For the most part, they decided not to pay themselves for their duties to the community as a social entity and corporation or to the land on which it was based. By 1952, the community had achieved financial independence from Regnery's trust fund and in 1953, the membership took over all nominations to the board of directors of Celo Community, Inc., essentially exerting their full control over community affairs.

The community continued to define itself in the 1950s. This involved solidifying their manner of self-government. "Gradually weaning the Community from control of its absentee board of directors, in both political and economic spheres, Celo's members tried to establish a structure which would reflect in practice their ideological views" (Hicks 1969:91). They used the concept of consensus, in the Quaker sense, to reach unanimous decisions during community meetings. This allowed all community members equal participation in community decision-making. They also continued to refine their land tenure mechanisms as indicated in another

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brochure that the community produced to advertise itself. "Members hold their land under a standard form of agreement with the Community that confers most of the rights of ownership but reserves essential social controls, such as zoning, to the Community" (Moody and Toness 1950).

Consensus decision-making in community governance and Celo's unique Holding Agreement, as they developed during this time, became defining aspects of membership in the community. They provided a means to balance the common good with individual aspirations. The collectively held land provided a common focus. Managing it through the consensus decision-making process required that everyone's perspective be considered equally, at least in theory. In order for collective ownership and consensus decision-making to work, the members would have to develop the mutual regard and sense of responsibility that Morgan believed were such important components of small community life.

The brochure produced by the members of the community at the time gives an idea of their developing sense of community identity. The vision for the community included such things as mutual trust, personal sacrifice, intellectual freedom, simple but adequate living, raising food, economic self-sufficiency and land conservation. It was clear that the community did not believe that they had achieved utopia: "Anyone expecting to find Celo Community a neatly finished product ready to go on display as a model of the perfect community will be appalled by its unfinished roughness" (Moody and Toness 1950:1). However, they were also forward looking: "As to the future, the pattern remains flexible, leaving individuals and small groups within the Community free to experiment" (Moody and Toness 1950:3). Celo Community was following Morgan's lead in adopting a utopian striving for a better kind of community.

Despite the apparent coalescence of Celo Community in the years following the war, for several families, the new community that was taking shape was not what they were looking for.

Indeed, it did not accommodate the more strictly communal and intensely spiritual focus that they sought. Conflicts over control of the newly established Celo Health Center and the nature of the land-holding agreement contributed to the tension. This precipitated an exodus from Celo Community in the 1950s.

Exodus and Disillusionment

In 1954, four families who had been focusing on creating a more materially communal organization and a more spiritually focused life within the community terminated their memberships and left to join the Bruderhof, or Society of Brothers. The Bruderhof communities had a long history and a historical connection to the Anabaptist Hutterite Bruderhofs, although they were of different origins. They also emphasized more economically communal and self-contained characteristics than did Celo Community. Celo was still trying to establish an economic basis for itself that would balance communalism and individuality; in its economic communalism, the Bruderhof was more firmly economically grounded. Those searching for a way to support themselves financially and materially in Celo during this time found life difficult and they found hope in the Bruderhof. In addition, because Celo lacked any common ideological or religious mandate, the consensus by which the community sought to reach decisions was often hard to come by. It created dissension within the community at times. After a short period of apparent harmony and prosperity during the postwar years, this lack of unity was certainly a contributing factor to the exodus from Celo.

Because several other families left in the early 1950s, the exodus of the four families that left for the Bruderhof put a serious dent in community membership. A community member who came to Celo in 1951 talks about why people were leaving the community in the early 1950s:

> Why they left had something to do with their inaccurate idea of how it was going
> be to live down here. Most of them were educated people and they'd tell tales of

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growing this great field of beans and picking them and taking them to market in Asheville and then bringing them all home at night and having to can them. I mean it was like they were trying to do something that they weren't really educated to do. Some of them left to get more education and then try to get jobs elsewhere. Some of them left because they wanted more community. There were four families who left to join the Bruderhof. They didn't all stay there, but the Bruderhof is a Christian community that's communal. [interview in Celo Community 4-17-01]

Her husband adds that because of the nebulous nature of the community, "the energy in the early 50's when we were just getting started was [focused on] survival and where do we go from here?" (interview in Celo Community 4-17-01).

In a memoir written for *Liberation* magazine in 1959, a former Celo resident recounts a similar sentiment – the alternating buoyant optimism and demoralizing disenchantment that coursed through the members of the community as they attempted to create their own social entity, to live out Arthur Morgan's experiment: "It was the people who lived there … who made Celo a delightful place that first summer. There seemed to be no adequate way to make a living and yet far too much to do. No one had any money, nor was anyone much concerned about it" (Greenbough 1959:14). By the time she left a few years later, her tone had changed significantly:

It is sad to think of the gradual disillusionment and bitterness that overtook nearly every one of us. There was perhaps not a single community member who did not know at the end of his first year, that his private utopia would never work. Yet most of us stayed five years – some more – some less, for to leave was the bitterest defeat of all. [Greenbough 1959:16]

Such disillusionment is reflected in the community records and demographics as well. In 1958, eight community houses sat empty. In the years following WWII, the community had been forced to build houses to keep up with the influx in membership. Now however, the members were forced to confront the possibility of the Community's demise. In 1956, they adopted a provision to their by-laws which declared a state of emergency if the membership were to drop below twenty members. According to this provision, at such a time, the board of directors would

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assume control and divide the corporate assets among the remaining community members and several charitable organizations.

Hicks believes that the depopulation and disillusionment led to the sentiment that "the utopian optimism which pervaded the community in the few years before and after 1950 had disappeared" (Hicks 1969:160). However, the defeatism expressed above by Hicks and the former community member was not universally subscribed to by community members. A relatively lengthy article on Celo Community in the December 1957 issue of *The Carolina Farmer* presented a positively upbeat portrait of the community. Based on a day-long visit to the community and a number of interviews with community members, the lead-in to the story read "This little bit of heaven was planned, but there's no standard design for the angels." (Brown 1957:10). The article is full of optimistic quotations from community members. Clearly not all members of Celo had become disillusioned with the community. Twenty years into his experiment, Arthur Morgan was not ready to concede defeat either. He wrote,

> It takes more than one generation to develop the possibilities of community life and it would seem to be unfortunate if boys and girls growing up at Celo should feel compelled to leave because the home environment has little economic opportunity … It was our belief … that if sincere, normal people will work together in reasonableness they will make day by day and year by year decisions which will tend to emerge into something like a desirable pattern. [Morgan 1957b:8]

Despite all of the discord of the 1950s in Celo and probably little known to the community members at the time, something like a "desirable pattern" had begun to emerge in the Community. Cultural currents in the United States over the next two decades would lead to the emergence of a group of people who very much appreciated Morgan's experiment in community. For them, the ideas of stewarding the land rather than speculating on it, of living simply and disconnecting themselves from the modern political economy and of cooperating with one

another, were central tenets. The two longest standing community members spoke with me about the transition that occurred between the 1950s and the 1970s:

> B: … of all those early people, one thing or another led them to leave. Except us and the doctor and his wife and family. So within our first fifteen years the original community was just about changed. There were very few of us left. There would be temporary people. People coming in and renting a house and seeing how it would go, but they never really committed themselves to it. And then about 1970 or maybe sooner, came this shift of younger people wanting to come to this type of an environment and bring their craft with them. Or for some other reason to join in.

> P: It was all over the country – the back to the land movement. [interview in Celo Community 4-17-01]

Back-to-the-Land Utopianism

The 1960s were a slow decade in Celo Community. A major event was the opening of the Arthur Morgan School in 1962 as a boarding school for grades seven through nine. Some staff came to the school in the 1960s as conscientious objectors to fulfill their selective service agreement. Some of them decided to stay in the community, thus filling some of the gaps left those who had departed during the previous decade. A review and revision of the documents and institutions that governed the community was undertaken in 1965 in order to clarify some issues that had arisen. However, major changes started to take place around 1970 when the back-to-the-land movement arrived at Celo's doorstep.

Frustration with modern, urban, industrial, capitalist society and the political and cultural directions of American life led to a fluorescence of social movements in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Many in these movements, critical of the direction of American society, sought to reestablish the connections and relationships of community life that they felt were missing, connections whose loss Arthur Morgan lamented over a generation previously. Added to this were concerns regarding the environmental destruction and social injustices that resulted from

the ascendance of an increasingly global, capitalist political economy. While some responded by joining urban communes, others sought to escape the cities. Either in intentional communities or individually, they sought to live more simply and self-sufficiently, to recreate the small farm agrarian lifestyle of American historical mythos.

> The back-to-the-land movement was, in its own quiet way, a broad-based protest against what the spirit of the sixties saw as the irrational materialisms of urban life. Starting in the mid-1960s and on through the 1970s, each year thousands of urban émigrés found their way to the countryside to set up individual homesteads on a few acres of land. [Jacob 1997:3]

Not all back-to-the-landers ended up on isolated homesteads. For a number of people, Celo Community proved a congenial place to live out their back-to-the-land ideals. An interview with one such couple is revealing. Both were raised in big cities on the east coast and trained as artists. They met in school in California, but moved back east seeking jobs and a way to start their life together. They were unsatisfied with the prospects for livelihood in the city; and they were enamored of the back-to-the-land ideals.

> We had gotten caught up in the back-to-the-land idea when we were in California. It was the big thing in the air, that the idealists would move out to communes and communities out on the land ... looking for a different way, a better way. I think that is what I gravitated to. I always loved being out in the woods and there was something so basic about building your own house, raising some of your own food. Getting back to basics was real appealing to me. [interview in Celo Community 9-22-04]

A series of fortuitous coincidences eventually led them to Celo. Reading in *Mother Earth News*, a key publication in the back-to-the-land movement, they happened across a story of a uniquely designed, energy efficient house that had been built in Celo Community in the 1950s. While visiting Penland School of Crafts in an adjacent county, the couple were introduced to a member of Celo Community and invited for a visit. They soon realized that it was the community they had read about in *Mother Earth News*.

Upon further examination, they found that the community neatly matched their desires. "We wanted to be living amongst like-minded people in the country. ... We wanted people that shared our values – simple living and caring for the land, people that shared our ideals about stewardship of the land and not abusing the land, not speculating on the land" (interview 9-22-04). Reflecting on their time in Celo Community, this couple finds that the community enabled them to live by their ideals. "Celo really enabled us to be able to start living out our dream, which was to build a little house in the country ... and to have a garden and raise a family. That's what we wanted and that's what we've done" (interview in Celo Community 9-22-04). This story represents the experiences of several other community households that came to Celo Community at this time.

The back-to-the-landers that came to Celo Community revitalized the community and provided a new sense of purpose to the experiment that Celo was designed to be. But they also continued trends that had already begun to manifest themselves within the community. The values of land stewardship were already present in the community and were promoted as part of its purpose as early as 1950. One member of the community had already designed and built two houses that received widespread recognition for their innovations in energy efficiency. Quaker ideals of simplicity imbued the community beginning in the late 1940s. Most of the houses in the community were small and simple compared with urban standards and many of them were accompanied by home gardens. The back-to-the-landers merely brought these trends to the forefront. As environmental awareness and critical perspectives on the wasteful materialism of American society increased in the 1970s, the values of simple living and self-reliance became common denominators in the community. This remains true in Celo Community to this day, although there is an increasing affluence in the community.

Celo Community Since the 1970s

Few events as significant as the exodus from the community or the arrival of the back-to-the-land movement have taken place in Celo over the last three decades. Most of Celo's current structure was established by the time the back-to-the-landers arrived in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Celo's major institutions – collective land ownership and stewardship, governance by consensus and the process for being accepted as a member in the community – have been subject to periodic revision as community members deemed appropriate, but they are products of the Celo's first two decades. Before moving on to an overview of Celo today, I will discuss a number of changes that have occurred over the last three plus decades.

A. More Members, Increasing Affluence

Celo has witnessed a fairly steady increase in membership since the 1970s although this increase is purposely kept to a slow trickle. A long waiting list of potential members has accrued as Celo only allows two new member households per year. As Celo's members come from diverse backgrounds, the slow process of admitting members is seen as a necessary precaution. Celo's unique governance process and land tenure arrangement require high levels of familiarity and trust among members.

When asked about noticeable changes in the Community, members who have been in Celo since the 1970s often refer to increasing levels of affluence.

> When we first came here [in the 1970s], it seemed like most of the houses were pretty rough and when I walk around now and look at houses in the community, it seems like they're all rather large and lavish by comparison. Not all, but certainly the mean has gone way up. The economic status of community members in general seems to have gone up considerably. [interview in Celo Community 5-4-01]

Greater material affluence is also reflected in the broader, mainstream society, from which most new members are coming. However the level of affluence characteristic of Celo is not a mirror

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of the level of affluence in the broader society. When one visits Celo it is apparent that Celo's members are living more modest lifestyles than is true of most suburban, middle class Americans. While houses in Celo have increased in size and new automobiles are more common than they ever were, many members of Celo still maintain a very spartan existence.

B. Land Use Planning – Balancing A Growing Community and Land Stewardship

An issue that has been of continuing significance in Celo Community since the 1970s is the development of a comprehensive land use plan for their commonly held 1,200 acres. This focus on land use planning arises from a desire to determine how many people they can accommodate in their community while maintaining a context of mutual support, a smoothly functioning governance process and a commitment to land stewardship. With regards to social issues, there is a perceived conflict as to how increasing size will affect social intimacy and governance processes. While not all community members are familiar with each other on equally intimate levels, they do all know each other and provide care and support to each other in times of need. Some believe that including more people in the community will lead to more mutual support and more intimate social relationships while others believe that the opposite will occur. As the community grows, there are more opinions and perspectives to account for in making decisions about community governance. As a result, the process of consensus government, which requires that all perspectives be considered, can become more difficult.

With regards to land stewardship, there is a perceived conflict between increasing community population and the continued ecological integrity and beauty of the land. The community has chosen to set aside over one quarter of their land as wilderness, to protect watercourses and sacred places and to provide effective wildlife corridors. More people in the community means more development, more encroachment upon the land whose integrity they

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wish to maintain and whose beauty they all enjoy. This trio of interrelated issues – the desire to preserve land from development, the desire to maintain an effective consensus governance process and the difficulty of determining how many people can effectively constitute an intimate social community – is a topic of ongoing debate within Celo, a debate that has manifested itself through the development of a land use plan.

In 1994, Celo attempted to address these issues by surveying themselves in an effort to determine if community members placed a greater priority on people or land. The results revealed that both people and land were of equal importance and that striking a balance between ecological and community integrity was important to members. For example, in response to the question, "What is most important to you as a member of Celo?", an almost equal number of respondents indicated that "caring for the people who live in Celo" (31) and "caring for and about the land of Celo" (37) was their top priority. Similarly, when asked if their preferred terminology for Celo would be either "land trust" or "community" an equal number of respondents (18 and 21 respectively) selected each option with a slightly smaller number (2) suggesting that Celo should be referred to as a "land trust community". Finally, when asked if they would like to see the community population decrease, increase, or stay the same, responses were in favor of seeing the community's population increase, but appended written comments expressed concerns about what would happen if it did. While no one wanted to see the community's population decrease, 16 respondents wanted it to remain at current levels and 39 responents wanted to see the community's population grow. The comments appended to the survey further reflected the mixed feelings of the community. A summary of these comments included "that we will become a stagnant, aged ... uninspired group" and "that we will be a poor man's country club" if the community chose to limit membership. On the other hand, worries

were expressed that if the community's population grew larger "we will destroy our natural environment," "the consensus process will become unwieldy," and "we will decrease the likelihood of social intimacy" (Celo Community 1994).

These perceived conflicts and the differing perspectives on them reveal fundamental issues that lie at the heart of Celo's intentional community building endeavor. Significant time was devoted to the intertwined issues of land use planning, social intimacy and community size in the early 1970s, the mid 1980s, the mid 1990s and again in the 2000s when a comprehensive land use plan was finally adopted. This land use plan was the result of years of debate, neighborhood and community meetings, and group land walks. The community came together in an attempt to determine where they could accommodate more people and what parts of their land should be protected from development. The outcomes of this process will be discussed at greater length in chapter eleven. The basic point is that Celo Community has devoted a significant amount of time and effort in seeking to strike a balance both among people and between people and land stewardship. That they have identified only a small number of new building sites interspersed with areas to be preserved and that they have not consensed upon an ideal community size indicates that these are issues that the community will continue to confront.

C. Celo Community Center

For most of its history, Celo Community has lacked a specific place that could serve as a central gathering area, a community center. A room in the health center building has long served as a space for community meetings, but the building itself was clearly the domain of the health center, its staff and its patients. A number of other places in the community have always served as gathering sites: the food co-op, the Friends Meeting, Granny's Beach, the community soccer field, but none of them provided facilities for a community center. Beginning in the 1980s, the

desirability of a community center became an ongoing topic of debate at community meetings. Some felt it would provide a focal point for the community and lead to more interaction, more group activities and more intimate social bonds. Others felt that it was a financial and maintenance responsibility that the community should not take on.

In 2000, the issue came to a head. The health center had received grant money to build a new facility on an adjacent piece of community land and would be vacating the building it had used for almost 60 years. Possession of the old building reverted to the community and they were forced to decide what to do with it. Although not everyone was equally enthused about it, consensus was ultimately reached to convert the old health center building into a full-fledged community center. During community meetings about the new community center concerns were expressed about a variety of things: the cost of renovation and maintenance, who would provide labor for renovation and take responsibility for maintenance, how the building would be used and how its uses might or might not meet the needs of Celo Community and other local constituencies, the potential duplication of activity spaces that already existed resulting in an unneeded burden on community resources, and the potential for the building to generate revenue for the community.

It was decided that the community center building, now called Celo Community Center or CCC would serve as a location for meetings and other Celo Community events as well as a social center for the wider community and the valley. A committee of community members was formed to conceptualize and oversee the process of building renovation and use and to bring their recommendations to the community's general meeting. Funds were appropriated for the building's renovation and a community member was hired as a building manager to oversee and complete renovations. As is common with most construction projects in Celo, renovations were

completed using mostly community labor and expertise. A small minority of community members carried the process of conversion forward, although a larger number of community members participated in several community workdays that were devoted to renovating the community center.

Community workdays are a regular occurrence in Celo, and I participated in several of these workdays at CCC during my research. As is the regular pattern, a predesignated workday project involving either community or individually held property is announced at Celo's general meeting. It usually falls on the Saturday morning and early afternoon following the community meeting. On CCC workdays, members of the community – usually only about ten in number – showed up in work clothes, carrying gloves and tools, knowing that they were bound to get dirty. This is part of life in Celo; maintaining community property or helping other community members build and maintain their propoerty requires elbow grease, a bit of blood, sweat and tears. As we tore up old linoleum and emptied out dusty closets, other community members, older people or those with physical handicaps, showed up with refreshments, appreciations, and encouragement for the hard work we were doing. Although many of Celo's members do not participate in workdays regularly, it is one way that the community develops a sense of camaraderie and mutual support. Even those who don't attend workdays get a feel for this when workday projects are described, and often cheered, at community meetings.

It remains to be seen how Celo will use its new community center once the renovations are complete. At the time of my research, there were a number of proposed uses being discussed, many of them involving groups from outside of Celo Community proper. One proposal involved renting the basement to artisans from Mayland Community College for the production of tiles and as an incubator project for cottage industries for local artisans. Another proposed use was as

a gallery for local artists, some of them Celo Community members, to sell their wares during the Toe River Arts Council's sponsored tours twice a year. It was also suggested that the planned CCC commercial kitchen could be used to produce food for fundraisers and benefits for the Toe River Arts Council, Celo Health Center, and other local charitable organizations. In the meantime, the community continues to use its building for meetings and for individual community member business offices as they long have. But it is apparent that there is a new sense of shared pride in the building as they join together in beautifying and renovating it.

Chapter 7

CELO TODAY: A STABLE AND MATURE COMMUNITY

The aim of Celo Community is to provide an opportunity for its members to enjoy a life that includes personal expression, neighborly friendship and cooperation and an appreciative care of the natural environment. ...

We encourage personal enterprise among members by making land and money available when needed for suitable productive use. Regarding ownership of land as a trust, we do not sell it, but assign it for short or long periods at as low an assessment as feasible to those who give promise of improving it while living harmoniously with their neighbors. ...

In the relation of the Community to its members the legal is an instrument of the moral. The relation is not an external one between a soulless corporation and independent individuals. It is the internal relation between one person of a friendly neighborhood group and all the persons including himself. Thus a member consulting in a Community meeting on a course of action is both a private user and (in consensus with others) a public controller of land. [Celo Community Constitution n.d.]

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This is how Celo describes itself in one of their most fundamental community documents: the Celo Community Constitution. This document places emphasis on fundamental characteristics of the community: a balance between the individual and the group and a commitment to stewarding the environment. Through the explicit recognition that "in the relation of the Community to its members, the legal is an instrument of the moral" Celo's Constitution touches on the ways in which relationships among community members and between the community as a corporate entity and the land are structured through the community's unique institutions of community membership, land tenure, and community governance. This document reflects an established and stable community, a community that knows its purpose and the processes through which a focus on that purpose are maintained.

*   *   *

It is difficult to see Celo Community as a whole and distinctly bounded social entity today. The coming together of all of Celo's members for a single event in a single place at one time simply does not occur. The closest approximation of a full community gathering occurs at Celo's general meetings which take place at the Celo Community Center on the first Wednesday night of every month or at their annual meeting there every October. During these times, the large, red brick building is full of people and it echoes with animated discussions about community history, people and business. However, the entirety of Celo's membership is never present at these events as at least several community members are bound to be away from the community traveling, visiting relatives, or engaged in work or activism in the nearby towns of Burnsville, Asheville or places much further away. Others may simply be too busy with their daily lives and their jobs outside the community or be too burned out on participating in the arduous process of consensus decision-making to participate. While the majority of Celo's Community's members gather, some of them will be tucked away in their homes or art studios attending to personal business, or perhaps as far away as India on a spiritual retreat.

Celo's members sometimes gather to celebrate the life of a person who has recently passed away or to help repair flood damage to the home of a community member or neighbor. During my research, I attended a memorial service that was held for a recently deceased neighbor of Celo Community at the Celo Friends Meeting House. Well over a hundred people attended this standing room only event, joining together in silent meditation and outpourings of grief and joyous remembrances of the dearly departed. While many of Celo's members walked to this event, friends and relatives of the deceased arrived from sometimes great distances by air and car. Many of them appeared to be quite at home in Celo Community, rekindling old

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friendships, apparently quite unselfconscious of the fact that they were in an intentional community. At times like this, it is clear that the social boundaries of Celo Community are blurred and indistinct.

The remnants of two Atlantic hurricanes caused severe flooding in the community during my stay there in the fall of 2004. Immediately afterwards, Celo's members were marshalling their forces to clear away downed trees, mend driveways that had washed away, and repair massive damage to the Ten Thousand Things food co-op that sits on Celo's land and across route 80 from the swollen South Toe River. Repairs to Ten Thousand Things' building and inventory were swift; water-logged boards, shelves, cabinets and inventory were repaired or replaced by spontaneously composed teams of people and without central guidance. Seeking authoritative direction as to how I could help, definitive responses were lacking. The message seemed to be "just take ownership for it and do it." In their responses to this event, Celo's members and their neighbors joined together in cooperation and mutual support and they expressed the sentiment that "this sort of cooperation is what community is about." However, this sort of coming together in response to an emergency situation did not seem unique to Celo as an intentional community. As we can see on the news, any group of neighbors will join together to help each other in response to death and tragedy. Even though times of death and tragedy may draw Celo's members together in one place and one time, these are not the definitive expressions of the uniqueness of Celo Community.

While at least some of Celo's members invariably are not present for these events, those that do participate are joined by many of their neighbors, people who live nearby and share many of Celo's values but have not taken official community memberships and do not live on community land. Indeed, the membership of Ten Thousand Things, a unique, entirely voluntary,

cooperative institution with no paid positions that has existed on community land since 1972, is comprised of a majority of non-community members. Tuesday afternoons and Saturday mornings when the coop is open for business are boisterous times. Co-op members staff the checkout counter, subtracting the totals of items purchased from members' accounts maintained in hand-written ledgers rather than by computer. Jovial bantering and laughter is interspersed with more serious discussions such as the sharing of advice regarding techniques for personal construction projects and the scheduling of appointments for cooperative work on them. Although Ten Thousand Things was initiated by Celo's members, it has become the domain of a much wider community. Many of Celo's members maintain closer personal relationships with people from this wider community than they do with most of Celo's official members.

Thus, one has to look beneath the surface to gain a perspective on Celo Community as a distinct social entity, an ongoing project of intentional community building. While Celo Community and its members are unmistakably integrated into broader local, regional, national, and even global communities, Celo is distinctly defined by a set of social institutions and the values that they encode and enact: Celo's membership process, its land tenure arrangement, and its process of community governance by consensus decision making. If one approaches Celo hoping to find a concisely bounded utopia, they will be disappointed for Celo's social boundaries with the wider world are unmistakably porous. However, within these porous boundaries, Celo is circumscribed by unique social institutions that continue to enact utopian strivings and cultural critiques whose roots stretch back to the founding of Celo Community by Arthur Morgan.

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In his dissertation, *Ideology and Change in an American Utopian Community* (1969), Hicks paints a picture of Celo Community that portrays it as a failed social experiment, a fallen

utopia, whose promise was not to be realized. He speaks of there being little business to conduct at community meetings, meetings which were taken up mostly by gossip. He portrays the community as a disappointment to its own members, a social endeavor that failed to realize its potentials:

> That Celo Community is not destined to lead a major social overhaul has gradually impressed its members since the intense disputes of the early 1950s. [1969:176]
>
> Celo simply was not radically different from an ordinary neighborhood; it had not developed, as they had hoped, into a unique experiment in social design. [1969:177]
>
> The residents no longer see the Community as offering to the matrix society an example of a better social order. Even the Holding Agreement, once thought of as a grand example of improved land tenure relations [has lost its significance for most members]. As a whole, the Community has lost its transcendental vision; it merely furnishes a context for the diverse activities of its residents. [1969:304]

Perhaps this was how it appeared in the mid to late 1960s when Hicks conducted ethnographic research in Celo Community. There is no doubt that the community was shaken by the dissension and defection of the 1950s. The remnants of this were what confronted Hicks during his stay. There is no way he could have foreseen the impact that the back-to-the-land movement would have on the community in the 1970s, the revitalization that resulted from the ideals of the countercultural movement. For people who were part of these movements, Arthur Morgan's experiment in intentional community, growing as it did out of a critique of modern industrial society and culture, provided a place where they could live out their own ideals in a supportive social environment, where they could join together with others and respond to their cultural critiques by creating and participating in alternative institutions. Celo's experimentalism was revived by their presence as were their efforts to live out their cultural critiques supported by their membership in Celo Community.

It appears that Hicks exaggerated the disillusionment that he says characterized community members and that he evaluated the community using the measure of utopia as an end rather than employing the concept of utopianism as a frame for understanding an ongoing transformative process. Judging Celo Community with regards to whether or not it had achieved utopia, whether or not its members had managed to completely transcend the dominant reality, Hicks inevitably found that it had not. While some community members might have believed they would find utopia in Celo Community and were disillusioned and left when they did not, it is clear that most people who came to the community were more practical in their expectations. Community documents from various eras indicate that the community saw and advertised itself as an ongoing social experiment, but never as a finished product, much less a utopia. The community did back away from promoting itself as a model community, but my research indicates that this is due to an overwhelming level of interest in the community and to the practicalities of community functioning rather than to a realization that "the community is not destined to lead a major social overhaul."

Whatever the case may be, I found that community members were well aware that they were part of a social experiment characterized by unique institutions for community governance, membership screening and land tenure, the very same institutions that Hicks points to as characteristic of their "utopian" undertaking. There may be different levels of excitement about the experiment in community and different levels of commitment to the community's ideals, but I did not come across a single community member who believed that they were living in "an ordinary neighborhood." Even though many members of Celo Community are not strong cultural critics and are not guided in their lives by a forceful utopian striving, they are well aware of their community's unique history and structure. This is a manifestation of the process of

developmental utopianism. Although the community's idealism may have diminished relative to the early years and in response to the practicalities of everyday life, current community members still recognize the community's roots in utopian experimentalism and cultural critique.

In any case, as the baby boomers age today, Celo Community's vitality is evident. Community meetings are well attended, their agendas full and the tone serious but light. Celo Health Center has moved to a new building and the community is energized by their efforts to remodel the old health center building into a full-fledged community center. The community is inundated with requests for information from potential members and others who want to set up communities elsewhere. The community waiting list of potential community members is over ten years long. It seems that Celo's stability is what attracts so many people to it. It no longer has to struggle so ardently to implement utopian visions or to act on cultural critique for Celo has already established successful, alternative institutions that function well. Because of this, the community does not appear, on the surface, to be utopian in nature. Indeed, in some respects it is 'not radically different from an ordinary neighborhood'. Other than collective land ownership, membership screening and consensus-based community governance, there is no other communal enterprise in which all members are involved. However, employing the lens of developmental utopianism, we can see that these instiutions are the outcomes of the hard work of previous utopians and cultural critics and their confrontations with the tension between the real and the ideal. In Celo, their utopian endeavors live on.

The idealism of the 1970s and earlier periods has faded considerably in the face of the practicalities of raising families, resolving disputes and stewarding the land. Yet, in many respects Celo Community is much more than just a neighborhood. It is a community whose strength grows, in part, out of a symbiosis with the land, a symbiosis that is facilitated by

governance and land tenure institutions that were created by previous utopian communitarians and cultural critics and by which all current community members are bound. These members are diverse in background experiences, current livelihood strategies, and the ways that they perceive of and participate in the wider world. It is thus difficult to generalize about them. However, all of the members of Celo Community recognize that they are participating in a unique social experiment and their community documents indicate this.

> CCI members have no common political ideology or religious conviction, rather its central focus is stewardship of the land held "in trust." Arthur Morgan's plan was for Celo Community to be an experiment, an adventure in community building. Working together with good will, the members would cultivate basic value patterns, social and ethical standards, free and open-minded inquiry, and a network of customs and relationships to create what he called "The Great Community."
> Members express the desire to avoid prevalent value patterns of urban and suburban America, to cooperate in creating a satisfying neighborhood, to develop relationships of honesty and mutual trust, to appreciate and care for the natural world, to raise some of their own food, to participate directly in making decisions affecting their lives, and to rear children in a wholesome environment. [About Celo Community n.d.]

> [We] have come here to share and cooperate with others in creating a satisfying neighborhood, attempting to live [our] lives somewhat free of the stresses of modern American society and to participate directly in making decisions which affect [our] lives. No common political ideology or religious conviction binds this group of people together. Rather it is stewardship of the land held "in trust" which is the center point of CCI. The members carefully consider issues which effect use of the land and make decisions by the process of consensus at regular monthly meetings. (Welcome to Celo Community)
> Though coming from diverse backgrounds, most Celo Community members are motivated, at least in part, by a desire to avoid the prevalent value patterns of urban American life. Hence, variations of income and life style within the Community carry neither prestige nor stigma. [Celo Community Self-Evaluation Questionnaire n.d.]

These long quotations are included in introductory materials sent to people interested in joining the community. They are the way that the community represents itself and they provide an appropriate segue for discussing Celo Community as it exists today. Celo Community is the

outcome of the decisions, intentions and actions of all who have been part of the community over the last 70 years. As we have seen, three particular strands of utopianism and cultural critique have significantly affected the community: Morgan's idealization of the small community, Quaker commitments to peace, equality, democracy and simplicity and the back-to-the-land movement's desire for simplicity, community, environmental conservation and self-reliance.

It is apparent that Celo Community is an outgrowth of Morgan's cultural critique of modern society and his utopian vision of the small community. Morgan's efforts in founding the community and his aims for it are acknowledged by current members. Many community members still recognize the community as an experiment, one that was designed to determine how people could cooperate, develop mutual trust and responsibility and a collective vision of the common good in juxtaposition to predominant cultural trends that emphasized individualism and material competition. Although in daily economic life Celo Community has not managed to detach itself from the political economic system of industrial capitalism that so worried Morgan, it has developed a unique set of social institutions that continue to attract people seeking alternatives to mainstream life. These institutions assert a greater degree of local control over the political economy of land ownership, the constituents that compose the community, and the way they relate to each other and govern themeselves. This control manifests itself in terms of the ethical values of land stewardship and collective land tenure.

Although there is no official requirement that members share Quaker values or participate in the Friends meeting at Celo, the Quaker heritage is a significant part of Celo Community. Some see the Friends' meeting, a regular Sunday gathering for silent worship followed by a potluck, as the heart of the community. Indeed, the Friends' meeting house does lie almost at the geographical center of the community and slightly over half of all community members

participate in it to some degree. The Celo Friends Meeting is also a nexus for cultural critique. It is a place where peace, justice and other social and environmental concerns are earnestly discussed.

I attended the Celo Friends Meeting regularly during my research. Each Sunday morning I would make way across small roads and footpaths constructed by members of the community through the forest that they own and steward together to a small, simple building where the worship takes place. This building, once a goat barn, reflects Quaker values in its humbleness and simplicity. It is not a grand cathedral, but a small and intimate gathering place with a fire burning in a wood stove at one end. On those Sunday mornings, we sat together for an hour or more, often in long silences punctuated only by the words of any worshiper who felt moved by spirit to express their sentiments. While those few community members who had been attending this meeting for decades were clearly deffered to in their wisdom as elders, this was clearly a meeting of equals.

Many times, those who were compelled to speak during worship expressed concerns about current political or environmental circumstances in the wider world. Often these were related back to very personal experiences. One morning, a woman spoke to the pain and worry that she felt as a result of the current war in Iraq and the political and economic considerations that she believed were driving it. She expressed that her nephew, who is in the military, had been sent to Iraq and she asked the worshipers to hold him "in the light" and to protect him. But her concern did not end there, she also asked that the Iraqis be protected from the bloodshed and violence and that a peaceful resolution be reached. Another Friend expressed his concerns for the harm that the Earth was suffering under the onslaught of global climate change and environmental degradation. He related that the wooly adelgid infestation that was causing the

death of so many hemlock trees in area had led him to think about the larger environmental problems that the need for massive changes if tragedy were to be averted. Could we focus our collective spiritual energy on solutions to these problems he asked.

In many ways, Celo Friends Meeting is a node for the larger cultural critiques and utopian striving for a better world that underpins the history of Celo's intentional community building endeavor. Most people in Celo Community, even if they do not attend the Friends' Meeting, adhere to Quaker values of simplicity, equality, social justice and democracy. Perhaps most significantly, a process of Quaker-inspired governance by consensus, of seeking unity and truth amongst a diversity of opinions, of encouraging all to participate in governing the community of which they are part, continues to serve as the model for conducting community business. This model stands in stark contrast to predominant political institutions that result in apathy, disenfranchisement and low voter turnout. It is a means of bringing people together in the process of utopian striving for a better world.

The back-to-the-landers that came in the late 1960s and early 1970s built upon latent themes of environmental stewardship and simple living that already existed in the community and brought them to the forefront. Today most community houses are owner-built, small, simple and energy efficient. Many of them include alternative energy systems and home gardens. Many of the houses are named for their original builders – Leveridge House, Reed House, Wyatt House – reflecting a strong sense of history and rootedness in the land and community. Social interaction, cooperative gardening, hikes in the woods and cooperative work projects substitute for television and high-priced, high-technology entertainment. Organic, locally grown food is a staple and fast food, largely unavailable in the area anyway, is disfavored. Although Celo Community is far from self-sufficient, most households in Celo Community are much more self-

reliant than is true of the average American household. In all of these senses, Celo's earlier utopian cultural critics have succeeded in creating viable cultural models that stand in juxtaposition with dominant cultural values and social institutions.

"Our Sane Fringe": The Wider Community and Beyond

As alluded to above, a wider community of like-minded people has grown up around Celo Community. Some of them came to the area in their quest to go back to the land. Many of them were attracted to the area by the presence of Celo Community, although they have chosen not to become official members. Some in Celo refer affectionately to this wider community as "our sane fringe," an ironic reference to the fact that they have created the lives that resemble what the members of Celo Community sought without being party to the painstaking processes and sometimes cumbersome arrangements that characterize Celo Community: its membership, land tenure and governance institutions. These people too are committed to simple living, but their individual decisions are not bound by the restrictions of collective land tenure and community governance. They share interests with Celo's members with whom they cooperate on building and agricultural projects. They participate in projects initiated by Celo's members such as the Ten Thousand Things food cooperative and the community supported agriculture farm operated by two of Celo's members on community land, but they do not go to community meetings and they are not required to have their building designs and home site orientations approved by the community.

There is a high degree of interaction between members of Celo Community and the wider community. In some senses, Celo Community is only differentiated from this wider community by their commonly owned land and their processes of community governance and membership screening. The wider community participates in and, by sheer numbers, dominates some of the

local institutions initiated by Celo's members. The congregation at Celo Friends Meeting, the weekly Quaker service held on community land, is often composed of a majority of non-community members. Cabin Fever University is a three month long series of events that occurs every winter and involves a good mix of Celo Community members and those from the wider community. Announced by the publication of a calendar every December that lists all of the events, Cabin Fever University is an opportunity for an individual or group to invite people to participate in an event of their design. These events may be educational, political, culinary, social, entertaining or any combination thereof. Cabin Fever University events often include plays, dinner events, political discussions, slide shows and how-to sessions through which participants can share their skills, opinions, experiences and expertise. The participation of the wider community in Cabin Fever University reflects Celo's porous boundaries and its influence beyond its political and geographical borders.

Beyond these particular institutions, some people in Celo Community say that their relationships with people from the wider community are more intimate than their relationships with other community members. The presence and growth of this wider community, in addition to the long list of people waiting to become members of the community, is an indication that Celo Community has manifested a lifestyle that many value and aspire to. Despite the fact that one can participate in many aspects of Celo Community without actually taking formal membership, there is a long list of people waiting for the opportunity to undertake the trial membership period and join the community. Although such membership entails significant limitations on one's freedom to develop and profit on personal property, and although Celo is no longer actively seeking new members through announcements and advertisements in intentional community communications networks, the community still attracts a large number of people who

seek membership. This is an indication that Celo's utopianism and cultural critique holds wider resonance.

In addition to referring to their like-minded neighbors as "our sane fringe", another way that Celo Community's members conceptualize the difference between themselves and the broader society is through the use of the label *the mainstream society*. This label manifests juxtaposition; it implies a contrast between themselves as members of a unique social community and the mass of people living "normal" lives in American society. Another way that Celo's members perceive of their difference is with reference to "the local" people, the families that have lived in these mountains for generations and were here prior to the establishement of Celo Community. These labels are not necessarily used normatively; rather they are simply an expression of difference. However, despite this perceived difference, Celo's members are very much engaged in both the mainstream and local components of the wider society.

There are a number of ways in which the wider society overlaps with Celo and in which Celo Community spills out into the wider society. One manifestation of this overlap is the ways in which people who are not members of the community proper or of the wider community of like-minded neighbors engage in activities that take place within the boundaries of Celo Community. During my research in Celo in 2004 just prior to the elections, Yancey County Democratic Party representatives and candidates held a meeting with their constituents from the South Toe Valley at Celo Community Center. In addition to the representatives and candidates and Celo Community members themselves, the constituents in the audience included people that Celo's members might refer to as locals and participants in the mainstream. This event was representative of the ways in which Celo Community's relationship with the wider world has changed historically. In the community's early years, Celo Community members were ignored

and even shunned by local politicians. The fact that a county democratic party would hold a campaign meeting at Celo Community Center reveals both that Celo's influence in the area has grown and that Celo's utopian idealism has been tempered enough that they recognize the necessity of engaging in mainstream politics rather than adhering strictly to their original utopian visions.

On the other hand, most of Celo's members engage in many activities outside of the community's boundaries, especially on an individual level. Some of Celo's members are active in the local Democratic Party and the local chapter of Habitat for Humanity for instance. Some of Celo's members are active in the Toe River Arts Council, a group of artists committed to promoting the work of artists in several local counties. Although most of Celo's members value simple living and eating food that has been produced by themselves or other local agriculturalists, most of Celo's members make semi-regular trips to the nearby towns of Burnsville or Spruce Pine or slightly farther to the city of Asheville for shopping and entertainment. In this sense, Celo is far from the more self-reliant community that Morgan once envisioned.

Celo's relationship with people in the local communities has also changed, even as the composition and worldview of these local communities have themselves been transformed. In Hicks' account of Celo Community, he characterized Celo's relationship with the locals as almost entirely antagonistic in nature. He points out that the nature of the community was confusing to local families who could not understand their values or what they were attempting to do. The vociferous pacifism of some of the community members in wartime was seen as unpatriotic, the fact that the community owned their land together ran counter to values of rugged individualism, and the eccentric behavior of some of the back-to-the-landers was just

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plain offensive. At various points, some of the local suspicions and misunderstandings about the community and a lack of communication between the two groups led to the community being labeled variously as German spies, Jewish communists, or hippie holler. The removal of local tenants from community land and their being asked to dissociate themselves from community business added to the strain. At one point during WWII, a group of local men barged into a community meeting, threatening violence if the pacifists did not leave the area. Although nothing came of these threats, it is indicative of the fact that there has been a good deal of tension between the local communities and Celo Community. This strained relationship between the two groups was unfortunate for Celo could certainly have learned much about self-reliance from the locals and the locals might have related to the community members' concerns with the destructive and disempowering effects of the growing industrial political economy on local communities and environments.

However, it became evident during my research that antagonism and strained relationships between Celo and its members and local communities and families, while they no doubt existed, were not as broadly characteristic as Hicks' account leads one to believe. Indeed, at least one local family joined the community and maintained their membership despite some disdain from their local brethren. In fact, this family is in its second generation of community membership. Some of Celo's members developed relationships with local families. Celo's longest standing current members, in addition to their regular participation in Celo Friends Meeting, have been attending local church events for decades. The daughter of this family married a man from a local family who has since become a community member. The father of this family taught for many years in local schools and is fondly remembered by his local students who still recognize and thank him when they see him. Before the local schools were

consolidated, when local children were taught in a number of one-room school houses throughout the valley, the students from the school house closest to Celo attended school in the basement of Celo Health Center when their regular school building burned down. And the Celo Health Center itself was explicitly conceptualized and established to be of service not only to Celo's members but to the residents of local communities as well and continues to serve in this capacity today. One of the local families even named their son after the community member doctor who delivered him at the Health Center.

