BUILDING RESISTANCE FROM HOME: ECOVILLAGE AT ITHACA AS A

MODEL OF SUSTAINABLE LIVING

by

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Because of the personal, social, economic, and environmental impacts of material

consumption, resistance is afoot. The creation of new places is a tool used by those

resisting the negative aspects of consumer culture. One example is the ecovillage: an

intentional community whose members strive to live in a socially and environmentally

sustainable manner, to practice voluntary simplicity, and to cultivate meaning, life

satisfaction, and fulfillment. This research involves a case study of EcoVillage at Ithaca,

located in New York, the goal of which is to create a model of sustainable living that is

appealing to mainstream America, reduce the ecological footprint of inhabitants and

increase meaningful relationships within the community. Through its educational mission

and accompanying outreach, EcoVillage at Ithaca models an alternative to middle-class,

mainstream American culture. EcoVillage at Ithaca's impact beyond the lives of the

individual residents demonstrates its effectiveness as a space of resistance to consumer society.

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This thesis is dedicated to the idealists, who may be accused of being naïve; to the change-makers, who may be told their pursuits are futile; to the unaware, who may need to be told of another way; and to the pessimists, who may need to be shown rather than told.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

An increasing sense of dissonance between our sense of our own values and ethical standards and the behaviors that we are forced to adopt through participation in consumer culture leads to the drive to find new ways of relating to the world around us. The rise of a movement that is concerned with the social and ecological consequences of the industrial/capitalist system reflects the emergence of new ways of thinking about the world and our place in it. The ecovillage movement represents the most radical expression of this movement towards reworking the self-world relationship. This is to be achieved through the creation of an alternative space in which the prescriptions and proscriptions of the dominant culture are excluded in favor of values that represent what has been termed a "new environmental paradigm." An emphasis on supporting sustainable practices such as organic agriculture, bioregional initiatives, recycling, and the practice of voluntary simplicity, flies in the face of the consumptive and globalizing force represented by the dominant social mode (Kirby 2004).

This research involves a case study of EcoVillage at Ithaca (also known simply as EcoVillage), an ecovillage using the cohousing model. Broadly, ecovillages are deliberately-created communities whose members strive to live in a socially and environmentally sustainable manner, to practice voluntary simplicity, and to cultivate meaning, life satisfaction, and fulfillment (Bonnette 2004; Kirby 2004; Svensson in Jackson and Svensson 2002). The goal of Ecovillage at Ithaca, as understood by residents, is to create a model of sustainable living that is appealing to mainstream America, while at the same time reducing the ecological footprint of inhabitants and increasing meaningful relationships within the community. Kirby (2004), in "Domestic Protest: The Ecovillage Movement as a Space of Resistance," identifies the ecovillage as

an everyday space that represents an alternative to consumer society, using "the spatial arrangements of its built form" to promote connections among residents and their environment. In this document, I will explore the degree to which EcoVillage can be understood as a space of resistance and EcoVillage residents can be understood as activists.

Resistance to the ills of consumer culture, including the negative personal, social, economic and environmental impacts of material consumption, can take many forms. Harvey (1989) and Sharp, Routledge, Philo, and Patterson (2000) hold that the dominating power of the capitalist political economic system has not only infused the American built environment, but also continues to play out across space and in places. Confronting either the built environment or capitalism necessitates confronting the other (Harvey 1989). As a result, according to Cresswell (2004), Harvey (1989), Pickerill and Chatterton (2006), and Pile and Keith (1997), place, and the creation of new places, can be an important tool used by those resisting the ills of consumer culture.

In this document, I will begin with an introduction to the relationship between capitalism and the built environment, and the various personal, economic, and environmental impacts of material consumption as structured by capitalism. The work of Marx and Engles (1848 & 1844), Gunder Frank, Heilbronner (1988), O'Connor (1998), Sawyer (1988), and Shannon (1996) will be instrumental in illustrating some of the economic impacts of material consumption. I will draw from the work of Goss (2004),

Billig (1999), Etzioni (1999), Stearns (2001), and Kasser and collaborative authors
(Arndt et. al. 2004a; Brown and Kasser 2005; Kasser 2002; Kasser and Ryan 1993, 1996;
Kasser et. al. 2004; Sheldon and Kasser 2001) to illustrate the negative social, cultural,
and personal impacts of material consumption as structured by capitalism. Using the
work of Foucault (1978, 1984); Harvey (1996, 2000); Cresswell (2000, 2004); Pile and
Keith (1997); Sharp, Routledge, Philo, and Patterson (2000); and Pickerill and Chatterton
(2006), I will then investigate the following theories: power and resistance, 'geographies
of resistance' (which include many spaces of resistance), and 'autonomous geographies'
(which are concerned specifically with the everyday spaces of resistance in the lives of
activists). I will draw from the works of these and other authors throughout this document
and these ideas will be synthesized in the concluding chapter.