As time has passed, the antagonism between the two groups has softened considerably although a certain level of ambivalence remains. Local communities, still living without electricity and phones at the time of Celo's founding have been exposed to a much wider world. They have become more cosmopolitan and appreciative of Celo's presence, if still somewhat guarded. This is indicated by a quotation from an interview I conducted with a long time local resident:

> E: The community has, in my opinion, been a tremendous asset to Yancey County. It's been a positive effect. The only thing, it took me thirty years to get any of them to work in the political scene much. They was afraid that somebody'd think they was a-meddling in affairs. And I said, look, you've been here almost as long I've been here. ... The people on the Celo Community is just – they had some funny ways, we thought. You might could find somebody who maybe would smart off a little bit because they don't want them to cut timber in the mountains. They call them tree huggers. That's just a difference. But still it's their business what they do on their property.

At the same time Celo's members have become more appreciative of the ways in which local families had long lived largely self-reliant lifestyles characterized by informal networks of cooperation and the passing on of basic subsistence skills. This was alluded to in my interview with Celo's longest standing members.

B: We had some very warm relationships. If we had felt antagonism and hostility on the part of the local people, I don't think we would have stayed. The Silvers up here ... they were very close to us.

D: We depended on Alonzo Silver, because he had so much knowledge of agriculture and stuff and he helped with the garden. And Isabelle Ballew up on the mountain, Seven Mile Ridge, was just a wealth of earthy knowledge about cows and chickens and corn and all sorts of things that we didn't know much about. We depended on those people. ... We feel we have a lot in common with the people who go to the Baptist church across the river. We don't define things in the same way, but they have a spirit of caring for each other and caring for us that crosses all sorts of lines.

B: But, it's just that there is this psychological boundary.

Celo's members recognize that a certain distance still exists between themselves and local familes and communities. This is likely an inevitable outcome where the formation of intentional communities is the result of a diaspora of people from one context to another, in the case, from the cities to a traditional rural area.

Celo's People

At the time of my field research, Celo Community was composed of 80 adult members, all of whom reside on community-owned land. Because of a constant influx in members and due to the occasional departure, Celo's demography changes slowly but consistently. The gender balance is among Celo's Current members is approximately equal. Celo's members are not particularly ethnically diverse. One African American and one Japanese American are the only members that are not of European American ancestry. Of the current members, 2 (2.5%) joined in the 1950s, 3 (3.75%) joined in the 1960s, 23 (28.75%) came in the 1970s, 25 (31.25%) came in the 1980s, 18 (22.5%) joined in the 1990s and 9 (11.25%) came in the first decade of the 21st century.

These figures can be somewhat misleading because many of the current members were involved in Celo Community long before they became formal members of the community, many of them working at or attending the Arthur Morgan School or Camp Celo, respectively a

boarding school for children in grades seven through nine and a summer camp for younger children. Both of these institutions are located within Celo's geographic boundaries and can only be reached by driving through the heart of the community. Additionally, some community members work at each; the camp has always been run by two generations of the same family and the school has employed a large number of community members over the years. Thus, outside people attending or working at the school or camp are directly exposed to both the people and the places that are Celo Community. Many of them develop an attraction or attachment to the community and decide to stay.

Community members vary widely with regards to age, the youngest members being in their early 30s and the oldest in their 80s. There is a high concentration of people in their 50s, 60s and early 70s, but the four newest community members are two couples in their late 20s and early 30s. The female half of one of the couples is a second generation community member reflecting a growing trend of multi-generational families in the community that now totals five. The children of these multi-generational families must go through the same membership process that their parents did although the community has established a separate track for them so that they can avoid the long waiting list of potential community members.

Most of Celo's members came as couples and have families, although there are some singles included in the community's membership and it was more common for single people to join in the past. Celo Community is family-oriented. There were approximately 20 children of community members living in the community at the time of my research although this number may have been greater in the past when the number of younger couples was greater. The community acts as an extended family for the children of community members. Children of similar ages often play together, traipsing across the community's land. Both children and

parents feel safe in the knowledge that there are a large number of adults who will watch out for them and attend to their needs if their parents are not immediately present. Some of these children attend the Arthur Morgan School and Camp Celo and some attend the county school system. The elementary school is only a quarter mile for the community while the middle and high schools are farther away in the town of Burnsville. Reflecting the changing relationship between the locals and the community and the changing demographics of the region, where community children once reported a high degree of antagonism between themselves and local children in the county schools, this seems to have diminished somewhat.

Most of Celo's members moved to the community from urban or suburban settings, although this is certainly not true for all of them. Still, it is hard to generalize about Celo's members because, despite the relative homogeneity of their ethnic, social, and economic backgrounds, they have brought with them to the community diverse experiences, attitudes and perspectives on the world. A brief, purposive sample of Celo's members and their backgrounds can be used to illustrate this diversity.

Peter Holder grew up in Madison Wisconsin in a professional, upper middle class household. He attended Antioch College when Arthur Morgan was President there and took two classes from him. Morgan encouraged Peter to come to Celo Community in the late 1950s and, although he did not formally join the community until the 1980s, he maintained an association with it from that time on. Paul received his Ph.D. in astrophysics from the University of Michigan and eventually became an international development consultant. Although he is nearing retirement, his job requires him to maintain an apartment in Washington D.C. and to travel around the world. His experiences and education have given him broad perspective. However, Peter is cynical about Celo Community. In contrast to most other members, he does

not think that the consensus process functions particularly well and he does not believe that the community is a good example of sustainability. Peter, like two other community members before his time, is known for his insistence on strict adherence to community policy. He has a vast knowledge of the community's governing documents and likes to insist on literal interpretation of them rather than allowing them to be finessed for particular individual cases as the community tends to do.

Julie Singleton grew in a poor and devout Catholic farming family in a small Iowa town and joined a convent directly after high school. As a nun, Julie got in involved in social justice work around the U.S. and in Latin America. After some time she realized that she couldn't realize the full extent of her activism within the confines of the church. She left the clergy and became a full time peace and social justice activist. Following a tradition in the community that extends back to some if its first lasting members, Julie lives a lifestyle of resistance. She describes herself as a "war tax resistor" and intentionally keeps her income below the poverty line in order to avoid paying taxes to support the war system. Her house is simple, spartan and meticulous. She is an idealist, but is somewhat uncomfortable with her idealism. When I asked her if she would like to do an interview with me she replied that she would but worried, "what if I say something really idealistic. Then I will have to live up to it." Julie is constantly engaged in protests of various sorts and recently returned from a two year humanitarian mission in China. Julie is a quiet but forceful presence in Celo Community. When she speaks at the Friends Meeting or at community meetings, people listen because they know that serious thought and principle stands behind what she says.

Margie Williamson grew up in a poor, rural, and devoutly religious South Carolina farming family. Her life was solitary but she enjoyed the farm life and related to me fond

memories of it. After her parents moved to North Carolina to take manufacturing jobs, she went to college and turned away from her religious background, immersing herself in countercultural movements and alternative religions. Soon after college, she met and married her husband, an African American who has also become a community member. Although they are both well educated, they have opted not to join the "rat race" of American materialist culture. They do not have regular jobs, but work part time in various capacities around the community and the local area. He is a self-employed piano tuner and she is a self-employed transcriber and accountant. Despite their limited income they have managed to send their children, both of whom were homeschooled when they were young, to college without going into debt. Margie has recently returned to her conservative religious roots. She has begun attending local Presbretyrian and Pentacostal churches and has found a community there. Unlike many Celo Community members she identifies herself as a political conservative. After some soul searching, she still finds that she shares common values of group decision-making and land stewardship with Celo's other members. Margie is quiet and softspoken, but has begun to assert her voice more in community meetings. She has taken on the job of community bookkeeper. With her husband and the help of a modest construction loan from the community, Margie is finally building a house of her own on community land.

Phillip Brown grew up in a poor family in urban Pennsylvania. He was a problem child and did not do well in school. He became a political activist at a young age got involved in the countercultural movement. He has lived in various places around the country and has been involved in alternative, intentional communities in both Louisiana and Califorrnia. Phillip is a professed anarchist and says that Celo Community is as close to a functioning anarchist community as he has found. He equates anarchism with a lack of hierarchy rather than a

complete lack of structure and says that Celo's consensus process is a close manifestation of his conceptualization of anarchism. Phillip has found his passion in food. He used to operate a bakery in the community and now operates a community supported agriculture farm on Celo land with his partner Deborah. He also does a gardening radio show once a week in Asheville and maintains the community garden at an ultra-rich gated community outside of Burnsiville. Although his political ideals differ greatly from the people who live there, he says that he can find community even with them, often using the topic of food as a mechanism for finding commonalities with other people. Phillip is somewhat withdrawn from the formal functions of Celo Community, but he is appreciated for his efforts with regards to the political ecology of food.

As this brief sample shows, Celo's members are diverse. Their backgrounds, interests and worldviews vary greatly and it is hard to generalize about them. Some of them are more connected to "the mainstream" than are others. Some are overt political activists and others are simply trying to make a satisfying life for themselves. They do not always see eye to eye and they are not all intimate with each other on a personal level. Indeed, there are distinct antagonisms among some of them. The extraordinary thing is that they have all found common cause in the community. They have deliberately bound themselves together through Celo's institutions of membership, land tenure and community governance. Although they conceptualize it in a variety of ways, being a member of Celo Community enables them to live closer to their values.

Social Geography

Celo Community may be entered from either the northwest or the south along North Carolina State Route 80 which runs through their property. Only two other points of access are

Figure 3: Celo Community Sketch Map

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available along two small asphalt country roads: from the north along Hall's Chapel Road and from the east by Seven Mile Ridge Road. It is not apparent that one has crossed onto Celo Community land as there are no distinct boundary markers. As indicated before, one must look below surface appearances to see the community as a bounded entity, in this case defined by property lines. Fishermen and families often use the main road through the heart of Celo Community, Hannah Branch Road, to access the South Toe River. Most of them are probably unaware that their recreational activities are taking place in the heart of a 70-year-old intentional community. Like most other properties in the U.S., Celo's collectively owned land is bounded by distinctly political lines. Celo's property is defined by property lines that have been drawn and redrawn over centuries of land speculation rather than by the contours of landforms or watersheds.

Celo Community's households are relatively dispersed across their 1,200 acres, although 11 different "neighborhoods" are recognizable by loose clusters of households and by neighborhood names that reflect the community's geography: Firefly Ridges Neighborood, Mac Hollow Neighborhood, and Upper and Lower West Side Neighborhoods. Community land is bisected by a stretch of the South Toe River and by North Carolina State Route 80 which runs alongside the river as it passes through Celo's property. Most of the community's land lies to the east of the river, but the best and largest extent of agricultural land is to the west. The population of the community follows this pattern, with most residing on the east side of the river. There are two neighborhoods totaling nine households on the west side of the river. The west side of the river also contains a small area designated as a business district that borders Route 80. this area includes an art studio, a cooperative crafts store, a cooperative organic foods store and the Celo Inn, a bed and breakfast that is owned and operated by one community household. Celo Health

Center and Celo Community Center are both located directly across the river from the business district. Celo Friends Meeting, the community soccer field and the Arthur Morgan School are all located along the community's main street, a two lane dirt road that runs along the east side of the river. Although the community is rather large, it is feasible to walk almost anywhere within the community in a reasonably short period of time. This opportunity is valued by community members who have constructed and maintain a series of trails to facilitate this.

The geographical layout of the community influences, but does not determine, the social relationships within it. Adjacent households tend to associate with each other more frequently and may even choose their homesites based on pre-existing relationships. When the land use plan was being developed, meetings and "land walks" were conducted within specific neighborhoods in order to locate appropriate spaces for new homesites and other areas to be protected from development. However, the proximity of Celo members' homesites to each other does not determine the strength or extent of personal relationships within the community. People who live on opposite sides of the community may be the closest of friends. For example, the couple that lives on the site of the Celo Inn, the business that they operate at the northern boundary of the community, share an intimate relationship with the couple that live on and operate Camp Celo near the southern boundary of community land. However, the locations that serve as gathering places for the community – the food co-op, the Friends Meeting house, Celo Community Center, and the community soccer field – are all centrally located. Yet, despite the availability of connecting footpaths and central gathering places, Celo's households are dispersed and isolated enough that one may spend weeks without direct personal contact with other community members, especially if they choose not to participate in community governance processes.

Community Governance

As I help to arrange the chairs for the community meeting tonight, I tune in to the conversations taking place around me. Most of Celo's members present for tonight's meeting are gathered in small groups, engaged in animated discussions. To my right two couples are discussing their children's performances in the high school play the night before. They are proud of their kids' accomplishment, but they lament the fact that the drama teacher is under pressure to resign because her class has chosen to perform plays that address topics that many local parents have found too controversial, in this particular case racism and homosexuality. To my right, two women and one man are discussing their plans to work together in the community's agricultural commons this coming weekend. They are discussing the different crops that they plan to cultivate and share with each other when they are harvested.

Promptly at eight o'clock, the community member that is serving as chairperson of tonight's meeting rings a bell and the conversations die down as people take their seats. We are arranged in a broad circle, two or three rows deep in some places. This arrangement facilitates a sense of egalitarianism; no one, not even the chairperson, is in a position of dominance and each can see the others's faces as they take their turns speaking. Before the meeting gets into full swing, the non-community member guests in attendance tonight are asked to introduce themselves. Having been present at the past four community meetings, I receive a reprieve. Other guests include a trial community member, the brother of a community member and a young teacher from Arthur Morgan School who is here to announce the school's upcoming open house. After these introductions, the minutes from the last community meeting are read aloud and, after a number of minor corrections are noted, accepted by a vocal chorus: "Approved!"

As is customary, the reading of the minutes is followed by a brief period of announcements. Someone begins by requesting a moment of silence to observe the recent deaths of both a non-community member neighbor and a community member whose presence at this meeting is sorely missed. As silence descends, I note that across the room several community members move closer to the deceased community member's husband, placing comforting hands around his shoulders and on his knee. Other announcements tonight are lighthearted and upbeat. A mother announces that her daughter who recently turned fourteen is available for babysitting. Someone else reminds his fellow community members that the Carolina Farm Stewardship tour next weekend will include several stops within the community including Celo's own community supported agriculture farm and several neighborhood and home gardens. Another community member reports on the progress of the Celo Community photo history project; photos will be accepted until the end of next week for a slide show at the community's annual meeting. The Celo History Committee and the photo history project have come into existence just since my arrival as a researcher in Celo; my interest in the community seems to have picqued their own.

After asking if there are any more announcements, the meeting chairperson requests the chair of the membership committee to bring forth any business that committee has to discuss. It is announced that two people have requested that their names be added to the waiting list for trial memberships, including a teacher at the Arthur Morgan School. Another community member asks the membership chair if the waiting list has been updated; he knows of at least one person that, having moved to California for a job, has asked to have his name removed. Moving on, two current trial members have their "documents meeting" next week where the membership committee will help to familiarize them with the community's governing documents. All

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interested parties are invited to attend. Finally, the newest community member has recently signed her Membership and Holding Agreements. Her home site plan proposal and her construction loan proposal were sent to the property and finance committees respectively for discussion and debate. Please attend those meetings in the coming weeks if you are interested.

Next up is the finance committee which doesn't have a lot of business to discuss this time around. It is reported that the committee approved an education loan for a community member, a mother who is returning to school to get her master's in public health now that her children have gone off to college. Hearty cheers erupt all around. The finance committee continues to consider some major restructuring of the community's finances, but will need at least one more monthly meeting before it is ready to make any major recommendations. One thing that they would like to submit for community approval is their recommendation to transfer Celo's "reserve funds", now totaling over $100,000, from a standard money-market account to socially and environmentally conscious hedge fund. A brief debate ensues about what change in interest rates might accompany this shift, but consensus is shortly reached that although this will result in a small reduction in interest rates, this move is in alignment with the community's collective values. The proposal is approved by voice vote, that is, with no one objecting.

The hands of the clock on the wall now point to nine and the meeting chair calls for a break. As those present disperse to all corners of the room for smaller discussions, one community member with whom I've not had a chance to interact approaches me. She says that from what she has observed, she believes that I'm taking a good approach to my research, but she's worried because George Hicks' account of the community left a sour taste in her mouth. "This community was simply not set up to be a utopia and that is the standard by which Hicks evaluated it. He missed the point. We are a practical-minded group; we just adhere to different

values than do most in our society." I suggest that I share her sentiments about Hicks' work and that my goal is to keep an open mind and portray the community according to the perspectives provided to me by current community members and the community's historical archives. Would she like to do an interview with me? After checking our calendars, we arrange a date for the following week.

The meeting resumes and moves on to discuss matters brought by the property committee. There is an urgent matter of business to discuss and the property committee chair hopes that the meeting and can reach consensus on it. Yesterday, he was disturbed by the activities of the French Broad Electric Company on community land; he was walking along one of the community's footpaths when the silence was disrupted by the noise of machinery up ahead. The electric company was doing its occasional clearing of power line rights of way, cutting away trees and brush that were encroaching on them. The community member was distressed by the destructiveness and waste of this activity, the use of large machines to rip limbs from trees and clearcut vast swaths through the forest, chipping the wood and trucking it away. He asked them if they would postpone their work here while he discussed a course of action with the community. Aware of the community from previous experiences, the workers acquiesced but indicated that they could only put it off for a couple of days.

The property committee, following informal discussions last night, proposes that the community ask the company to allow them to do their own clearing along the power lines. This way the clearing might proceed less destructively, preserving the beauty of their footpaths, many of which run under the power lines, and harvesting the cut vegetation for firewood. A discussion ensues. Some in the meeting indicate that they simply do not have time to do the necessary work to clear the rights of way and others suggest that they should not antagonize the power company,

fearing that it will result in delayed service in the future. Others, raising their hand to be put in a queue of speakers kept by the meeting chair, back the initial speaker's proposal. The debate continues and it appears that consensus may not be reached as the ten o'clock hour, the designated end point of community meetings, is approaching. Finally a community member steps forward and offers to devote the extra time to the project himself if some community members will join him in a special community workday this Saturday. He will complete the remaining clearing himself on Sunday if he can keep as much of the wood that he cuts as he needs for firewood. He also offers to join the property committee chair as a liaison to the electric company.

A brief and spontaneous moment of silence follows as the meeting ponders this offer. After about 30 seconds, someone says, "I motion for approval of this proposal." This is followed by a second and then a third motion for approval. The meeting chair asks if the meeting has reached consensus on this proposal, and as no one steps forward to object, the proposal is approved and noted in the meeting minutes. After asking if there is any further business to be discussed in the remaining three minutes, the chairperson adjourns the meeting three minutes early.

This is an example of a process I witnessed numerous times in Celo's community meetings. Although difficult issues did not always get resolved as swiftly as this one did, the community does seem to have a process that works. Their meetings take perserverance and they can get heated at times, but community members are committed to working through their differences in order to govern themselves and manage their collectively owned property. As I walked away from the Celo Community Center that night, a community member approached me and said, "It's mysterious how things work out around here. Despite our differences, we

managed to reach an agreement that is in all of our best interests, and perhaps those of the land

too." "It is intriguing." I replied. "But I don't think it's a mystery. It's a result of all of your

efforts and those of the community members that came before you." "You know, you're right."

He said. "Sometimes I get too lost in the present and don't see the larger picture of Celo's

uniqueness. Maybe you can put it in perspective for us."

<center>*   *   *</center>

All full members of Celo Community are encouraged to participate in the community's governance. A board of directors that initially oversaw the community was originally composed entirely of non-community members. This Board of Directors still exists, but it is composed of a majority of community members along with others directly selected by the community. The Board serves only in an advisory role, although it may be asked to mediate in the event that irreconcilable differences arise among community members and it is empowered to assume control of the community should it dissolve. Power within the community is really vested in the community's monthly general meeting where all members participate in making decisions by consensus.

As noted, Celo's governance institutions are based upon the Quaker process of consensus decision-making. Sheeran suggests that "Quakers ... may be the only modern Western community in which decision-making achieves the group-centered decisions of traditional societies" (1983:xiv). In this model, a decision represents the collective sentiment of the community of people involved in making the decision, each of them guided by the spirit within. Thus Quaker decision-making is equally a political and a spiritual process.

Celo's model of consensus decision-making is adapted from the Quaker version for use by people who are joined together in community but not necessarily in the Quaker form of

spirituality. To promote a common understanding of the methods they use to make decisions, Celo occasionally holds consensus workshops. A long quote from these workshop materials indicates the way Celo Community approaches consensus decision-making:

> Consensus decision-making stresses cooperative development of a plan or idea with group members working together rather than competing against each other. Members strive to listen and learn from each other, thereby coming up with a decision resulting from group input rather than one or two individuals. The way you listen to each other and the way you contribute ideas can enrich and extend or limit the original idea. It is a more creative approach to reaching a decision because it can include input from everyone in the group. Group wisdom is usually a more creative solution than individual knowledge. This method is more than a procedure; it is an expression of an attitude. It stems from the belief that we should come to decisions in a sprit of unity since we all have access to the light of truth. [Johnstone 2007:1]

This process of consensus decision-making requires members to be familiar with each other, to be willing to listen to and open their minds to each other, to view each other as equals, to cooperate in the face of conflict and have faith in the process. This process is enacted at monthly community meetings where matters of community business are considered.

Each monthly community meeting is overseen by a chairperson whose duty is to facilitate discussion, promote the participation of all parties, make sure that all sides of an issue are heard and shepherd the group towards consensus. If consensus cannot be reached after discussing an item over the course of several monthly meetings, a supermajority voting procedure may be invoked. However, outside of decisions on new memberships, this voting procedure has never been used as the community has always been able to reach consensus on matters of community business. The general community meeting also delegates minor matters to specific committees for consideration. At each general meeting, these committees report on business and decisions that have been delegated to them. Decisions on minor matters may be finalized in committee, in which case decisions are simply reported to the general meeting. On matters of general concern

to the community as a whole, recommendations made by the committees must be submitted to the general meeting for consensus.

Celo's committees include those overseeing matters relating to membership, property and finance most prominently. These committees meet once each month. Other committees, such as those charged with business related to the Celo Community Center and land use planning are convened as needed. Each committee has a chairperson that is elected annually. The chairperson serves in the same role as the chairperson of the general meeting with the additional responsibility of reporting committee business to the general meeting. All community members are permitted and encouraged to participate in the decision-making process within the committees. In addition to the meeting and committee chairs, there are a number of community offices that are filled on a yearly basis. Holders of these offices do not exercise any significant power. Rather, holding such an office is seen as a duty to the community.

Community Finances and Making a Living

Celo Community has a financial advantage that most other intentional communities do not have. The purchase of its land and its initial development was financed by an outside person (Regnery) who was not interested in exerting control over the community. As such the community is able to provide community members with access to land at rates far below the norm for the area. It has also managed to develop a large monetary surplus that it invests in socially and environmentally conscious funds. Some of the money is made available to community members as low interest loans for a number of different purposes: home construction, education, business start up and emergency needs. The availability of these loans is significant since the members of the Community are unable to obtain conventional mortgages because they do not own their property outright. A portion of this fund is also reserved for

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making payments to departing members who must transfer their holdings back to the community rather than directly to an individual buyer (this process will be discussed in more detail in chapter eleven).

Despite the fact that Celo Community does have a large common fund, the community is not financially communal. Property taxes on the community's land and buildings that are designated specifically for community use are paid by all community members equally on a per head basis. However, each household is responsible for its own income and finances, although there have been many occasions of community members joining together in cooperatives business ventures. Most members of the community live rather simply when compared with the average suburban lifestyle, but some members are also significantly wealthy. Although many do not earn significant income from their jobs, some have retirement or trust funds or significant assets outside the community. However, other community members are, either by conscious intention or not, living below the poverty line and are without significant reserves to fall back on.

The diversity of financial assets is reflected in the diversity of employment types of community members. Some community members perform most of their work within the community, although they are dependent upon outside consumers who purchase their products and services. Within this group are those that work at the Arthur Morgan School, the family that owns and operates the Celo Inn, physical and psychological therapists with private offices in the Celo Community Center, and a significant number of artists including painters, glassblowers, writers and potters who have individual art studios on the land and offer their wares for sale at the cooperative crafts store next to the Ten Thousand Things food co-op in Route 80. Some of Celo's artists are well known on a national level. At least two of them have their work on display

in galleries in Asheville or more distant urban areas. These artists may earn thousands of dollars on the sale of an individual piece of art.

A number of community members continue to work as staff and teachers at the Arthur Morgan School and Camp Celo, sometimes continuing in positions that they took long before they joined Celo Community. Indeed, a large number of community members first became aware of the community when they came to work at the school and the camp. Both of these educational institutions were started in the community's first two and a half decades, the Arthur Morgan School by Arthur Morgan's daughter-in-law, Elizabeth Morgan. Both the school and the summer camp are located on land leased to them by the community at very low rates, in the case of Arthur Morgan School, one dollar per year. The educational approaches and activies of the Arthur Morgan School reflect the values of Celo Community. They encourage young people to interact with and learn about the natural world; children go on backpacking trips and plant identification walks in the surrounding woods. They teach them to cooperate and work together as a community; the children live together in group houses and dormitories under the supervision of live-in staff. They participate in planning their own educational activities. They instill in children the values of simple living and raising food; the children heat their homes with wood they often cut and grow some of the food they eat in on-campus gardens.

A number of community members manage to make their living doing mostly activist work. For instance, one of Celo's members founded an organization called Rural Southern Voice for Peace (RSVP) that has employed a number of Celo's members at different times. RSVP "provides organizing assistance, networking and training in the rural communities of the southern United States" as well as nationally and internationally (RSVP 1993). RSVP seeks "to affirm our common humanity and to protect our environment by resolving conflict through the

promotion of positive alternatives and by affirming the wisdom and power of people at the grassroots" (RSVP 1993). To address their goals, RSVP created the Listening Project,

> a successful organizing trool for social change, especially useful in low-income, disadvantaged communities. It uses trained volunteers to conduct one-on-one interviews to survey a local issue and bring forth the determination of people in the community to explore new ideas and develop their own solutions for change.
> Since these issues often divide local communities into opposing camps, the Listening Project provides ways for groups to build bridges and to open up new lines of communication with their opposition ...
> Listening Projects have addressed a wide range of issues including racism, community development, environmental justice, ethnic violence, multicultural diversity, military spending, AIDS, mothers' and infants' health, and child welfare rights. [RSVP 1993]

RSVP is currently undertaking a listening project with the congregations of local churches to help them find common ground from which to address the problems associated with global climate change.

Some of Celo's members are engaged in agriculture, odd jobs or construction work in the valley, often for other community members. However, many members commute to jobs in local and regional municipalities such as Burnsville or Asheville. They work as professors, public school teachers, public health workers and in other areas of civil service. One member is chief of a local volunteer fire district. These community members, often serving the citizens of the local communities have been able to build some bridges of communication between Celo Community and local residents. Other community members work in a more global arena. One community member was, until his recent retirement, employed as an international development consultant and traveled to an apartment and office he maintained in Washington D.C. once a month and overseas somewhat less frequently.

As this brief overview suggests, Arthur Morgan's hope that people could use the land he made available to create alternative kinds of economic arrangements that freed people from the

social alienation and ethical conundrums created by the larger political economy of industrial capitalism has been only partially realized. Most of Celo's members have found work that they find meaningful and in part this is due to the fact that land and a common valuation of simplicity make life in Celo more affordable than it is in the cities or in suburbia. Although many community members are engaged in work that does not create large ethical concerns, most are still directly dependent on a larger political economy that does not resemble the bioregional vision that Morgan spoke of in the 1940s. Creating a more sustainable, bioregional or village scale economy is one area in which Earthaven seeks to move beyond Celo's significant achievements. I turn now to a discussion of Earthaven Ecovillage, the cultural critiques and utopian visions that characterize it and the ways it has built upon the alternative models initially developed in Celo Community as it strives for a closer approximation of sustainability.

Chapter 8

A HISTORY OF EARTHAVEN ECOVILLAGE

The vision of ecovillage pioneers ... was grounded in a radical critique of the the whole 'development' paradigm that underlies and indeed defines post-Enlightenment society. In the place of a linear, developmental model where stragglers (the Third World) follow on a path defined by the leaders (the First World) of definite growth, the ecovillage philosophy was based on respect for equality and diversity within the confines of a finite Earth. ... In contrast with developmental thinking, the knowledge and skills of the small-scale farmer and artisan were viewed as strengths to be built upon rather than a problem to be solved on the fast track to modernization. [Dawson 2006:18]

To date, ecovillages have been swimming resolutely against the dominat socio-economic paradigm of our age – globalisation. Where globalisation is predicated on the notion that we can grow our way out of our social and ecological problems through ever-greater specialisation, accumulation and trade, ecovillages are the living manifestation of a philosophy of voluntary simplicity and greater self-reliance. Given that dominant economic signals and regulatory frameworks so strongly favor strongly favor mass-production and distribution and that ecovillages have benefited from so little official support, it is astonishing that they have been able to achieve as much as they have. [Dawson 2006:75]

* * *

Winding mountain roads lead through the Blue Ridge Mountains of Western North Carolina. For a newcomer to this landscape, the trip can be disorienting; steep forested hillsides obscure any outward view and the unceasing twists and turns of the roads inhibit any effort to gain a sense of direction. After navigating this topography you'll find yourself at the end of a steep, descending road that passes a number of houses, a boarding school for boys and a pair of tethered, grazing goats. On your right the forest opens up on an agricultural field and a recently raised barn. Aside from a few ridge crests and hillsides, this is the most expansive view of the sky that can be achieved in this hollow. On your left you are greeted by a common green street

sign reading "Another Way" and a hand painted wood sign announcing your arrival at Earthaven Ecovillage. These signs point you down Earthaven's appropriately named main street. Following this one-lane dirt track you shortly enter a steep and narrow mountain valley where three creeks converge to mark the heart of an experiment in ecologically responsible and sustainable living that is Earthaven Ecovillage. Set on 320 acres in one of the most diverse bioregions in North America, Earthaven Ecovillage represents an ecologically conscious search for Another Way.

<p style="text-align:center">*   *   *</p>

Compiling a history of a social experiment such as Earthaven Ecovillage requires pulling together a coherent narrative from a diversity of threads that converge from different directions and different times. Earthaven has been a locus for a diversity of utopian visions and critically derived passions for community building. Many people who engaged in Earthaven's common endeavor during its first years are no longer part of the community. Fortunately, I was able to discuss Earthaven's history at length with some of the people who were there from the beginning. These conversations, in combination with over six months of ethnographic research in the community and access to Earthaven's archives, enables me to produce an accurate account. At the heart of this account lie a diversity of forceful individual cultural critiques of dominant ideologies and political economic institutions, ideologies and institutions that, in community members' perceptions, result in cultural alienation, social inequity and ecological devastation. As will be seen, the cultural critiques and utopian visions of the permaculture paradigm serves as the most coherent framework under which the members of Earthaven have united to build a more just, sustainable and personally fulfilling alternative cultural model.

Seeds of the Vision: Dreams in a Hopi Cornfield

The first seeds of Earthaven Ecovillage sprouted in a Hopi cornfield in Arizona in 1990. A woman, who was a member at different times of both Earthaven Ecovillage and Celo Community, was traveling in the western U.S with a group of her friends and her Peruvian spiritual teacher sharing spiritual teachings and prophecies from the indigenous traditions of Peru. "We were out at the Hopi land, sharing prophesies with the tablet keeper of the Hopis, grandfather Martin. And we were sleeping out in his cornfield that night. The next morning, we all started talking because we had each had a dream or vision or something about doing community" (interviews in Celo Community 4-20-01 and 6-7-06).

Unlike many dreams, this dream did not fade for this woman nor for her companions in the cornfield that night. Two women from that group, including the one quoted above, would return to North Carolina and begin an intensive process of developing a "vision statement" for the community that they had dreamed of. Along with other interested parties, they began researching other intentional communities and developing documents that spelled out their vision for their dreamed of community. After a long process, one of those women would eventually draw together investors and initial community members and take preliminary steps towards purchasing the land upon which Earthaven now sits. Another of those cornfield community dreamers, a man who did not ultimately join the community, suggested the name that community founders later adopted for their ecovilage: Earthaven.

Friends in Proximity or Community of Service:

Visioning Earthaven in Western North Carolina

Dozens of people residing in and around Asheville, North Carolina were at one time or another involved in the process of conceptualizing Earthaven and searching for an appropriate

place within which to develop the community their were envisioning. It soon became apparent that there was a division within the group. Some people – referred to as the "friends in proximity" group – simply wanted to live together with like-minded people, to support each other in their personal lives and to cooperate in building a community and living more sustainably. Others in the group had higher ideals. They envisioned a community with a mission. They wanted their community to be a demonstration center, a community of education and outreach that would experiment with and reveal how human beings from diverse backgrounds could live together in a spirit of cooperation with the goal of living more lightly and sustainably on the Earth. Ultimately, the mission-oriented group became the founders of Earthaven Ecovillage.

The mission-oriented group that became the founders of Earthaven included diverse individuals. Most of them grew up in a variety of contexts that could loosely be categorized as mainstream or middle class American. However, most of them had also consciously chosen to break with mainstream models at some point in their lives. Many of them participated in a variety of alternative, countercultural or intentional community movements prior to their involvement with Earthaven's founding group. A brief overview of the backgrounds and experiences of this founding group is revealing.

A. Bonnie

Bonnie became part of the group that founded Earthaven after having lived in Celo Community for a decade and then leaving to go to graduate school and travel. In the late 1970s, Bonnie and her husband were living in Florida where she was a jeweler and he was an attorney. They were wealthy, but dissatisfied with their mainstream, suburban lifestyle. They wanted to make a change. They began searching for land in the Appalachian Mountains and, as they

traveled through the Western North Carolina and entered the Upper South Toe Valley, Bonnie had an uncanny sense that she had found home. "The minute we started into this valley, I just knew it was it. ... I don't know why. Didn't know anything about the place, didn't know there was a community here" (interview in Celo Community 4-20-01). Bonnie and her husband stayed in the area for several days and soon learned about Celo. They decided to join the community because they saw in it the alternative they were looking for. "I know in joining Celo in the first place, my motivations were that somehow the world is going to change. That the way we live in this country – materialism and being so unconscious of being in harmony with the Earth and living in a sustainable way – it's not going to hold" (interview in Celo Community 6-7-06).

After Bonnie and her husband divorced in the late 1980s, she left to go to graduate school in transpersonal psychology. She also began traveling to Peru and other South American countries seeking wisdom from the traditional cultures of that part of the world. In the process, she found herself in the Hopi cornfield that night when she and her group dreamed of creating a community together. Her spiritual journey had prompted her to seek "a way to live more simply, closer to the earth" and it seemed that she had found a group who were on their way to doing this. Their visions involved something more communal, and something moving more radically toward sustainability than what she had experienced in Celo.

> We wanted to do something that seemed like it was going to be a new model for sustainable living. So that was the motivation for going with Earthaven. I wanted to find a way to do it more communally – not to have all your finances communally, but to do things more as a community. So when we started that, we all decided that we really wanted to do it as a tribal thing. We were a tight-knit group. We met for years and we spent weekends together. But I think what happened with me at Earthaven is it became very difficult for me. [interview in Celo Community 6-7-06]

After a couple of years of helping to set Earthaven in motion, Bonnie felt drawn back to Celo Community because of her strong roots there and because the social, material, and financial

conditions at Earthaven were so difficult for her. "My vision and my whole belief system is much more in alignment with what Earthaven is, and yet it just wasn't home for me. ... I love the people who are all so dedicated to sustainability, but I just never resonated with the land like I did at Celo" (interview in Celo Community 4-20-01). Bonnie indicates that, in addition to feeling that Celo, both as a place and as a community, felt more like home, she found it difficult to deal with the social, financial, and physical trials of a community just beginning its utopian journey.

> For one thing, I didn't have any money. So it wasn't like Celo where you could borrow some money to get started with a house. I didn't have any way of getting started. I didn't have enough to build a house. I didn't have any way of making a living there. The combination of all that plus seeing how difficult everything was – all the decisions were, seeing how difficult all the interpersonal stuff was becoming, that wasn't where I was you know. It just became too difficult to me. And also Celo had always in my heart been home. [interview in Celo Community 6-7-06]

Although Celo Community did not take as radical an approach to sustainability as Bonnie would have liked and although Celo's members did not share social bonds as intimate as did the members of Earthaven, Bonnie found Celo's social, material, and financial stability appealing and chose to renew her membership there. Bonnie maintains strong connections with Earthaven and visits the ecovillage frequently, but she is now six years into her second membership period in Celo Community.

B. Annie

Annie was born and raised in a middle class Jewish family in Brooklyn, New York. She recognizes that her affinity for community comes from the close-knit community context that she grew up in; it was an urban area, but her family knew their neighbors and had many extended family connections in the area. For Annie, the idea of community became connected to radical politics when she was doing her undergraduate work at the New School for Social Research in

New York City. It was during the time of the Vietnam War protests in which Annie was very much involved.

> The phrase that started to develop ... was that the personal is political and we have to change our own lives and examine our own lives if we were going to be true to the values that we had been evolving in this whole process. And so, wouldn't it be great to stay together more and really evolve our culture in that way, our counterculture. [interview in Earthaven Ecovillage 8-24-05]

Towards the end of her undergraduate career, Annie began a long series of involvements with various communal living and intentional community situations in various places across the country: New York, California, Arizona and Florida. Her adventures in communal living were not only about politics; Annie also followed interests in therapeutic healing, Eastern and Native American spiritual traditions, environmentalism and group communication processes and found communal situations where these were the focus. These interests stand behind her passion for Earthaven as much as if not more than any political commitment.

While living in Florida, Annie and a couple of her friends spent a lot of time conceptualizing how they might start a community of their own based on their shared interests. However, none of them wanted to stay in Florida and her friends moved to North Carolina in the early 1990s where they got involved with the group that was creating the vision for Earthaven. Annie soon followed them and found herself immersed in a very tight-knit group that shared many of her interests and within which her past efforts at conceptualizing community could be integrated. In summing up her motivations for joining Earthaven, Annie told me,

> I always felt like I was part of community. ... Community is part and parcel of cultural transformation. If we want to get out of this alienated military industrial dominated culture, people were going to have to live in community and all of the challenges that brings up. I was just following my life. [interview in Earthaven Ecovillage 8-24-05]

Annie felt that the mix of people that were included in Earthaven's founding group, including especially the permaculturalists, had the necessary skills to make this community work. However, placing herself in the present, Annie feels like the spiritual, social and communicative elements of Earthaven are incomplete today, in part due to the fact that some of Earthaven's founders never came to live in the community.

> I thought I was joining this community with two of my closest frinds from the same spiritual community as me and we were connecting with other people who had other spiritual community experience. Permaculture was ... an important part of it, but in my picture, the main thing was all the spiritual focus. That's still very remote. [interview in Earthaven Ecovillage 8-24-05]

As a result, and somewhat ironically, Annie feels that she is somewhat isolated, even though she lives in an intentional community. Annie's feelings of dissatisfaction with some of the lack of social and spiritual focus at Earthaven touch on an emerging theme in the community. The struggle to effectively balance the material, social, and spiritual aspects of this young community will be discussed more below.

C. Chuck

Chuck was born and raised in a middle class family a small town in South Carolina and was deeply influenced by the progressive liberal politics of his parents especially as they were juxtaposed with the staunchly conservative political background of most of their neighbors. He went to college in South Carolina where he became politically active and was caught up in the countercultural movement.

> It was actually my first experience of family and community outside of biological family. Here I was involved in this community of brothers and sisters who were environmentally and politically activating and exploring the edges of consciousness and rediscovering what it meant to be in community with each other in a deep and profound way. ... That whole experience ... was a totally profound turning point for me. [interview in Earthaven Ecovillage 8-30-05]

After college where he majored in biology and after a horticulture apprenticeship in a Philadelphia arboretum, Chuck explored a number of spiritually-based intentional communities in different parts of the U.S. and Canada but did not find one in which he felt he could make a home. He also took a permacultue class which inspired him. "Permaculture put all of these different tracks that I had been engaged in – horticulture, ecology, and cultural evolution – and put them in an interesting conceptual framework that's applied ecological design" (interview in Earthaven ecovillage 8-30-05). However, "like so many of the people that were involved in the alternative culture of the 1970s" Chuck got sidetracked by family and career; he got married and started a landscaping business. He was living a largely mainstream lifestyle, but soon found himself dissatisfied; the marriage and the landscaping business were, in his words, "killing my spirit."

Because of a number of background experiences – his experience of small town Southern life, his immersement in a number of countercultural communities and his interest in "revitalizing village-scale technologies" – Chuck maintained a vision of the importance of village life. "I've always had this sense that the village was the form of human settlement that makes the most sense" (interview in Earthaven Ecovillage 8-30-05). When his father died, he reevaluated his life and came to some conclusions. "I said OK Chuck, don't waste time. Death is always over your shoulder. If you're going to do your vision and dream then it's time to do it. I need to sell the business and get on with actually building an ecovillage. ... It became clear to me that I had a life work around this" (interview in Earthaven Ecovillage 8-30-05). At this time, he got connected with some of the other people who eventually became founders of Earthaven and committed himself to the vision of Earthaven.

> It got to a place where I could see what was going on in the world. It needed a response. It was obvious that community had come apart at the seams all over

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America. ... I wanted to do something more with my life than just serve my own interests. ... That was something that was pretty common among the founders was that we were people who had been talking and experiencing the heartbreak of watching the decline of alternative culture during the 80s and 90s and wanted to still have a go at it. We wanted to make a difference in some way, shape or form. [interview in Earthaven Ecovillage 8-30-05].

Chuck is one of the few founders that remains at Earthaven and he still feels the compulsion to be there. However, he balances this with a healthy sense of skepticism and awareness of the challenges they face in their utopian community building endeavor.