Following a description of my qualitative methods research of EcoVillage at
Ithaca, I will conclude with an investigation of the thoughts of EcoVillage residents
regarding the role of both individuals and the EcoVillage itself in contesting consumer
culture and modeling an alternative. I will argue that although the individual residents do
not necessarily consider themselves activists, EcoVillage itself is an activist space and
can be considered a space of resistance to consumer society. This is important because it
demonstrates that EcoVillage at Ithaca is not simply a comfortable lifestyle choice for
residents, but has transformative impacts beyond the EcoVillage itself.

Ecovillages

Ecovillages are one type of intentional community. Kozeny (2005a) articulates that intentional communities are created based on a dream of a better life, a life that incorporates something that is apparently missing in mainstream culture. Meltzer (2005) provides examples of many types of intentional communities, such as Kibbutzim, religious/spiritual and egalitarian communities, American communes, student co-ops, cohousing, and ecovillages. Specifically, as mentioned above, ecovillages are deliberately-created communities whose members strive to live in a socially and environmentally sustainable manner, to practice voluntary simplicity[1], and to cultivate meaning, life satisfaction, and fulfillment (Kirby 2004). Most simply, an ecovillage can be defined 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 (Gilman 1991).

There are 375 ecovillages in the world and 85 in the United States (Global Ecovillage Network 2007). By and large, ecovillages in the United States are a distinctly white, middle-class endeavor (Kirby 2004). Ecovillages aspire to perhaps an unattainable ideal. However, they have been identified by Kirby (2004), Pickerill and Chatterton (2006), and

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[1] Voluntary simplicity, one component of ecovillage living, has three components: (1) the rejection of consumerism, (2) the cultivation of spirituality, and (3) the ability to freely choose this lifestyle. A person does not have to live in an ecovillage to practice voluntary simplicity. You will notice the similarities between the definition of voluntary simplicity and that of the ecovillage.

other academics as an everyday space that represents alternative to consumer society.

According to Bonnette (2004), they are touted as strong models of activism.

EcoVillage at Ithaca

In July of 2007, I traveled to EcoVillage at Ithaca, located on the West Hill of Ithaca, New York, to conduct qualitative research. EcoVillage's mission statement reads:

> The ultimate goal of EcoVillage at Ithaca is nothing less than to redesign the human habitat. We are creating a model community of some five hundred residents that will exemplify sustainable systems of living – systems that are not only practical in themselves, but replicable by others. The completed project will demonstrate the feasibility of a design that meets basic human needs such as shelter, food production, energy, social interaction, work and recreation while preserving natural ecosystems (EcoVillage at Ithaca Mission Statement 1994).

As stated above, the goal of EcoVillage, as understood by residents, is to create a model of sustainable living that is appealing to mainstream America, while at the same time reducing the ecological footprint of residents and increasing meaningful relationships within the community.

In 1990, founders Joan Boaker and Liz Walker had vision for an ecovillage based on McCamant and Durrett's (1988) book *Cohousing: A Contemporary Approach to Housing Ourselves.* Cohousing is a design style that is meant to facilitate community interaction. McCamant and Durrett (1994:17), who are credited with bringing the idea of cohousing to the United States, hold that "based on democratic principles, cohousing developments espouse no ideology other than the desire for a more practical and social home environment." Typically, there are several common characteristics shared by

cohousing communities, including resident participation in planning and design process; a design that encourages interaction among residents, including shared pathways with no cars allowed inside neighborhoods; common facilities, including a common house with a kitchen for common meals; self-governance, usually consensus decision-making; and small houses. These characteristics are believed by cohousing proponents to have many benefits, including the opportunity for greater access to resources and services as a result of the combination of various community members' interests and skills; less pressure on individuals and families, less monetary expenditure, less need for transportation, and smaller ecological footprints; and child-friendly environments resulting from their pedestrian-friendly nature and their community support networks. Boaker and Walker were inspired by these characteristics and supposed benefits. Eventually EcoVillage did use the cohousing model to design and build their two existing neighborhoods.

In 1991 Boaker and Walker held an envisioning retreat and in 1992 they gained nonprofit status, purchased 176 acres in Ithaca, New York, and began the planning of the First Neighborhood Group (FROG). FROG, which includes 15 duplexes, was constructed between 1995 and 1997. The residents were intimately involved in the collective design process. During this time the Second Neighborhood Group (SONG) was in the planning stages. SONG, which also includes 15 duplexes, was constructed between 2000 and 2003. In this neighborhood, the residents each designed their own custom home and some participated in building their homes, as well. Currently, EcoVillage is planning its Third Neighborhood Group (TREE).