We don't have a common heritage to draw on. We come from all over the country. We each are carrying a different personal history. We haven't known each other that long. I say sometimes we're trying to do what it would take a traditional culture thousands of years to evolve. We're trying to do it in a lifetime. It's like compressing five thousand years of human evolution in terms of what we're learning about community living that's been lost and has to be relearned in the context that relates to the present human condition in twenty or thirty years. That's a lot to take on. ... We're either naïve fools or ambitious naïve fools. But we're doing it you know. [interview in Earthaven Ecovillage 8-30-05]

D. Peter

Peter grew up in a middle class family in a university town in central Illinois. Much of his family lived within walking distance, and although a suburban pattern of development was taking shape around him, he felt like he lived in a close-knit community. Peter went to college in Illinois where he studied political science and civil engineering, and followed that by working in a Congressional office on Capitol Hill and for the Department of Health, Education and Welfare in Chicago. Peter sensed that these public bureaucracies were imbued with corruption and inhumanity, but he could not quite put his finger on it. He didn't have an experience of something else to compare it with, until he started traveling to different parts of the world later in life. Still, as Peter grew into adulthood, he increasingly recognized that he was out of step with mainstream culture. A turning point was his realization that he was gay.

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> I felt dissonance with the conceit of the larger culture of the place where I was as I became an adult and became more aware [that] I'm a sexual outlaw. I'm queer. ... I became aware that I don't match any of this. There's no alignment. So that opened me up in many ways to the alternative culture, to the marginal. [interview in Earthaven Ecovillage 8-3-05]

After college and working in the mainstream, Peter's travels further prompted both a growing critique of mainstream society and his burgeoning search for alternatives. He went to Europe and Central America where he sensed deep currents of artistry, spirit and community that he resonated with. He spent time in Mexico where he studied with Ivann Illich who was "basically documenting the critique of the institutions of western society." Peter dates his "real political awakening" to that time. "I studied political science in college ... but then I went outside the academy to actually learn the truth. I learned what was going on in the world. ... I saw the dark side of empire" (interview in Earthaven Ecovillage 8-3-05).

Still not knowing how to fully disengage himself from a culture of which he was increasingly critical, Peter took a job working as a highway construction engineer where he was exposed "to the way the empire treats the earth" and to the social alienation of being a gay man in a context dominated by a distinctly American machismo that Peter associated with "a false sense of manifest destiny." When he quit this job, Peter's life became a full time search for something other than the mainstream life he had lived. His search took him to various corners of the United States and into various kinds of cooperative work and living. Peter explains that at this time "I was already aware that modernism was dead. ... I didn't have the words, but I had the images and the gestalt. ... I was moving towards something other than that. I didn't know what it was yet, [but] I'd had a taste of it in my exposure to other cultures." He was looking for "something more rounded and less obsessive and less totally materialistic. Something where spirit was infused. ... I had rejected my family's religious background ... [but I wanted

something] that still embodied spirit ... the connectedness to the earth" (interview in Earthaven Ecovillage 8-3-06).

In 1989, Peter was living in Hawaii where he was first exposed to the permaculture movement. In January 1990, he took a permaculture course and "everything about my life changed from that time. It was a sea shift ... Everything changed. Not just my perspective, but all the outer, material things as well." A vision of community emerged for Peter.

> I started talking to people about community, about buying land in order to have an intentional community. The whole idea of community took crystallized form out of the permaculture course. I'd had all the pieces in a way ... [But] it just became completely obvious that there's a way to create communities. Humans belong in communities, but the communities we have now are inadequate for a whole lot of reasons and we need to create new ones. [interview in Earthaven Ecovillage 8-3-05]

Peter immersed himself in the permaculture movement, eventually becoming editor of *Permaculture Activist* magazine and a certified permaculture instructor. Through his participation in this movement Peter met Chuck (the cofounder of Earthaven described previously) and Albert Bates, a member of The Farm intentional community in Tennessee. Albert was working with the the Global Ecovillage Network on articulating the ecovillage concept in the early 1990s and, in 1993, he invited Peter and Chuck to teach permaculture at The Farm where Albert and others were establishing the Ecovillage Training Center. For Peter, the ecovillage concept was the embodiment of his intertwined vision of permaculture and community.

> [It] was perfect because the ecovillage people ... were promoting permaculture training everywhere they were doing ecovillages. It was like OK, we're doing ecovillages and people ought to know how to take care of the land, and the permaculture training is a way to do that. So we'll teach people permaculture as part of the ecovillage movement. This is the process by which different movements – permaculture, intentional communities, ecovillages – have been layering over each other. [interview in Earthaven Ecovillage 8-3-05]

Through his ongoing work at The Farm and his friendship and teaching partnership with Chuck, Peter developed relationships with other permaculture activists who were working at The Farm, people who would also eventually become members of Earthaven. Through these relationships, Peter was drawn into the group of Earthaven founders and had joined them by the time they bought the land upon which Earthaven now sits.

Peter sees Earthaven as a node for creating broader cultural changes. However, his utopian vision of Earthaven is, like Chuck's, tempered by a sense of humility and cynicism. He recognizes that Earthaven is a long way from an actual utopia.

> It's a long piece of work, the whole ecovillage thing. Seen from a bigger scale, it's a strategy to create demonstrations in all regions so that enough general public can expose themselves to these ways and technologies and get a taste so that it starts to infuse the culture. You have these base communities for everyone to use as a jumping off place for changing the culture in lots of more powerful ways. We're doing public demonstration and outreach, showing people all of our dirty laundry, so to speak. Come to our council meetings. Watch us fight. Come and see our toilet that stinks and everything else that's wrong about the place. And see the wonderment of it too. It's better than Disneyland. We really mean to build a network of communities that cooperate at high levels and take economic and political action to change the world. We really mean all of that, we just look like toddlers at that level. [interview in Earthaven Ecovillage 8-3-05]

Seen from this perspective, Earthaven appears as one community, one node, in a broader process of developmental utopianism through which multiple intentional communities build upon each other's progress in ongoing processes of cultural critique and cultural change.

Earthaven Ecovillage, as a permaculture based intentional community, is experiencing the growing pains that accompany the process of developmental utopianism. Peter, along with Chuck and others, brought their passion for cultural transformation and their knowledge of permaculture as a tool for change to Earthaven. Peter continued to work as editor of *Permaculture Activist* magazine from an office that he established at Earthaven and he continued to work with Chuck and other Earthaven members as permaculture instructors, using Earthaven's

evolving ecovillage structure as a base and learning environment for their classes. As will be discussed in more detail below, permaculture has been widely used in Earthaven as a guiding template for Earthaven's efforts to integrate their growing ecovillage into their landscape in a sustainable manner. However, some have become dissatisfied with the ways in which permaculture has directed the focus of Earthaven's efforts onto the material plane to the detriment of more social and spiritual aspects of the community. Other Earthaven members are attempting to shift the focus, at least in part, away from the strictly material realm.

The Birth of Earthaven: Situating the Garden and Financing the Dream

In 1992, with the division between the friends in proximity and the community with a mission groups still nascent and before many of those who would ultimately become founders of Earthaven even joined them, the group began searching for land upon which to grow a sustainable, self-sufficient, cooperative community. "To create as self-reliant a village as possible, they assumed they'd need at least 150 residents to provide the range of skills and services required to feed and house themselves and create an active village economy" (Christian 2003a:86). Based on this vision, the group developed an extensive list of attributes for the land that they sought, but after looking at hundreds of pieces of land over the course of two years they had not found one that satisfied their needs. It appeared that the group might fall apart in frustration. At this point, one woman who had immersed herself in the Western North Carolina real estate business took a leap of faith. She made an offer on a piece of land in the Blue Ridge Mountains southeast of Asheville, North Carolina that the group had previously looked at and dismissed because of its undeveloped state and poor soils. In August of 1994, she called the group together and asked people to make commitments to growing the community that had been dreamed of in a Hopi cornfield and in many individual experiences. "On September 11, 1994 in a

circle of excitement and high hopes … Earthaven was founded" by a dozen of those from the group willing to take the leap and make a collective investment in land (Earthaven Ecovillage 2004).

Earthaven's founding members purchased the community's land from the Brown family. The Browns have resided in the area for multiple generations and had accumulated large landholdings. Based on their conversations with local residents, Earthaven's founders concluded that the Brown family gained possession of at least some of the land that became Earthaven through the family patriarch, T.K. Brown who was described to me as "the last dynastic sheriff of Buncombe county" (Marsh, personal communication, 2007). It appears that title to at least some of the land was acquired by the Brown family in return for T.K. Brown's collusion with local moonshiners. Earthaven's members have located at least 3 moonshine still sites on their property, lending credence to this claim (Marsh, personal communication, 2007).

At the time that Earthaven bought the land, it was being used as a hunting reserve for deer and bear by the Browns. Indeed the only existing building on the land at the time of purchase was a primitive log hunting cabin that still stands at the heart of the community. The Brown family retains ownership to a large parcel of land adjacent to Earthaven that is only accessible by the main dirt track that runs through Earthaven's land. This family is often seen driving through the community in their jeeps and 4x4 trucks, waving to community members as they pass by. Earthaven's members consider it extremely important that they maintain a friendly relationship with this family because the Browns are able to communicate with other local families about the goings-on at Earthaven. Through the Browns it is made apparent to other local families that, despite the apparent eccentricities of Earthaven's members, they are, in fact, good

people seeking to make their living closer to the land much as local families have long done (Norman, personal communication, 2005, Carroll, personal communication, 2005).

Prior to the Brown family obtaining title to the land, parcels of it were owned by a number of other long-time local families including the Elliot and Vess clans and a number of other "black freeholders" and "country folks" (Marsh, personal communication, May 8, 2007). Until the late 1930s and early 1940s when the area was depopulated by migration to the newly electrified towns of Asheville and Black Mountain, these families constituted a loose community of mountain agriculturalists. According to one of Earthaven's cofounders, this community was named "Redtop" because their mountainside farming practices were leading to the erosion of topsoil and the exposure of the layer of red clay underneath (Marsh, personal communication, 2007). The residents of this community practiced diversified, subsistence mountain agriculture and produced some tobacco and moonshine for cash income. Tree ring dating conducted by Earthaven members indicates that the area was last cleared approximately 60 years prior to Earthaven's founding (Marsh, personal communication, 2007).

Earthaven members have located at least five cabin sites and two cemeteries on their land that represent the only remnants of this community of mountain agriculturalists. In fact, Earthaven's business district is located on the site of an old cabin that was, in addition to being a homestead compound, a post office and general store for the local community. None of these buildings were still standing at the time Earthaven obtained title to the land, all of them having burned down or been scavenged by the Brown family for salvage building materials. Earthaven's founders also claim that their land lies along an old stagecoach road that connected to a larger series of local and regional transportation routes. This indicates that the previous inhabitants of Earthaven's land were part of the diaspora from the Carolina Piedmont as people moved away

from an increasingly populated area characterized by exhausted soils. Earthaven's members are pleased to note that their land, while degraded by unsustainable agricultural practices, was not exposed to the chemical agricultural inputs that became increasingly prevalent after WWII.

The agreement to purchase the land – 320 acres of steep terrain on the eastern slope of the Blue Ridge Mountains – from the Brown family closed on December 30, 1994. The founders of Earthaven, for reasons of principle, did not want to be dependent on banks to finance their land purchase. It did not seem appropriate to start a community dedicated, in large part, to local self-sufficiency and sustainability by becoming indebted to financial institutions committed to profit rather than people, community and ecological integrity. They had learned from the E.F. Schumacher Society about local-scale, self-financing methods and this experience suggested a novel solution. Earthaven founders drew together a number of individual investors who believed in their vision enough to finance the land purchase at low interest rates. These investors transferred money from other investments into an "EarthShares" fund that would be used to pay off the previous owners of the land. Over the next ten years, using money from new membership and site lease fees, Earthaven paid off these private loans plus interest, becoming full and collective owners of their land.

From Vision to Design and Inhabitation: Earthaven Sprouts on the Land

The piece of land where Earthaven founders decided to sow their seeds was significantly lacking in two attributes that they had explicitly sought: cleared land and infrastructure. A small, one lane, dirt track traversed only a portion of the land, land that was almost entirely covered by secondary growth forest. No utility lines extended onto the land and, other than an old, primitive hunter's cabin, there were no buildings. In a word, the land was undeveloped. As Earthaven's founders and pioneer members began to move onto the land, as they attempted to grow the

community, it became apparent that starting from scratch was not going to be an easy task. Many were unprepared for the hardships that rustic living and physical labor entailed. Most of the original members did not have the knowledge or skills necessary for building a community from the ground up.

As a result, many of those who helped to envision Earthaven never moved on to the land or, if they did, soon left. Annie explained to me that

> so many of the people who helped start Earthaven were older people who had either families or land or careers. They were established. So they had the money to help start it, but they also had lives that they would have to give up in order to be here. Whereas for me, I had no life to give up. I just had to come here. I owned nothing. I had some money. That was all. [interview in Earthaven Ecovillage 8-24-05]

The community began to attract younger people who had the energy and skills for building community infrastructure and enduring primitive conditions. Those who endured the hardships of those early years reflect on how foolish they must have been to brave the elements as they did. One community member described to me his experience of living in a tent for his first two years at Earthaven. "In the summer, everything was soggy and moldy and in the winter, I would wake up to find my drinking water frozen solid. Until we finished building the kitchen, I spent two years without a place to bathe or cook." During the first six or eight years, the spiritual ideals and social commitments of the original vision took a back seat to the practical necessities of developing basic material infrastructure such as housing, water sources, roads, electricity and waste treatment.

The group of twelve that founded Earthaven shared backgrounds and interests in Eastern and Native American spiritual and mystic traditions. Earlier in their lives, many of the founders had joined communal groups organized around these traditions. Beginning in the 1960s and 1970s, many of them had lived a communal lifestyle in various places around the U.S. or

elsewhere in the world. Thus, the founders brought with them experience with communal living and a deeply held feeling that living in community entailed a spiritual commitment. There was a general sense of urgency and commitment to environmental sustainability, but the overriding theme was spirituality. Having secured a place to grow their community and cultivate their spiritual commitments, Earthaven's founders sought the practical tools to provide a physical foundation for enacting their spiritual vision. Fortunately, two people from this original group brought with them a toolbox designed to address the practical, material aspects of conceptualizing and designing ecologically sustainable human settlements. Two of Earthaven's founders are permaculture instructors.

Permaculture as Cultural Critique and Utopian Vision

Since permaculture – as guiding philosophy, design practice, cultural critique and utopian vision – is such a prominent part of Earthaven as it exists today, I must describe the origins and development of permaculture as a movement and a body of thought. Permaculture is a global grassroots sustainability movement that was initiated in the mid-1970s in Australia by Bill Mollison and David Holmgren (Holmgren 2002, Mollison and Holmgren 1978, Mollison 1991). It grows from the recognition, first popularized in the 1960s and 1970s by Rachel Carson, the advent of Earth Day and the 1972 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, that the accepted way of creating our livelihoods is unjust and unsustainable. Permaculture encompasses a set of ethical and design principles for realizing its utopian goal of creating sustainable, permanent human culture and agriculture. Indeed, permaculture is an agglomeration of those three words: permanent, culture and agriculture. Permaculture holds that "the process of providing for people's needs within ecological limits requires a cultural revolution" (Holmgren 2002:xxv).

As with any utopian movement from broad-based cultural critique to an alternative, utopian paradigm of cultural values and practices, a concise definition of permaculture is elusive. Holmgren defines permaculture as follows:

> Consciously designed landscapes which mimic the patterns and relationships found in nature, while yielding an abundance of food, fibre and energy for the provision of local needs. People, their buildings and the ways they organise themselves are central to permaculture … It draws together the diverse ideas, skills and ways of living which need to be rediscovered and developed in order to empower us to move from being dependent consumers to becoming responsible and productive citizens. [Holmgren 2002:xix]

The utopian nature of permaculture is clear from the definition provided in every edition of *Permaculture Activist* magazine, a publication that is based in Earthaven, but has worldwide distribution.

> Permaculture is a holistic system of DESIGN, based on direct observation of nature, learning from traditional knowledge and the findings of modern science. Embodying a philosophy of positive action and grassroots education, Permaculture aims to restructure society by returning control of resources for living: food, water, shelter and the means of livelihood, to ordinary people in their communities, as the only antidote to centralized power. [Permaculture Activist 2004:3]

Permaculture seeks to enable people to become more self-reliant and, in the process, to relieve the social injustices and ecological degradation created by the global political economy. In this aim, permaculture's critique of the modern, Western, industrialized political economy and culture is clear:

> The fact is that our own comfort is based on the rape of planetary wealth, depriving other people (and future generations) of their own local resources. Our own "hard work" and the so-called "creativity" of our economy and "fairness" of our system of government are all secondary factors in creating our privilege. Once we understand the massive structural inequities between rich and poor nations, urban and rural communities and human resources and natural resources, the emphasis on providing for one's own needs is seen in a different light.
>
> *As we reduce our dependence on the global economy and replace it with household and local economies, we reduce the demand that drives current*

inequities. Thus "look after yourself first" is not an invitation to greed but a challenge to grow up through self-reliance and personal responsibility. [Holmgren 2002:7, emphasis in original]

Based on this cultural critique and utopian vision, permaculture combines traditional ecological knowledge and methods and modern scientific knowledge and methods into designs for sustainable human settlements and production systems. Its three ethical principles are basic – 1) care for the earth, 2) care for people, and 3) set limits to consumption and reproduction and redistribute surplus. Its design principles are more numerous and complex, but their overall aim is to develop closed-loop, symbiotic, self-sustaining human habitats and production systems that do not result in ecological degradation or social injustice.

> The aim is to create systems that are ecologically-sound and economically viable, which provide for their own needs, do not exploit or pollute and are therefore sustainable in the long term. Permaculture uses the inherent qualities of plants and animals combined with the natural characteristics of landscapes and structures to produce a life-supporting system for city and country, using the smallest area practical. [Mollison 1991:1]

Although the design of such systems is necessarily dependent upon the particular local context, permaculture manuals provide general guidelines for considering environmental variables and patterns in designing buildings, home gardens, orchards, farms, livestock operations, aquaculture systems and community and urban areas (Mollison 1991).

Permaculture is practiced and taught by a global network of grassroots activists and teachers who attempt to apply its principles to the development of their homes and communities. These homes and communities, in turn, become practical demonstrations of permaculture principles in action. They are used as bases for educating and empowering more permaculture practitioners. As a result of the growth of the permaculture network, permaculture principles are increasingly being employed by individuals, communities – intentional and otherwise – and even

local and national governments (Cuba, Vietnam, Brazil) in the design and construction of more sustainable human habitations, communities and agricultural production systems.

Earthaven has become a significant node in the global permaculture network. Peter Bane, a founding member of Earthaven Ecovillage, world-renowned permaculture instructor and publisher of *Permaculture Activist* magazine describes permaculture in an introductory packet provided to Earthaven's visitors as follows:

> The core of permaculture design is the belief that all living beings and systems have intrinsic worth, that we each bear responsibility for our own lives and the lives of our children, that human life is inextricably embedded in the web of life which is the Earth and that if we choose patterns of land use and technologies appropriate to these ethical precepts, we will have the best chance of surviving over generations in a world we'd like to live in. [Earthaven Ecovillage 2005a]

Although the level of personal commitment to and passion for permaculture principles varies amongst the members of Earthaven, all members of the ecovillage receive permaculture training. The physical development of Earthaven Ecovillage over its first dozen years is largely an example of permaculture design in action. The community's land use plan, its buildings and its agricultural projects are all guided to some degree by permaculture principles. Through workshops, classes and tours, Earthaven offers itself to interested parties as a model of permaculture principles in action. Earthaven's members recognize that their village is far from a perfect model; they conceptualize themselves as a learning community that is willing to make mistakes so that others may build upon the lessons learned.

Continued Ecovillage Development

The founders of Earthaven spent the first couple of years after they purchased the property establishing the deep familiarity with the land that they would need in order to develop a land use plan based upon permaculture principles. Much time was spent walking the land and identifying its features – sacred sites, springs and stream courses, flood plains, erosion gullies,

plant communities, land suitable for agriculture, potential pond sites and potential home and business sites. These features were transferred onto overlay maps and an overall site plan was developed around them. This information provided the basis for the development of Earthaven's infrastructure – roads, neighborhoods, areas for businesses and community buildings, agricultural areas, forest reserves, community commons and sites for micro-hydro electrical generating stations.

As the process of developing consensus on the overall land use plan proceeded, Earthaven members, and non-members working as interns and gaining knowledge about permaculture design, labored to put components of the physical infrastructure into place. Relative to a neighborhood or community built by commercial developers, progress was slow; deliberateness and attention to detail are inherent aspects of permaculture design. By the end of 1997, three years into the process, Earthaven members, growing in number as new people joined the community, had cleared a south facing slope and some bottom land, put in a number of small roads and footbridges and constructed a number of buildings including a meeting pavilion, a composting toilet, a root cellar and four small residential "huts". They called the central area where these huts were constructed the Hut Hamlet. It was to serve as a base camp and a place for experimentation with passive solar design and natural building techniques. The center piece of their activities during these first three years was the construction of the Hut Hamlet Kitchen, a timber frame, straw bale kitchen, dining and bathing facility shared by all residents of the neighborhood and serviced by gravity-fed running spring water, a small photovoltaic electrical system and a propane powered refrigerator.

In their fourth year, 1998, Earthaven members cleared land for their community building or Council Hall and began constructing it, felling and milling the timber themselves with a

portable saw mill operated by the worker-owned Forestry Cooperative business started by several community members. They also installed a micro-hydro electrical production system, harvesting the inertia of one of their mountain streams to supply themselves with power. An early decision had been made that the community would remain "off-grid", independent of commercially generated electrical power. Over the coming years, construction of more huts and more permanent residences for both individuals and multiple families continued. Significant accomplishments included the completion of the Council Hall, the construction of a sauna and a 10,000 gallon ferro-cement water tank for their gravity-fed community water system, the completion of the "Village Green" and the erection of buildings for a general store and combination lodge and café. All of this had been accomplished using the labor of community members and interns and a high percentage of materials harvested from Earthaven's land.

Over the course of the community's first ten years, Earthaven gained several dozen new members, paid off most of their debts, developed processes for communication and decision-making, developed an elaborate land use plan, and constructed over two dozen community buildings and individual dwellings. These were impressive accomplishments considering that, in the past, most intentional communities have not survived past ten years or have not even made it past the planning stages. Despite the odds against it, Earthaven appeared to be thriving.

Chapter 9

EARTHAVEN TODAY: AN ECOVILLAGE IN EARLY ADOLESCENCE

Purpose: Dedicated to caring for both people and the Earth and recognizing the Oneness of all life, we come together to create and to sustain beyond our lifetimes a learning community village, by gaining the skills, cultivating the attitudes and sharing with the public the resources for a holistic, regenerative culture. [Earthaven Ecovillage 2007]

* * *

With this quotation, Earthaven's most fundamental community document, the Earthaven Ecovillage ReMembership Covenant, begins. It is a concise statement of their overall utopian vision, a vision that guides their continually unfolding efforts towards creating a holistic sustainable culture. They recognize that it is a journey that they have only begun. One member of Earthaven, discussing with me the overall development and state of the community, characterized Earthaven as being "in that awkward state of early adolescence." This seems an appropriate description as Earthaven enters its thirteenth year. Earthaven Ecovillage is a work in progress and a description of it written today will likely be inaccurate tomorrow.

* * *

It's my first visit to Earthaven and I pause where the pavement stops and the one lane gravel road begins. I take out my camera and snap a picture of two signs that stand at the entrance to Earthaven Ecovillage. One is a common green street sign that says "Another Way" and the other is a bright and artistic, but worn, hand painted wood sign that reads "Earthaven Ecovillage." Together, they say quite a lot and I imagine I'll use this picture in the future. Reentering my car, I drive ahead, passing another sign that reads "Slow: Developing

Ecovillage. Construction in Progress.” and a couple of small, but relatively normal looking houses and outbuildings on my left. The large arrays of photovoltaic cells on their roofs are the telltale sign that they are part of the ecovillage I have just entered.

After about a third of a mile, I come to a parking area marked “Visitor's Parking” that is bordered by a large collection of colorfully painted signs. The signs indicate that “Hut Hamlet”, “Council Hall”, “House of Oneness”, “Rosy Branch”, and the “Trading Post” among many other destinations are located in various directions. There are a few other cars parked nearby, but to my surprise, no one is in sight. Where's the community? I'm a little early for this morning's tour of Earthaven, so I decide to sit on my car and absorb my surroundings. I am struck by the natural beauty of the setting, a beauty that is enhanced by the mid-morning light. Steep, green, forested hills rise on all sides and two creeks converge just below the parking area. The sound of running water and birds chirping almost drowns out the distant buzz of a power saw and the banging of hammers. Across one of the creeks and up the hill, a large pink plaster and natural wood building rises into the trees. A beautiful, mosaic snake sculpture wraps its way around two sides of the building. Unprocessed tree branches form the vertical slats of the railing that encloses the building's second floor balcony.

My reverie is interrupted by the sounds of approaching voices. A rambunctious group of about ten young children are hopping across a series of rocks standing in the creek below, just beside where the road passes through it. They are accompanied by a brightly dressed young woman. She points to a weed at the side of the road and asks the children what it is. “That's lambs' quarters” they respond in chorus. “Can you eat it?” she asks. “We picked it for a salad last night,” one of the children replies. As they pass by the woman asks if I'm here for the tour and points the way toward the Hut Hamlet where the tour will start. I ask her what they're doing

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and she explains that she's the teacher for the Forest Children Program, the home school program for Earthaven's grade school children. They're on their way to the Forest Garden where they're going to help one of the community members inoculate logs with shitake mushrooms.

As they move along, I turn and cross the creek, making my way to the Hut Hamlet. I walk across a finely constructed footbridge that spans the two creeks, now joined into one and enter the Hut Hamlet. A sign reads, "Quiet Please. Private Neighborhood." Footpaths diverge in a number of different directions. I choose the middle one and am soon surrounded by what are accurately described as "huts." Small dwellings of various shapes, sizes, colors, and construction stand on either side of the path, dotting the hillside above and standing between myself and what appear to be cultivated fields in the floodplain below. A man, tending a garden outside one of the huts, waves to me as I pass by. A sign up ahead points me to the "Registration Hut" and I pass between two earth-plastered buildings and join a small group of people waiting for today's tour to begin.

*   *   *

As construction of dwellings and infrastructure has proceeded, Earthaven's population has grown – from only a few people living on the land in 1996 to 15 in 1998, 25 in 2000, 35 in 2002 and approximately 45 (not including long term visitors, work exchangers and interns) at the time of my research in 2005 (Christian 2003a). During my time at Earthaven, the ecovillage seemed to be at a crossroads in a number of senses. For one, enough physical infrastructure – buildings, roads, waste treatment, power generation and water distribution systems – had been completed that Earthaven's members could begin to focus on other components of their envisioned community. The development of more socio-cultural aspects of community –

spirituality, language, interpersonal communication and conflict resolution – were common topics of discussion and action.

At the same time, the population of the village had grown so large and dispersed as to be an obstacle to cohesive cultural development. Founding members commented to me that there used to be a greater degree of closeness and like-mindedness that today is not as present. Finally, there was an increasing emphasis on food production and agricultural self-sufficiency within the community. During my brief time in the community, I witnessed large increases in land area committed to agriculture (now almost 10 acres) and the number of domestic animals present on the land. It would be a mistake to say that any of these aspects of community development are unique to the current stage of growth. Each of them – the development of community culture, population increase and food production – have been present, waxing and waning, over the years. However, as the community develops critical mass and inertia, each aspect of the community's development takes on new dimensions, new accomplishments are reached and new obstacles are confronted. Such is the nature of this deliberate experiment in sustainable human community.

Earthaven and "the Outside World"

As I wait for the tour of Earthaven to start and sign the registration and release forms, I exchange introductions with some of the other people that will be participating in the tour today. There is a family of four who live in the suburbs of Asheville. They have been curious about Earthaven for some time, having read a number of short articles about it in Asheville's weekly community newspaper and they're here to see it for themselves. There's a man from Charlotte, North Carolina who is worried about oil depletion and concomitant rising fuel prices. He's here to check out Earthaven's alternative energy systems and thermally efficient buildings to see if he

might be able to incorporate some of these innovations into his home. A young couple is here from New York City. They're seeking a way to live more cooperatively and sustainably and are on a six week long tour of about 30 different intentional communities in the eastern U.S. Another, older couple, both retired academics, have been visiting a friend of theirs who is a member of Earthaven. They are so impressed by what they've found here that they're thinking about joining the community.

And finally, there are four people in their early twenties, two women and two men. They've all come from the Bay Area in California where they've all been working in urban agriculture and food co-ops after dropping out of college. They didn't feel that their professors were teaching them about what was really going on in the world. They're here to take two, week long permaculture courses being taught here by Earthaven members Peter, Chuck and Priscilla. All but one of them is staying on for the next six months to do work exchange programs and apprenticeships in permaculture gardening, natural building, and sustainable forestry. They're all excited to have the opportunity to learn something "real." These assorted visitors, I will later learn, are ubiquitous at Earthaven. And this is by design. Some of Earthaven's members are tired and weary of the constant stream of visitors and temporary community members. It makes them feel like they live in "Eco-Disneyland" and they're wary of devoting much energy to these transitory elements of their community. However, they are all bound together by a commitment to share their efforts to develop a more sustainable culture, both their successes and their failures, with others so that they may be empowered to undertake similar utopian projects.

*   *   *

While Earthaven as a community is characterized by distinct social and geographical boundaries, boundaries that are delineated by their membership process and their property lines,

these boundaries are also pourous. Earthaven's members cross them frequently. Some of Earthavenn's members work outside the community, all of them travel to nearby towns and cities for supplies and entertainment and they maintain relationships with friends, family, and neighbors outside the community. All of Earthaven's members are, through their life histories, grounded in the world outside of their ecovillage; they all brought their experiences of the world outside with them into the community. Although Earthaven's members often distinguish themselves with reference to "the outside world", they are all distinctly part of that outside world as well.

Significantly, "the outside world" also crosses into Earthaven in a variety of ways. As mentioned previously, the Brown family from whom Earthaven bought their land, frequently drives through Earthaven to access an adjacent piece of land that they still own, although they do not often stop to interact with Earthaven's members. Local building inspectors come to Earthaven to grant building permits and inspect their structures. Earthaven's members are thankful that these government officials have given them significant leeway for their experimental architecture, and this is in part a result of the fact that Rutherford County is still primarily rural and has relatively relaxed building codes. Although Earthaven does not utilize mass-produced electricity, they do rely on phone lines for communication with the outside world. Telephone repair trucks are ubiquitous at Earthaven and there is a running, half serious, half light-hearted discussion about whether or not the repairmen are actually government spies.

Participants in other movements for cultural change – intentional communities, bioregionalism, permaculture – make frequent visits to Earthaven. During my time there, Earthaven hosted a contingent from ZEGG community in Germany who came to experience Earthaven and to provide a presentation and workshop on the unique system of community

governance and interpersonal communication that they have implemented in their community. Earthaven also hosted the Continental Bioregional Congress during which bioregional environmental and cultural activists from throughout North, Central, and South America as well as the Caribbean came to Earthaven for nine days of sharing, networking and mutual support. During this time, both Earthaven and the bioregional movement were invigorated. Earthaven had the opportunity to show off their projects and bioregional activists had the opportunity to see many of their theoretical ideals in action in a place-based community.

Earthaven's People

Three of Earthaven's members will be leading our tour today. They're experienced at this; they've been leading tours of the community every week for the past six months. After asking each of the tour participants to briefly state our name and the nature of our interests in Earthaven, the tour guides each take a few moments to introduce themselves. Their introductions are refreshingly frank and candid; they reveal a lot about this intentional community, its members and what motivates them.

Stacy describes herself as "a red diaper baby," in that her parents were "communist-oriented radicals." She was born into a Quaker family in Schenectady, New York where her father was a union organizer and both her parents were teachers. Stacy has obviously absorbed the political stances of her parents and molded them into her own critique.

> *I'm just so saddened that this country has always pretty much been based on imperialism and environmental degradation and war. I never had a desire to actually make it in this country. I never said I'm going to go get myself a good job and have myself a good life inside of this god-forsaken mess. So I went along and had jobs, made money and so on, but basically the alienation was always there. And this is the first time I don't feel that.*

Stacy explains that, unlike many other members, she was not drawn to Earthaven by the promise of permaculture, but rather because she was looking to develop intimate social relationships

with people who shared her commitment to living according to her political ideals. She joined Earthaven because she found people who were creating the sort of intimate social community that she wanted, a community that was based on a similar political critique.

> *I feel that what drives this monstrosity of American culture is a me, me, me attitude. Getting away from that is really exciting. I feel myself doing that here. I really want to hold firm to a new culture. I wouldn't want to try and imitate somebody else's culture, but I definitely want that intimacy where everybody has a place in the social scene, an intimacy that characterized a lot of indigenous cultures before they were destroyed by imperialism.*

Stacy ends her introcution by stating that she thinks that "maintaining the center" is one of Earthaven's biggest challenges, that despite the common commitment to community, there is a growing tendency towards individualism and social disconnection as Earthaven grows and develops its material infrastructure. "We'll see this as we visit some of the outlying neighborhoods towards the end of the tour."

Bill is Earthaven's youngest member; he joined the community at the age of 17 and is now 21. He says that he grew up in a "typical, upscale, suburban, consumeristic" neighborhood in southeastern Connecticut. His family was dysfunctional and Bill spent a lot of time outdoors to get away from his family situation. This led to an appreciation of the natural world, a growing awareness of the environmental crisis and eventually, to his becoming active in the Connecticut Green Party. At about the same time, he began studying anthropology and he realized that the environmental crisis is the result, not just of the political system, but of the "deeper underlying social system and worldview that characterizes modern civilization."

> *When I was doing the whole anthropology thing, I started realizing that the only solution to this problem is to start a tribe. I used the term "tribe" at the time. So I started doing research with the aim of starting a tribe, a sedentary community of a hundred and fifty to three hundred people who have a mixed subsistence economy and produce as many of their goods as they can from local resources and trade with other tribes.*

At this point, Bill realized that starting a tribe was too large a task for a seventeen year old. However, his research had turned him on to intentional communities. When he read a description of Earthaven, he thought that it fit closely with his vision of a tribe and he signed on for a permaculture internship. He decided to join Earthaven because of its potential to create, through hard work, the material reality that manifests an alternative worldview.

> *I think the only way we're going to get out of this mess is work, a lot of intelligent, well-executed work. I just can't help but laugh when I hear people say that what we need to do is advance our consciousness. I hear that so much even at Earthhaven. We should advance our consciousness, but that's not what's most important. My personal opinion is that consciousness is only useful when it's actually manifested in the way that you live in the physical world.*

Bill says he looks forward to using this tour to show us how Earthaven is working to manifest an alterntive consciousness in the physical world.

Iris introduces herself by saying that her family has deep roots in the Appalachian Mountains. She was born and raised for most of her life in rural North Carolina. She joined Earthaven in its second year of existence and feels that helping to build Earthaven is a way of reconnecting with her family's heritage, of revitalizing a cultural inheritance that her family lost over the last couple of generations as they became more deeply embedded in the mainstream society. Using her own experience as a backdrop, Iris suggests that "the dominator culture" of Western civilization has replaced valuable cultural traditions with something much more superficial.

> *My grandparents knew how to grow food and live sustainably in the mountains, but my father only knew some of that and I wasn't taught any of it. I should have known how to cure meat and how to take care of pigs. I should have known how to live sustainably. I should have known how to have a culture of joy and art and exaltation and peace. All of these things we don't know how to do are our birthright. My ancestors knew how to do all of these things. What did we lose them for? So we can make macaroni and cheese and drive around in big cars and wrap everything up in plastic and sit in front of a square box and live vicariously? It's a poor substitution.*

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Iris tells us that she's here at Earthaven to begin the long process of retriving her birthright and that there have been a tremendous amont of frustrations in the process. In fact, she tells us that she sometimes thinks of leaving Earthaven because "facing the dominator culture within yourself and in others and trying to change is so difficult." Earthaven has a long way to go on that road to cultural transformation, but if we stay around for a while and look closely we will see that it is beginning to happen.

<p style="text-align:center">*   *   *</p>

Earthaven's membership demographics are at once diverse and homogenous, stable and fluctuating. The following provides a general account of Earthaven's member population as it was at the time of my latest field research at Earthaven, keeping in mind that it is in constant flux as new people join the community and as current members sometimes leave. There seems to be a pattern of people coming to Earthaven with a high level of idealism and later leaving, either temporarily or permanently, with their idealistic tails tucked between their legs. Joining in the attempt to create a cooperative, self-reliant, social and physical community from scratch, some of Earthaven's members find that the distance between the real and the ideal is too much to take and either take a long vacation or leave altogether. This creates a demographic flux that is represented by the fact that, as of 2005, only four individuals from the original dozen that founded Earthaven "live on the land". Some founding members (as well as some newer ones) maintain their membership but do not live on the land. Of the 60 total community members, 45 of them lived on the land full time at the time of my research.

The people that maintain community memberships, but do not live on Earthaven's land do so for a variety of reasons. Some struggle with the social components of the community – the high levels of social intimacy, the deliberate processes of community governance and

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interpersonal communication and the conflicts and slow pace of development that those processes can lead to. Others struggle with the primitive physical conditions; some of Earthaven's members still do not live in what could properly be called a house and many of them are without regular electricity and running water in their dwellings. Still others are intensely committed to Earthaven's values and processes, but they feel that they must live in town in order to maintain the lives and livelihoods that they had created for themselves before they came to Earthaven. For instance, one Earthaven member is a medical doctor who has a practice in Asheville where he works on a daily basis. He says that his membership in Earthaven and his frequent visits to the ecovillage provide him with a beautiful place to which he can retreat as well as a context of social support for the larger social and environmental change values that he holds dear.

The fact that people who have joined Earthaven in the last six years far outnumber those that became members in the first six years is indicative of Earthaven's changing nature. Earthaven may have a number of different people undergoing the process of provisional membership and they are actively seekng new members by advertising in venues such as *Communities* magazine. Each new community member adds new elements to an already eclectic social mix; new personalities can disrupt an always tenuous social balance that Earthaven must constantly seek to maintain. As one of Earthaven's founders told me, "we all come in with our baggage. ... We are each carrying a different personal history. ... Some people come here with less of a sense of what citizenship and care of the whole and care of the commons looks like" (interview in Earthaven Ecovillage 8-30-05).

Earthaven members are diverse in age if not in ethnic background. Earthaven's oldest member is 90 and its youngest member is 21. While most of Earthaven's founders are middle

aged, many of Earthaven's more recent members are much younger. Most of Earthaven's members have come as single people. Some of these people have later been joined by their partners in romantic relationships that they have developed outside the community and there are always a number of different romances burgeoning among community members or between community members and people who are in the midst of extended stays in the community as apprentices or work exchangers. There are a small number of families with children, although only six children have been born to people who were community members at the time they gave birth. One family is represented by three different generations: a grandmother, her two daughters, and an adult grandson, all of whom joined the community at separate times.

Earthaven's members have established a cooperative home school for the community's grade school age children called the Forest Children Program. The Forest Children involves a certified teacher who coordinates activities for children aged six through twelve, including children of Earthaven members and those of neighboring families, four days a week. Earthaven's website describes the Forest Children Program.

> We are an Earth based community creating an integrative homeschool resource and learning program for Earthaven members and local families. We take advantage of our natural setting at Earthaven Ecovillage in the Appalachian mountains of western North Carolina, encouraging each child to develop a deeper understanding of the cycles of nature and sustainable stewardship of the earth.
>
> Weaving together individual homeschooling and an experiential academic program, we have developed a unique collaborative curriculum. Our classroom calendar follows six week cycles of in depth subject study, incorporating a creative portfolio designed by the child, parent and teacher. This program explores academics through art, music, movement, and drama to create a holistic experience for each child. [Earthaven Ecovillage 2007]

Children involved in the Forest Children Program must be registered as home schoolers with the state of North Carolina and the Forest Children Program is overseen by a board of directors that works with parents to coordinate curricular and financial aspects of the program.

Earthaven's members believe that providing a healthy context for the development and education of children is fundamental to the cultural transformations that they seek.

> If we can prevent unnecessary childhood trauma then we can save those kids a huge amount of evolutionary growth and move them a lot further on the tracks than we are because they're starting ahead of the game. Not having to spend the next 40 years of their life dealing with their wounded child. I hold out the hope that we can at least aid that process so we end up with healthier young adults, the future inhabitants of the planet. Cultivation of children is key. I want to do everything that I can to support children and families and the school. [interview in Earthaven Ecovillage 8-3-0-05]

During my time at Earthaven, I was repeatedly impressed with the gregariousness and knowledge displayed by the children there. They interacted with the various adult members of the community without inhibition and often demonstrated a keen awareness of their natural surroundings, often identifying animals and plants and their associated uses in ways that I could not even hope to do.

Despite the perception that the physical hardships that characterized Earthavn's attempt to build a community from scratch on undeveloped land might deter women from becoming members, a relative balance between genders has been maintained. Of the 45 full members living on the land during my research, 25 were male and 20 were female. There are explicit attempts at Earthaven to break down gender barriers and stereotypes. For example, many of the women are involved in the physical aspects of the community, some of them participating in the felling of trees and the processing of lumber. In Earthaven's common kitchens, there is an explicit attempt to include both men and women in domestic chores like cooking and cleaning. And men are often engaged in traditionally more feminine components of the social realm in terms of interpersonal communication and the expression of emotions. Although, as will be discussed in more detail below, gender stereotypes have not been completely overcome at Earthaven, they are explicit topics of discussion and effort.

With very few exceptions, Earthaven's members are of European American heritage although they come from diverse places, backgrounds and experiences. Earthaven's members would like to see greater ethnic diversity in the community, but Earthaven follows what I observed to be a general pattern in intentional communities: they tend to consist of a mostly homogenous Euro-American membership. During my time in Earthaven, an African American family spent a couple months living in the community, exploring the possibility of membership, but ultimately chose not to join the community.

Social Geography

As the tour of Earthaven begins, I look around again and notice that Earthaven is really in an isolated little valley. Forested hills rise on all sides. Small buildings, each unique in design, texture and color dot the landscape and are interspersed with agricultural areas and lots containing random piles of salvaged building materials. Other than an occasional airplane passing overhead, there aren't many signs of what one of our tour guides refered to as "the outside world." There's no asphalt, no large buildings, no supermarkets, no fast food joints, no gas stations, no traffic. Many of the material manifestations of Western civilization that we take for granted are really out of sight, and perhaps, out of mind while one is here at Earthaven. The valley in which Earthaven is nestled is, I imagine, an appropriate place to try to create a community, a tribe, or an alternative to the dominator culture.

However, I notice again that there don't seem to be a lot of people around. As we move out of the Hut Hamlet and walk down the narrow gravel road toward the Medicine Wheel neighborhood, one of the other tour participants asks, "Where are all the people?" The group pauses underneath a large pine tree as our tour guides respond. They tell us that one of the unfortunate aspects of the process of building their community is that they have all brought the

dominant models that they were raised with into the community. When Earthaven was just starting and there were fewer people, they all lived together in the Hut Hamlet and shared the common kitchen there. However, they incorporated components of the suburban pattern into their land use plan by allowing for the placement of outlying neighborhoods at the far corners of their collective property. As the community has expanded and as some of the older community members have become burned out on the creative process of community building, some of them have retreated to individual households in "the suburbs of Earthaven."

* * *

Earthaven plans to situate its resident members, community buildings and businesses in 14 clustered neighborhoods that are dispersed across the community's 320 acres. Each neighborhood is described in a document entitled "Earthaven Site Plan: A Guide for Siteholders" that was completed on November 5, 1997 (Bane and Marsh 2007). This document is a synthesis of legal description, topographic information and environmental analysis that contains maps, descriptions and strategic development guidelines for each planned neighborhood. Reflecting Earthaven's desire for sustainable human settlement through ecologically-minded community development, each neighborhood map is accompanied by information in the following categories: topography, road access, solar access, drinking water sources, surface water catchment, soil, wind and air drainage, existing vegetation, fire and privacy gradient. This information is used to guide the development of ecologically efficient and interdependent home sites and neighborhoods.

Some of these neighborhoods are already in existence and others are only beginning to be built. The centrally located Hut Hamlet neighborhood was originally envisioned as a temporary home for new members building more permanent houses in other neighborhoods, but has

Figure 4: Earthaven Ecovillage Sketch Map

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become something of a permanent sub-community itself. Members in this neighborhood inhabit twelve small and unique "huts" as well as a travel trailer, one larger multi-unit building and two composting toilet huts. Some of these buildings are named to reflect their uniqueness. The Wonky Hut which sits at the heart of the neighborhood directly behind the Hut Hamlet Kitchen is so called because it is constructed of irregularly placed straw bales that protrude at odd angles, resulting in a "wonky" exterior outline. The Tribal Condo is so named because it consists of four separate individual bedrooms that share common living spaces. The goal is to create a collective living space and facilitate a "tribal" mentality.

As most of the residences in the Hut Hamlet have no kitchens or running water, the residents of the Hut Hamlet neighborhood share a common kitchen and bathing facility. The Hut Hamlet Kitchen was one of the first buildings built on Earthaven land. The Hut Hamlet, centered around the Hut Hamlet Kitchen was the original heart of the community, before some of the community members moved into more recently completed dwellings in other neighborhoods. As this neighborhood is centrally located within the community and as it is also home to the community mailroom, playground and community supported agriculture garden, it still serves as a sort of social hub for the entire community.

No other neighborhood is as highly developed as is the Hut Hamlet. Village Terraces is conceptualized as a common-wall, cohousing community within the larger Earthaven community (they even have their own listing in the Communities Directory). VT, as it is commonly referred to, has completed only one building of a planned four building cluster. Within this building, a number of residential apartments share common facilities including a kitchen and dining room, an outdoor composting toilet, and large outdoor recreation and garden areas. Hickory Knob is the business center of Earthaven and also complements the Hut Hamlet as another centrally located

social hub. Here, the Trading Post serves as a mini convenience store, internet café and coffee shop while across a small courtyard the White Owl serves multiple purposes – café, bar, dining facility and workshop space. On any given day, a number of people from Earthaven's various neighborhoods can be found chatting over a cup of coffee on the deck outside the trading post or buying snacks and checking their email inside. The White Owl hosts dinners or events – the beer brewing collective, community skit night – that are usually well attended by community members and friends and neighbors from outside the community.

A natural building school and carpentry cooperative is being constructed below the White Owl and across the creek from the Hut Hamlet. Inside are the various tools and carpenter's implements that are used in community building projects. Many of the power tools will one day be powered by a water wheel fed by the creek that flows nearby.

The community's Council Hall and Village Green are nearby, just to the north of the Trading Post and the White Owl. The Council Hall is an artistic circular white building of combined straw bale and timber frame construction on top of which sits a windowed cupola. The Council Hall was deliberately designed for both beauty and functionality so that community meetings will always take place in a comfortable environment. A large bank of windows on the south side open upon a sizeable clearing backed by the forested landscape. This design allows for passive solar gain to keep the building warm in the winter and for light to filter in while the building's occupants enjoy the outward view. The interior of the building provides space for a large circle of chairs where the community meetings take place, illuminated by the sunlight that falls through the windows. Underfoot the floor is of finely finished hardwood in a pattern of spiraling concentric squares that converge at the center where an altar is placed during the meetings. Around the interior on the east, west and north sides are office spaces for the

community and the community's home school program. The floor here is a mosaic of polished marble consisting of broken pieces that were too irregular to be sold, leaving them to be salvaged by Earthaven's members. Just below the Council Hall is the Village Green, another beautiful and consciously designed communal space. It is a flat, elevated, grass covered circle about 125 feet in diameter where community members can gather to play soccer, have picnics, or stargaze.

Other neighborhoods – Gateway, Benchmark, Main Street, Medicine Wheel, East End, Piney Knob, Upper, Middle and Lower Rosy Branch – are developing more slowly and are characterized by low populations. Walking along the single track gravel roads that have been put in by Earthaven using the community's collectively owned track hoe, it takes fifteen to twenty minutes to reach some of these outlying neighborhoods. As a result, outlying residents seem extremely isolated, leaving one with the feeling that perhaps the Earthaven's community is not very cohesive. The distance between these outlying neighborhoods is an impediment to social interaction, one that is difficult to overcome. The steep slope of many of the roads deters bicycle travel and Earthaven's members recognize the inappropriateness of using cars to visit their fellow ecovillagers. Indeed, Earthaven members express regrets that they have allowed their community to be so dispersed, but they chalk this up to the fact that they are involved in an experiment and are learning as they go.

Community Governance

It's the day after the tour of Earthaven and I've stayed overnight so I can attend the community's twice monthly community meeting or "Council" as they call it. As I enter Earthaven's Council Hall, I wonder how closely their governance process will resemble that used in Celo Community. I'm aware that Earthaven, like Celo, conducts their meetings by consensus, but I've also been told that Earthaven spends much more time and energy on

community meetings. Bonnie, who has been a member of both Earthaven and Celo, says that this is because Celo is mature and stable while Earthaven is young and growing, still feeling its way towards its vision of creating a new culture while also trying to integrate more new members than Celo does. As I will find out at this meeting and many more over the coming months, Bonnie is right. Earthaven consistently has to confront fundamental issues about community life. There are often widely differing opinions about how to address these issues and creative proposals for addressing them are often brought to the Council only to be blocked because of unforeseen concerns about the consequences that they might create. As I will learn, Earthaven's Council meetings take endurance not only because of their duration but because of their intellectual and emotional intensity.

As in Celo's community meetings, Earthaven's Council meetings are arranged in a circular pattern to facilitate a sense of egalitarianism and direct communication among the participants. Visitors to the meeting are asked to leave chairs in the inner circle open for Earthaven members. The meeting begins with ten minutes of silent meditation so that Earthaven's members may clear their thoughts and attune themselves to the task of governing their community. Before the meeting gets down to business, visitors are asked to briefly introduce themselves. Members of two other intentional communities, one a self-described hippie commune and the other a newly established community, are present at this meeting. Both say that they are here to observe Earthaven's process of consensus decision-making so that they might improve the governance processes of their own communities. Aside from me, the only other visitor is someone who has been visiting Earthaven for the last seven years and has finally decided to become a provisional member of the community. I note with some surprise that Earthaven's members do not seem to express any trepidation about my proposed research in the

community; it appears that they are more comfortable with the idea of having visitors and observers in their midst than were Celo's members.

The meeting begins with a review of who will be performing the various roles – the facilitator, notetaker, timekeeper, gatekeeper, vibeswatcher, and scribe – at today's meeting. The facilitator and notetaker correspond to the roles of chairperson and notetaker in Celo's meetings, but the other four roles are departures from Celo's model. The timekeeper is charged with making sure that Council sticks to the time allotted for each agenda item, the gatekeeper makes sure that latecomers are brought up to date on the proceedings, the vibeswatcher calls for "process time" to be taken if individual Council members get involved in an emotional confrontation and need to work things out, and the scribe's job is to write on the board any particular wording or lists of ideas that the facilitator thinks should be made visible to Council. After the various roles are filled and approved, the previously distributed agenda and associated time limits are read and approved.

The first item of business at today's meeting is a course of action that has been proposed by an ad-hoc committee of Earthaven members who have tasked themselves with strategizing ways to deal with a large subdivision that is being put in on a parcel of land adjacent to Earthaven's. There seems to be a high level of emotion and worry surrounding this not only because the development is perceived to be a manifestation of the values of individuals and materialism that Earthaven is so critical of, but also because part of the development is upstream from Earthaven, situated directly above the springs that serve as the community's source of drinking water. The community members are worried about the potential pollution and diminished spring flow that might result from the development. Council first moves to confirm

that this committee will report to Council and get approval before it takes any action with regards to the development.

A long discussion ensues regarding the various strategies that the committee has recommended and the overall ethical protocols that Earthaven should use when interacting with its neighbors. It is brought to Council's attention that a group of Earthaven members, mostly young men, conducted an informal reconaissance trip to the development several weeks ago. While the information and pictures that they brought back are appreciated and incorporated into the discussions, concerns are raised about the potential consequences of their trespassing on the development. One of Earthaven's founders makes it clear that the developers should be approached with caution because Earthaven does not want to draw unwanted attention to itself. Some of its buildings and community water and fire systems may not be up to code. Thus, angering the developers could have severe repercussions for Earthaven and its members.

Discussion turns to how Earthaven's members should present themselves to representatives of the development if they are to attempt to engage with them. Should they approach them as representatives of Earthaven Ecovillage, should they represent themselves as speaking for 'a group of concerned neighbors' or should they present themselves only as individual neighbors. The advantages and disadvantages of each course of action are discussed at length and the final decision is to take the middle path and say that they are speaking for a group of concerned neighbors. It is also noted that only the members of this ad-hoc committee are authorized to make any contact with the developers.

Several other courses of action are also discussed and decided on. One member of the committee volunteers to go to the county authorities to make sure that the developers have obtained the appropriate permits and followed all of the legally required courses of action

concerning the work that they have already done on the development. Again, caution is recommended so that unwanted negative scrutiny is not drawn to Earthaven. Another member says that he is familiar with the name of one of the architectural consultants for the development and knows that he has some knowledge of green, sustainable building standards. He is willing to speak with him about whether or not they are employing any sustainability standards in their buildings. Perhaps this can be turned into an opportunity somebody else says. Maybe we can convince the developers to build a green development that will become a large extension of Earthaven. "You're a dreamer, a hopeless romantic," someone responds. "It's a permaculture principle – turn problems into opportunities." The Council erupts into knowing laughter.

A final item of business regarding the development is the allocation of funds and community service credits for the activities of the ad-hoc committee. After some discussion of precedents and "institutional memory" it is confirmed that all of the activities of the committee that are approved by Council, including the actual committee meetings, are creditable under the community's requirements for community service that they keep track of through their alternative currency system. The members of the committee should include those hours in their accounting sheets. As this agenda item approaches its time limits, the committee asks that Council allocate $400 for water testing. They want to establish baseline data so that they can prove whether or not the development has had a deleterious effect on their springs in terms of pollution and flow. A couple of members object to this, noting that the community's budget for the year is already stretched beyond its limits. Others respond that this matter is urgent; that there won't ever be another opportunity to establish this kind of baseline data. Reluctantly, the objectors relent and consensus is reached.

This long discussion is followed on the agenda by a ten minute break. Council attendees rise and stretch, breaking into smaller groups, some of them continuing the previous discussion and fretting over the impending development. I join a group of men outside for a game of hackey sack. As we kick the bag around, one of them says to me, "So you're studying anthropology? What are you going to do, teach?" "That's likely," I reply. "Why do you ask?" "Well do you think that you can have any positive impact on the state of the world doing that? I mean I dropped out of college because I didn't really feel like I was being taught anything useful. I thought about going to South America or something and studying tribal cultures, but I decided that this is what I needed to be doing – creating a tribal culture here in the middle of this mess that is the United States." Before I can respond, the timekeeper rings the bell and we make our way back inside to resume the meeting.

The second half of the meeting begins with fifteen minutes for announcements. The first announcement is that there will be a solstice celebration next week in Hidden Valley. All are welcome to come and bring instruments and their dancing shoes. There will be a potluck afterwards at the White Owl. The Forest Children Program will be having a fundraiser at the White Owl on Saturday. Parents of the children will cook and there will be meat and vegetarian options for $7 a plate. A generous neighbor has pledged to match all donations up to $1,000 so please feel free to donate more. The current provisional member will be sharing her life story with the community next Tuesday night, please come. A community member announces that he has bokchoy and various greens available from his garden. He would be happy to sell them or better yet trade them for skills or products provided by other community members. His roof is leaky and he'd love to have that repaired. Please see him after the meeting. Finally, it is brought

to everyone's attention that quarterly community fees are due by next Friday and should be paid in full to the Finance Committee.

The next item on the agenda is brought by the membership committee. It appears that one of the community's provisional members has brought a long term visitor onto the land without prior approval. Further, this visitor, her boyfriend, has failed to check in with the Vistor Committee and has not paid his required fees or performed his community service over the last two months that he has been here. A community member, a young mother, interjects that the visitor's son apparently picked a fight with her son that did not ultimately result in any violence, but was emotionally disturbing to him. "We all want our children to feel safe here. I feel like something needs to be done about this." Another community member states that the responsibility is partly hers as she is the provisional member's sponsor. She should have paid closer attention and made sure that she was following the rules which can, she suggests, get confusing and convoluted sometimes.

She's worried that this will reflect poorly on the provisional member and that some people might choose to block her membership because of it. As the discussion ensues it becomes clear that the ability of provisional members to be aware of and follow not only the rules, but common sense about what is appropriate in the community is a fundamental basis for evaluating their suitability for membership. A number of courses of action are soon consensed upon. The sponsor will meet with the provisional member and tell her that her boyfriend and his son will have to leave. Then, she will take the provisional member to meet with the Membership Committee to review her progress on her provisional membership, make sure she is aware of the community's policies about visitors (well, let's make sure she's aware of all the community's policies) and invite any concerned members to discuss their concerns with her at a commuity

meeting. Also, the Visitors Committee will be tasked to meet, review the policies on visitors, distribute them to the community, and make sure that they have an accountability team that is prepared to be on top of any similar situation that may soon arise.

The final item on the agenda of this Council meeting, I will later learn, concerns an issue that has long been causing divisiveness in the community. Part of the community's vision has always been to grow as much of their own food as possible. However, many of the young people with the energy and motivation to engage in agriculture have not been able to afford to join the community. Several of Earthaven's young members and provisional members have, over recent years, felt that their participation has put them in a bind; their ability to pay their joining and site lease fees has been dependent upon a cash income that they have not been able to adequately create for themselves here at Earthaven while at the same time engaging in the agricultural activities that both they and the community would like to see happening. These sentiments are reflected in the minutes from this particular Council meeting.

> As we all know, living at Earthaven can be financially challenging. Anyone who plans to create their livelihood here needs to have enough capital to pay the joining fee and a site fee, buy or build a house, and start a viable business or career in an exigent economic climate. Though there are ways for incoming members to avoid making all these expenditures at once ... life at Earthaven inevitably requires from new members a high level of investment made in a short amount of time.
>
> The situation is especially daunting to aspiring farmers. Ecologically responsible agriculture can be difficult even on an established farmstead with access to the electric grid. Though essential to the development of the community, realizing it at Earthaven is a far more demanding task. In addition to fulfilling the financial obligations of membership, would-be cultivators must manifest a food-producing ecosystem and income stream without access to cleared land or infrastructure adequate to support commercial farming (resources that Earthaven has agreed but cannot necessarily afford to provide).
>
> In an attempt to alleviate the burden that these circumstances place on agriculturally-oriented potential members, and to enhance the community's ability to develop agricultural resources with limited funds from the annual budget, the Strategic Planning committee proposes that Earthaven adopt an alternative "Sweat Equity" membership track. [Earthaven Ecovillage 2005c]

Over the next two hours of the Council meeting I watch as an elaborate process of debate and discussion unfolds regarding this fundamental aspect of the vision for community life that Earthaven's members are building together. Two of Earthaven's young members have, through the community's Forestry and Agriculture and Strategic Planning Committees, developed a detailed and complex proposal that basically allows time, labor, and expenses invested in the development of the community's common agricultural infrastructure to be substituted for joining and site lease fees that would otherwise be paid in cash to the community. This is why the proposal is labeled a "sweat equity" membership track, because it substitutes labor for hard cash with regards to covering the basic fees involved in joining the community and gaining part ownership of the community's collectively owned property.

The community members take their turns expressing and responding to concerns and ideas about the proposal and its details. How does the proposal affect our budget, both short term long term? Is this proposal going to be retroactive, applicable to current members who haven't finished paying their fees? Does it apply only to new provisional members? Is there an overall cash value limit that will be placed on the sweat equity track? Will the limit be annual or cumulative? What happens if someone who is on the sweat equity track ultimately decides not to join the community? Will we be responsible for reimbursing them? Through a slow and deliberate process all of these questions and concerns are addressed by clarifying the content of the proposal or making changes to its wording. The meeting facilitator manages to keep track of all the details and maintain a steady and orderly queue of speakers. Those with serious concerns are given their time to speak and the proposal's sponsors are provided time to respond. After almost two hours, the comments seem to be winding down. There is a moment of silence and everyone looks around the room at each other. There is a sense that something momentous is

about to happen. The facilitator of the Council states that she would like to test for consensus. Does anyone object to this proposal? No one raises their hand. Does anyone feel the need to stand aside from any potential decision? No one raises their hand. Do we have consensus? A chorus of cheers erupts from the Council.

The closing moments of this Council meeting indicate that this is indeed a momentous decision. At the end of each Council meeting at Earthaven, ten or fifteen minutes are provided for both Earthaven members and visitors to the Council to evaluate what they have just participated in and observed. This afternoon the room is suffused with joy and good vibrations. Multiple speakers compliment the two young members on the time and thought they put into this proposal and on the articulate way in which they were able to express its aims and connect them to Earthaven's larger vision and institutional history. The facilitator and the notetaker are appreciated for their ability to make the process run smoothly and to keep up with the complex discussion. The members of the Forestry and Agriculture and Strategic Planning Committees are appreciated for their professionalism in helping to develop the proposal. One of the proposal's sponsors, a young, intelligent, and incredibly hard working community member is overcome with emotion. He tearfully thanks Council for seeing this proposal through. For him it represents a solution to an ongoing problem that has so frustrated him that he has avoided coming to Council for many months. He's heartened to be here today to see the community work through these issues and he appreciates their tolerance of his absence. His comments are followed by a warm and heartfelt silence.

Before the Council adjourns and people head over to the White Owl for dinner, some of the vistors to today's Council share their own evaluations. Reminding Council that they came today in hopes of observing and learning from an effective consensus decision-making process,

these visitors express awe and appreciation for the maturity that Earthaven's Council has just demonstrated. They look forward to applying the lessons that they have taken from today's Council meeting to the improved functioning of their own communities. As I walk away from the Council Hall, I pause on the Village Green and reflect, absorbing the fact that I have witnessed people coming together to make decisions about how they can most effectively cooperate to create community and economy and that others with similar goals have come to learn from them. I too feel a sense of awe at these people's dedication to their ideals.

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Earthaven's political organization is, in its general outlines, the same as that described for Celo, although as a young and growing community, attending to community business requires more time and energy in Earthaven. Earthaven seeks to empower each of its members to participate as fully as possible in decisions that affect the community while at the same time allowing for individual freedom to the extent possible. Earthaven's Council, like Celo's general meeting, is its main political institution, an institution within which decisions are made by consensus. Council is held the second and fourth Sunday of every month from 2 to 6:30 p.m. A Council agenda is circulated several days in advance of each Council meeting so that all are informed as to what business will be up for discussion. Individuals or groups may request a slot on the agenda for a proposal they have developed and would like the community to consider. Requests for which there is not enough time are put into a queue called "in the box." Seeing a proposal through to consensus is a process that usually runs its course over several Council meetings. In Council, decisions are made by consensus by all full, active community members who choose to participate. Earthaven's consensus process resembles that used by Celo, although it is more formalized and includes a greater number of defined roles which are filled by different

community members at each Council session. For those who don't participate and for future reference, minutes of all Council meetings are posted around the community, emailed to community members and filed in the community's archives.

Like Celo's general meeting, Earthaven's Council delegates some business to particular committees where participation is voluntary and decisions are also made by consensus. Earthaven's committees are organized into four different groups called Orbos. Earthaven borrowed the term Orbo from a book about village life in Nigeria and they chose it because it refers to groups of villagers who work and perform community service together. Thus, they envision participation in committees and Council meetings as necessary means of governing themselves together. Duty to their community binds them to participate in community governance. Orbos are organized according to thematic areas. Orbo leaders, chosen each year, correspond to the president, vice president, treasurer and secretary of the community.

The Fire Keeper Orbo oversees the social aspects of the community. It is headed by the Fire Keeper or president of Earthaven who looks out for the general well-being of the community, sees to legal aspects of the community and signs community documents. The Fire Keeper Orbo includes the Agenda Planners, the Care Team (for dealing with emotional and physical hardships experienced by members), the Safety Committee, the Accountability Team (for ensuring that members meet their responsibilities to the community) and the Spirit Walkers (a group that organizes community rituals and celebrations). The Water Bearer Orbo oversees the financial aspects of the community. The Water Bearer acts as community treasurer and keeps track of Earthaven's finances. The Water Bearer Orbo includes the Finance Committee, the CurrentSee Committee (which administers the community's alternative currency system) and the Documents Committee. The Airspinner Orbo is in charge of the community's official business,

internal communications and record keeping. Its head, the Air Spinner, acts as the community's secretary. This Orbo includes the Promotions Committee, the Visitor Committee, the Membership Committee and the New Roots Committee (for orienting long-term visitors and provisional members). The Earth Delver Orbo is responsible for overseeing the construction, repair and maintenance of Earthaven's physical infrastructure and property. Its head, the Earth Delver, serves as vice president of the community. This Orbo includes the Land Use/Site Planning Committee, the Forestry and Agriculture Committee, the Building Review and Building Projects Committees and the Utilities Committee. The heads of each Orbo are chosen by the community each year and are assumed on a volunteer basis.

Decisions made in committees are binding only following a three week period during which committee minutes and decisions must be posted for all community members to review. If there are objections, the committee must revisit the decision and take the issue to the full Council. If after three weeks there are no objections, committee decisions stand. However, Earthaven is structured politically in such a way that any member can propose to change any existing policy or create a new one, so long as they are willing to take the time to think the issue through, make an appropriate proposal in Council or committee and see it through the consensus process. In this way, any member may propose a change to existing policy, made either at Council or in committee, at any time. Earthaven's political structure is a manifestation of direct democracy and decentralization of power within the community.

Communication and Conflict Resolution

Although the formal decisions that constitute Earthaven's self-government take place primarily in the community's twice monthly Council meetings and in the associated structure of committees described in the previous section, Earthaven's members have also designed and

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implemented a number of other forums that facilitate inter-personal and intracommunity communication and conflict resolution. Earthaven's membership is composed of diverse and strong-willed individuals all of whom are attempting to cooperate with one another and put the good of the community ahead of their own personal interests. However, they recognize that they all come to this common endeavor from a cultural background that places emphasis on the individual above the collective and that their attempts to cooperate with one another will inevitably come into conflict with the "cultural baggage" that they have brought with them into the community. Thus, Earthaven encourages its members to use established processes that facilitate open and honest communication in order to bring conflicts out into the open. The goal is to gain an understanding of not only the surface conflicts but the deep roots that underlie them and work together to create healthy and productive solutions to the problems at hand. Below, I will describe three different forums that Earthaven's members have created to facilitate communication and conflict resolution outside of the contexts of official community government. This description will be based around an emerging theme at Earthaven: the perceived need to balance the material development of the community with a focus on nurturing the social, spiritual and artistic components of the community.

Heartshares are a forum for interpersonal communication and conflict resolution. Any community member may request a heartshare with another community member or suggest that two or more community members should come together for a heartshare. This process is designed to encourage open and honest communication and to provide a safe environment for the expression of frustration and even hostility. To this end, the members of Earthaven's Care Team serve as mediators (so long as they are not personally involved in the conflict); they encourage each party in the conflict to set aside their own concerns and be ready to fully and actively listen

to the side of the story presented by the other parties. A common and valued expression at Earthaven is "I hear you" which signifies that you have been fully receptive to concerns and frustrations expressed by another person.

The following is an example of a situation that might call for a heartshare. Manuel and Annie have been in conflict over an issue that has been discussed at the last several Council Meetings and this conflict has been made worse because their contrasting personalities are abrasive, making communication between the two difficult. Manuel, as a representative of the Earth Delver Orbo and a new community member trying to satisfy his community service requirements, has brought a proposal to Council for the construction of a bridge across one of Earthaven's many creek crossings. Annie, a founding member of Earthaven and often times facilitator of Earthaven's Council meetings, has been the most vocal opponent of Manuel's proposal. She, along with several other members, most of them women, feels that continuing to allocate funds for physical projects at Earthaven detracts from larger social, psychological, and spiritual issues that she feels Earthaven needs to be confronting at this time. Manuel is angry not only because Annie has been blocking his proposal, but because he feels her responses to his attempts to revise the proposal in Council have been condescending in tone and amount to personal attacks. The day after the last meeting they had a vocal confrontation during which Manuel accused Annie of using her power as a community elder to manipulate the community into opposing the project that he is "focalizing". She, on the other hand, accused him of being an insensitive tool of the "patriarchy" that is so characteristic of the dominant society that they are trying to create an alternative to. Recognizing that Council has devoted too much time to "processing" this interpersonal conflict and that the conflict might reach a boiling point, the Care

Team asks both Manuel and Annie to work with the care team to establish a four hour block of time when both of them will be available to sit down for a heartshare.

Over the following weeks it begins to become apparent that the topics that underlie the conflict between Manuel and Annie are symptoms of a larger tension that is growing in Earthaven. Every so often, Earthaven holds what they call a Community Check-In. Check-Ins are forums during which each individual community member is allotted a certain amount of time to express their feelings and talk about what they have been experiencing. They may choose to talk about whatever topic they would like; it can be entirely personal or more specifically related to the community or its members. The idea is to provide a supportive social context within which community members can express their emotions and be "heard" by other people who care about them and may be able to empathisize with them. Sometimes Check-Ins take place at the beginning of Council meetings, but as the number of people attending Council meetings has grown, Check-Ins more often constitute an event of their own. Earthaven's older members told me that Check-Ins used to be much more frequent, well-attended, and intimate occurrences and they lament the loss of the closeness and intimacy that surrounded them.

Recognizing a growing tension in the community, a tension that was made more explicit by her participation in Manuel and Annie's heartshare, Earthaven's Firetender calls for a community Check-In. At the Check-In, the majority of the community members spend time talking about how recent events in the community have affected them and it becomes increasingly clear that there is a fundamental issue that the community is going to have to confront. In fact, Annie's blocking of Manuel's bridge proposal represents a larger undercurrent of resentment that is rising mostly amongst Earthaven's women members. They feel that too much time, energy, labor and financial resources are being devoted to the development of

physical infrastructure at Earthaven. Many of Earthaven's male members feel that these projects are essential and they have noticed a growing sense of resentment among the women at Earthaven. They feel a growing opposition and this has put them in a gloomy mood. After four hours, the Check-In is coming to a close and the group sentiment is that the next Council meeting should arrange a time for a Threshing at which the subject can be fleshed out in greater detail.

Earthaven occasionally uses Threshings as an open-ended forum within which to discuss single issues that are of broad relevance to the community. These separate forums are required because the community must sometimes discuss issues that are so fundamental and so demanding of an open-ended discussion that cannot be accommodated in the relatively structured environment of the Council meeting. Threshings usually require a whole day or even an entire weekend and they often do not result in any sense of closure; rather they are a way of bringing fundamental issues out in the open so that they may be fully addressed. Although it is difficult to set aside the time that they require amongst the often full slate of regular committee meetings, classes, community projects and busy individual agendas, the fact that they take place is evidence that Earthaven's members are committed to the social process of coming together to create a community. Earthaven's fundamental commitment to conflict resolution is expressed in their ReMembership Covenant which states, in part, "We commit ourselves to transcend mere compromise and to reach for truly transformative solutions."

As the time for the Threshing to address the issues alluded to above nears, some of Earthaven's women members suggest that the topic of the meeting should be phrased in a specific way. The women want to make it clear that they are not trying to be oppositional in expressing their concerns. They are worried that two positions on this issue seem to be forming along the lines of gender (although they recognize that this is not the case across the board; some

of Earthaven's male members clearly sympathize with their feelings). Although they are concerned with a lack of attention to what could be described as feminine energy and values in the community, they do not want to approach the issue as feminists. They believe that a feminist approach to the larger issues at hand will be divisive rather than transcendant. They believe that all community members will feel a sense of ownership for their concerns when they are viewed within the broader vision of the community as it is stated in their ReMembership Covenant: "Our greatest challenge is to co-create with Spirit a wise, just and sustainable culture in balance with the natural world, and to serve as a living example, manifesting a spiritual ecology – a vision of a new reality."

Some of Earthaven's members believe that the balance of energy in the community has tilted overwhelmingly to the physical aspects of the above quotation; that too much emphasis is being placed on the physically sustainable and the ecological to the detriment of the cultural and the spiritual. They feel that the amount of community finances, labor, and mental energy being devoted to developing the physical infrastructure of the community – even in the form of creating ecologically sustainable systems – is preventing the community from committing themselves to the development of social relations, spiritual interconnections, and artistic expressions that bring them closer together and will enable them to transcend the dominant reality to create the culture that they all seek.

The members of Earthaven who are advocating for a reevaluation of the community's priorities refer to their task as "the creation of a partnership culture." The phrase "partnership culture" is taken from a book by Riane Eisler entitled *The Chalice and the Blade: Our History, Our Future* (1987). It is a well researched tome that uses archaeological evidence combined with symbolic and discourse analysis of religious scriptures to suggest that some early civilizations,

most clearly exemplified in the book with reference to Crete, were more egalitarian and peaceful and less imperialistic than most civilizations of the last 4,000 years. She suggests that this difference is grounded fundamentally in a worldview and spiritual mythology that revered the feminine as the source of life, joy and beauty in contrast to worldview and mythology that reveres the masculine as a source of domination and power. In her review of the causes of the broad change from a "partnership culture" to a "dominator culture," Eisler has constructed a juxtaposition that many Earthaven members are resonating with and turning to create a "sustainable" and "holistic, regenerative" culture. The discussion of how to create a "partnership culture" at Earthaven, manifested here in their use of Eisler's terminology and research as an inspiration for their own efforts, is only one component of their larger, multifaceted cultural critiques and their attempts to create cultural change.

This particular discussion was only beginning to take focused form in Earthaven at the time my research came to an end and it remains to be seen what the outcome will be. However, the fact that a considerable amount of the community's time and energy is being devoted to resolving this problem is an indication of their commitment to creating cultural change. Earthaven's members are making it a priority to examine how the deeply ingrained characteristics of what they, following Eisler, call the dominator culture have been carried with them through the gates of their community in the form of "cultural baggage." Through deliberately designed processes of communication and conflict resolution, Earthaven's members are intent on bringing their cultural baggage out into the open so that they can dissect it, deconstruct it, and prevent it from obstructing their efforts to create the cultural changes that they believe are necessary if they are to live peacefully and sustainably.

Community Finances and Making a Living

The Forestry Co-op is a worker-owned business that uses sustainable logging practices to clear homesites and future agricultural sites and designs and builds passive solar homes of wood from the land. ... The co-op offers services ... which individual community members would otherwise have to do themselves or pay outsiders to do. And the Forestry co-op does this while following the community's agreements to keep biomass on the land and use it for building materials whenever possible. [Christian 2003b:32]

The Forestry Co-op helps fulfill Earthaven's ecological and economic vision, models and demonstrates several of the community's primary values, and contributes to its financial and social well being. If there was ever an example of right livelihood in a community setting, this is it. ...

The Forestry Co-op's story illuminates what often happens when visionaries with sustainable values meet up with economic realities trying to earn a living in community. [Christian 2003b:34]

In April 2004, the [Forestry] Co-op at Earthaven Ecovillage in North Carolina, made the hard decision to go out of business. They stopped operating; began selling off their lumber, trucks, and equipment; distributed their power tools among themselves; and started looking for other work. [Christan 2004:24]

The Forestry Co-op's story tells me this: A community-based business can only function without security for so long. Sooner or later, even visionaries who've learned good management skills and productive work habits can become exhausted from trying to effect social and ecological change without at least a modicum of physical comfort, community-wide support, and a decent living wage. [Christtian 2004:28]

The above excerpt is from editor of *Communities* magazine and Earthaven Ecovillage member Diana Christian's account of the asent and demise of Earthaven's largest cooperative business endeavor to date. It shows that although the Forestry Co-op was aligned with many of Earthaven's fundamental values, it was ultimately unable to compete with predominant economic realities. It was forced out of business because it was not able to compete with the economies of scale characteristic of the commercial world, because of co-op members' lack of experience and their mistaken attempts to try to do too much all at once and due to lack of formalized community support for their endeavors. Despite their commitment to the values that the Forestry Co-op embodied some Earthaven members found it more economical and less risky to contract with commercial sources to clear their home sites and construct their homes rather

than to have the Forestry Co-op do the same. The Forestry Co-op experience taught Earthaven's members who were involved in it a lot about the challenges of creating an ethically grounded, village-scale economic livelihood and brought them face to face with the ways in which dominant realities can impede well-intentioned utopian striving.

Earthaven's vision includes the creation of a village scale economy that is largely self-reliant and composed of people performing complimentary services. Earthaven wants to be producing goods that are needed by all and bartering and circulating money amongst themselves and their regional neighbors. It is a vision of an economy rooted in and supported by a particular place. This vision is summed up in a quotation from one of Earthaven's founders. "As new settlers we have a double challenge/opportunity. We have to create a place for ourselves to live *on* the land and we need a way of supporting ourselves *from and with* the land. Neither can work without the other" (Bane 1996:44).

Much as at Celo Community in the early years, the difficulty of aligning economic activities with ethical concerns and of simultaneously creating a cohesive community and an independent, small-scale economy is evident. The dependence of Earthaven's members upon the economic structures of the global political economy conflicts with their cultural critiques; it clashes with their commitment to sustainability and interferes with the development of their relationships with each other. This is not a judgment, but rather an observation, a paradox that Earthaven members recognize. Their acknowledgement of this paradox is not necessarily a resignation to the inevitable, an admission of failure, for Earthaven Ecovillage is an active response to the sustainability challenge and an ongoing experiment. As Earthaven grows and as they develop networks of production and consumption and relationships with others of like-mind

in the southern Appalachians, they believe that greater self-sufficiency and sustainability will be realized.

The foundation of the village-scale economy that Earthaven envisions is their collectively owned land and their common financial reserve fund and budget. However, Earthaven is not financially communal. Individual community members are financially independent, although many of them are involved in small group ventures that involve some degree of economic communalism. For the present, a brief overview of the ways in which Earthaven's members support themselves economically will be provided. Members exert strong efforts to make their living on the land in socially and ecologically responsible manners for a number of reasons. For one, a main part of their vision for the community is to foster a thriving "village scale" economy complemented by some local and regional economic networks. Second, they recognize that traveling 40 to 100 miles round trip to nearby towns and cities to work is a manifestation of an unsustainable and polluting reliance on fossil fuels that runs counter to many of their values. Earthaven's members want to avoid the dichotomy between core and periphery and the negative socio-cultural and ecological consequences that it entails.

Many Earthaven members have managed to create livelihoods for themselves within the community. Several people offer their services in clearing land and designing and building dwellings for other community members. Two of Earthaven's young members are self-taught builders; they came to the community without any of the knowledge or skills required for constructing buildings. Through tireless research and an ongoing process of trial and error, including working for the now defunct Forestry Co-op, they have become seasoned experts in a number of different building styles. They have acquired the necessary knowledge, skills and tools to construct homes from scratch. They use locally and sustainably harvested materials to

construct passive solar-oriented buildings that incorporate sustainable systems such as roofwater catchment and recycled insulation. They have converted a U-Hual moving van into a portable tool shed and power supply. Their van uses a large photovoltaic array mounted on the roof and an engine converted to run on biodiesel to supply power to the tools they use on their construction sites. Their expertise is now in such demand by other members of the ecovillage that they have building projects scheduled solidly for the next several years.

One family provides accommodations for visitors to Earthaven in the large home that they built using recycled materials. The A&A House is one of the largest buildings at Earthaven; it includes a number of individual bedrooms and dormitory style rooms that house visitors of various sorts. The owners of this home charge modest nightly rates for their guest rooms and daily meal fees to eat in their family style organic and vegan kitchen. For an additional fee they will also provide their guests with a well-informed tour of Earthaven. They also exchange room and board for their guests' labor, inviting them to help complete some of the unfinished house construction or work in their permaculture garden.

One woman owns and operates a mail order medicinal herb company that employs several other community members. Red Moon Herbs is entirely owned and staffed by women, most of whom are members of Earthaven. Its office and production facility are housed inside Village Terraces, a large cohousing neighborhood in the heart of Earthaven. The employees of Red Moon Herbs cultivate and harvest from the wild medicinal herbs and plants that they convert into tinctures, salves, oils and vinegars. In addition to offering the products to Earthaven residents, they sell them in a number of regional and national herb shops as well as through mail order. Red Moon Herbs also offers classes and internships focusing on herbal medicine and women's health. They are connected to a wider grassroots network of herbalists and activists and

they are one of the primary sponsors and organizers of the Southeast Women's Herbal Conference that takes place every year near Asheville, North Carolina.

Two community members telecommute as publishers and editors of the grassroots periodicals *Communities Magazine* and *Permaculture Activist*. Both of these people have made their homes and their livelihoods in a context that is directly related to their work: a permaculture-based intentional community. They often include articles by fellow community members or articles about their community in their publications. They are also both highly in demand as speakers at national and international events and consultants to developing intentional communities and burgeoning permaculture projects. In these roles, they are joined by several other community members who make their living as permaculture, natural building, ecovillage design and consensus facilitation instructors offering the skills and expertise that they have honed at Earthaven to others. Each of them teaches courses in their respective areas of expertise at Earthaven and in other locations around the country and the world.

Several members earn their living in small cottage industries, doing custom woodwork or providing services such as massage and chiropractic. One member owns and operates a "useful plants" nursery on Earthaven land where he propagates, advises on and sells edible and medicinal plants that are adapted to Earthaven's bioregion. Still other members of Earthaven work in the nearby towns of Asheville and Black Mountain, maintaining jobs in the mainstream economy while building more self-reliant homesteads in the community. Finally, several members live off of retirement pensions, investments, or personal accumulations, often infusing their money into the community's economy in the form of loans to other community members, investments in nascent business ventures and the purchase of labor and products from other community members.

As a community, Earthaven provides part time employment to several people in the realms of labor project coordination, maintenance of physical infrastructure and promotion of educational and outreach programs. Several young people who have recently become provisional members have entered a "sweat equity" membership track whereby they pay their joining and site lease fees in the form of labor on community projects rather than in hard cash earned outside the community. The sweat equity option serves multiple purposes: bringing young, physically able, but cash-strapped people into the community, increasing the development of infrastructure and promoting local economic development as an alternative to the capitalist economy.

As a community, Earthaven draws funds for their operational costs and continued infrastructure development from new members' joining and site lease fees, existing members' operational and facilities fees, fees paid by outsiders who come to the community to undertake internships, electricity sales to community members and from contributions from supporting members and other interested parties who make donations to their cause. Labor for infrastructure development and community governance is provided by community members each of whom is required to provide 1,500 hours of service to community-related projects or governance institutions over the first ten years of their membership.

Earthaven has developed an alternative currency system to keep track of these labor requirements. Each hour of labor committed to community projects and activities is valued at $10. Paper money representing labor performed and its cash equivalent have been printed and circulated within the community. This paper currency is called "Leaps", a symbolic reference to the fact that engaging in such a system (and indeed in the community itself) represents a leap of faith. As is often the case with alternative currency systems, there are disputes about the value of some kinds of labor relative to others. Some skilled and particularly physically demanding labor

is now valued at a higher rate in Earthaven. While such disputes led to the demise of a similar system in Celo, Earthaven's alternative currency remains functional after over ten years.

Each member can contribute actual labor or the cash equivalent on a yearly basis as they work towards their required contributions. As one moves beyond the required 1,500 total hours of required community service, paper leaps are issued for accrued credit. These paper leaps can then be used to pay other members hired for personal projects. In some cases, goods and services can be paid for in leaps as well. Earthaven's members hope that this system will eventually provide the fiscal basis for their village economy. "We imagine that our currency will come to support a larger and larger internal trade economy as more and more of us take up residence on the land" (Bane 1996:46).

Earthaven's attempts to create a more self-reliant, village-scale economy are a manifestation of the fact that they have picked up where Celo's utopian community building endeavor left off. They have gladly adopted models of membership screening, community governance and land tenure and stewardship pioneered in Celo, but they believe that their vision of sustainability requires them to be more locally self-reliant and less intertwined in the global political economy. Their attempts to manifest their vision have seen both success and failure, but they continue to try, pushed by their own cultural critiques and utopian visions to develop alternatives that can serve as cross-cultural juxtapositions for the world to see. The alternative models and institutions, the cross-cultural juxtapositions developed by Celo and Earthaven, will be considered in greater detail in chapter eleven and in the context of the utopian challenge of sustainability.

Chapter 10

SUSTAINABILITY-ORIENTED INTENTIONAL COMMUNITIES AS CULTURAL

CRITIQUE?: WHAT MOTIVATES THE MEMBERS OF CELO AND EARTHAVEN

The Sorcerer's Apprentice and the Clueless Honkey

One member of Earthaven Ecovillage was particularly articulate in expressing cultural critique as he sought to describe to me his motivations for joining Earthaven Ecovillage. Tim Fields was born and raised in an upper middle class family in Bethesda, Maryland, a place that was, according to Tim, "the epitome of the American success story." Tim says he never wanted for anything as a kid, but at a young age he began to notice that everything around him seemed "wrong." As he grew into an adolescent, he noticed how his family, like so many of the families around him, was dysfunctional. His parents didn't know how to communicate with each other and their lives, despite all the material "success," were filled with depression and loneliness. In high school, Tim found the things that his peers were interested in to be superficial. He was being groomed to "go to an Ivy League School and become a rich doctor or a rich lawyer" but he increasingly felt that he could not follow that path. Instead, Tim went to college at Evergreen, a progressive, liberal arts school in Washington state. While at Evergreen, Tim was exposed to academic courses that empowered him to further his critique of western civilization. His critique extended to himself and his participation in an economy in which economic forces and technological innovations divorced him from the material sources of his life and livelihood. He dropped out of college and plunged into full time organic farming. But he wanted to find a

community of people who were committed to taking responsibility for the entirety of their economy, not just the food that they grew and consumed. Tim's search led him to Earthaven.

Tim has become one of the hardest working members of Earthaven. He is a builder, a farmer and a storyteller. When he's not building houses for other community members from local materials, He spearheads the community's attempts to develop integrated agricultural, small-scale biofuel production, and local economic development systems. When he has free time, he likes to tell stories, stories that encapsulate his cultural critiques and that, he hopes, will eventually develop into a larger cultural mythology that will encourage people to "take responsibility for the economy that sustains them." In my interview with Tim, he shared with me his stories, his cultural critiques, in the form of two narratives. These narratives revolve around two figures – the Sorcerer's Apprentice and the Clueless Honky – that metaphorically translate his critique of modern culture. The first is a retelling of the Disney classic Fantasia, one that ends with the suggestion that the Disney ending is symbolic of a larger cultural logic that obscures and justifies the consequences of our growing reliance on technology and concomitant separation from the natural world that is the source of life.

> *So the wider umbrella of the mythology that I propose is a story that we already all know that has probably been in western culture for a long time. If I were still in school, I would do everything in my power to track down the source of the story, and try to figure out where it came from, who first came up with it, from where it arose. [This is] the story of the sorcerer's apprentice and most of us know it from Fantasia, the Disney movie ...*
>
> *The sorcerer's apprentice is in the sorcerer's study one day when the sorcerer is gone, and out of curiosity starts thumbing through all the big magic books. He's not taking the time to undergo the appropriate training, the learning of discipline, the humbling apprenticeship. He takes no time to read the introduction, the footnotes, the epitaph. He goes straight for the juicy spells. He pays no heed to the age old practices of casting an appropriate circle, or grounding the spell as and after it is cast – paying heed to the power of the source, and giving the appropriate thanks and acknowledgement to that power.*
>
> *In his unbridled ignorance, he uses the power of the spells almost as amusement, but specifically to forego his chores of carrying water up from the*

well (chop wood, carry water – often understood by traditional peoples to be some of the most sacred tasks). He casts a spell so that the broom will do the work for him. It works wonderfully for a while, his craft of magic seems to take off and fly well … But it just cannot last long. It was not done in accord with the laws of life. It is going to crash. But no problem, he thinks. He'll just cast a new spell to fix the problems caused by the first miscast spell. Once again, everything seems great for a while, but then the inevitable crash into chaos. This goes on and on. The ensuing moments of chaos happen after shorter and shorter lapses of time. The sorcerer's apprentice scurries around more and more, pulling another and another spell out from his sleeve. It is starting to become painfully evident that he is not going to be able to hold it together if he keeps this up.

Disney would have us believe that this is where the Sorcerer returns to find his home falling into fracturing chaos. The Sorcerer then powerfully puts a stop to all of the miscast spells and brings his home back into harmony. The apprentice looks up sheepishly with a new found humility. The End. My sense is that this Disney ending is a lie because the Sorcerer is not going to come back and clean up our mess. My sense is that the Sorcerer is not going to come back because the Sorcerer never left … To me it is clear that we the human beings are the sorcerer's apprentices.

Six thousand years ago, particularly in the fertile crescent, we stumbled upon a book of magical spells: agriculture, writing, mathematics, the wheel, money. I'd say those are the five biggies, five chapter headings. We stumbled upon all these intense magic spells, all at the same time, and we made mistakes. Any magician will tell you, if you're going to make a magical spell, first you have to cast a circle, and then when you're done with the spell, you have to ground the spell … by letting those powers that you've drawn up return back to where they've come from, and you close. Well, that metaphorically is a way of saying, giving back, taking care of that which takes care of you. Magic comes from the world, so [if we're] not using agriculture to further unfold the flowering of life [i.e. increasing biodiversity], [then] that's black magic. We're not grounding the spell. If we're using money, if we're using mathematics, if we're using writing in any of those ways that isn't actually giving back to where the true power came from, then we're practicing black magic. Black magic takes on a mind of its own. Six thousand years later, here we are, on the verge of peak oil, and massive global economic collapse. [interview in Earthhaven Ecovillage 6-2-05]

This retelling of the Disney classic Fantasia reveals Tim's belief that our cultural ideologies are blinding us to the ways in which what we believe are characteristics of the most highly evolved culture are actually perversions of the true course of human evolution, obfuscations of our connection with and dependence upon the natural world. "We're never learning from our mistakes [and this] means we're not evolving. That means if we don't evolve,

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we're going to destroy evolution because we're such powerful players in evolution" (interview in Earthaven Ecovillage 6-2-05). He suggests that we're not aware of this because we have, through our technologies become so divorced from the natural world, the evolution of which we have such a key role to play. His tale of the Clueless Honky, presented below, suggests that we have arrived at a crucial time in the course of evolution, a time during which we have the last opportunity to learn from our mistakes and change the ways we are going about our business.

The clueless honky is a mythological figure that epitomizes the etymology of the word "honky." Have I told you the etymology of the word "honky?" ... Well, the honky comes from back in the old South, when a poor white man was looking for a prostitute. He was too poor to afford a white prostitute, so he would drive down to a poor black neighborhood and pull in front of a black prostitute's house, but be too scared to get out of his car, because all the black guys would come out and kick his ass, so he would stay in the driver's seat, he would stay at the wheel, and lay on his horn, and honk on his horn until the black prostitute came out of her house in all her finery, got in the car's passenger's seat, and drove away with him. Well, what we have created in thinking we've created the most successful civilization in the history of the planet is, we've created a culture of honkies, and all of us, every day, go in to the poorest neighborhoods of the world, and are too scared to get out of our car, we're too scared to leave the driver's seat, and we lay on the horn until the objects of our desires come out and get into the car with us, so we can drive away with them and fulfill our desires. And we all do this, day in and day out. So what happens is that we actually make it through this time, that the humans actually somehow survive and the planet survives. We somehow make it thru the crux times we're living through now. And how our descendents tell the story is that, right around this time, which is the crux time, there was a book that was published, which was How Clueless I Am in the Face of Common Sense by the Clueless Honky, that was a media firestorm, sold more copies than anything in the media, more than the Bible times orders of magnitude. ... Everywhere you went, it was just nothing but clueless honky, clueless honky, clueless honky. But the whole thing was a riddle. The whole thing was written as if one could assume that the clueless honky was an individual, but as time went on ... the riddle became unfolded. And what became clear, the clueless honky wasn't an individual, but the clueless honky was a club. It was the world's biggest country club. And it was the strangest club of all time, because you didn't need to gain admittance to the club. You had to admit that you were in the club to get out of the club. Your admittance out of the club was admitting that you were in the club. Because by that time, everybody in the world had been turned into a clueless honky. Once you realize that you're a clueless honky, you're not entirely clueless anymore. You're on the first step. [interview in Earthaven Ecovillage 6-2-05]

The symbolic metaphors in these tales are rich and compelling. The tales are subtle, incisive and nuanced critiques of modern epistemologies and institutions. They are damning accounts of modern Western culture and compelling suggestions that we must change that culture. They are manifestations of the critical thinking that drove this individual to try to create the necessary changes at Earthaven Ecovillage.

<p style="text-align:center">*   *   *</p>

In the previous chapters, I have described the contemporary, sustainability-oriented intentional communities movement and the ways in which social scientists have conceptualized intentional communities at different periods in time. I have shown that current conceptualizations of intentional communities as manifestations of utopian striving and cultural critique are attempts to center attention on human agency and the ways in which human intention might contribute to culture change. I have considered how utopianism and cultural critique, as manifested in contemporary sustainability-oriented intentional communities might contribute to solutions to the sustainability challenge and how bringing these sorts of communities into social science research might help us to overcome some epistemological and methodological challenges that arise when social scientists wish to make similar contributions. I introduced Celo Community and Earthaven Ecovillage as examples of contemporary sustainability-oriented intentional communities and detailed how my interpretations of Celo Community diverge from those contained in a previous ethnographic account of the community. I suggested that I see Celo Community not as a failed utopia but as an example of cultural critique in action and as a node in an ongoing process of developmental utopianism.

I have also considered some of the methodological and theoretical challenges of using social science as an arm of critique. In response, I have operationalized cultural critique and

suggested that one can use sound ethnographic methods to look for it in a variety of social settings and specifically in intentional communities. This responds to Marcus and Fischer's call for an ethnography of cultural critique whereby the critiques are discovered in the ethnographic examination of cultural contexts rather than promulgated by the social scientist. In this chapter, I examine the narratives that people invoked to explain their motivations for joining the communities in order to identify cultural critique.

I return now to my original research question and the data I collected in these two communities in an attempt to answer my question. *Why do people join intentional communities?* What does it mean to people to join and live in an intentional community? *Are intentional communities enactments of cultural critique?* Having spent over a year living in intentional communities, talking with intentional community members and examining intentional community life, what are the answers to these questions? Were they the appropriate questions to ask? Having examined two intentional communities in depth with these questions in mind, what broader conclusions can I reach?

Is Cultural Critique a Main Motivating Factor?

In reviewing the literature on intentional communities, I showed that the vast majority of theorists of intentional community have conjoined the concepts of intentional community and utopia. Intentional community theorists suggest that intentional communities are inherently utopian endeavors, that they are defined by attempts to confront the tension between the real and the ideal. Brown's conceptualization of intentional communities was similar, but in her treatment, cultural critique took the place of utopianism as the defining characteristic of intentional communities. She assumed that intentional communities are manifestations of the cultural critiques of their members and leaders. One of my goals was to test this assumption. I

did this by operationalizing cultural critique and by employing ethnographic methods to determine what motivated current community members to become members of intentional communities. In participating in and observing intentional communities and in interviewing their members, I explicitly looked for well-articulated critiques of predominant cultural values, ideologies and institutions as people moved through their life histories to explain their reasons for joining the communities. I also looked for associated references to the alternative values or instiutions they found or created in the intentional communities as potential solutions to the objects of their critiques. As a result of my analysis, I found cultural critique, as a main motivating factor in people's decisions to join intentional communities, to be more predominantly expressed among the members of Earthaven Ecovillage than among the members of Celo Community.

My research reveals that people join intentional communities for a variety of reasons. They are motivated by factors that are unique to each individual as those individuals are shaped by their backgrounds and their personal identities. In turn, individual backgrounds and personal identities interact with factors that are unique to each community and the cultural and historical contexts under which it was formed and entered into. Some people join intentional communities because of experiences with and attachment to a place and the people that live there. Others join because they are seeking something in their personal life that they haven't found elsewhere and that they believe they will find in the intentional community context. Still others join because they do believe that living in an intentional community will enable them to address pre-existing cultural critiques that they have constructed in their minds, because they believe that they can create and participate in alternatives to the ideologies, values and institutionalized activities that are the subjects of their critiques. In the following, I will discuss and compare the various

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rationales, including cultural critiques, that people invoked to explain their decisions to join Celo Community and Earthaven Ecovillage. Where cultural critiques were invoked, I will also show how these critiques were topics of broader discussion and action within each community

Motivations in Celo Community:

Cultural Critique, Place Attachment and Personal, Social and Economic Reasons

In Celo Community, cultural critique was one of only a number of reasons that people stated for joining the community. Based on my initial experience and knowledge of Celo, I expected cultural critique to be much more commonly invoked when people explained their decisions for joining the community. However, of the 51 participants from Celo Community whose interviews I analyzed, less than half of them expressed an explicit cultural critique as a main motivating factor. Among this group, there were several kinds of critiques. One was a critique of corporate consumer driven lifestyle as unsustainable and unsatisfying. As mentioned previously, this sort of critique, evidenced during the discussion of advertising and overconsumption in America during my first visit to Celo, was a theme that initiated my interest in the community. Indeed, Celo is seen by some of its members as a setting in which they can live more sustainable and cooperative alternatives to a predominantly consumerist and wasteful society. Another kind of critique focused on the negative social and ecological consequences of private land ownership. This critique has been acted on at a fundamental level through the development of Celo's institutions for collective land ownership and stewardship through cooperative community governance. "The war system" was a third object of cultural critique that community members referred to in explaining their decisions to join Celo. These people indicated that Celo provided them with an opportunity to live out their lifestyle of resistance to a national political system based on war and imperialism.

Examples of the first kind of cultural critique can be seen in the following quotations where a critique of suburban, commercial, corporate-driven life as unsustainable, unhealthy and unrewarding is combined with a desire to live and work with like-minded people in a simple, rural setting. The first quotation is from Greg who joined Celo community in the 1980s. Greg grew up in the suburbs of Cleveland, Ohio. During his college years at MIT, Greg became politicized, in his words, he became a "hippie", joined "the counterculture", and began "looking for community."

> I: So what was it about living in community - can you go into that a little bit more? You talked about it coming from your political ideals ...
> G: Well, try to stay out of the suburban life, you know, the commercial realm of American society, sharing with people you live with, working with people you live with, just working and accomplishing things with likeminded people, I guess, in a rural, you know, hands-in-the-dirt kind of life.
> I: Was there a reason for trying to break away from the suburban, consumer culture, or was it just that it didn't seem to fit for you?
> G: It didn't seem sustainable, even then, or healthy, or rewarding. I was an architecture student at MIT and at the time, I could only see being an architecture graduate from MIT, I'd be designing corporate buildings and stuff like that and I didn't want to get into that.
> I: So, this idea of community living and living a little bit more sustainably, that seemed possible here in Celo and that's kind of what made you seek out an intentional community?
> G: Yeah. Trying to build the alternative culture. [interview in Celo Community 11-4-04]

In Greg's search for community and his attempts "to build the alternative culture," he and his wife, who is also a community member, tried several different communal living situations in Ohio and Massachussetts. However, they found that the intentional communities they were involved in were in their nascent stages and, as such, they were disorganized and "left with a lot of unanswered questions." When they visited Community Service, Inc. in Yellow Springs, Ohio, an organization started by Arthur Morgan, they found out about Celo Community. Upon visiting

Celo, they found an established community that was organized and characterized by a balance between individualism and communalism that they sought.

The second quotation is from Margie, a community member whom I introduced earlier. In contrast to Greg, Margie did not seek out Celo Community as a direct result of any search for an alternative culture. Margie and her husband came to work at the Arthur Morgan School and subsequently found that the community matched their values and enabled them to live a lifestyle that they sought and that was in contrast to life in society "out there."

> M: I think one of the biggest reasons, really, that we decided to join, is that when people share things, they don't have to be slaves to a job. Most of the people out there have a house that they could sell and probably profit from it, but they give their lives to that house and that car and that's something I've never been willing to do and neither has [my husband]. I've said that people in this area [referring to western North Carolina], I think, still know their neighbors and are friends with them and do help and take care of one another when they're in trouble, but there's still that economic servitude, that people think they have to have so many things. That I guess is something that really attracted us to this place, is the simple living. We never wanted a lot of stuff and didn't want to become slaves to buying stuff and you could see here right away that that's the way people lived here. [interview in Celo Community 2-25-05]

When Margie and her husband joined the community in the mid 1990s, they moved into one of the more primitive houses available on community land, a house that was built of cordwood, was not connected to the electric grid and was located in an isolated corner of the community. Margie and her husband have since started building their own home in the community. However even in this, they have maintained their commitment to avoid "economic servitude." They are building their house using their own labor and that of fellow community members and are doing so on a budget of only $45,000 including a $35,000 construction loan from the community.

The final quotation that I use to illustrate the first strand of cultural critique in Celo Community comes from my interview with a couple who live a closer approximation of the mainstream lifestyle than do most of Celo's members. Their house is large and spacious relative

to most of Celo's homes and they maintain another home in Green Bay, Wisconsin where they go every summer. However, this couple still based their decision to join Celo in the 1980s on a critique of "competitive, consumerist, and commercial" mainstream society, as evidenced in the following quote from Diane.

> D: I think for me it was being part of a society that was competitive, consumerist and commercial, but not cooperative. We're really interested in cooperation. So I think it was the three Cs didn't really fit for me. Commercialism – when you're based around commercialism and competitiveness, it didn't tend to make for real intimacy or cooperation and those ideas seemed important to me and still are. Intimacy and cooperation are more prominent in this community. [interview in Celo Community 5-17-01]

In the same interview, Diane's partner Rick described how he was involved in a cooperative work project soon upon their arrival in the community, a project that gave him great satisfaction.

> I had always romanticized about ... homesteading, but never really had someone to do that with. And this seemed like a good alternative. Shortly after we moved here, I was able to help another community member build his home and basically I did it just through volunteer time. I wasn't paid at all for doing it, but I learned a lot in the process. It just felt so wonderful to be part of the building of a home, actually making different pieces of the structure that would be going together. It was a post and beam type of construction. And then to participate in the big house raising with other people, it was just an incredible experience. I got that part of my dream to come true I guess. [interview in Celo Community 5-17-01]

Rick and Diane's commitment to cooperation is still evident. They consistently participate in Celo Community workday projects, regular events where Celo's members come together to volunteer their time and labor to maintaining and improving community property or individual homesites.

Another kind of cultural critique in Celo Community focused on private ownership of land, an ideology and social institution which was seen as socially, culturally and environmentally destructive. The first quotation that I use to illustrate this theme is taken from my interview with the community member that started the aforementioned activist organization

Rural Southern Voice for Peace. Harry was an army brat that moved a lot as a young person, spending much of his formative years in Georgia and Germany where he became politically aware and active. One thing his activism over the years has made him aware of is the structural inequalities between rich and poor, especially as they are manifested in free-market, private land ownership.

> H: We didn't want to own our land. We wanted the community to own it. If I look specifically as to why I joined the community, the two main reasons would be for community and because I believed that land ownership is not the way to go. I think an alternative to land ownership is one of the most important developments that needs to happen in our world.
> I: Why?
> H: Because ultimately with land ownership, it creates a division between the rich and the poor and there will be a world landless class developing more and more all over the world. I've seen how that works in other countries. I did a lot work in Central America, where it's devastating, where it created a violent, distorted culture, an impoverished culture. That hasn't happened in this country yet because there's so much land and so much wealth, but it'll come. I mean, it's already getting that way right now. The ability of the poor to buy a piece of land is extremely limited. And then the other reason is, this community protects the land. I believe in cooperative ownership and stewardship of the land. So stewardship of the land is a vital issue, it's a really key environmental change issue now, is that we don't own the land. I think one of the basic reasons for environmental problems is this whole psychology of owning the land, which means, if you own it, you can do whatever you want with it. You can trash it, you can cut down every tree on it, you can poison it. It's yours. Whereas here, that is not acknowledged at all. You can't do whatever you want with it. Talk about a clear way to positive environmental change, to move away from ownership and move towards stewardship is a key element. So those would be my main reasons. [interview in Celo Community 10-19-04]

Harry and his wife Mickie joined Celo Community in the 1980s, after spending some time homesteading in the mountains of rural West Virginia and working as activists for "social change" in various places around the country. In West Virginia they befriended

> local people who taught us a lot about living simply. They were just people who I immediately felt a kinship with. During the sixties and early seventies, there was this whole back to the land movement thing that people were experimenting with and these were people who had done it all their lives and for generations. It was their culture. It was just rich to be with people who lived real simply and didn't

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even think of it as living simply, just thought of it as living. [interview in Celo Community 10-19-04]

Harry and Mickie value Celo Community not only for its alternative model of land tenure and its values of land stewardship, their appreciation for which is expressed above, but because the community provides them a supportive context in which they can live simply and close to the land while continuing to engage in activism for social change.

Other community members share Harry and Mickie's critique of private land ownership. Bill is a retired humanities professor who joined Celo Community with his wife, a medical doctor, in 1980 after their attempts to start "a commune" in Alabama fell through. Bill points to his critique of the destructive effects of private land ownership and "capitalism" on culture and agriculture as part of his reason for joining the community.

> B: [One thing that attracted me to the community was] that whole idea of careful development of land including the option not to develop. The founding fathers' ideas – Arthur Morgan and Henry Regnery – of not speculating, not trying to make money off land, there's a lot to be learned from that. For instance in an agricultural economy, people keep coming in and buying land at higher and higher values and then the taxes get so high that farmers are driven off the land. It's happening all over the country and it's happening in this valley. Farmers can no longer farm. That's an insidious aspect of the capitalistic [system], capitalism tied with land. And that's something that our country is still to come to grips with. We're losing so much farmland, farm societies, and farm economy. When I say societies, I'm talking about culture, cultural values that go along with small farming. So Celo is a good counter example to that too. [interview in Celo Community 5-14-01]

Celo's institutions for collective land ownership, stewardship and governance are seen by the people who expressed critiques of private land ownership and associated destructive development as important alternatives to predominant models as they are manifested in the capitalist political economy. Joining Celo enabled them not only to avoid participating in dominant patterns that they saw as unjust and unsustainable; Celo also enabled them to engage in alternatives to dominant patterns of land ownership and development. In Celo Community, they

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are engaged in a form of cross-cultural juxtaposition by creating and participating in alternative ideologies and institutions that exist in the midst of and directly adjacent to the ideologies and institutions that are the objects of critique.

A final form of cultural critique that I will touch on here with regard to Celo Community focuses on resistance against a system that supports war and imperialism. For those who invoke this critique, Celo enables its members to live very simple lifestyles in order to avoid paying taxes that will be used to support the brutality of war and imperialism. In this sense, the community supports a lifestyle of resistance. This critique of the "war system" has deep historical roots within the community, stretching back to the 1940s when Quaker conscientious objectors arrived to join the community after their release from the Civilian Public Service internment camps. Indeed the first quotation that I use to illustrate this critique comes from an interview with the longest standing members of the community, people who came a short time after the man was released from a CPS camp.

> D: In 1951 we came up and visited for a weekend and it was a whole different thing from what we had been used to. We grew up in suburbia in a northern city and here were people living really simply. It was not too long after the War and several of these people had been conscious objectors and had studied living in the community as an alternative to the war system. … So for instance, there was a man who had been a C.O. [conscientious objector] and he didn't want to pay any taxes that supported the war system so he was trying to keep his whole income below … whatever, it seems like it was less than $1000, but anyway so he tried to grow all his own food, can all his own food, he had a goat that he milked and he didn't have a car and he just tried to live very simply. And that was just a whole new idea to us. We wanted to take a stand against or not participate in the war system. [interview in Celo Community 4-17-01]

Benson and Della have made their home in Celo for over 55 years now, but their values of peace and justice, grounded in their Quaker faith, have changed little and they continue to adhere closely to them. Along with their son and his wife who are also members of the community, they are regular participants in Celo Friends Meeting where they are recognized as elders for their

longstanding service and commitment. Benson and Della are also appreciated for their wisdom and historical knowledge regarding Celo Community as a whole, but now in their late 80s they feel that they can pass the torch on to a new generation of community members. Although they have witnessed many changes in the community including the fact that all other current community members did not join until at least fifteen years after they came to the community, they are proud of what the community has accomplished and still believe that it is on the right path.

Part of the reason for Benson and Della's ongoing belief in the direction of Celo Community is that it continues to attract people such as themselves, people who seek in the community a context in which to live a lifestyle of resistance grounded in their spiritual faith. One such person is Julie, whom I introduced earlier. Julie is a former Catholic nun whose full time social justice and peace activism grows from her faith even though she decided to leave the church because she recognized that her position in the clergy placed limits on the extent of her activism. Julie described to me her motivations for joining the community in the 1980s.

> J: I'm a war tax resistor, so I try to keep my income below poverty level and living here allows me to do that because the cost of living isn't so great. You know, I don't have to pay huge amounts of rent and I can live my tax resistance here. … Others resist out of different reasons. I've been involved in civil disobedience against the arms race, against intervention in Central America and labor issues and so forth and I do strongly believe in resistance as a lifestyle. So, if you're a war tax resistor, you have to change your lifestyle. You have to live it. I mean that's how I feel. Not everybody lives it in the same way. Conscientious objectors were kind of the starting members of the community, so it had that kind of appeal to me. [interview in Celo Community 5-17-01]

Although most of Celo's members don't correlate their decisions to join the community with such explicit cultural critiques as those expressed in the last two quotations, the ability to be supported in living a lifestyle of resistance is an ongoing thread amongst Celo's members. The

expressed motivations of Celo's newest trial member combine each of the three themes of cultural critique discussed above.

> J: I want to join Celo Community because I never agreed with the principal of individual land ownership. I always had a problem with that, even though I have been a private landowner by owning my own house in the past, owning the farm with my mom in the past, and we had to pay taxes to the tax man on that land, just like Celo as a community has to pay taxes to the tax people for this land. It's definitely a difficult question. It's like, how did it become that all of a sudden the United States of America, when it was first invaded by Europeans, that the European notion of land ownership pervaded the existing ways of life of the indigenous cultures who were already living here? It's is just mind-boggling to think about. That alone is reason enough to be nonviolent and to work forcefully for nonviolence and against violence. Being a member of Celo Community will provide me a solid foundation from which to engage in my activism against a very unjust and unsustainable system. [interview in Celo Community 9-13-04]

Jason's quotation nicely sums up some of the explicit critiques invoked by Celo's members to explain their decisions for joining the community. Jason believes that going back to his family roots in organic agriculture, especially on land owned by a community rather than held as individual private property is one of the best ways that he can respond to his critique. While many of Celo's members appreciate the opportunity to engage in and benefit from local agriculture, not all of them explain this by invoking explicit cultural critiques.

The previous quotations represent some of the most explicit examples where cultural critique was invoked as a main motivation for joining the community. However, over half of the community members I interviewed did not express explicit cultural critiques in describing their attraction to and decisions to join the community. These people's reasons for joining the community amounted to what I am calling implicit critiques. That is, in their narrative descriptions of their reasons for joining the community they did not explicitly express critical evaluations or deconstructions of dominant ideologies of institutions. However, they resonated

with the alternatives provided by Celo Community's institutions and shared values enough to go through the process of becoming members of the community.

Thus, people expressed ideological, personal, social and economic reasons for joining the community. They pointed to particular values that joining the community would allow them to live by without expressing an explicitly critical orientation to the idea that life outside of the community might have been less supportive of their values. While explicit critiques may be absent in these narratives, the rationales that they express are still based on a comparison between the context provided by the community and their background and experiences in the mainstream society. A first example is from my interview with Pam and Charles. Pam and Charles had a life-changing experience during their years in the Peace Corps in Lesotho where they were inspired by a culture that was "rich in values" but "simple" in a material sense.

> I: Anyway, so just to recap, you had reevaluated your lifestyle and decided that you wanted to live a little bit differently, a little more simply.
> P: Closer to our values.
> I: Closer to your values? What did you value?
> P: I think at that time, having been in the Peace Corps, we really valued simple living and when we returned to Michigan after the Peace Corps, somehow our lives were getting much closer to what we thought of as the mainstream, so we were getting away from those things and then we went back to that original idea that we had in the Peace Corps of just having a simpler lifestyle, without so many trappings.
> C: Not so focused on work, on career and making money, more focused on spending time together, raising our kids together. When we came down here, [my wife] got a job teaching and I stayed home. I was a house husband the first couple of years here.
> P: You were a homesteader.
> C: A homesteader, right. And that was the time when we started doing things we were dreaming about doing. … Certainly, life isn't always simple and we have lots of the trappings of what we feel is very middle class. And yet, we're in the middle of this community, which is different than most mainstream experience and I'd say that everybody here in the community, including us, all simplify where we think it's important to simplify … [interview in Celo Community 11-15-04]

While Pam and Charles came away from their Peace Corps experience in Lesotho with a commitment to living a simpler lifestyle, they did not have it in their minds to do so in an intentional community context. On a return trip to Lesotho, they met a group of Quakers who introduced them to the idea of intentional communities. When they came back to the U.S. after their second sojourn in Lesotho, Pam and Charles went on a tour of intentional communities that included Celo Community, where they eventually decided to come and apply for membership in 1979.

In addition to simple living, those who expressed ideological motivations also referred to living in an environmentally responsible manner and living cooperatively. In most cases when these types of motivations were expressed, they were related to a particular experience or revelation, often involving an immersion in another culture or community, similar to Pam and Charles' learning experience in Lesotho. When ideological factors such as these were expressed as motivating factors they were often stated in conjunction with the perception that living in Celo Community "enabled them to live with like-minded people." Even among the groups that espoused very explicit cultural critiques, critical stances were often only one of several motivating factors with which they were intertwined. It became clear that joining Celo Community was a very personal decision, one that might involve some combination of cultural critique, ideological factors, personal motivations, or economic reasons, although each of these types of motivations also stood alone.

Personal motivations, motivations that did not include explicit cultural critiques or ideological factors, were frequently mentioned when I asked people why they joined Celo Community. Within the category of personal motivations, I have identified three different types of reasons for joining the community. The first type of reason was an attraction, often described

as unexplainable, powerful or ethereal, to the landscape and environment within which Celo Community is situated. The second type of reason was a social motivation. Social motivations included either an existing circle of friends and acquaintances that one had developed in the community or a desire to live in a supportive and cooperative community where people interacted regularly. A final type of personal motivation was economic in nature. In these cases people joined the community either because their cost of living would be much lower (thus, in their perception making their quality of life higher) or they came to work in the area, often at the Arthur Morgan School or Camp Celo. Again, personal motivations of different sorts were often expressed in conjunction with each other or in conjunction with ideological factors or epistemological critique. A few short examples of personal motivations are provided below.

James grew up in Miami and went to junior high at the Arthur Morgan School and then returned to work at Camp Celo during the summers. He developed a sense of roots in Celo, relationships with people and the place that he did not feel in Miami where people were "living in gated neighborhoods" and were difficult to get to know. Although much of his childhood was spent in Miami, James feels like he "grew up here."

> I: Can you talk a little bit about what brought you here, what attracted you to the community, what made you decide to join the community?
> J: I came here as a kid to go to the camp and then to go to the Arthur Morgan School as a student. And then I came back here to work at the school and camp. I wasn't drawn to the community per se, more just the area and the camp and school. And then I stayed and joined the community not so much for the community itself as just because I wanted to stay around here. It was almost just a thing of convenience to join the community. I already had friends here and I just loved the valley very much and was attached to the land and the valley and the mountains. The community as an institution – I didn't really care that much about it one way or the other. Although since I joined I'm more and more into it. [interview in Celo Community 4-25-01]

This quotation, through its emphasis on the fact that the community, "as an institution", was not something that was attractive and through its focus on place attachment, indicates that for this

particular individual cultural critique did not serve as a motivating factor. James was not attracted to the community for the alternative values that it represented, but rather for the personal relationships with people and place that he developed in Celo. Although James claims that he was not attracted to the community "as an institution," he has clearly found a role within the community's institutions. During the time of my research in 2004, James was the chairperson of Celo's general meeting, serving the critical function of guiding the community meetings through the agenda and shepherding community members towards consensus.

Two final quotations from Celo Community illustrate personal reasons of two different sorts for joining the community – social and economic. The first encapsulates a desire for the social connections and support that are available in Celo Community, especially with regards to raising children and the personal crises that may arise in one's life. Maria grew up in Japan, but went to college in western North Carolina where she met her husband Bob. Bob's sister was already a member of Celo and they came to visit her, eventually staying in the area to work at Camp Celo and the Arthur Morgan School. As they interacted with people in the community, they felt a sense of warmth and welcome that made them feel at home. For Maria, this was a new experience and she was drawn to it. (Her husband Bob had grown up in a Christian intentional community in Georgia and was more familiar with the experience of community.)

> I: Can you discuss what actually motivated you to make that decision to join the community? Can you talk about that a little bit more?
> M: Yes. Having [a child] in the community what happens here, which is all so new and so, my mind was blown away with it, was when someone has a baby here, there's usually somebody else who would organize a meal for the couple or the mom, single mom, or whatever. And, for the first two weeks, there would be meals coming to you, or maybe you had a death, or if someone is sick. For people to support [you] it feels good and at the same time [it feels good] to be able to do that [for others]. … You just feel that tremendous love from the community. [interview in Celo Community 9-10-04]

In many of my interviews people mentioned that they were attracted to Celo Community because it is such a wonderful place to raise children, because they feel that there is an extended family of people that will watch over their children. They feel it is a safe and nurturing environment in which to raise a family, and like Maria, this motivated them to set down roots here and join the community. Other than Celo Friends Meeting, Bob and Maria aren't very active in Celo Community's formal institutions, but they have developed a strong network of social connections with other families that have children in their children's age groups.

As indicated before, Celo Community enables and encourages a simple, frugal lifestyle that is appealing to many people. Thus some Celo members are motivated by, among other things, personal economic reasons. Dahlia grew up in urban areas of the Midwest and Northeast. Although she came from a relatively "normal" family, she characterizes herself as somewhat of "an experimenter." After college, she participated in an exchange program called the Experiment in International Living during which she lived in Switzerland for several months with a large group of students. She discovered that, although communication was difficult, she liked the experience of community that she had being in close quarters with this group of people for so long. After she returned to the U.S., she spent some time doing normal jobs in urban areas, but did not find the "rat race" to her liking. After getting married, her husband responded to an advertisement for a job at the Arthur Morgan School that was posted in *Mother Earth News*. The ad also indicated that the Arthur Morgan School was located in an intentional community and Dahlia thought she might have found the solution to her desire to escape "the mainstream." It turned out she was right.

> D: I think another reason [I joined] was perhaps the realization that in order to have outside the community what I have inside the community would take a great deal of money. It would require me to have probably a full-time job somewhere,

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spending less time enjoying where I'm living, benefiting from the setting in which I'm living and so again, that was a way to solve that problem.

I: So what I'm hearing is that you saw the community as sort of allowing you to live a different lifestyle than you might have otherwise in the mainstream, in terms of a land ethic and in terms of being able then to enjoy being on the land without having to be part of the rat race to do it?

D: Yeah, I think that sums it up quite well. … We're not looking at ourselves in the same way that people living in the cities are looking at themselves, where they have to have the same thing that everybody else has got. They have to live in a big house because all their neighbors or their friends live in big houses or their cousins in some other city live in a big house. Or they have to go make mucho money because that's the only way they can live that way and afford to live that way. My time is more valuable to me than a lot of money in the bank. … So [living here I] benefit from the social connections in the community and the natural setting, which is pretty important to me. [interview in Celo Community 9-23-04]

I believe that this quotation, while used specifically to illustrate personal economic motivations, sums up quite well a number of different factors that motivated people to join Celo Community. It indicates that the community provided access to things of value to the person – a beautiful "natural setting" and "social connections" while at the same time enabling them to escape the rat race of American life. In this sense, even though the expressed motivations are very self-referential, they also contain an implicit critique of the American culture of consumption. Less than half of the people that I interviewed in Celo expressed explicit cultural critiques and for some it was clear that cultural critique was not a motivating factor at all. However, for many who expressed neither, it was clear that Celo was experienced as a special place, a place wherein existed certain qualities of life that were not available in the "mainstream" culture.

Celo's members have come to the community from diverse backgrounds and experiences. They chose to join the community for a variety of reasons, some of them stumbling upon it in the course of their life, perhaps through attending or working at Camp Celo or the Arthur Morgan School. Others found Celo more directly as they sought out alternative lifestyles that would enable them to live according to their values. Some found Celo Community as they searched

more specifically for intentional communities where they could live out responses to their critiques of the dominant culture. A minority of Celo's members were compelled by explicit critiques and utopian visions with deep roots in Celo Community's history, stretching back to the early days when the Quakers sought a lifestyle of resistance and helped to develop the community's land tenure and governance institutions. Thus, while Celo's early members might have shared common reasons for joining the community, reasons that were grounded in cultural critiques of the predominant society and utopian visions of a better world, the motivations of Celo's current members are more difficult to characterize in a general way. As we turn to an examination of Earthaven Ecovillage, a young community where the idealism of utopian striving is still at a high level, we will see that the members of this community have much more in common in terms of their motivations for joining the community and the ways in which these motivations grow from cultural critiques and utopian visions.

Motivations in Earthaven Ecovillage: Cultural Critique and EcoSpiritual Awakening

In Earthaven Ecovillage, cultural critique was a much more explicit and predominant motivating factor in people's decisions to join the community than it was in Celo. Of the 21 participants from Earthaven Ecovillage whose interviews I analyzed, I identified cultural critique as a main motivating factor in every interview. This is not to say that cultural critique was the only motivating factor. Another main factor that I identified is what I am glossing as an inwardly directed eco-spiritual awakening. However, eco-spiritual awakening, although it may be expressed in a separate context, cannot typically be understood without reference to a larger cultural critique.

The cultural critiques professed by Earthaven members were of several different types, but when looked at collectively, they combine to create an overarching concern with living in

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such a way as to create greater social justice and ecological sustainability in the wider world. This is a very general cultural critique that backgrounds the global, capitalist political economy as a causal factor in the deterioration of social and ecological systems. Each of these passages reference not only a critique, but a very personal sense of guilt or dissatisfaction with their participation in the predominant mainstream cultural ideology and the institutionalized behavior that results. Earthaven's members have clearly extended their cultural critiques to themselves and they see their involvement in Earthaven as a way of extricating themselves from the ideologies and institutions of which they are so critical.

The first quotation that I include below is taken from my interview with Darrell. Darrell had a "typical middle class upbringing" in Connecticut and identifies his formative experiences as the time he spent playing in the forest with his friends. In college he wanted to study forestry, but his parents didn't believe that he would make enough money doing that and, under their influence, he decided to study engineering instead. He managed to translate his growing interest in the environment into a focus on environmental engineering and alternative energy, but after college he found himself doing engineering work for the defense industry. It was at this point in his life that Darrell had a "life changing experience." In late 1995 and early 1996 Darrell participated in two permaculture courses taught by Earthaven members, the first at The Farm in Tennessee and the second at Earthaven. Immediately afterward, Darrell decided to join Earthaven. He talked to me about his motivations.

> I: Can you talk more directly about your motivations for joining Earthaven building on what you've just said?
> D: Well a lot of things that we as modern western people do just seem very absurd to me. So as I grew into adulthood and learned about a lot of the environmental disasters or whatever you want to call it, I was not wanting to contribute to or participate in that. Also growing up in Connecticut, people tend to be very pretentious, very keep up with the Joneses, very materialistic and that was just not appealing to me at all throughout my whole life. I'm a very frugal person with

money and purchases. So that whole lifestyle of the white picket fence and the shiny new car was just never appealing. I felt very strongly that I was put on this earth for a very specific reason and that wasn't it. Just going out and making a bunch of money. Thoreau had a big influence on me. He said something like why work like a dog all your life so you can pant for a moment or two before you die.
I: So that lifestyle wasn't personally appealing to you and you saw the problems it caused in general?
D: It seems very short sighted. Years ago, companies and industries built up along rivers and they needed to get rid of their waste or whatever and they just dumped it in the river. It was a very short sighted, cheap economical solution and in my opinion just very narrow-minded and selfish. Disrespectful. [interview in Earthaven Ecovillage 9-5-05]

For Darrell, the idea of participating in the creation of an intentional community based on permaculture principles resonated with him; it seemed like an appropriate way to live according to his ideals and avoid participating in the "short-sighted," "narrow-minded" and "selfish" things that "modern western people do." Darrell feels like Earthaven is "a seed and we're having an influence. I get satisfaction out of being here because I feel like I'm in some way contributing to a change in how humans live on this planet – how we interact with each other, how we interact with the environment" [interview in Earthaven Ecovillage 9-5-05]

Stephanie shared with me a critique that was in many ways similar to, if more forceful than the one that Darrell invoked. If one were to base their judgments strictly on physical appearances, one would not expect this from Stephanie; standing next to Darrell, Stephanie appears to be a mainstream, middle class, middle-aged American. Darrell looks like someone who would stereotypically belong on a commune; he is young, he has long hair worn in dreadlocks and his clothes are often tie-dyed and somewhat ratty. Stephanie on the other hand, looks very straight, displaying no outward expressions of the counterculture; her clothes are normal and her demeanor is serious. Yet between Stepahie and Darrell, Stephanie advocated a much more forceful and more personally felt cultural critique.

Stephanie had an "all-American, middle class" upbringing in Massachussetts. She went to college in the northeastern United States where she met her soon to be husband who was studying to be an engineer. They got married soon after college and followed her husband's employment opportunities to upstate New York and eventually to Arkansas where he became highly positioned in a large engineering firm. In many ways, Stephanie and her husband were living a mainstream, middle class lifestyle, but Stephanie and to a lesser extent her husband had begun to develop a deep concern about environmental issues and cultural change as early as the 1970s. They found little support for their interests in energy efficient housing, organic gardening or new age and eastern spirituality in the small town that they lived in in Arkansas, so as her husband's retirement approached, they began looking for a community of people that shared their interests and concerns. Stephanie had read about intentional communities like Findhorn in Scotland in the past and it seemed like the kind of place where they could make a home. After visiting 16 or 18 communities, mostly in the eastern United States, they ultimately decided to apply for membership in Earthaven in 1998.

> I: Can you draw on the life story that you just told me to describe your motivations for joining Earthaven?
> S: It was a whole dilemma for me of what can I do? How can I do something about this? I think I got so discouraged at one point I decided the best thing I could do to save the world was kill myself because – not that I was seriously considering killing myself – but it was like well I'm using so many of the resources. I'm involved in the system. I can't get out of it. No matter what I do, I'm damaging the Earth so I might as well just kill myself and that would be the best thing I could do. I wasn't really serious about doing that, but that was the conclusion that I came to that I wasn't going to be able to change what the government was doing no matter what I did. It was so discouraging for me. And of course, [my husband] was into this too at the time and I think we came to the conclusion, both of us, that the best thing we could do short of killing ourselves was to live the life that we thought people ought to be living and do it in a such a way that other people could come and see what we were doing. So that was part of the motivation for doing this and for picking a place like Earthaven where people come to see it. That was a big part of it. [interview in Earthaven Ecovillage 6-24-05]

Stephanie and her husband have been an integral part of Earthaven for the last ten years and she feels like they have accomplished their goals of creating a more sustainable way of living that can be demonstrated to other people while also developing intimate personal relationships with like-minded people. Stephanie and her husband have weekly potlucks at their house for community members and host weekly tours of their house for visitors to the community. On the tours, visitors to Earthaven are exposed to how people can live in a comfortable, normal looking home that features many sustainable systems such as passive solar, a living roof, recycled and locally harvested construction materials, photovoltaic solar electrical systems, constructed wetlands for greywater recycling and roofwater catchment. Stephanie emphasizes that Earthaven is a combination of the physical and the social aspects of sustainability. "[Earthaven is] an experiment in creating a new way of living which involves living in harmony with the Earth, but also living in harmony with each other. So it's not just the physical aspects of ecology, but the cultural, social, emotional and interpersonal aspects of living in harmony" (interview in Earthaven Ecovillage 6-25-05).

Manuel was born and raised in Kansas City, Missouri, the son of first generation immigrants to the U.S. from Eastern Europe. Despite his parents' immigrant background and some of the stigma that he experienced as a result of his cultural background, Manual describes having an "average, middle class American upbringing." However Manuel says that he soon became "discontent with my life. ... I was pissed off at the government and didn't like the wealthy family that I came from." He exlains that, "I did not know what to do with my life. I was feeling fear and anger and helplessness." His discontent translated into anger and illegal behavior; he got into trouble with the law and was kicked out of college. He joined the Army and after his four years of service he got married and had a family.

I said I've got to make money. I've got to support a family. The switch went off and I just started doing what ever I could to make the most amount of money and have what I thought was a stable lifestyle. And for me that was a two-story house and a new car and private school for the kids and I got into sales. Shortly thereafter I realized that my life was not where I wanted it and I was miserable. I got divorced and took a couple of years of really looking at my life and how do I really want to live my life. During that time I spent a lot of time on my health and started looking at how healthy I can be. I asked, what are some of the steps I can take in my life to maximize my health and the health of my family and the health of the planet. I saw how the economics on the broader scale are related to my own health and my family's health. It was how do I stay healthy and how do I do it in a way where I am not damaging our countryside too. I saw that continuing to participate in the mainstream society would not allow me to do that. I found out about organic farming and its industrialization. Maybe they're not spraying pesticides on the crops but organic farms are big commercial farms. Is that really that sustainable? What has that done to the small farmer? What has that done to the local farmer? I've been hearing statistics about thousands of small farmers going out of business over the last decades. Why is that? [interview in Earthaven Ecovillage 7-27-05]

In examining his life, Manuel increasingly saw the connection between the industrial political economy and the deteriorating health not only of himself and his family, but of communities and the environment. His search for a more healthy and sustainable way of living eventually led him to intentional communities and after visiting a number of communities around the U.S., he decided to apply for membership at Earthaven. When asked about why being part of Earthaven is important to him, Manuel explains that he thought a lot about working with indigenous cultures in some other part of the world to help protect them from "how the industrial lifestyle is creeping into their existence." But he explains, "I think I have the most chance of affecting the world by staying here in the United States in a community. I really feel like having been born here and having the privilege of being an American, I probably have the most chance of creating change by being here at Earthaven" (interview in Earthaven Ecovillage 7-27-05).

Each of the previous quotations reflect concerns with social and ecological deterioration caused by the modern, industrial political economy and the ideologies that justify it and shape

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the behavior of "mainstream" Americans. They also reflect a personal compulsion to move away from those things, a compulsion that was addressed in these cases by joining an ecovillage. The following quotations encapsulate a more comprehensive critique that more explicitly approaches the social justice and ecological sustainability concerns inherent in the utopian nature of the sustainability challenge.

The first quotation that I use to illustrate this theme comes from my interview with Rob. Rob was born in a small town in rural Texas in 1939. It was just after the Great Depression and his family had gone back to a farming lifestyle. He describes an early family life of self-sufficiency during which he learned many basic skills including caring for animals and recycling basic materials. Rob eventually went on to college and then joined the Air Force. After five years of military service, he formed a real estate and development firm back in Texas. However, he soon became dissatisfied with the world of business and went to Goddard College to get a Master's degree in social ecology. Rob was slowly developing a critique of the industrial political economy and he went into environmental education and ecotourism work and eventually to Nepal as a Peace Corps volunteer. His experience in rural Nepal only reinforced his feeling "that something is wrong in the way we are conducting our society" in the United States. Rob explained to me that coming to Earthaven, where his second wife had already made connections, was a way to live in a more economically sustainable and socially just manner.

> R.: What is important is that – and this goes far beyond the borders of Earthaven – if we can let people know how we can live and not use natural resources from other countries, that we will reduce the reasons that people have unrest throughout the world. So this is not only about us, this is about the whole world. Justice is really I think a key part. To be able to get justice, from my viewpoint, we have to not take away from other people what their natural resources are because if we do they get mad and sometimes they get desperate because they can't eat. This is why I am such a believer and I think the basic mission is to have people live with resources that come from here and not import them from long distances. … We can change our lifestyles so that we do not need to eat mangoes every day or palm

oil or bananas or things that a lot of times take away the arable lands that people need to feed themselves. [interview in Earthaven Ecovillage 4-26-05]

Rob has become somewhat dissatisfied with Earthaven and is considering moving away from the community. He explained to me that many within the community are not living according to their professed values; he believes that Earthaven's members are still too reliant on their cars an on other imported products that they tend to take for granted. "One reason why I am here is because I thought Earthaven was on the cutting edge and I'm just hoping we can keep that blade sharpened and not fall back into nice and secure conventional place. Unfortunately I see this happening." Rob's appeals for greater purity of both values and practice have been the cause of some controversy within Earthaven. Many at Earthaven tell Rob that he is "a dreamer" and "a hopeless romantic." However, Rob has solid ground from which to speak. His home at Earthaven is consistently acknowledged as one of the best examples of sustainable natural building in the community and he claims that 90% of the materials that he used in its construction came directly from Earthaven's land. While many of Earthaven's members theoretically aspire to the level at which Rob has been able to practice his ecological sustainability values, most of them do not have the same set of skills that he does. Others have a different focus; they believe that developing social connections and doing the psychological work of detaching from the dominant culture are equally as important as any of the material components of sustainability.

Some of Earthaven's members articulately express their belief that the social and ecological aspects of sustainability are intextricably intertwined. Carl was born in Kentucky but he moved a lot as youngster because his father's employer, the Social Security Administration, had a policy of regularly relocating its employees. He describes this hypermobility that "began in the 50s and 60s" as something that "has destroyed a lot of the cultural underpinnings of the nation." In large part, Carl's decision to join Earthaven is an attempt to avoid this pattern and to

reconnect with both people and place. However he also traces his decision to join Earthaven to

his fundamentalist Christian upbringing and the disjunctures between real world practice and the

ideals of the church that he increasingly observed as he went through life. As a military

serviceman, as a hospital chaplain and as a person that was looking for a community to be a part

of, Carl says that he increasingly became aware that we have lost sight of fundamental values of

justice and sustainability in our daily lives.

> C: What comes to my mind right now is that it's all a part of justice and sustainability. How people treat each other and relate to each other, whether it's in personal relationships or in business, how we treat the earth, you know how we treat other races and other nations, other groups of people, it sort of seems like it's all the same thing. An awareness and sensitivity to justice would, it seems to me, lead us to pretty much the same place on a number of different specific topics. I don't see them as being separated. They only get separated if the values are separated. For example if you base everything on a money economy then you can justify buying something because it's cheaper, or you get more for your money. But if you consider a more holistic point of view then it's like if that T-shirt was cheaper because it was made by slaves or made in a way that poisoned the ground or made in a way that destroyed an ecosystem then its monetary cheapness is just a façade for it actually being much, much, much more expensive than one that might cost more money. So if you only consider one thing … in many cases [it disguises] the justice issues inherent in those concerns. I think those of us here at Earthaven are more collectively conscious of those kinds of concerns. [interview in Earthaven Ecovillage 8-2-05]

Carl believes that "there's an airtight case to be made for the insanity of the way of life that is

destroying the planet so there's got to be a more sensible way to live than that" (interview in

Earthaven Ecovillage 8-2-05). He chose to join Earthaven because it was the most sensible way

to live based on his critiques.

What the previous two quotations have referred to is an emergent sense of the injustices

that accompany an unsustainable political economic system and the lifestyles it supports here in

the Global North. Many of Earthaven's members find themselves culpable for the world's social

injustices based on their participation in the global industrial political economy and they have

chosen to come to Earthaven because they believe it will enable them to step out of that system. The following quote, from Earthaven cofounder Chuck who was previously introduced, demonstrates that Earthaven members are also concerned about the injustice of handing a degraded environment down to future generations.

> C: There's more to be done in the world. There's a world in such great need you know. I personally felt the need to respond. So my whole dedication is to future generations. It's not that I necessarily feel I'll even realize the results of my labors, but if I can at least give future generations a shot, a fighting chance at a world worth inhabiting then that would be good enough for me. Whether I succeed or fail, I'm going to give it my best shot. [interview in Earthaven Ecovillage 8-30-05]

Each of the above three quotations points to a perceived need to create a more just and sustainable culture; they contain an inherent cultural critique of the global political economy, its justifying ideologies, its institutions and the social injustices and ecological degradation that result from them. These people see the creation of an alternative lifestyle in an ecovillage as a way of ensuring greater justice and sustainability in the wider world.

At times, the cultural critiques expressed by Earthaven's members were very explicit. Some Earthaven members very explicitly expressed that their motivations for joining the community stemmed from critiques of the dominant culture, critiques that motivated them to dedicate their lives to cultural change. For example, Iris had first introduced herself to me during my tour of Earthaven by describing how "the dominator culture" had taken from us our "birthright" of knowing how to live peacefully, sustainably and self-sufficiently. In my interview with her, she explained to me that she had, at an early age begun to question the perspectives provided to her by the dominant culture.

> I: So that is at the root of it too then is the desire to change culture?
> IL: Yes, from the very beginning, I questioned culture, I didn't like it and I wanted to change it ever since I can remember. Ever since I was aware of a culture at all. I mean the core of the way I see a sustainable culture is in reverence

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and in harmony with nature. I don't think any other kind of culture is worth doing. The dominator culture is not revering or in harmony with nature. So it's basically turning on itself because we are nature. So it's not even in harmony with itself. It doesn't revere itself. [interview in Earthaven Ecovillage 7-31-05]

In what was an especially emotional interview, Iris explained to me that she saw the economic, political and epistemological systems of "the dominator culture" leading to the destruction of the very ecological systems that support human life on earth. She said that we are polluting our selves to death and, through our "unthinking materialism" degrading the ecological systems that provide human sustenance. In a sense, she said, we are killing ourselves. Iris believes in Earthaven because of its potential.

> IL: One thing about Earthaven is that we all came into this space of Earthaven with the dominator culture engrained in us. So it's not like Earthaven is totally different. It's just a place to begin to change. If we create a prototype here that works and is pleasant then I know people will emulate it all over. [interview in Earthaven Ecovillage 7-31-05]

> Iris's critique of "the dominator culture" is an acknowledgement that she, like other Earthaven members, is embedded in the cultural systems of which they are all so critical. It is an extension of cultural critique to oneself. This recognition of the need to change oneself is also evident in Rob's reference in the quotation below to "deprogramming." Rob explained to me that he thinks that people coming to Earthaven want "help in deprogramming themselves from the outside competitive and consumer world." This means that if one comes to Earthaven, they must be willing to do the psychological work of ridding themselves of their "cultural baggage."

> I: I like that expression – deprogramming – can you talk about that a little bit more?
> R.: Well the programming is we have been brainwashed and conditioned and we have been programmed from day one to be consumers, to be competitors, to be individualists. … By default it is creating addictions where people become addicted to consumerism and addicted to making money. They have to make money to satisfy the addiction of consumerism and then making money creates an addiction to making money and an addiction to power. … It's probably harder to get rid of these addictions than addictions to smoking or drinking or to gambling

because they are programmed 24 hours a day everywhere you go. They are programmed through your relatives or through the media or whatever. You are always reminded - you are still living in this house? You need a bigger house. [interview in Earthaven Ecovillage 4-26-05]

Rob believes that a fundamental part of Earthaven's attempts to develop alternative values, institutions and political economic systems is part of the process of deprogramming. He explains to me that in a large sense, Earthaven is really "a deprogramming community. We are all trying to deprogram ourselves and we have varying amounts of success at it." For Rob, like Iris in the quotation above, Earthaven as a deprogramming community is far from achieving its potential.

Although everyone used different language to express it, a number of Earthaven's members expressed the theme of needing to be "deprogrammed" from "the dominator culture." Similar sentiments were expressed to me by Pablo. Pablo was born and raised in a middle class family in Kalamazoo, Michigan. He lived a relatively normal life and was following his father's career as a chemist. Pablo was a science major at Western Michigan University when he had a life changing experience. He spent part of one of his years in college experimenting with psychedelic drugs with his friends, during which he had an incredible "mystical experience" that changed his orientation to the world. After that period of experimentation, he quit doing drugs, but he now felt compelled to address profound questions about the nature of life and the universe. He changed his major from science to philosophy and delved deeply into a lot of philosophical literature: the Frankfurt School, Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty and Nietzche. Based on his psychedelic mystical experiences and his immersion in philosophy, Pablo began a long intellectual struggle during which he questioned the meaning of his existence.

However, it was not enough for Pablo to confront these questions intellectually; he wanted to connect his intellectual ponderings to the social and material realms in some way. Some friends of his had recently returned from California where they had gotten involved with

an Indian guru who had a series of ashrams across they United States and they suggested that Pablo might find some of the answers that he was looking for in these communities. He was cynical at first because of his scientific background; he wanted something empirical against which he could match and test his mystical experience and his intellectual struggles. Pablo slowly began to go to meetings, to listen to what the guru was saying and observe some of the things that were going on in his ashrams. He wanted to make sure that this was not just some form of indoctrination, that it actually had the potential for enlightenment and transformation. Ultimately he decided that this was the case and he dedicated the next 15 years of his life to the guru's teachings and the development of his ashrams. Pablo described his experience there.

> P: [The guru] said basically that people need to change their lifestyle because what we're doing is not sustainable. He said what we need to do is organize ourselves into a set of organizations that will offer alternatives. It was very broad. He wasn't laying down details, but he was basically saying create alternative communities. That's what he said. And I said I can do that. That's why I wanted to move into the ashram. I got that message and I said OK that's what it is. Because I had studied all this stuff in college and figured out what was all wrong and I had an idea of what would have to be done. It was this transformation. We have to change. We have to become different people. And so he said create a model for alternative communities where you support each other not just spiritually, but also physically. He didn't provide details, but my mind put together this picture. It was like we have our own food sources. We have alternative technologies. We have our own gas station and repair shop. We have our own businesses. We cooperate. In other words it was cooperation. This is what I got was that the way the world and the economy is set up is to separate everyone out into their own little boxes and suck all the wealth of their life out and the banks end up with it because the money comes from them and goes back to them. That's the way the economy is set up. Break down all cohesion and get everyone in a little box that you can then suck all their wealth, all their life energy. Cooperation is not good for business. Everyone having their own lawn mower, everyone having their own washing machine, everyone having their own two cars, and their three TVs, everyone having a TV in their room. That's good for business. Rather than having one TV where 20 people can watch, not have 20 TVs. We can sell more TVs that way. Seven people could easily share a lawnmower and still mow the lawn every week, but that's not good for business. So the basic thing sunk into my mind because I was already primed intellectually for it. I knew basically what it was and here's my guru giving me a command to do this. [interview in Earthaven Ecovillage 6-30-05]

Pablo ultimately left the ashram after many years. He can't explain why; he just felt it was time. He moved to North Carolina and took a job doing wood work, one of the skills that he had gained in the ashram. However, before long, he found the group of people that was trying to find land for Earthaven at his doorstep. They were looking at land adjacent to where he was living and he soon joined them in their efforts to start the ecovillage. I asked Pablo to explain how his experiences in life and in the ashram translate to his involvement in Earthaven.

> I: So can you describe for me why you came to Earthaven and how it relates to this story you've just told me?
> P: It's very simple really. People have to become cooperative. People – all humans – to be sustainable we have to get out of our egotism. You know the ecovillage movement is worldwide but yet it really is specific to the West because we're the ones that are all egotized and separated out. I mean every village in Africa's an ecovillage. They already know how to cooperate. We're the ones that have forgotten it. and there's a level of transformation of lifestyle that doesn't involve just actions. Because actions are an expression of who we are. We have to change our personalities. We have to become more cooperative. We have to start thinking about the whole rather than about myself. The attitude that I try to take is that if I take care of the needs of the whole then my needs will also be met because I'm part of the whole. and if I can't get exactly what I want, well what do I want anyway. That's arbitrary – my desires. The purpose of life is not to fulfill your desires. It's not. So when we get all uptight and fear-based in our actions and our reactions because we're afraid we're not going to be able to fulfill our desires, we just need to change. We need to become different people. We need to have the welfare of the whole at stake because that's what is at stake.
> I: and Earthaven is a place where that's being figured out, worked out?
> P: Yeah. and so how do we do that as the egotistical bourgeoisie individuals that we are? We have to practice. It's not something you just have an idea about and then you start doing it. We've got inbred, enculturated selfishness and we're proud of it. The United States has this rugged individualist ideology even though it's a bunch of bullshit and we're actually just being manipulated by economic interests. But it's like the ideology is everyone just takes care of themselves and be a man and … You know so we've got to get over that stuff and it's not easy. and we have to put ourselves in an arena where that's what we're trying to do and by direct conscious intention, take actions to change. And that's what Earthaven is all about. The sustainability vis-à-vis resources of the earth is something that is a necessity for humans to survive on the planet, but it's not the main thing that we have to do in order to survive. If we don't change, we're not going to be able to do those things. [interview in Earthaven Ecovillage 6-30-05]

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This final quotation by a founding member of Earthaven Ecovillage, well represents the overall broad and deep-seeded cultural critique that motivates Earthaven members and to which Earthaven is a response. It is deep and probing. It touches on what are perceived to be fundamental problems with life in modern "Western" culture, problems that create an unjust and unsustainable situation in the world. It was deeply felt and emotionally expressed.

The spiritual component of Pablo's cultural critique and his motivations for joining Earthaven links to another theme I found in my interviews with Earthaven's members. Some of Earthaven's members felt so deeply about their motivations for joining the community that they characterized their decisions and their lives in the community as part of a process of eco-spiritual awakening. For them, their dissatisfaction with the status quo was so comprehensive and deep-seated that it moved them beyond an intellectual level critique. Their compulsion to create positive, more fulfilling alternatives and to live those alternatives on a daily basis was felt to be intensely spiritual. While I provide only three examples to illustrate this theme here, it was widespread in my interviews. Over half of Earthaven's members invoked spiritual themes to help explain their decisions to join the community.

The first quotation is from a man who arrived in Earthaven shortly after its founding. Sam was raised in a devout Catholic family farming family in rural Ohio. His older brothers became politically active during the late 1960s and early 1970s and he says that he was really affected by all of the social ferment of the time. Through the guidance of his older brothers, he melded the spiritual teachings of his Catholic upbringing with a profound political critique that motivated him to choose to live in an ecovillage.

> S: I grew up with a very deep sense of spirituality and that religion was not just about the institutional practices, but it was about the way that we lived. So I had the experience of that heart component of Christianity although it was kind of layered over with traditional institutional kinds of things. Through my brothers'

influence I was kind of able to drop the institutional spiritual prayer forms and see that the heart of that Christian message could be wedded to a progressive political perspective. And so they turned me on to magazines and movements specifically related to where I am now in the intentional communities movement. My brother was a theology professor, conscientious objector, kind of a Marxist Christian sort. He showed me Communities magazine and he said this is real Christianity. To live cooperatively, to live in a way to transform culture to being peaceful cooperative and sustainable – this is what it means to be Christian. And whether or not these folks call themselves Christian it doesn't matter. And if you call yourself Christian and you're not doing this then it doesn't matter. He didn't mean that everybody had to live in an intentional community, but basically the whole thrust of transforming culture from a competitive consumeristic thing to a cooperative, sustainable [one] is what he understood as the heart of the Christian message. ... After having been into the whole eco-spiritual social justice movement for like ten years or so living in the city, I began to realize that there were a lot of things that I was doing that were inconsistent with my deepest beliefs and that I wanted to be more committed. I wanted to take it to another level. That's when I decided to join Earthaven. [interview in Earthaven Ecovillage 8-15-05]

A second quotation comes from Chuck, one of Earthaven's founders who was introduced earlier. Like the quotation above, it illustrates that living at Earthaven is the culmination of a lifelong process of spiritual seeking. However, unlike the individual quoted above, this person's spiritual quest did not come out of any specific denominational background.

C: Well it comes from my whole spiritual quest and my understanding of the world's mystical traditions and vision questing and questioning what human existence is all about and why we're here and all that kind of stuff is basically where it comes from. For me, its having engaged in that question for a long time. ... How do we get the stuff that's in the way of that potential being realized out of the way so that we can actually realize our potential as human beings, as hearts and souls and minds and bodies. It's not some kind of disembodied religious concept. It's about actual engagement with the world, the physical, natural, experiential world rather than escape from it. It's a spiritual path or a leg of the spiritual path. And the other piece is healing. I think this is another place where Earthaven has a huge amount of potential as a community for healing the wounds of both the planet and the people as we learn more and more about what that is. I've always seen this as a healing enterprise. [interview in Earthaven Ecovillage 8-30-05].

For these two individuals, their decisions to join Earthaven were the outcomes of spiritual processing that had begun much earlier in their lives. However, this spiritual processing has

taken on new and more meaningful forms in the context of Earthaven's utopian endeavors to create a sustainable, regenerative culture.

However, for others, the act of becoming part of the community at Earthaven has led to an ecospiritual awakening. Darrell came to Earthaven from his upbringing in Connecticut wehere he was not an especially spiritual person. He had gone to Catholic school when he was younger but he found that he did not resonate with the teachings of Catholocism. At Earthaven, he has experienced a spiritual awakening and now believes that spiritual transformation is part of the larger process of striving for sustainability.

> D: I really believe that what needs to happen is a spiritual transformation on a global scale. Solar panels and wind turbines and biodiesel and organic gardening – all these ideas are great and they're all part of the solution, but until humanity evolves to a higher spiritual level, things are just going to keep getting worse and falling apart. The greed, the fear and all these kind of things lead to the destruction of mother earth. [Being here] helped me in my own spiritual revolution. I said in the beginning I was in the catholic schools and everything. I think everything happens for a reason and I think I needed or chose to experience that so that I could experience the emptiness of it and so that when I did experience something more fulfilling, I would have something to reference back to. Going to church just didn't do it for me. It was very mechanical. He said this and he said that. We knelt for a little while and we stood for a little while. I didn't really walk out of there with much of a spiritual experience and I've had spiritual experiences [being here with] like-minded people who want to live simply and ecologically and be self-sufficient and sustainable. [interview in Earthaven Ecovillage 9-5-05].

It is clear that for each of these individuals, a spiritual awakening was an integral part of their cultural critique and utopian striving for a better world. For them, the process of creating the cross-cultural juxtapositions demanded by their epistemological critiques was an inherently spiritual process, either as an outgrowth and transformation of spiritual beliefs that they already held or part of a spiritual awakening that accompanied their search for a more sustainable way of life at Earthaven Ecovillage. The same can be said for some of Celo Community's members,

especially those Quakers and conscientious objectors who came to the community in its early days and those new members who follow a similar path today.

Conclusions

The previous analysis suggests something about the nature of intentional communities themselves, something that ties in with what previous theorists of intentional communities have attempted to conceptualize. The greater prevalence of cultural critique as a motivating factor amongst the members of Earthaven Ecovillage suggests that cultural critique, elsewhere characterized as utopianism or utopian striving, is a characteristic of intentional communities that is often most strongly manifested at the beginning of their existence. This cultural critique and utopianism may be inspired by exposure to other intentional communities and it is something that is strongly felt as people enter into the intentional community building endeavor. However, as my analysis of Celo Community indicates, these utopian cultural critiques appear to fade over time as the practicalities of day to day living amongst a group of widely divergent individuals and in the context of a larger society take precedence. Or perhaps they fade as community members grow closer to realizing some of their goals and as their critiques and the alternatives they suggest permeate the wider society. In other words, cultural critique and utopianism in intentional communities follows a pattern similar to that suggested by Pitzer's developmental communalism: it is predominant as community building commences and may even serve as a tool for creating community. However, as time goes on, it becomes less predominant. In fact, strict adherence to it can even interfere with the ability of the community to survive in the midst of all the challenges it faces as it attempts to confront the tension between the real and the ideal. This is the developmental utopianism process that I referred to before.

While the members of Celo Community evoked cultural critiques to explain their decisions to join the community, they were not as commonly evoked nor as deeply felt as they were in Earthaven Ecovillage. All of the interviews from Earthaven that I analyzed contained fairly well articulated cultural critiques, whereas less than half of those from Celo can be characterized in the same way. However the situation may have been different had I arrived in Celo during the community's formative years in the 1940s and early 1950s. It was during this time that the community was being populated by people who were driven to seek alternatives by deeply held spiritual beliefs and political resistance. It was a time when Quakers came to Celo Community seeking to create alternatives to a competitive, hierarchical society that was engaged in what they believed to be an unjust war. It was also the time during which the fundamental institutions that characterize Celo today – membership screening, consensus decision-making and the community's unique land tenure arrangement – were created by its members. It is to an analysis of these institutions that I now turn.

Chapter 11

UTOPIANISM, CULTURAL CRITIQUE AND SUSTAINABILITY IN CELO AND

EARTHAVEN'S INSTITUTIONS

H: If I look specifically as to why I joined the community, the two main reasons would be for community and because I believed that land ownership is not the way to go. I think an alternative to land ownership is one of the most important developments that needs to happen in our world.
I: Why?
H: Because ultimately with land ownership, it creates a division between the rich and the poor and there will be a world landless class developing more and more all over the world. I mean, I've seen how that works in other countries. I did a lot of work in Central America, where it's devastating, where it created a violent, distorted culture, an impoverished culture. That hasn't happened in this country yet because there's so much land and so much wealth, but it'll come. I mean, it's already getting that way right now. The ability of the poor to buy a piece of land is extremely limited. And then the other reason is, this community protects the land. I believe in cooperative ownership and stewardship of the land. So stewardship of the land is a vital issue. A really key environmental change issue now, is that we don't own the land. I think one of the basic reasons for environmental problems is this whole psychology of owning the land which means, if you own it, you can do whatever you want with it. You can trash it, you can cut down every tree on it, you can poison it. It's yours. Whereas here, that is not acknowledged at all. You can't do whatever you want with it. And so, talk about a clear way to positive environmental change, to move away from ownership and move towards stewardship is a key element. (interview in Celo Community 11-17-04).

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Here at Earthaven Ecovillage, some of us are trying to mobilize an integrated agricultural and biomass fuel production system to take responsibility for the resource use of our village in preparation for Peak Oil, devastation of the environment, extinction of valuable human knowledge, collapse of the U.S. dollar, the effects of war, overpopulation and consequent resource shortages, etc. We need to get ready in a hurry, and are developing a plan to do so, but need more people to manifest it.

Economically viable import substitution is the great untapped potential of Earthaven Ecovillage. If manifested, it will provide much needed employment to

support increased membership that will facilitate infrastructure development, while simultaneously reducing our dependence on unsustainable food and fuel supplies, and increasing circulation of money within the community. We can create a village-scale agricultural economy to achieve this that also satisfies our basic needs (food, energy, fuel, shelter, etc.) using local resources, community labor, and existing technology. (Fields and Friend 2005).

*   *   *

These quotations reflect the significance that some of the members of Celo Community and Earthaven Ecovillage ascribe to their institutions and activities in light of the utopian challenge of sustainability. They reveal that their community building endeavors are motivated by considerations of the greater common good and associated concerns with ecological degradation and social inequities. Were such models of land ownership, local-scale economic development and the cultural logics that imbue them to become more widespread, they might have significant environmental and social justice implications. In the following, I describe the institutions and practices that manifest these values in Celo and Earthaven. In doing so, I reveal how Celo and Earthaven are part of an ongoing process of developmental utopianism through which increasingly innovative attempts to implement potential solutions to the utopian challenge of sustainability are manifested and continuously rearticulated within the sustainability-oriented intentional communities movement.

*   *   *

In the previous descriptions of Celo Community and Earthaven Ecovillage we have seen how these two communities were born of utopian visions and cultural critiques. Arthur Morgan was critical of the ways in which modern industrial society was leading to the disintegration of small communities which he believed were the foundation of modern life and the seedbed of human cultural evolution. In creating Celo Community, Morgan was motivated by a utopian vision of the small community, a vision grounded in romantic images of ancient and traditional

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communities. In the years since Celo was founded, other utopians and cultural critics have found in Celo a place to act upon their visions and critiques. Quakers and conscientious objectors arrived in the wake of WWII and were driven by their vision of a more just, peaceful and democratic society. The back-to-the-land movement brought individuals to Celo who sought to create a more simple life that involved living closer to the land and to the material sources of their livelihood. They sought a life unencumbered by the excesses of modern society, one characterized by cooperation and ecological sensitivity.

Earthaven's members were motivated by more contemporary utopian visions of a just, sustainable, socially connected and spiritually fulfilling society. They were critical of the materialistic nature of modern society and of the injustices, social alienation and ecological degradation that resulted from the ideologies and institutions that characterize such a society. The actions that they took in response to their critiques were framed by the utopian visions contained in the idea of permaculture. Permaculture provides a theoretical basis as well as practical and ethical guidelines for creating a more just, sustainable and spiritually fulfilling culture by designing human settlements in concordance with the ecological characteristics of particular regions and localities. In what follows, I consider how Celo and Earthaven have built upon their utopian visions and cultural critiques to manifest alternative institutions and practices and encourage individual and group actions that might represent appropriate responses to the sustainability challenge. These are the cross-cultural juxtapositions that constitute the second component of cultural critique that Marcus and Fischer discussed and that Brown suggested defined intentional communities.

In the discussion of sustainability-oriented intentional communities in the first chapter, I pointed to some of the ways in which contemporary intentional communities are addressing the

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sustainability challenge. I suggested that intentional communities often come closer to the romantic vision of communities articulated by anthropologists and other social scientists as they attempted to demonstrate that the tragedy of the commons is not an inevitable outcome of human economic behavior. I demonstrated that contemporary sustainability-oriented intentional communities are characterized by explicitly shared values and goals, egalitarianism, democratic decision-making institutions and commitments to stewarding local places. In doing so, they are taking local actions that are driven by their identities as global citizens concerned with social equity and ecological sustainability. These actions are manifested in particular socio-cultural, political economic and technological institutions that coordinate community action and that guide individual behavior and decision-making in local contexts.

In the process, the actions of atomized individuals are transformed. Those dependent upon a global political economy wherein the consequences of their decisions and behavior are hidden from their view become individuals enmeshed in communities of equals attempting to take greater responsibility for the consequences of their actions through cooperative governance, local-scale economic activities and economic networking, sharing and cooperation. The development of institutions that promote sustainability in intentional communities reveals that social, political, economic and technological institutions are inextricably intertwined with cultural processes. Communities engaged in the local-scale, cooperative economic activity and the creation of institutions of collective governance, common property and collective consumption develop a common sense of place, ecological awareness and values, social predictability and a sense of mutual trust and responsibility both amongst themselves and between themselves and the natural world of which they are a part. These are fundamental starting points for creating a more just and sustainable world.

Institutions and Initiatives for Sustainability in Celo Community

The discussion of Celo Community in chapters six and seven was intended to provide a descriptive overview of the community's historical development, its cultural values and its current institutional structure. The following is a discussion of how Celo's institutional structure, cultural values and the individual initiatives the community fosters might contribute to solutions to the sustainability challenge. It considers the implications of Celo's membership and governance processes, its land tenure arrangement and the values of land stewardship and simple living that community members hold dear. It ends by touching on some particular projects that have been undertaken by individual community members in the context of a community of supportive, like-minded people. While these projects are often unique within Celo, they are more characteristic of Earthaven Ecovillage collectively, again demonstrating that Earthaven was inspired to take up the utopian challenge of sustainability where Celo left off.

Joining Celo Community: Trial Membership and the Membership Agreement

Celo's meeting room is particularly full this evening as community members come together for their monthly community meeting. I've arrived with the community members with whom I'm staying during my research. Our flashlights sit on the floor next to us, ready to help us navigate through the dark along the community's footpaths as we make our way home after the meeting. Having discussed, debated and approved items of business introduced to the general meeting by the members of the property committee, we move on to matters raised by the membership committee. Tonight there is a prospective community member in attendance. The chairperson of the membership meeting introduces her and she stands to read her letter of interest.

"Thank you for having me here tonight to express my interest in becoming a member of Celo Community. I have been working at Arthur Morgan School for three years now and I've been blessed with the opportunity to learn about and experience the uniqueness of Celo Community. Through friendships I have developed with community members and through my participation in community workdays, I've gained an appreciation of the sense of community and environmental values that imbue this beautiful place. I am impressed by the way that you cooperate with one another and by your common commitment to stewarding the land together. Your values match my own, but until now, I have not experienced a context in which I could live by them on a daily basis. Celo Community is so different from the neighborhood I grew up in outside of Charlotte. I finally feel like I've found home. Please accept my application for membership in Celo Community. Thank you and blessings to you all."

This speech is met with a round of applause from Celo's members, but soon it is back to business. Through previous experiences, Celo's members are well aware that good intentions and expressed coincidence of values do not always translate into positive outcomes for new community members nor for the community. In fact the next item of business on the agenda involves a current community member who seemed a good fit for the community, but has not been meeting his responsibilities. Specifically he has been absent from the community for a number of years, neglecting to formally request a leave of absence (as is community policy when one is to be gone for six months or longer), failing to keep up with his portion of property taxes, and allowing his home to fall into disrepair, a situation that the community is now forced to deal with. I wonder how the prospective community member responds to this sudden change of tone in the community meeting.

* * *

Ensuring a minimum of shared values and familiarity with community institutions and people is a necessary component of an enduring intentional community. Celo's membership process and Membership Agreement attempt to facilitate this. Celo Community has developed a specific process by which new members may join the community. This process is lengthy and is intended to provide potential members a chance to become familiar with the community, its values and its institutions and governance processes as much as it is intended to provide the community with a chance to evaluate the potential members for compatibility with the community. The process evolved early on in the community's development and, like most community institutions and processes, has undergone revisions. Most recently, in response to increasing interest and proposals brought forth by community members, a new membership track was created for former members and family of current community members. This parallel membership track still requires a lengthy trial membership period, but allows family of community members to avoid the long waiting list of potential community members. Still, only two new households are accepted into the community each year so as to maintain a degree of equilibrium in values and decision-making that a rapid influx of new members, values and opinions might disrupt.

The process for becoming a member of Celo Community is as follows. When a request from prospective members is received the community sends them a description of the community, pre-application and self-evaluation questionnaires and descriptions of the community's membership process, governance procedures and holding agreement. On a subsequent visit, the prosective member attends a community meeting and meets with the membership committee. If the person wishes to apply, his letter of application is read at a community meeting and, if approved, she is put on the bottom of the waiting list. These early

stages provide the prospective community member with a chance to understand the values of the community and to see if they coincide with their own.

When there is an opening for a trial membership, a sponsor is chosen from amongst community members in order to facilitate the process of gaining familiarity with the community. To further facilitate this process the trial member is required to live on community land or, if appropriate housing is not available on community land, within one mile of the community boundaries so that they may participate in community activities. Over the following year, the trial member is required to meet with community members and discuss living in the community, participate in community meetings and workdays and attend a meeting at which the documents and procedures that govern the community are discussed at length. Finally, it is suggested that the prospective member "become familiar with the land" in order to seriously consider possible "holding sites" in conjunction with the guidelines of the land use plan and the desires of potential neighbors. The trial membership allows the prospective member to become familiar with the ways in which the values of the community are manifested in particular community institutions and rules that will govern their decisions and behavior if they are accepted as community members.

At the end of the trial period, the potential member and the community may decide to extend the trial membership or move for a decision on full membership. If a decision is called for, community members are notified at least a month in advance that such a decision will be made at the next general community meeting. Trial members are present at a community meeting during which their membership application is discussed. At the subsequent community meeting, votes and accompanying rationales for votes against full membership are provided in writing by all present community members. Negative votes and their rationales may be submitted

anonymously. A supermajority of 85% is required for affirmation of a new membership. (This is the only area in which the community makes decisions by anonymous, supermajority vote from the outset rather than through the open discussion characteristic of the consensus process. It is a result of difficulties raised by a trial member family in the 1950s and is a matter of some controversy in the community.) Final membership votes are contingent upon approval by Celo Community's Board of Directors, although this amounts to a rubber stamp as the community controls the board. This process of discussion and decision-making on new memberships provides an opportunity for existing community members to express their views as to whether or not the prospective member fits within the social, ideological and institutional values and structure of the community.

New community members are required to sign their membership agreement within 30 days of their membership being approved. The membership agreement stipulates that the new member understands and agrees to abide by community purposes, procedures and rules as they are articulated in the following documents: Certificate of Incorporation, Code of Regulations of the Corporation, Constitution and By-Laws of the community, Community Holding Agreement and Community Membership Agreement. It further states that community members are expected to reside primarily within the community (requests for leaves of absence of six months or more are required), actively participate in community governance, assume their share of the yearly community budget and property taxes and abide by community decisions reached through the consensus process. The Membership agreement ends by discussing the procedures and grounds for termination of membership by the community. Thus, the membership screening process described above, provides an opportunity for a mutual familiarization period between the prospective member and existing community members. It enables all parties to make judgments

as to whether or not there is a sufficient coincidence of values among them such that they will all be able to abide by the rules and institutions that put those values into action as they proceed together in their collective endeavor. In Celo Community, the strongest unifying values and institutions are those that concern the relationship of community members to the land and through the land to each other.

Living on the Land: Celo's Holding Agreement

Today I joined some of Celo's members for a "holding walk." A couple, Celo Community's newest members, have been renting from two community members on leave of absence to return to the site of their Peace Corps work in Lesotho for the last year. This new couple has been working hard to choose a holding site and develop a design for their new home in the community. The father, a computer technician who works in Burnsville, and the mother, a stay at home mom taking care of three young children, have been up late at night developing the design for their home. On weekends, when their children have been playing with other community kids, they have been walking through the woods attempting to demarcate a piece of land on which to build their new home and talking about their plans with other community members who would soon be their neighbors. They presented their plans at the property committee meeting last Wednesday and all seemed to go well.

Now is their chance to show community members in person and on site how they plan to make their home. They are nervous, but confident that they have thought of all contingencies. As they walk through their site, designs in hand, explaining their plans, it becomes apparent that there are concerns among those present. One community member points out that their home does not have a large southern exposure to accommodate passive solar gain. Further, were it to be so oriented on this particular site, it would require the cutting of a large number of trees that are

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not within the boundaries of their land holding as they have them marked out. Another community member points out that their proposed driveway runs through a patch of rare and mature black locust trees. Even if they plan to incorporate the lumber from these trees into their building design, she is not sure that she can countenance their removal. They're slow growing hardwoods.

As the group walks back towards the community center, the chairperson of the finance committee asks them if they have considered the financial implications of their building design. He points out that their building, while modest, will probably cost over a hundred thousand dollars to build. Do they have that kind of money available? They will not be able to obtain a bank loan because they don't own the land on which they are building and the community limits construction loans from its common fund to $35,000. Finally, do they realize that if, God forbid because he really likes them, they have to leave the community and they cannot find a buyer from within the community and agree on a selling price, the community will only guarantee a portion of their equity in the building. This guaranteed equity is, by the way, well below the estimated $100,000 building cost. As a young family with three children could they afford this? Perhaps they should reconsider their design.

As the land walk wraps up and the other community members depart in small groups, the couple looks at each other deflated. This wasn't what they had hoped for. They had witnessed other holding walks that did not raise nearly as many concerns. Perhaps they shouldn't have joined the community. But they knew what they were in for; they will persevere with the understanding that they are abiding by the consensus process and the community's shared values of environmental stewardship and simple living. Note: this couple ultimately built a small

and cozy house on another site that they took as a holding. It is fully oriented for passive solar

gain, did not raise any concerns regarding the land that was cleared, and cost only $75,000.

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Celo Community is a private land trust or private stewardship trust. According to Gilman, "a land trust is a non-governmental organization, frequently a non-profit corporation, that divides land ownership rights between immediate users and their wider communities" (Gilman 1990:112). There are a number of different types of land trusts but within each, "the immediate users (non-human as well as human) have clear rights which satisfy their legitimate use needs" (Gilman 1990:113). That these needs are met is ensured by the process through which the land trust is governed and administered. This process usually involves a board of trustees within which the needs of the various stakeholders – leaseholders, the trust community, the wider community, non-human species – are represented by board members. "By dividing ownership into 'stewardship' for leaseholders and 'trusteeship' for wider community representatives, land trusts are pioneering an approach that integrates the legitimate interests of the individual with those of society and the rest of the natural world" (Gilman 1990:113).

The idea of land trusts is fairly radical when considered in the context of American society where individual ownership and control of land is sacrosanct. By vesting individuals with political and economic power, partially through individual land ownership, the United States attempted to overcome systems of feudalism and theocratic control that characterized Europe. Traditionally, private land ownership in America was seen as the basis for individual security, earned equity and a family legacy. It was the mechanism through which one could build a home and a livelihood that could be passed on to one's family. Increasingly, ownership of land is seen as source of profit. Land is developed, subdivided and sold as property values increase.

Alternatively, the resources contained on the land, resources that may have accrued over many years prior to the establishment of current ownership, are extracted and sold as commodities for profit. Increasing percentages of land are used as a source of profit by corporations and individual landowners that control large amounts of land and that do not have any direct interest in the integrity of the land, local communities or the utility of land and resources to future generations (Institute for Community Economics 1982).

The idea of the land trust is radical because it is an attempt to institutionalize recognition for the broader interests of a vast number of stakeholders – human and non-human, past, present and future – for whom the land is a source of livelihood and security. Proponents of land trusts

> talk about "decommodification," of changing the way people look at land and housing – not as a commodity for speculation and exploitation, but as a resource to be shared. Land trusts counterbalance the American taboo about inviolability of private property by stressing the historic social rights of the community [and the rights of non-human communities as well. [Naurekas 1990:115]

The land trust concept is an attempt to remove the idea of land ownership from the strictly economic realm and to bring broader ethical concerns of social equity and ecological integrity into the institutions that govern land ownership.

The development of the land trust concept is over a hundred years old. This development grows from Henry George and his Single Tax Theory, the single tax colonies of Fairhope, Alabama and Arden, Delaware, the work of Ralph Borsodi at the School of Living in Suffren, New York and the work of the Institute for Community Economics. Celo Community's land trust model and the work of Arthur Morgan and others at Community Service, Inc. are cited as examples in a long line of development of the land trust model (Stucki and Yeatman 1990, Questenberry 1990). In Celo's model, the interests of the wider community and non-human species are dependent upon the values and ethical integrity of the residents of the land trust.

Whereas other land trusts are governed by an outside board designed to represent outside interests, the members of Celo Community retain control of the board that oversees the trust. This is one reason why coincidence of values in Celo, a coincidence maintained through their membership screening and consensus governance processes, is so important. (The community land trust is a more recent innovation in the land trust concept, one that goes to greater efforts to institutionalize the interests of the wider community, especially those in need of affordable housing, and natural ecosystems by separating control of the board of trustees from the leaseholders of trust land. Further discussions of the community land trust model can be found in Stucki and Yeatman 1990 and Institute for Community Economics 1982.)

Celo's Holding Agreement is the legal contract, the institutional form that manifests Celo's model of land trust. It encodes the mutual relationships that exist amongst the community as a social entity, its individual members and the entirety of its land that it holds in trust. Celo Community Inc.'s Holding Agreement is a fairly complex legal document. It spells out the rights and responsibilities of both the Holder (the individual community member taking temporary individual possession of a specified tract of community-owned land) and the community as an organization committed to mutual benefit and land stewardship. The Holding Agreement institutionalizes a unique form of land tenure and property rights. It is neither lease nor deed. The "Holding Agreement is not only a legal agreement but a personal moral obligation. It is a special type of agreement, different from the usual type of lease as well as from a deed." (Celo Community, n.d.) The Holding Agreement balances individual and community interests in favor of "mutual benefit" and "common welfare."

Membership in Celo Community is synonymous with residence on land owned by the community and, more specifically, with the signing of the Holding Agreement and the taking of

an individual landholding. The Holding Agreement confers regulated usufruct rights to a specific

landholding on community land to the individual community member and her household and

dictates the terms under which any transfer of an individual holding and associated usufruct

rights may be conducted. Celo's Holding Agreement is a unique institution and it is worth

quoting Celo's conception of the document at length.

> A basic feature of the Community is its landholding agreement. All the land belongs to the Community. The individual or family evaluates and states his/its need for land, then pays for that much land and any existing houses or buildings at a fixed price (based on annual assessments.) Then a Holding Agreement is signed by which the holder assumes responsibility and all essential privileges of ownership. No deed is ever bestowed. Since the individual does not own the land, he may never use it for speculation purposes, but within Community structure he may pursue his business or homelife as he wishes. On the holder's departure or death, his holding reverts to the Community for re-use, but it may pass by sale or will to another Community member if the Community approves. [Celo Community Self Evaluation Questionnaire]

> In the relation of the Community to its members the legal is an instrument of the moral. The relation is not an external one between a soulless corporation and independent individuals. It is the internal relation between one person of a friendly neighborhood group and all the persons including himself. Thus a member consulting in a Community meeting on a course of action is both a private user and (in consensus with others) a public controller of land. [Celo Community Constitution]

> The Community operates for the mutual benefit of all holders of lands under agreements with the Community for land holdings ... This agreement is not a deed, but is a cooperative agreement between parties that have mutual interest in the development and welfare of Celo Community, Inc. Because the Holder and other members of Celo Community, Inc. are mutually interested in maintaining the common welfare of the Community and are agreed to forgo some elements of private control in order to promote their common welfare and in order to develop the greatest and best use and value of the community's resources, the holder accepts on his part the conditions of possession and use of his holding as set forth in this agreement, as part of the general program of mutual benefit to all holders in said Community. [Celo Community Holding Agreement, Article I]

In their literature, Celo Community is careful to articulate the implications of their Holding

Agreement for incoming members who may be accustomed to the model of private land

ownership that prevails in the United States. Below, I discuss a number of these specific implications.

One thing the community wishes to make especially clear to potential members is that upon joining the community, they will be party to a unique land tenure agreement that provides the advantages of partial ownership of a large property and associated community buildings while reserving to the community specific rights that would otherwise accrue to the individual landowner. In the interests of land stewardship, the community has designed an institution through which the advantages of access to and joint ownership of a large piece of rural land are traded for usurpation of particular property rights that would otherwise accrue to an individual owner. Specifically, Celo's Holding Agreement disallows subdivision, speculative gain and development of land or extraction of associated resources that is not conducted in a socially and ecologically sensitive manner.

In some senses, Celo's model of land tenure functions in a manner similar to local zoning laws, but in many ways Celo's rules and procedures go much farther than do most zoning laws in regulating land use. The community must consult on and approve holding sites, the placement and design of individual houses, the construction and placement of any outbuildings, the clearing of land and the cutting of any trees over six inches in diameter. The procedures for taking a holding once one is accepted into the community appear fairly straightforward, but the approval process and the regulations contained in the Holding Agreement can be convoluted and complex when submitted to the process of consensus decision-making and considered within the context of Celo's land use plan. The community has recently developed a comprehensive land use plan that delimits all available holding sites. These sites have been deemed appropriate for individual holdings based upon a number of considerations defined by Celo's members: potential for solar

gain, spatial relationship with other holding sites and noninterference with other community land uses including wilderness areas, greenways, wildlife corridors, communal use parks, wood lots, agricultural fields, business sites and trails.

Holding site selections and building plans must be approved by Celo's Property Committee and their general community meeting through the consensus process. All interested community members can participate in this process. It can be extremely time consuming to account for all opinions and reach consensus on a holding site and building design. After appropriate approvals, surveys, appraisals and payments, the community member may take up residence or begin building on his holding. Alternatively, he may choose to take an existing holding, that was made available by a departing member, in which case the process is simplified because the holding was previously approved. Designated holdings may also be taken for agricultural use in which case it is expected that no house will be built there. With regard to individual holding sites a number of other regulations contained in the Holding Agreement or in other community documents are binding on the individual holder. These include rules that regulate timber harvesting, extraction of other natural resources and the use of chemical sprays. All are designed to encourage ecologically sensitive behavior.

Perhaps the most significant component of Celo's Holding Agreement is the part that concerns the transfer of a holding upon termination of community membership. The regulations governing this eventuality are designed to prevent the possibility of speculative profit on real estate development and sale and have the effect of encouraging commitment to community and place and to simple living. In the event that an individual member decides to terminate her relationship with the community, her land holding, including any buildings and improvements, cannot be placed on the open market. Rather, the holding can only be transferred through the

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community to another member of the community. In the event that an appropriate buyer cannot be found within in the community within a certain number of years, the community will only guarantee a return of a certain portion of the holder's equity in the property up to $50,000. In addition, this guaranteed amount may only be paid over a period of ten years. As such, one must be fully aware that they are making a financial investment in a property that they may never fully recover in monetary terms as they would if they possessed an individually deeded property.

Although Celo Community only guarantees a certain portion of one's equity in their holding, Celo endeavors to make their land affordable and easily available to prospective members. The monetary values assigned to holdings reflect this. The amounts that community members pay for their individual landholdings are lower than the going rates for comparable land in the area. This stems from the community's desire to provide opportunity, in the form of access to land and supportive community, to those who wish to live their lives and organize their livelihoods according to considerations that are moral or ethical rather than strictly financial. Standing behind these regulations is the idea that a new member is making an investment in a social community and in caring for a large piece of collectively held land. Following Morgan's vision and those of other utopian cultural critics who came to the community, it is believed that this sort of investment should be more highly valued than any financial gain that might accrue from a transitory and speculative relationship with the land.

Collective Land Ownership and Stewardship: Celo's Land Use Plan

It's a sunny, summer Saturday morning and I'm on my way to a Celo Community workday inside the large portion of land that Celo has set aside as a permanent wilderness area. I'm wearing a pair of galoshes and carrying a pair of gloves and hedge trimmers because today we will be working in a rare patch of Southern Appalachian Bog that Celo has chosen to protect

from development. I'm walking with Celo's resident naturalist, a man who came to the area two decades ago looking for a place to complete his research for his doctoral degree in ecology. He found Celo's collective commitment to stewarding their land attractive, was invited to use their land as a study site, and decided to join the community. He explains to me that the bog is an endangered habitat type in North Carolina because of the massive amount of deforestation that has taken place. The bog habitat depends upon dense vegetation to slow the flow of water on the mountain slopes as well as underlying granite formations to force the water to the surface. He indicates that when he explained the significance of the bog to Celo's members, they took steps to protect it and the wide buffers of forest that are required to ensure its continued functioning.

As we arrive at the bog, there are already about ten other community members at work, laughing and enjoying the beautiful day. I observe them working with saws and clippers around the edges of the bog. As I witness their feet sinking into the spongy surface, I ask my traveling companion if we are not damaging the bog by trampling through it more than we are helping it. He explains to me that the bog habitat is dependent upon periodic natural fires for its continued existence. Since natural fires have been suppressed for some time, woody tree species are increasingly encroaching on the bog and outcompeting other species specific to this habitat. Today, we are here to cut back these species. Before we go to work ourselves, he takes time to show me which species should be cut and which should not, noting specifically three endangered plant species that depend on the bog – the queen-of-the-prairie, the balsam groundsel, and the marsh bellflower. As we begin to work, cutting back woody shrubs and trees along the edge of the bog, the voices fade into the background and the bog and the surrounding forest come alive around me, animated by the knowledge and values that Celo's members share and use as a foundation for becoming partners in stewardship of the their collectively owned land.

*   *   *

Celo Community's shared mission of land stewardship is also manifested outside of the institutions, rules and procedures contained in its Holding Agreement. The establishment of a comprehensive land use plan and the setting aside of over one quarter of the community's 1,200 acres as permanent wilderness are voluntary and deliberate acts that grow from shared ecological knowledge and awareness and a collective sense of place amongst Celo's members. Celo's comprehensive land use plan encompasses their collective vision for the ecologically sensitive development of their 1,200 acres. This plan was agreed upon through the community's process of consensus governance. It includes areas that are set aside as wilderness, greenways and wildlife corridors as predominantly natural zones as well as areas that are designated for social uses such as parks, wood lots, orchards, fields, holding sites, business sites, trails and driveways and power line cuts.

The setting aside of wilderness areas in Celo Community predates the development of Celo's comprehensive land use plan. In the mid-1980s, Celo worked in conjunction with the state of North Carolina's Department of Natural Resources and Community Development to identify ecologically significant portions of their land and to develop an agreement whereby those pieces of land would be set aside as a Natural Heritage Area that would be recognized by the state and administered by the community. This process was set in motion by one of Celo's members who was trained as an ecologist and undertook to survey the floral and faunal communities that exist within the boundaries of Celo's commonly owned land and share this knowledge with other community members. One ecological community that he identified was an acre of Southern Appalachian Bog, a critically endangered natural habitat type.

Rather than setting aside only the bog, Celo Community chose to include broad buffers for the bog and other ecologically significant areas such as riparian corridors. They designated 300 of their collectively held 1,200 acres as wilderness that would be protected from further development or extractive use. The significance of this is demonstrated in materials produced by the Natural Heritage Program, Division of Parks and Recreation, North Carolina Department of Natural Resources regarding Celo's Natural Heritage Area:

> The presence in excellent condition of a critically endangered natural community type, the Southern Appalachian Bog, makes the Celo Community Natural Area of considerable importance. The Natural Area protects not only the bog itself, but also much of the surrounding watershed, a valuable insurance for the long-term viability of the wetland. [Weakley and Mansberg 1985:1]

The report goes on to note that the natural area contains four Special Status plant species as well as a

> good representation of the forested communities of slopes and floodplains at lower and middle elevations of the Southern Appalachians. Although some parts of the area do not have exceptionally old timber, the protection (provided by the charter of Celo Community) from any future timbering greatly augments the natural significance of the area. Nearly all forest lands in the mountains are destined for timber cutting. [Weakley and Mansberg 1985:1]

Celo's voluntary designation of this wilderness area includes the provision that no timbering will take place on this portion of their land. With the help of representatives from the Department of Natural Resources, they were able to convince the Forest Service to forego plans for logging Forest Service lands upslope from the Celo Natural Heritage Area. Further, in consultation with the Department of Natural Resources, Celo Community developed an active management plan for the bog habitat. In the absence of periodic fire that helps to maintain the bog, woody plants are encroaching on it. To counteract this, Celo's members take one day each year to go to the bog and cut back these encroaching plants. In recognition of their efforts, Celo Community is not required to pay annual property taxes on the 300 acre wilderness area that they have set aside.

However, their ecological awareness and values and their sense of duty as stewards of their land were the driving forces behind the designation of the wilderness area rather than the monetary incentive of a tax break.

Consensus Decision-Making

It should be remembered that all of the endeavors discussed above were agreed to through a collective process of consensus decision-making. Recall that consensus decision-making is a process inspired by the Quakers or Religious Society of Friends, whereby all community members participate as equals in making decisions about community business. This process requires familiarity, trust, cooperation and a sense of egalitarianism. It is a process that is in many ways antithetical to the one man-one vote, majority rule model that predominates in the United States. It is a process that is potentially transformative because it forces the participants to consider the greater common good. Beatrice Briggs, who provides consensus facilitation and training services to intentional communities and other groups, describes the transformative potential of consensus decision-making:

> Today more and more people are disillusioned with "top-down" structures in which a powerful few make decisions for everyone. Even the democratic ideal of majority rule is found wanting because it almost always results in a disempowered minority. All over the world people are seeking ways to discuss and resolve common problems and build a future for their children which is both ecologically sound and socially just. The decision-making process which best supports this intention is called consensus.
> Consensus is the way a group of equals makes decisions. The process rests on the fundamental belief that each person has a piece of the truth. Each member of the group, therefore, must be given space and time in which to speak his or her truth and each must be listened to with respect. On the other hand, individuals cannot be permitted to dominate the group. In consensus, as in ecosystems, each individual rules and is ruled by the larger community. In this web of reciprocal relationships, the beauty and strength of the whole is created. [Briggs 2000:7]

It takes practice, patience and faith in the process to make consensus decision-making work, but when it does it creates stronger community bonds and theoretically results in decisions that are

best for the common good. Consensus decision-making is a fundamental component of Celo's community building process and their efforts to steward their land. However, their efforts in these areas are not limited to official community policies created by consensus.

Sense of Place, Environmental Awareness and Individual Initiative

Celo Community's collective sense of place, environmental knowledge and their efforts to minimize their impact on the land are evident throughout the community. The members of Celo recognize several places within their borders that they regard as sacred, places whose unique ecological characteristics are valued by members as places of respite and sources of beauty, awe and knowledge. One such place is known within the community simply as "the wildflower cove" because it is characterized by a profusion of wildflowers each spring. During my research I heard many anecdotes of trips to the wildflower cove to enjoy and learn about the wildflowers. Sometimes, members would happen to meet at the wildflower cove and join together in an impromptu session of flower identification and knowledge-sharing. Shared community experiences of places such as the wildflower cove are an indication that a community has developed a sense of place and an awareness of the significance of their land and their stewardship of it.

Other projects, undertaken within the community on an individual level, are manifestations of environmental values and, if they were more widespread within our society, would have broad environmental and social justice implications. For instance, many households in Celo cultivate home gardens, share neighboring plots on agricultural commons designated by the community or subscribe to the community supported agriculture farm operated by two community members. Almost all households in Celo are characterized by passive solar construction for energy efficiency and many homes are equipped with photovoltaic electrical

systems for the production of renewable energy on a small scale. Finally, a small number of houses within the community are designed as experiments in sustainable home construction. One home incorporates highly insulated wall and roof panels, a photovoltaic electrical system, a rainwater collection system and a waterless, anaerobic composting toilet among other sustainability features. The home was built in a minimal time frame and on a small financial budget to facilitate easy replication. The community member who designed, built and owns it notes that his "original purpose in this design was to try to achieve a structural design that might serve as affordable housing in third world countries" (interview in Celo Community 9-21-04). All of these activities, from attaining some of one's sustenance locally to inhabiting energy efficient homes, represent the fact that Celo's members are attempting to generate greater awareness of and responsibility for the economy that sustains them. In so doing, they become less reliant on the extraction of natural resources in the context of a global political economy driven by profit rather than concerns with social justice and ecological sustainability.

Most of the initiatives described in the paragraph above are the result of individual endeavors rather than community-wide projects. Celo Community fosters such creativity and individual initiative, but does not insist on it as a part of their overall community vision and values. One could likely identify some sustainability component in the homes and lifestyles of each member of Celo Community, but there is not an explicitly articulated community-wide commitment to sustainability as such. However, Earthaven Ecovillage has taken Celo's utopian visions and cultural critiques a step further by explicitly articulating a community-wide commitment to sustainability. Earthaven has borrowed directly from Celo's models of membership screening, consensus governance and land tenure, albeit with certain modifications. However, in their common commitment to sustainability, Earthaven's members have

incorporated sustainable design practices and technologies into all of their collective and

individual projects within the context of their growing ecovillage.

Sustainability by Design in Earthaven Ecovillage

> It's a cool, blustery day at Earthaven, a young ecovillage settlement nestled into the eastern slopes of the southern Appalachians. Breaking through the rustle of wind in the trees are the sounds of human activity, of people building their common future together, of children at play. In the distance you can hear the Earthaven Forestry Cooperative's portable sawmill cutting lumber from trees felled on the land. This is the sound of liberation. The Coop's sawmill is allowing villagers and neighbors to create shelter, freeing themselves from the clutches of banks and clear-cutting timber barons while keeping materials and money within the village economy. These are radical acts. Should these and other permaculture-based strategies take hold in the larger society, corporate control might someday yield to an empowered, responsible, ecologically literate citizenry. We can hope it will be in time to pull humanity back from the brink of disaster brought on by our own folly.
>
> A major first-generation challenge for the Permaculture movement and one of the main reasons for the creation of Earthaven, is to get enough working systems on the ground that we can make informed choices based on actual experience and begin to model bioregionally appropriate culture for our time and place. Creating and integrating ecologically responsible forestry and agriculture while developing natural building systems that conserve forest health, create jobs and generate renewable energy through good design has proved to be quite an ambitious undertaking. That we are doing all these things while feeling our way toward just and sustaining social and economic relations and maintaining democratic self-governance within a new village context still seems nearly miraculous, the more so the longer we persist. [March 2002:44]

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This is the way that one of Earthaven's founders introduces the community in an article

published in *Permaculture Activist* magazine. It indicates that the community is on a mission to

retake control of the economy that sustains them, to overcome their dependence on a global

political economy that they perceive as unjust and unsustainable. It also indicates that they are

aware of the quixotic nature of the task that they have set for themselves. In the following, I

describe some of the ways in which Earthaven's members are moving towards their goal.

*   *   *

Earthaven's founders came from a diversity of backgrounds, but all were critical of the direction of American society and the social injustices, cultural alienation and ecological degradation that resulted from the global political economy. Working together to develop their vision of community, they shared a utopian striving for a more sustainable culture. They sought to change predominant cultural patterns, to create a new, more sustainable culture amongst themselves, one that could serve as a model and inspiration for others of similar persuasion. As a foundation for this new culture, they adopted some of the fundamental components that characterize Celo's community building process: membership screening, collective land tenure and stewardship and consensus decision-making. They modified these components of community in slight ways to meet their specific needs and desires. These are the types of institutions that Gibson and Koontz (1998), in their analysis of two intentional communities, recognize as necessary for translating shared values into effective action.

Earthaven's members, as was appropriate to their time, brought a more explicit emphasis on sustainability to their community building endeavor than did Celo's members. They envisioned a more self-contained and bioregionally integrated economy that would provide for community needs without recourse to larger, destructive political economic systems. To put their vision into practice they called into service the utopian visions and practical ethical and design principles of the permaculture paradigm. Recall permaculture's three main principles: 1) care for the earth, 2) care for people, and 3) set limits to consumption and reproduction and redistribute surplus. These ethical principles are general guides to Earthaven's development.

In envisioning, designing and building their community, they also aspire to the definition of ecovillage originally articulated by Robert and Diane Gilman. "An ecovillage is a human-scale, full-featured settlement in which human activities are harmlessly integrated into the

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natural landscape in a way that is supportive of healthy human development and which can be successfully continued into the indefinite future" (cited in Dawson 2006:13). Earthaven's members recognize that they have set impossibly high standards for themselves, but they believe it is important to strive for them nonetheless. Keep in mind that, in striving for their utopian vision, Earthaven employs models of land tenure, land stewardship and community governance developed in Celo as foundations. In the following I describe how they are moving beyond these institutions to create more sustainable relationships with the natural economy that sustains them.

Natural and Recycled Building

It's late summer at Earthaven Ecovillage and I'm participating in the permaculture fundamentals course that is co-taught by three of Earthaven's members – Chuck Marsh, Peter Bane and Priscilla Alvin. The first day of the course consists of a day long tour of and discussion about the ways in which Earthaven has manifested their shared sustainability values in their material culture. The instructors and course participants are standing in front of the A&A House, a large structure owned by Priscilla and her sister that serves as an inn for many of the visitors and guests that come to Earthaven.

Priscilla is telling us the course participants the story of the house's construction. She focuses particularly on the fact that 80-85% of the materials that were used in constructing the house were either harvested on Earthaven land or salvaged from various places. The main supports in the house are made out of recycled parts from a bridge that was being torn down in a nearby town. The insulation is blown in cellulose made of recycled newspapers. The oak flooring is made of leftover scrap pieces from a commercial construction job that were destined for the landfill. All the doors and windows were used; they came from buildings that had been either

retrofitted or demolished. The wood siding on the house is from trees that were felled and milled here at Earthaven.

She explains that most of the plywood in the house came from recycled crates that were used to ship frozen fruit juice concentrate. The story of those crates themselves is a fitting example of the reasons that Earthaven's members want to create alternatives to an economic system that they see as destructive and wasteful. The wood for the crates was harvested in Siberia and shipped to South Africa where it was turned into crates and loaded with frozen apple juice concentrate. The crates and the concentrate were then shipped to South Carolina where the receiving company, after unloading the apple juice concentrate, was either burning them or sending them to the landfill. A couple of Earthaven's members were alerted to the opportunity to recycle these crates and retrieved them from the company. Priscilla says that every time she looks at her house, she is reminded of how easy it can be to turn the wastefulness of the global economy into elegant and sustainable solutions.

<p align="center">*   *   *</p>

In the process of clearing their forested land, Earthaven converts its standing timber into building materials. Aside from kiln drying, this conversion process is done almost entirely on Earthaven land by a team of members that organized a cooperative business. Although the business eventually proved unsustainable due to a number of different factors including their collective inexperience and the fact that they attempted to take on too much all at once, the members of the cooperative attempted to engage the entire process from logging, to milling, to the construction of buildings. Although much of the processing of their timber now takes place at nearby facilities not owned and operated by community members, Earthaven still conducts their own logging operations under a sustainable forestry plan. They log in the winter when the

ground is frozen to minimize damage to the forest floor and they avoid logging near streams to avoid disruption of aquatic ecosystems. They fell trees directionally so as to avoid damaging other trees and they replant the areas that have been damaged. Earthaven is also selective about the trees they harvest, choosing to leave the largest, most healthy trees believing that they represent the best genetic stock and the best opportunity for the regeneration of healthy forest habitat.

Earthaven's members have built over 40 buildings on their land using the timber they have harvested as well as other locally harvested and recycled materials. They have trained themselves in traditional and alternative, natural building techniques. For the most part, they have not hired outside labor, preferring instead to learn together, develop the necessary skills and hire each other. Most of the materials they have used to build their buildings have been harvested and, to a large degree, processed on the land that they own together: timber, clay, sand and natural pigments. The construction is of various types: earthship technologies (employing used tires to construct walls), post and beam systems, timber frames, cob, straw bale, wattle-and-daub, clay-straw, earth plasters and living roofs. Many of the buildings they have created are experimental, the first buildings of their kind built in the area. Some of them will inevitably prove to be unstable, but the point is that they are willing to experiment in building techniques in order to become more self-reliant.

Earthaven's attempt to create a vernacular architecture and to develop the skills to build their own homes and community building can have significant environmental and social justice implications. Aside from some necessarily manufactured components such as metal and rubber roofing, glass for windows and electrical wiring, Earthaven's members harvest most of their building materials directly from the land. They fell and mill timber, dig clay and dry adobe

bricks. If they aren't harvesting something directly, they find ways to use recycled materials. The largest building on the land was constructed from waste plywood, recycled bridge components and salvaged fruit juice pallets. Another building's walls consist of old tires. Another community member claims that 90% of the building materials used in constructing his house were harvested on Earthaven's land. Although Earthaven's members have not been able to completely detach themselves from larger political economic structures as they construct shelters for themselves, they have taken considerable steps towards self-reliance. This sort of self-reliance in building means less reliance on destructive corporate producers, less waste and pollution and more local jobs.

Local Food and Agriculture

As you venture into the Hut Hamlet at Earthaven, you will notice an unmistakably large woven bamboo fence. Inside the fence lies a half acre agricultural plot. The portal has been opened. The calls for us to grow more of our own food finally have a chance of being answered. One year ago, we planted the plot in potatoes, some corn, beans, squash, and a handful of vegetables, most of which were eaten by the deer (hence the large fence). We also sowed a large portion in buckwheat to help build soil. We experimented with various fermented teas in large barrels, usually consisting of some combination of nettles, comfrey, urine and deer blood. We fed the potatoes this tea and low and behold we harvested a few hundred pounds! We sold the potatoes to the Hut Hamlet Kitchen, the White Owl, the A&A House, and oh yeah we ate a lot of them ourselves.

So here we are. One year after the first potatoes went in, we've begun to cultivate a larger section. We had greens growing over winter in a hoop house. Garlic in the ground since October and we've since added a dozen or so vegetable varieties and a lot of perennials (strawberries, asparagus, rosa rigosa, blackberries, raspberries, gooseberries, and more) on the perimeter. We have nearly completed our bamboo fence, made of local materials (locust from on the land and bamboo from nearby). Our hope is to slowly integrate a living fence into the existing one.

If you visit the field you will notice that it is divided into two sections. One section has 75 to 100 foot rows of vegetables. The other is in cover crop. The idea is that the cover crop section wil be pasture for a few years, building soil, adding nitrogen, hopefully depleting the weed population. After we feel it is time, we will switch the pasture and vegetable gardens, making the current vegetable gardens the new cover crop area. At this point we don't have any pasture animals ourselves and have been opening it up to Lily and Manuel and their cow and two

sheep. It's been a pretty good system, allowing their pasture to get more established while the animals are munching our yummy rye and clover.

You may wonder about our name. Juanjo is the first two letters of all our names (Julianne, Andre, Joseph). Qualia is a biodynamic term that means aspects of perception. Aside from sounding cool, it applies to the different ways that we can perceive the garden. There is the physical layout with rows and plants and irrigation and compost pile etc. Then there's the realm of the devas or plant and animal spirits whom we give thanks to and ask for guidance from as we go about our work. Then there's the science perception where everything is about nutrient uptake and mineral composition and beneficial insect species and x gallons of water at x pressure to irrigate for x hours. There are infinite levels of perception that we can come up with, and the point is, they are all here, all present. We may spend more time focusing on one or the other, but we recognize the importance of all beings and all viewpoints.

We have decided to use a community supported agriculture (CSA) model as one of our marketing tools. This helps us to ensure that the food will be distributed and that we will get some income from this. The members of our CSA are able to get fresh organic produce from the land. It's a win-win situation. Our hope is to also develop a farmer's market out here on the weekend so that folks who aren't part of the CSA as well as visitors can have an opportunity to enjoy some of this fresh food. In addition, we will be marketing some produce to restaurants and food stores in town.

This year is our first big season, and we only hope to expand. With a lot of perenials in the ground and the fence built, we hope to be able to focus more on the soil and the vegetables in the coming years. Another added benefit will be the new greenhouse that we plan to build this winter in the Hut Hamlet. In addition to being a year round growing space, this will also be a place for us to produce a lot of vegetable starts. We've been experimenting with homemade potting soil mixes and hope to continue experimenting while being able to produce healthy starts for gardens in the community. Other future visions include field expansion to the Northeast with a fruit and nut orchard along the creek, integration of small livestock such as ducks and chickens, and medicinal and culinary herb gardens. [Juanjo Qualia Farm at Earthaven: A Short Description, Bidwell 2006]

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The development of agriculture at Earthaven has proceeded in fits and starts. Although producing much of their own food has always been part of Earthaven's vision, much energy in the early years was devoted to developing appropriate housing and to working out social agreements. However, a number of agricultural projects are underway. A vast diversity of crops, too many to mention here, are cultivated in home gardens and neighborhood agricultural

commons for community consumption and for the local market. Animal husbandry is gaining pace. During my time at Earthaven, I saw the introduction of bees, goats, a dairy cow, ducks, sheep and enough chickens to meet most of the community's demand for eggs. Medicinal and edible plants are both cultivated and harvested in the wild on the community's land. A business owned by a community member converts some of them into tinctures, salves, oils, vinegars and other value-added products for sale or trade in the community and beyond. The community is also integrating agriculture into their larger landscape. Rather than only setting aside distinct agricultural spaces, Earthaven promotes the idea of edible landscaping and forest gardening, mingling low maintenance crops with the natural landscape.

In their agricultural projects, Earthaven's members abstain from the use of chemical fertilizers or pesticides, preferring to enhance their soil fertility naturally with compost and animal and human manures and to cultivate symbiotic relationships among plants that have the desired effect of reducing agricultural pests. The act of obtaining even a portion of one's subsistence within the immediate vicinity of home through organic agriculture represents a reduction in the use of petroleum products for transport and agricultural supplements. It avoids much of the packaging that accompanies food bought at the grocery store. The pirate flag that flies over Earthaven's community supported agriculture plot at Juanjo Qualia Farms, I was told, is a symbol of the radical and rebellious nature of obtaining one's own subsistence close to home in today's corporate dominated world. Although Earthaven is still dependent on outside sources for their sustenance, they make great efforts to support local and regional producers. They frequent local farmer's markets and food co-ops and trade with surrounding agriculturalists.

One might expect that a place such as Earthaven would be overwhelmeingly vegan or vegetarian, but the dietary choices of Earthaven's members are diverse. Earthaven's members are

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all well aware of the energy inefficiencies involved in industrial agriculture and the global food production and distribution system. The caloric inefficiencies involved in the production and consumption of meat is only one reason why some of Earthaven's members have chosen a vegetarian or vegan diet. The kitchen at the A&A house, a large residence that doubles as a bed and breakfast for some of Earthaven's visitors, serves only a vegan menu. Despite the limitations posed by vegan dietary restrictions, the A&A house is renowned for the delicious dishes that it serves up.

The members of the common kitchen in the Hut Hamlet neighborhood share no common dietary restrictions, but they pool their money for groceries. Once a week, the kitchen's designated food buyer travels to Asheville to buy groceries to supplement vegetables, eggs, milk and meat that they obtain from various Earthaven food producers. The food buyer usually makes four or five stops in town: the farmer's market, the local bakery, the Green Life chain organic grocery store and perhaps a local honey producer. The Hut Hamelt Kitchen's stores of basic, bulk supplies – grains, nuts, breads, pastas, cheeses, fruits and vegetables – line the shelves of their pantry, their solar powered chest refrigerator and their root cellar, although they often run low towards the end of the week. The members of the kitchen take turns at cooking and cleaning shifts for their shared dinners at which they come together in a circle of hands to give thanks for each meal. Dinners are usually basic, but balanced; Tim Field's legendary cornbread and Bill Friend's much-loved meat pasta are usually accompanied by vegetable dish or a grain.

The kitchen at Village Terraces cohousing neighborhood common kitchen is home to one of Earthaven's unique dietary schemes. All of the residents of Village Terraces, some of them "reformed vegans," have adopted what they call the primal diet. One of the residents of Village Terraces described the diet to me.

Basically, it's based on an understanding of how our digestive systems have evolved over millions of years and that cooked food, even though we think of humans as always having had cooked food, from an evolutionary perspective, it's a very recent invention. So it's based on eating all raw food. It's a high meat, high fat diet. It's a raw meat, high fat diet. Now there are some adjustments that are made. There are some components that one would argue did not occur in our evolutionary history like juicing. So we're trying to compensate for a lifetime of inappropriate food by doing things that would not have been normal in our evolutionary past. There's a compensatory aspect to the diet. So basically I eat raw meat, raw dairy products – milk, cream, butter, a quart of green drink a day, raw fruits and vegetables and some sauces to help make the meals more interesting – salsas and curry sauces, but it's all raw. [interview in Earthaven Ecovillage 8-15-05]

The person who explained this diet to me is himself a reformed vegan and has made the radical shift from a diet based wholly on non-animal products to one based largely on *raw* animal products. He explained that his health had deteriorated greatly after years of veganism and that the primal diet has been an "absolute miracle" that has given him his health back. The other adherents of this diet make similar claims about improved health. Of course, the people on the primal diet are very conscious about where there food comes from and have spent long hours developing connections with local organic farmers from whom they obtain the raw animal products that they regularly consume.

Alternative, Renewable Energy

I make my way along well-worn foot paths in Earthaven Ecovillage's central Hut Hamlet neighborhood amongst a diverse array of photovoltaic solar panels that provide power for the neighborhood's residents and their shared common kitchen. I cross the creek and follow it upstream past the micro-hydro power mill that produces power for the community's Council Hall and business district where I will later plug in my laptop to check my email via satellite internet. I follow the road up to the Rosy Branch neighborhood where terraced home gardens will soon dot the south facing slopes of this steep mountain valley. I note that one of the

residents continues to make progress on his bio-digester that will turn the neighborhood's sewage into methane gas that will one day power cooking stoves. I note that in the valley from which I have just emerged, two of the community's residents are likely hard at work on the Gateway Agricultural Field where they plan to use livestock and appropriate scale technologies to turn locally produced corn and soybeans into ethanol that will be used to power community vehicles. These are some of the ways in which Earthaven's members are producing electricity for themselves, ways in which they are divorcing themselves from a reliance on unsustainable, mass-produced electricity.

The systems that they are creating to provide electricity for themselves don't always run smoothly. At the Council Hall last night during the Forestry and Agriculture Committee meeting, the lights went out. Further investigation today revealed that the large pipes that funnel water to Earthaven's micro-hydro electrical generating station were clogged with silt. The high stream flow from recent heavy rains apparently muddied the streams quite a bit, clogging the filter that is supposed maintain stream flow to the turbine. Combined with the fact that a solid week of cloudy and stormy weather has made it impossible to charge the batteries connected to Earthaven's photovoltaic systems, the community is running low on electric power to say the least. We conducted the rest of the meeting by candlelight. Such is the nature of life in an off-grid community; the residents are subject to the whims of nature.

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All of Earthaven's buildings are required to be oriented for passive solar gain. This usually means that they are built on south facing slopes with large southern exposures that allow the buildings to absorb the sun's energy when it is low in the sky during the winter. Thus their homes are heated naturally rather than through the use of fossil fuels. Earthaven is also entirely

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"off grid" meaning that they do not utilize any mass-produced energy for their electricity needs. Rather, Earthaven's power is supplied by small scale photovoltaic electrical systems that transform the sun's energy into electricity. Earthaven's business district, Council Hall and one residential neighborhood receive electricity that is generated by a micro-hydro generating station that uses a small turbine to transform the inertia of flowing water into electricity. This system uses a series of pipes that divert a small portion of stream flow rather than relying on the construction of a dam that would entirely impede the stream's course.

Despite their best efforts and intentions, Earthaven is still largely reliant on petroleum for transportation and large construction projects. However, several members' cars have been converted to run on biofuels and there are two solar powered golf carts that are used for transportation within the community. Batteries for some power tools are charged using the photovoltaic and micro-hydro generating systems and Earthaven's most prominent construction team has converted a big box truck that they use as a portable tool shed to run on biodiesel. They use its alternator and a large solar panel mounted on the roof to charge a large bank of batteries that provide power on their construction sites. Finally, two of Earthaven's members have developed a plan for an integrated agriculture and biofuels production system that will be discussed further below.

Water Harvesting and Waste Recycling

It hasn't rained for over seven weeks at Earthaven. While the batteries for the photovoltaic systems are fully charged from all the days of sunshine, the flow of water from the springs that supply Earthaven's water is slowing and the tanks that store that water for future consumption are drawing low. Earthaven's color coded community water system has been on code red for the last three weeks. That means no unnecessary water use and strict conservation

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measures, including no bathing. Earthaven's swimming hole has been getting quite a work out; I'm here for the second time today and it's crowded. Most of us haven't showered for three weeks, but we're having fun. We just did a rain dance.

<p style="text-align:center">*   *   *</p>

Earthaven's members obtain their drinking, cooking and bathing water in one of two ways. A community built water system supplies many of the households and neighborhoods with water from highly productive springs. The community has constructed a community-scale, gravity fed water system that pipes water from a spring at a high elevation on community land down to a 10,000 gallon ferro-cement tank that sits atop a lower hill from where it is piped to several neighborhoods below. Households not connected to this system rely on roof water catchment or individually tapped springs. Earthaven's members are extremely conscientious of their level of water use and have developed a community-wide, color-coded system to coordinate it. During periods of drought or low spring flow, water use is reduced sometimes to the point of substituting a dip in the stream for bathing until they judge that there is sufficient rainfall to continue more normal, but still conservative water use.

Earthaven makes an effort to recycle greywater through constructed wetlands. Water from the showers, sinks and bathtubs flows through a series of gravel bed and reed ponds in order to filter out soap residue and food grease. The effectiveness of this system is evident in the aquatic flora and fauna that reside in the bottom pond from whence it seeps back into the aquifer. Thus Earthaven is not drawing down ground or surface water reserves at the rates that predominate in the surrounding society. Nor are they releasing pollutants back into the water system, only to be dealt with by people downstream.

The absence of flush toilets at Earthaven is a characteristic of significant note to many visitors. Earthaven utilizes composting toilets to recycle solid human waste for eventual use as fertilizer on fruit and nut trees. The composting toilets are of varying complexity, some consisting only of an elevated wooden outhouse perched over a barrel and others of more "luxurious" enclosed double-seater construction with sealed composting chambers below. Each load of human waste is covered with a sprinkling of sawdust and allowed to compost for a significant period of time before it is used. This form of fertilizer is highly valued within the community. One community member, describing the difference between Earthaven and "the outside world" commented to me that a major difference was that "we fight over who gets to use our poop" (interview in Earthaven Ecovillage 5-13-05).

Despite Earthaven's best efforts they still produce a significant amount of solid waste from consumer products and construction projects. During my time there, I performed a portion of my community service by partnering with one long term member to take charge of the community recycling center in the Hut Hamlet neighborhood. We typically hauled away one small truck bed full of recyclables per month. Although there is a strong effort to compost and recycle, Earthaven does subscribe to a trash service that hauls away up to six large trash cans full of trash each week. This may sound significant, but it should be remembered that over 60 people (including long term visitors) reside on Earthaven land and utilize their trash and recycling services. Whereas it is an accepted practice for most in the United States to send their trash out of sight and out of mind, it is a point of considerable embarrassment for Earthaven members. Two community members created a significant community-wide conversation when they calculated the amount of trash that was being hauled away and informed the community about the volume of trash they were producing. Although Earthaven has not created entirely closed-

loop systems to treat their waste, they are all aware that their waste does not just go "away" and

that they must continue to make efforts to reduce the waste and pollution they create.

Alternative Currency

> Leaps are Earthaven's alternative currency. They are a means to facilitate the exchange of labor and goods within our community. Ideally, they will allow us to prosper by creating our own economic system, which can flourish without being dependent on the global/industrial economy. [Earthaven Ecovillage 2005b]

> Community currencies are unmistakably a critique of the conventional monetary system. ... Community currencies belong together with a cluster of movements, local in organization and cosmopolitan in outlook, each of which tries to implement a practical reorganization of a particular set of globalized structures. ... Community land trusts, co-housing and eco-villages, community shared agriculture, alternative credit and financing arrangements, worker-owned enterprises, energy and transportation alternatives are being invented concurrently with community currencies ... all promoting local self-reliance, community economic revitalization and ecological sustainability, all sharing the strategy of creating parallel institutions and complementary in their design for re-localization, together [amounting] to a wide-ranging program for self-protection of communities and systemic change. [Raddon 2003:23-24]

Alternative currency systems, like Earthaven's Leaps system described in chapter nine,

have a long history. As alternatives to the industrial capitalist monetary economy they date back

to the Robert Owen's Equitable Labour Exchanges of the early 20th century and the local scripts

that came into use during the Great Depression. These scripts were employed as means of

keeping economies functioning on a local scale and keeping families fed and employed during

economic downturns. They are seen as community building mechanisms that exert social

regulation over economic activity. Those who employ them see political economies not as given,

natural, apolitical entities but "social constructions with a morality that is negotiated, created and

reproduced through economic activity" (North 2006::6). Thus, Earthaven's Leaps system is a

challenge to the moral ideologies inscribed in the global capitalist political economy, an

alternative that puts sustainable local development and ecological values ahead of an abstract

financial bottom line. Earthaven's alternative currency system is an attempt to manifest an economy that is "run by slower, local, community rhythms, rather than those of a globalised market working according to Adam Smith's instrumental rationality and a global division of labor" (North 2006:6).

Since the late 1980s, over a thousand alternative community currency systems have been started in countries around the world. Some have grown from necessity in economically depressed areas while others have arisen as direct challenges to the predominant economy. Their transformative potential is real for they have been stamped out by governments and their corporate patrons where they have become most successful and thus threatening to predominant economic models (Raddon 2003). Were alternative currency systems like Earthaven's Leaps to become more widespread, they could lead to vast political economic transformations, to the relocalization of economies, decentralization of power, the establishment of strong community bonds and potentially to the more just and sustainable use of natural resources (Raddon 2003).

The Gateway Vision:

Demonstrating and Perpetuating a Local Synergy of Economy, Ecology and Technology

Two Earthaven members have convinced the community to support them in an ambitious, but well-detailed plan to combine crop agriculture, animal husbandry, biofuel production and local economic development into a largely closed loop, locally integrated system on over five acres of Earthaven land. The initial stages of this plan – clearing five acres of forested land, processing the wood and constructing a barn – were only beginning to take shape during my time at Earthaven, but an overview of the scheme is encapsulated in the following quotation:

> Economically viable import substitution is the great untapped potential of Earthaven Ecovillage. If manifested, it will provide much needed employment to

support increased membership that will facilitate infrastructure development, while simultaneously reducing our dependence on unsustainable food and fuel supplies and increasing circulation of money within the community. We can create a village-scale agricultural economy to achieve this that also satisfies our basic needs (food, energy, fuel, shelter, etc.) using local resources, community labor and existing technology. [Fields and Friend 2005]

Earthaven's members recognize that, while they have made significant progress towards their goals, the community is far from self-reliant or sustainable. They have not yet succeeded in creating a village scale economy. They are still dependent to a significant degree upon the global, industrial, capitalist political economy of which they are all so critical and to which they seek to develop alternatives. If the Gateway Vision were realized, and it remains to be demonstrated that it is even feasible, Earthaven will have taken significant steps in the direction of viable, sustainable alternatives. The community members who developed the Gateway Vision are recognized as two of the most intelligent, hardest working and most committed Earthaven members. They have put a tremendous amount of passion, research and physical and intellectual energy into the development of this plan. The document they have created and circulated to the community provides a clear and concise overview of their plan for creating a sustainable, village-scale, agricultural economy. As such, and as this plan is a direct manifestation of Earthaven's current and ambitious attempts to develop political economic alternatives, I have included an illustration that they created to represent their plans as they existed during 2005 as appendix 2.

Part of Earthaven's utopian vision is to provide a demonstration center for a more sustainable way of living. The Gateway Vision and other projects described herein are components not only of their utopian community building endeavor, but also of their attempt to demonstrate more sustainable alternatives to the wider world. In responding to its cultural critiques and utopian goals, Earthaven is constantly evolving, developing new institutions,

practices, and components of its physical infrastructure that serve as more sustainable alternatives to their mainstream counterparts. They invite the public to observe and participate in their endeavors. Through their website, Earthaven offers a variety of ways, including weekly tours, short classes, and long term internships and work exchange programs, through which interested parties can learn more about their utopian endeavors and community building projects.

Chapter 12

CONCLUSIONS: UTOPIANISM, CULTURAL CRITIQUE & SUSTAINABILITY:

ENGAGING THE TENSION BETWEEN THE REAL AND THE IDEAL IN

CONTEMPORARY INTENTIONAL COMMUNITIES

To the extent that we consume, in our present circumstances, we are guilty. To the extent that we guilty consumers are conservationists, we are absurd. But what can we do? Must we go on writing letters to politicians and donating to conservation organizations until the majority of our fellow citizens agree with us? Or can we do something directly to solve our share of the problem? [Berry 1990:177]

We cannot do this alone, but it must be a partnership of trust in human communities bound by covenants that favor life over material accumulation, that favor dignity for members of the community and the pleasures of taking care of each other, and nature, as the highest good. We need to re-conceptualize our relations with each other, and with nature – and to think of human agents as organic parts of nature. [Moran 2006:8-9]

This is not a process that can be described in terms of "the whole of society" but rather as something that concerns first and foremost local and regional communities, perhaps the construction of unforeseeable reticular structures through cooperation among groups. It is not a teleological project (moving people towards a pre-determined direction) but one which recognizes people's agency and learns how to foster and co-move with them. [Escobar 1993:28]

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These quotations bring us back to the utopian nature of the sustainability challenge. They suggest that fundamental changes are required if the challenge of overcoming the tension between rhetoric and practice with regards to sustainability is to be met. Further, they suggest that these changes will have to come from within communities and the individuals that inhabit them rather than through any sort of top-down program. In helping to usher these changes along, the best that scholars can do is to collaborate with communities to help them make the changes

that they believe are necessary as they move toward sustainability. In the process they might have something to teach us; they might reinvigorate our theory building and make it more practical. Below, I review the ways in which Celo and Earthaven have moved toward sustainability in response to their cultural critiques and utopian visions. I locate these broad conclusions within the theoretical contexts in which I have understood and developed them. I end by suggesting that further, collaborative research with such communities might be a fruitful way forward and by considering how some of the issues I have raised remain unresolved and require further research and analysis.

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This research reveals that human agents can take deliberate and fundamental action in the world to create cultural change. It shows that they are able to do so even when confronted by the hegemonic and increasingly global ideologies and institutions of the capitalist political economy. This process of creative resistance is necessarily utopian and is manifested, in this case, in the form of contemporary, sustainability-oriented intentional communities and the ongoing process of developmental utopianism. Building on recent theoretical developments in the communal studies literature, this research asserts that these communities can be understood as forms of cultural critique that are similar to, but more powerful than, the forms of critique inherent in the process of producing anthropological knowledge about other cultures. They gain their increasing emancipatory power because they move beyond intellectual processes of epistemological demystification and cross-cultural juxtaposition. These communities are engaged in the practice of constructing alternative value systems and the socio-cultural, political economic and technological institutions that translate those values into action. In the process of confronting the tension between the real and the ideal, the efforts of contemporary, sustainability-oriented

intentional communities are of increasing relevance to current social and environmental problems and should be of great interest to anthropologists and other interdisciplinary scholars concerned with contributing to solutions to those problems.

Intentional community building is a phenomenon of socio-cultural resistance with a deep and cross-cultural history. It stretches back over 2,000 years and is defined by (1) a deliberate coming together (2) of five or more people not all of whom are related (3) in a geographic locality (4) with a common aim to improve society through conscious social design (5) that involves some degree of economic, social and cultural sharing or cooperation. It is defined by intentional, collective endeavors to experiment with new cultural models in response to critical evaluations of the cultural forms that are characteristic of the predominant society. The endeavors of intentional communitarians must be understood and evaluated not based solely on the efforts of individual communities but rather through the process of developmental utopianism evidenced in the foregoing account of Celo and Earthaven. This is an ongoing process of utopian striving through which one community may innovate and lose some of the force of its utopian striving only to have its creations picked up and built upon by newer communities.

Intentional community building has been most prevalent in the nations of the Global North where people have sought ways to respond to changes wrought by the development of industrial capitalist political economies. In intentional communities, they have responded by joining together to live according to values different from the short-term, economic ideologies that predominate, to create small-scale cooperative or communal political economic institutions and alternative production and consumption rationalities. These endeavors are increasingly and explicitly directed at creating more just and sustainable patterns of social organization and behavior, especially with the ascendance of the global ecovillage movement since the early

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1990s. Contemporary, sustainability-oriented intentional communities are characterized by a global awareness of ecological degradation and social inequities that prompts local action. This local action, as it is manifested in the forms of economic relocalization and intentional community building, attempts to ameliorate these problems and simultaneously create more fulfilling personal and social lives. These communities are learning from and building upon the successes and shortcomings of past communal societies in order to make themselves more enduring social entities and to construct institutions that will result in more ecologically sustainable and socially just human economic behavior.

Interdisciplinary theorizations of intentional communities have increasingly moved toward a revaluation of the utopian struggles of intentional communities, toward an appreciation of their relevance to contemporary issues. Interdisciplinary scholars have typically described intentional communities as utopian in nature, but they have disagreed as to the relevance of such utopian undertakings, their ability to successfully address the problems they set out to confront, and their utility as sites for social science research. Marx and Engels and other early theorists of intentional communities dismissed them because they believed that they represented a mere divergence in the evolutionary development of larger social forces that were moving toward the perfection of human society. However, contemporary theorists are more appreciative of the comprehensive and adaptable nature of intentional communities as movements for social change. They recognize them both as individual social experiments and as interconnected networks of human agents. They suggest that their utopian endeavors can be understood as a collective manifestation of the human will to confront, and gradually overcome, the tension between the real and the ideal.

This research builds on recent theorizations of intentional communities, most prominently the work of Pitzer (1989), Schehr (1997) and Brown (2002), to suggest that they are of increasing relevance to contemporary social and environmental problems and of increasing utility to social scientists wishing to engage with potential solutions to those problems. It uses comparative ethnographic research in two contemporary intentional communities to test, modify and, ultimately, confirm and extend the utility of their theoretical understandings of intentional communities. Pitzer held that intentional communities should not be looked at as isolated phenomena that could be evaluated as successes or failures based on the temporal extent to which they maintained their communal arrangements. Rather, he asserted that intentional communities should be conceptualized through a process of developmental communalism whereby their efforts must be understood within the wider contexts of culture, history and communitarianism. Pitzer's concept of developmental communalism suggests that communal social organization is a tool for creating change, but that such communalism need not be maintained for communities to be judged a success. Indeed, insistence on the strict maintenance of communal organization may even impede progress. If intentional communities are to be evaluated at all it should be based upon the ways in which their members believe that they have been successful and the effects that such communities have within larger movements for change, even as the communities themselves shed their more communal forms or dissolve altogether. Building on Pitzer's insights and taking them in a slightly different direction, I have demonstrated that intentional communities are involved in a process of developmental utopianism whereby the utopian efforts that characterize the early stages of community building often lose their force even as the original utopian visions remain manifest in alternative models that still characterize the community. As the process continues beyond the original community,

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these models are picked up and built upon by newer communities where the force of utopian striving has not been diminished through the practicalities of their confrontation with the tension between the real and the ideal.

Schehr suggested that conventional social movement theorizing has proved inadequate for understanding intentional communities. This is because the efforts of intentional communities are not attempts to create overt political change at the level of the state as social movement theory predicts. Nor are they surreptitious acts, the hidden transcripts of the disempowered that Scott so lucidly articulated. Rather, intentional communities seek more fundamental and emancipatory change in cultural processes and institutions as they are enacted in everyday life. Through seeking to take control of the forces that determine one's life, by making taken-for-granted cultural logics and institutions explicit and confronting them, intentional communities manifest the inherent power of human agency. These efforts do not fit within neat theoretical boxes or dominant narratives of resistance. Schehr suggests that the utopian endeavors of intentional communities be viewed not as transgressions but rather as manifestations of the inherent power of juxtaposition and the attempt to confront the tension between the real and the ideal. I have suggested that these are the sorts of endeavors that are of fundamental significance to the utopian challenge of sustainability. Following the arguments of interdisciplinary scholars and international documents, I have suggested that sustainability will not be achieved through predominant political channels but rather at the basic cultural levels where intentional communities act in the process of utopian striving. Schehr's articulation of the ways in which intentional communities work for change, especially when viewed in combination with the work of Brown, helps to point the way to the transformative potential of utopian community building and to situate this potential relative to the utopian challenge of sustainability.

Brown defines intentional communities as a form of cultural critique similar to those that Marcus and Fischer suggested are implicit in much of anthropological knowledge production and ethnographic writing. That is, intentional communities manifest critical deconstructions of dominant ideologies and institutions that serve to demystify the power structures that are served by particular dominant discourses and taken-for-granted modes of behavior and social organization. Further, intentional communities, through cross-cultural juxtaposition, through the construction of ideologies and institutions that differ from those that characterize the predominant society, reveal that alternative and equally valid forms of cultural logic and institutionalized behavior are possible. As Marcus and Fischer suggested in their appeal for ethnographies of cultural critique, these forms of cross cultural juxtaposition differ from the anthropological strategy of rhetorical cross-cultural juxtaposition because they involve the active construction of alternative cultural forms within the bounds of the society that is the object of critique.

Through a comparative, ethnographic analysis of Celo Community and Earthaven Ecovillage I subjected the theoretical constructions of Pitzer, Schehr and Brown to empirical examination and extended their theoretical and practical relevance. I showed how Celo and Earthaven are, in fact, forms of cultural critique as Brown suggested. They are places where deconstructions of predominant ideologies and institutions have led to attempts to manifest and demonstrate alternative systems of norms, values and institutions for guiding human behavior. As these alternative systems are created within the society that is the object of critique, they manifest cross-cultural juxtapositions that demonstrate how intentional experimentation and utopian community building can generate culture change. As such, intentional communities are more powerful than the intellectual cultural critiques promulgated by anthropologists from the

armchair in the academy. Intentional communities are engaged in the practice of cultural change, an active confrontation with the tension between the real and the ideal in everyday life that is not available to intellectual cultural critics. This "checking" of the dominant realities against alternative possibilities is what Marcus and Fischer suggested we look for when they called for ethnographies of cultural critique.

As Schehr suggested, these cultural critiques, these forms of utopian striving, are potentially transformative and emancipatory. Further, these forms of cultural critique are engaged in not only by the subaltern, but by the elite and the bourgeoisie who have an inside view of hegemony and of their complicity in and subjugation to dominant ideologies and institutions that lead to social inequities and ecological degradation. As they explicitly strive to create more just and sustainable socio-cultural forms, these forms of cultural critique are of increasing relevance to attempts to overcome contemporary social and environmental problems. Such utopian cultural critiques, critiques that center sustainability as an ideal, should be of increasing interest as social and environmental problems become more urgent.

Finally, these cultural critiques are manifested in the form of developmental utopianism, a process that is similar to the process of developmental communalism proposed by Pitzer. That is, individual intentional communities, as forms of utopian cultural critique, are never able to entirely overcome the tension between the real and the ideal that they attempt to confront; they are never able to entirely achieve their utopian visions. Their utopianism and cultural critiques fade in the face of a variety circumstances, changes and opportunities that arise over time as they confront the practicalities of daily life at the disjuncture between the real and the ideal. Even so, they are able to manifest partial ideological and institutional alternatives to the objects of their critiques. Their utopian cultural critiques and the alternative forms that they enable are, in turn,

picked up and built upon by other intentional communities and other change agents whose utopian cultural critiques are the product of different times. As such, intentional communities have long-lasting effects beyond their specific borders even as the explicit utopianism of individual communities fades.

Developmental utopianism as a frame of reference allows us to understand the ways in which the force and focus of utopian striving in intentional communities alters or changes in response to broader circumstances, opportunities and challenges posed by historical events and influxes of new members into the community. In this view, intentional communities are no longer to be evaluated as successes or failures based only on the degree to which they achieve the original utopian vision. The lens of developmental utopianism shifts the frame of analysis to broader movements and historical forces within which intentional communities and their individual utopian visions are only single components. Developmental utopianism recognizes that achieving a completely transcendent utopia is impossible, but it also acknowledges the transformative and emancipatory potential of the ongoing process of utopian striving that play out across the generations, historical eras and the boundaries of individual intentional communities. Utopian striving is seen as a manifestation of the potential of human agency, a potential that is always somewhat constrained by larger cultural, historical and material forces even as it is partially successful at generating cultural change.

Empirical verification of these ideas emerges from an examination of the data I collected in Celo Community and Earthaven Ecovillage. Comparative analyses of each community's history, the ways in which they represent themselves, the ways in which their members explain their motivations for joining the communities as well as analyses of the institutions and common practices of each community reveal forms of utopianism and cultural critique. These utopian

cultural critiques have led to fundamental action in the world, to the development of alternative systems of norms and values and the institutions that put those norms and values into action. Further, even as the force of utopian cultural critique in Celo Community has faded over its 70 years of existence, the institutions that it developed to put its utopian cultural critiques into action have been built upon by Earthaven Ecovillage as it embarks on its own intentional community building endeavor guided by a utopian vision that has a desire for a more just and sustainable world at its heart. This is the process of developmental utopianism at work.

In Celo Community, intentional community building was a response to the cultural critiques and utopian visions of Arthur Morgan, members of the Religious Society of Friends and people involved in the back-to-the-land movement. Morgan believed that modern, industrial, capitalist society was leading to the deterioration of small communities which he asserted were fundamental to human moral development, cultural evolution, and democratic society. He had a utopian vision of the small community as a locus for human cooperation and the development of mutual responsibility for the common good. He attempted to put this vision into action through the founding of Celo Community and other model communities elsewhere. The Quakers who joined Celo Community in its early years were critical of a society that was engaged in war and oppression, a society that valued materialism and led to the development of vast human inequities. Their utopian vision was of a society of simplicity, peace, and egalitarianism, one in which all individuals were politically empowered, one imbued with a certain degree of non-dogmatic spirituality. The back-to-the-landers who came to the community later were similarly critical of materialism and the rhythms and pace of an urban, competitive society. They sought a life that could be lived closer to the natural world that is the source of human sustenance, one that would be more slow and simple.

Celo Community became a place where these cultural critics came together to develop institutions and practices that would translate their values into action and put their utopian visions into practice. They developed a community that was defined by a process whereby both the extant community and potential members engaged in a mutual process of self-selection to ensure a continuity and congruence of values amongst themselves. They developed unique institutions of community governance through consensus decision-making such that they could all agree on the way their common values would be translated into action. One way that they put their values into action was through the development of a unique form of land tenure that discouraged speculative and exploitative relationships with the land. Through collective land ownership they encouraged, instead, commitment to community and place as well as simplicity of lifestyle. They institutionalized their values of land stewardship in the form of rules and norms mandating that they develop and use their land in an ecologically sensitive manner. They also created a supportive community context for people who wished to move beyond these agreed-upon minimums in order to create livelihoods that would be in congruence with their social and ecological values.

However, in the process of utopian striving and intentional community building, Celo's members have faced challenges and changing circumstances that have made the original utopian vision unreachable or at least forced a reassessment of it. In the early years of the community, community members were unable to create a functioning and effective communal economic enterprise because of their collective inexperience, the vagaries of nature and the market and disagreements among themselves as to how labor was to be valued. Later, five familes departed for the Bruderhof and two others defected and took their landholdings with them. These defections left the community with such a small population that they were forced to consider

procedures for dissolving the community. Subsequently there was an almost complete turnover in membership and the new members that came to the community did not share the same utopian vision as the community's founder and its original members. A new vision of the community emerged as a result, a less completely transcendent vision that focused mainly on land stewardship and cooperative community governance. In recent years, some of the longstanding community members and some of Celo's new members seem to have lost sight of the original grand utopian vision that underpinned Celo's founding. They recognize that the community was intended to be an experiment, but many of them are content with the community's stability and the limited alternative models it has developed.

Celo Community may have diverged from the original intentions that Arthur Morgan set for it. They did not develop a communal economy that enabled them to divorce themselves from the ethical conundrums that accompany involvement in the larger, competitive political economy of industrial captialism. They did not manage to separate themselves entirely from the wider world so as to create a completely transcendent model community. They did not create utopia. For this, Hicks labeled Celo Community a utopian failure. As indicated previously, I take issue with Hicks' assessment of Celo Community as a failed utopia. I hold that Celo's shift from a broader social vision to a more narrowly focused environmental stewardship represents not the dwindling of a grand utopian dream, but rather a manifestation of the process of developmental utopianism whereby grand utopian visions are tempered by the challenges posed by the confrontation with the tension between the real and ideal. On the road of utopianism, practicality and unforeseen circumstances create detours and lead to only partial utopian destinations. However, in its practical endeavors, Celo is still fundamentally grounded in the same institutions that Hicks said characterized Celo Community's utopian orientation. As I have demonstrated,

Celo's use of land stewardship as a socially binding principle has much broader implications than one might expect if one looks only at the surface discourse of environmental stewardship. Indeed the institutions of collective ownership of land and the governance of commonly held land through consensus decision-making represent the sort of community based efforts that the concept of sustainability indicates are necessary. They manifest ways to avert the tragedy of the commons by making an understanding and appreciation of one's relationship to the commons central to social life. Celo's political economic institutions differ in fundamental and important ways from those that characterize the predominant society.

Earthaven has grown from the utopian visions and cultural critiques inherent to the permaculture, bioregional and global ecovillage movements. In the process of building their ecovillage, they are compelled by their critiques of a materialistic and hierarchical culture and guided by their utopian visions of a more just and sustainable society. All of these movements articulate a utopian vision of society defined by cultural values, political economies and technologies that situate people closer to the natural and material world that sustains them. They suggest that humans are an integral part of the natural world rather than separate, superior entities. They hold that humans are dependent on the continued integrity of functioning ecosystems and the continued flowering of biodiversity. In doing so, they envision more ethical, efficient, cooperative and responsible political economies, political economies that are defined and constrained first and foremost by their social and ecological contexts rather than more abstract concerns with a financial bottom line.

In acting on their cultural critiques and putting their utopian visions into action, Earthaven's members found that the institutional models of community governance, land tenure and land stewardship developed by Celo Community during its early years when Celo's

utopianism was strong provided an appropriate foundation from which to start their utopian endeavors. Now they are seeking to develop further values and practices that will enable them to move forward with their vision of creating a local economy that is regionally self-reliant and a culture that functions in a holistically sustainable manner. These values and practices are manifested in various activities of material self-reliance, simplicity and cooperation that are engaged in throughout the community. These include natural and recycled building, ecologically sensitive forestry, local agricultural production, the production of renewable energy, reduced consumption, waste recycling, the use of alternative currency, and the development of integrated agricultural, political, economic, ecological and technological systems on a local scale.

Earthaven has not achieved its goals of creating a village-scale economy or a holistic, sustainable culture. Earthaven's members, like Celo's members before them, are beginning to face the recognition that fully realizing the utopian vision of their community is likely to be impossible within their lifetimes. A slight tempering of their utopian idealism is indicated in their comments, in the cynicism and frustration that some of Earthaven's members expressed as they discussed with me their motivations for joining the community and their progress towards their goals. As many of Earthaven's members told me, their ability to transcend "the dominator culture" is obstructed by the fact that they have all brought the "cultural baggage" of the dominator culture through the door of their community with them. This impedes their progress toward their utopian vision and the goals it encapsulates.

Indeed, it is not likely that Earthaven's members will ever entirely achieve the goals contained in their utopian visions. What does this suggest about Earthaven Ecovillage's utopian community-building efforts? Will they too one day be regarded as utopian failures? My interpretation is that this should not, and indeed cannot, be the case. Celo, Earthaven and other

communities like them are of greatest interest for their deliberate attempts to strive for utopian visions, their willingness to experiment and to fail in their attempts to achieve them. Having lived amongst them, I can attest that their endeavors entail no end of experimentation, compromise, failure, and outright contradiction, often leading to frustration and to cynicism. Earthaven will no doubt, like Celo before it, alter its course from its original stated idealistic – utopian – intentions. The force of utopianism and cultural critique will likely fade at Earthaven as they have at Celo. But this should not be interpreted as a utopian failure, for just as Celo provided models for Earthaven to build upon, so will Earthaven serve as an example for future utopian efforts towards achieving more just and sustainable models. This is the process of developmental utopianism, an ongoing process through which interconnected networks of active human agents build upon the efforts of previous actors in continued attempts to confront the tension between the real and the ideal. This ongoing process is essential if we are to meet the utopian challenge of sustainability.

The members of both Celo and Earthaven recognize the incompleteness of their cultural critiques and utopian strivings, the impossibility of entirely overcoming the tension between the real and the ideal. During my time in Celo Community, I heard frequent reference to the "Celo country club syndrome." This was an acknowledgment of a tension that some of them felt between the original ideals that had been set for the community and what the community had actually become. They recognized that the community had been started as an experiment, an endeavor to live one's life more fully according to particular ethical considerations, to particular social, political and environmental concerns. They felt that to an extent, the community had become apathetic, that they had grown too comfortable in enjoying the benefits of the

community, that they were no longer experimenting or sharing the fruits of their experiment with others so that they might learn from and enjoy them as well.

Similarly, some of Earthaven's members recognized the contradiction between the goals that they had set for themselves and the way they were actually proceeding with their daily lives. As we were on our way to the recycling center one day, one member of Earthaven characterized the ecovillage as "America's largest permaculture-based landfill." This comment reflects the fact that, despite their efforts, they still live a largely consumerist lifestyle, one that produces a great deal of refuse and pollution. They cannot seem to complete the changes they seek soon enough and in their frustration they express cynicism and doubt about the community. The point, however, is that they are willing to examine, debate, and address their shortcomings and disagreements, keeping in sight goals and values that are broader than immediate, individual, economic self-interest and continue to strive for them. Earthaven's members, despite emergent cynicism and frustration, are still motivated by utopian visions, still enamored of Earthaven's transcendent potential.

This expressed tension between the real and the ideal suggests to me that contemporary, sustainability-oriented intentional communities might be promising sites for academic research. These communities should be sites of fundamental interest to anthropologists and other scholars interested in contributing to emancipatory solutions to contemporary social and environmental problems. We can examine not only what these communities have accomplished through cultural critiques and utopian endeavors but what they have left undone, how they might go further. We can provide measures of the extents to which they have achieved their goals and work with them to suggest ways that they might move closer to them. At least we can do so where these communities are open to such collaboration and such input.

I did not attempt to measure how sustainable Earthaven was or what effects Celo's efforts at land stewardship have had, but these might be components of future research projects defined in partnership with intentional communities. Such collaborative projects will necessarily be interdisciplinary and participatory in nature, allowing the communities' goals and visions to guide the research. At the same time, they will employ a variety of cross-disciplinary tools with the aim of empowering communities to achieve their goals. Simultaneously, they will demonstrate to others how some have proceeded and, to a degree, succeeded in pursuit of their goals. Such participatory, interdisciplinary and collaborative projects would be immensely valuable as intentional communities seek to become more effective in attaining their goals, as sustainability-oriented intentional communities seek to become more sustainable. As we develop collaborative research projects to examine utopianism and cultural critique in other endeavors and other cultural contexts, each initiative will inevitably take on different characteristics and adopt different metrics. Such endeavors, to be truly emancipatory and counter-hegemonic, must be appropriate to particular people, times, and places, to particular historical, cultural and ecological contexts. Such encounters with utopianism and sustainability will require us to change the way we go about our research, but they might enable us to navigate some of the epistemological and methodological challenges we face as we seek emancipatory solutions to the sustainability challenge.

Developmental Utopianism and Cultural Critique:

Unresolved Issues and Further Research

My conclusions about the relationship between utopianism and cultural critique and regarding the process of developmental utopianism will benefit from further research and theoretical analysis. As I have demonstrated, the vast majority of communal studies scholars

have integrated the concepts of utopianism and cultural critique; they suggest that utopianism and cultural critique are coterminous processes. The suggestion is that utopian striving is based on critical examinations of the dominant reality and subsequent attempts to construct a better world. My analysis of Celo Community, in part, suggests that there are other possibilities. Many of Celo's current members did not invoke explicit cultural critiques in explaining their decisions to join the community. Instead they pointed to characteristics and possibilities in the community that they found desirable, ways in which joining the community enabled them to live according to their values. This suggests that utopianism, the desire for a better world, may not always involve explicit cultural critique. Perhaps utopianism can work in the opposite direction; a glimpse of a better world might lead to critiques of the existing one. Sometimes people may simply know what is appealing to them when they see it and take advantage of the opportunity to participate in it. Or perhaps utopian visions are simply grounded in a faith that humanity is evolving towards a better state and that current imperfections are an inherent component of this evolutionary process. Further research on intentional communities and other utopian endeavors will shed greater light on the relationship between utopianism and cultural critique.

Whatever the case may be, it appears that utopianism necessarily involves some sort of comparison, either implicit or explicit, between the current state of affairs and alternate possibilities, possibilities that may already exist or that may only be glimpsed by looking to the future or to the past. In analyzing Celo Community and Earthaven Ecovillage, I have shown how utopian visions and cultural critiques underpinned the founding of each community. I have suggested that, as Celo progressed through the process of developmental utopianism, the force of those utopian visions and the cultural critiques that accompanied them has faded; for members that came to Celo in its later decades utopian visions and cultural critiques were not as salient

components of their decisions to join the communities as they were for the founder of the community and its early members. In contrast, all of the members of Earthaven, a community that has only just begun its utopian journey, invoked cultural critiques to explain their decisions to join the community. People need not be motivated by cultural critiques to join Celo even though its institutions, stable and mature as they are, do represent significant alternatives to dominant cultural forms. On the other hand, it appears that Earthaven's utopian vision is still more forceful and its striving for cultural change more intense. Thus, the people that join Earthavne in its early years are more likely to be compelled by explict cultural critiques or strong utopian visions.

This suggests to me that the process of utopian striving can be at least partially successful as people work to develop alternatives to the ideologies and institutions of which they are critical. People who came to Celo during its more recent decades were drawn there because they saw that the community provided a context for a life that they saw as desirable. They were not necessarily motivated to join the community by explicit cultural critiques, but rather by an inherent and, perhaps, implicit comparison with the wider society, a comparison through which Celo's established institutions and the alternative values they enact were seen as attractive options. Even though Celo's original utopian vision was not entirely achieved, the community, through the hard work of its earlier members, has manifested successful alternative cultural models that have become attractive options for people who may not fashion themselves utopians or cultural critics. The fact that Celo has successfully generated cultural change even though the community did not fully attain the original vision of its founder and early members is a part of the process of developmental utopianism.

This process of developmental utopianism that I have suggested demands further research and analysis. Pitzer's articulation of the concept of developmental communalism, from which I derived the concept of developmental utopianism, has proven useful as it has been discussed, debated and elaborated within the community of communal studies scholars. Pitzer's edited volume, *America's Communal Utopias* (1997), gathered together works by a number of leading scholars in this community who used the concept of developmental communalism to reexamine and generate more enlightened understandings of a variety of historic intentional communities. My articulation of developmental utopianism is based largely on a comparative ethnographic study of only two contemporary intentional communities. Studies of other intentional communities and intentional communities movements might confirm or refute the concept of developmental utopianism. Or perhaps they will suggest that my articulation of it should be revised.

Brief reference to a small number of works produced by communal studies scholars and utopian communitarians seems to suggest that the concept of developmental utopianism has some validity. For example, Spiro's most recent analysis of the Israeli kibbutzim (2004) reveals the diminished utopianism that characterizes the current state of these communities. Spiro shows how the people who started the kibbutzim in the early decades of the 20th century based their community building endeavors on grand utopian visions grounded in Zionist ideology, visions that enabled them to create rather successful alternative models of cooperation, communalism and self-reliance in a difficult social and environmental context. However, as the Israeli state has developed and as new generations of kibbutzniks have arisen, the original utopian visions are no longer as salient or desirable and, as a result, the communities are changing. Contemporary kibbutzim are becoming more privatized, individualized, and materialistic. But the kibbutzim

survive and provide lessons for other, newer communities including a new group called the "Green Kibbutz" movement that is affiliated with the Global Ecovillage Network and their vision of ecologically sustainable communities.

Kinkade's insider account of Twin Oaks intentional community, *Is It Utopia Yet?* (1994), lends further credence to the concept of developmental utopianism. Kinkade explains how the community was founded in 1967 with a high degree of utopian idealistic intentions inspired in large part by literary utopias such as Bellamy's aforementioned *Looking Backward* (2000[1888]) and Skinner's *Walden Two* (1948). Kinkade describes how the community's "utopianism" and "idealistic passion" were tempered by the challenges of creating the community's institutions and material culture and incorporating new community members. In pursuing their utopian vision, community members "squandered time and energy in projects doomed to failure" and argued with each other over their goals and visions and the ways in which strictly adhering to them compromised their ability to attain the practical necessities of daily life (Kinkade 1994:11).

In the end, the community managed to create a variety of innovative and alternative cultural forms, but did not ultimately attain their original vision. "Walden Two idealism is nothing now but a quaint and somewhat embarrassing part of our history. What we created instead is a sturdy, modestly prosperous, self-governing community with no one ideological name tag beyond 'egalitarianism'" (Kinkade 1994:13). Reflecting back on the first twenty years of Twin Oaks community Kinkade concludes that achieving utopia is impossible, but that that conclusion does not invalidate the prospect of utopian striving. "Obviously Twin Oaks isn't Paradise. ... Ordinary mortals can't create Paradise. We can, however, strive for Utopia. Never mind that we haven't quite got there yet. We're working on it" (1994:308). Kinkade also points to the fact that Twin Oaks' utopian striving has provided a foundation for other intentional

communities, including the neighboring Acorn community, that are joined together as the Federation of Egalitarian Communities in their commitment to striving for egalitarianism.

A final piece of evidence that supports the idea of developmental utopianism comes from The Farm intentional community via a short account written by one of its former members. Rhine describes the original utopian vision that motivated The Farm's founding in 1971 and explains how and why it was unattainable.

> Part of The Farm's original vision was to build a village for a thousand people using alternative energy systems that were economically and ecologically responsible. We believed that we could design a graceful standard of living which would be attractive to large numbers of First World people, while also being within reach of all Third World people. [Rhine 1998:157]

However, The Farm's vision was more expansive than these designs for right and sustainable livelihood. It included the intention to create their village based on an entirely communal and egalitarian economic system while also sending many of the community members to various parts of the country and the world to do relief and social work projects with the world's most disadvantaged people. Rhine relates that The Farm's utopian vision was too grand and that the community spread itself too thin, ultimately resulting in massive defections from the community and fundamental changes in The Farm's political and economic structures.

> Many of the people who had been in on the original vision were tired of living in a crisis-management state of mind, with systems constantly breaking down because they weren't built right in the first place. It was frustrating because we knew how to do it right; we just didn't have the resources. [Rhine 1998:157]

The Farm's utopian idealism faded as a result of the challenges it faced in the pursuit of its utopian vision. Many of the community members left, the community changed from an economically communal entity to one based on private, individual incomes. Some of the relief and social work projects that community members were involved in were abandoned. However, The Farm survived in altered form and continues to function to this day. In fact, it, like

Earthaven Ecovillage, has become a significant node in the Global Ecovillage Network, offering courses designed to empower people to create ecovillages and sustainability-oriented intentional communities in the places where they live. In doing so, The Farm makes available to others the hard lessons it learned in the course of its utopian striving.

Each of the cases cited above describe intentional communities whose original utopian visions have been tempered and changed by the challenges they faced during the course of their utopian community building endeavors. Each community was forced to face the fact that they would not fully achieve their visions, but they each persevered as well. They have all managed to create some of the changes they originally sought even as they adopted new goals and visions that were more practical and achievable. Each of these communities has also inspired newer utopian community building projects that are aspiring to create a more just and sustainable world. While each of these new communities will likely also face challenges that force them to moderate their utopian idealism, they may create more transcendent models by using the lessons and models provided them by previous intentional communities that have already confronted the tension between the real and the ideal.

This seems to me to be an area where we as academics can contribute. Those of us concerned with contemporary social and environmental problems can analyze and accumulate the lessons learned by people who have committed themselves to confronting the tension between the real and ideal that lies at the heart of the sustainability challenge. We might then make our databases, analyses and conclusions available to new generations of utopians and intentional communitarians striving to address the challenge of sustainability so that they can be more effective in their utopian endeavors. Academic theorizing can be invigorated by engaging with and analyzing real world situations in which people are struggling to generate cultural

change and manifest the greater common good. In turn, it is possible that their endeavors might be invigorated and made more effective by academic analyses of their efforts, especially if their perspectives and goals are incorporated into our research designs and projects. Such a symbiotic relationship appears to be a win-win situation; but beyond that, such collaboration is absolutely essential considering the immensity of the challenges that humanity faces in the coming decades.

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APPENDIX A: ETHNOGRAPHIC INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

This is an interview with ____ at ____ on ____.

1. Would you start by telling me about this place/house that we're in now? I like to begin by learning a little bit about the place in which one lives within the community.
2. Now I would like you to go back in time and tell me about your life. Can you start by telling me about where you grew up?
3. Can you describe your family background and your upbringing?
4. Where did you go to high school? To College? What did you study?
5. What did you do after school?
6. What were you doing/where were you living directly before you came to Celo/Earthaven?
7. Were there any particular life experiences from the story you just told me that led you to seek an intentional community lifestyle?
8. A main part of what I am trying to understand is your motivations for joining the community, what it means to community members to be part of an intentional community. Can you describe/summarize your reasons for joining Celo/Earthaven and the decision making process that you went through?
9. What most attracted you to Celo/Earthaven? Or, so you would say that ____ are the reasons you came to Celo/Earthaven?
10. Land stewardship/permaculture design appears to be a fundamental component of Celo/Earthaven. Does this seem accurate? Why are these principles important to you? Or why not?
11. What would be the ultimate ideal outcome of you decision to join the community?
12. Do you think you would join another intentional community if you weren't a member of Celo/Earthaven?
13. If someone else was considering joining Celo/Earthaven, what sort of goals, values, or characteristics would be important for them to have?
14. What kind of person wouldn't want to be involved in a community like this?
15. Why are other people coming to Celo/Earthaven? Are their motivations similar to your own?
16. Why do people leave Celo/Earthaven?
17. When you describe Celo/Earthaven to someone who is unfamiliar with it, what do you say?
18. What distinguishes Celo/Earthaven from mainstream American society? In what ways is it similar?
19. What is the most fundamental challenge or problem that Celo/Earthaven faces?
20. What is Celo's/Earthaven's greatest success or accomplishment?
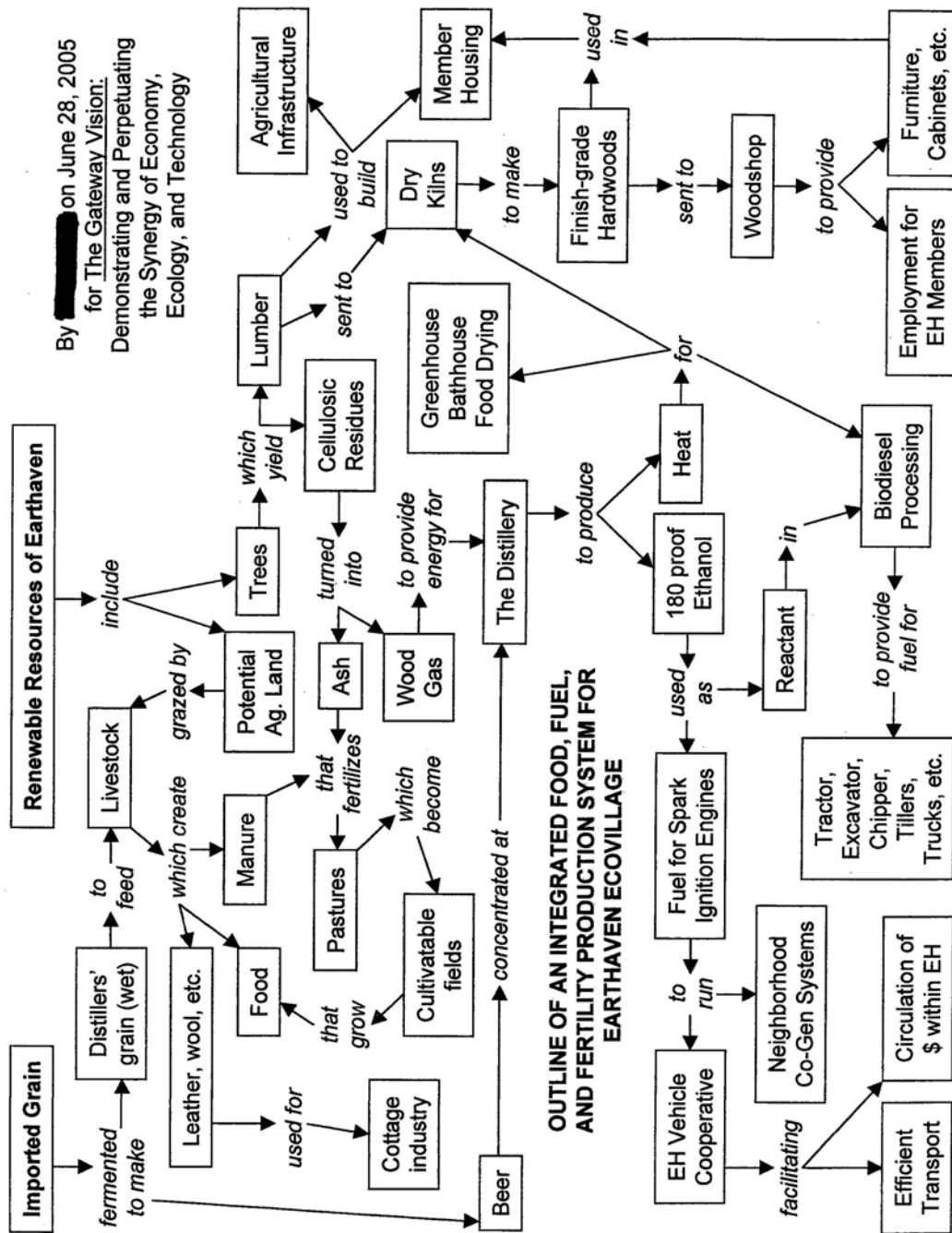21. Is there anything else that you would like to add?
22. Do you have any questions for me?

Figure 5: Illustration of the Gateway Vision