EcoVillage currently has 60 homes housing approximately 170 people. Fifty-five acres are held in a conservation easement by the Finger Lakes Land Trust, including the privately-owned organic community supported agriculture (CSA) Westhaven Farm. There is also a privately-owned CSA you-pick berry farm. Each neighborhood has its own common facilities, including a common house for shared meals, community gardens, shared laundry facilities, and playgrounds. EcoVillage has common facilities shared by all residents, including the infrastructure (roads, water and sewage pipes, and electricity delivery), a pond (used for fire suppression and recreation), a sauna, and treed land used for hiking and cross country skiing. The neighborhoods and the village use consensus decision-making and voluntary work teams, but the nonprofit uses a typical board of directors voting strategy. All the homes incorporate various green building, renewable energy, and energy efficiency technologies, such as passive solar construction, photovoltaics, solar hot water, rainwater capture, the use of regional and/or recycled materials, strawbale construction, super-insulation, and shared boilers.

Research Questions and Answers

In this case study of EcoVillage at Ithaca, I will explore the following research questions:

1. To what degree is EcoVillage at Ithaca a space of resistance to the ills of capitalism and consumer culture?

2. To what degree do the residents of EcoVillage at Ithaca interpret their choice to live there as an activist act of resistance?

3. How are these different scales of resistance, at the EcoVillage and resident level, related?

These questions are important because they help illuminate whether EcoVillage at Ithaca is simply a comfortable lifestyle choice for residents, or has transformative impacts beyond the EcoVillage itself.

I will argue that EcoVillage has emergent properties that result from a combination of resident participation in community building and maintenance, the use of an architectural style that facilitates community interaction (cohousing), the reduction in the ecological footprints of individual residents as a result of resource sharing, and the scaling-up of local action that results from EcoVillage's educational mission to model sustainable culture to mainstream Americans. As a result of these emergent properties, EcoVillage (the *place* itself) is the unit of resistance to capitalism and the ills of consumer culture, rather than the individual residents. The inhabitants, although themselves not actively resisting, are along for the ride.

I came to this conclusion for several reasons. A person's decision to move to EcoVillage is not, in itself, a single, defined, political act of resistance against capitalism, consumer culture, or their ills. People moving to EcoVillage are, for the most part, seeking fulfillment (i.e. a greater sense of community, reduced alienation, addressing

personal and family needs), as opposed to addressing these larger structures, processes, and dynamics. However, these two things are not contradictory. It is, in fact, how resistance happens. People seek an alternative to the status quo and create a space of resistance incidentally, often a involving their everyday activities. The creation of a space of resistance does not have to be an articulated manifesto. And so, the choice to live at EcoVillage results in resistance.

Again, these questions are important because they help to illuminate that EcoVillage at Ithaca is not simply a comfortable lifestyle choice for residents, but has transformative impacts beyond the EcoVillage itself. There are numerous impacts of material consumption as structured by capitalism, including economic, environmental, social, cultural, and personal. If ecovillages are going to help lead the cessation of these impacts, both the residents of the world's ecovillages and those emulating these models must understand the ways in which their individual lifestyle choices can be harnessed to facilitate sweeping social change. Because of its educational outreach, EcoVillage has the potential to have a broad impact in this regard.

Capitalism and Consumerism

My research is under-girded by the understanding that patterns of material consumption in the United States, and other industrialized nations, are structured by capitalism, the dominant political and economic system. These consumption patterns have associated economic, environmental, social, cultural, and personal impacts across

the globe. The economic impacts of material consumption include the concentration of wealth and dominating power in the hands of the world's upper echelon, and an increasing wealth gap between the world's rich and poor. This inequitable distribution of wealth and power occurs not only within countries, but between them as well (Heilbronner 1988; O'Connor 1998; Sawyer 1988; Shannon 1996). The environmental impacts of material consumption include global climate change, deforestation, natural resource depletion, air and water pollution, biodiversity loss, and the list goes on.

The social, cultural, and personal impacts of the capitalist political economy include (but are not limited to) impacts on consumers, such as commodity fetishism, alienation, and materialism. Commodity fetishism describes the process by which consumers dismiss the impacts of their consumption choices on those people who actually produce the products, as well as impacts on the environment. Some now argue that commodity fetishism fosters the derivation of consumers' senses of personal identity through consumption (Goss 2004). Under late capitalism, some argue that alienation and commodity fetishism are reciprocally reproduced. No longer the owners of the means of production, people are no longer defined by what they 'do'. Rather, they are increasingly defined by what they consume. This increases the strength of the link between personal identity and consumed commodities (Billig 1999).

The idea that through material consumption, people search for fulfillment, meaning, happiness and identity is not new (Billig 1999; Stearns 2001). However, there is

a growing body of literature describing the ways in which consumers' ability to derive

satisfaction from consumption actually decreases with each incremental increase in

consumption, excluding the poor (Etzioni 1999; Myers 2004; Stearns 2001). Tim Kasser

and collaborative authors are the most prolific social psychologists studying this

relationship between materialism and well-being. These authors describe the negative

personal, psychological, and environmental impacts of materialism, understood as being

oriented towards external goals, including the pursuit of money, fame, image, power,

possessions, status, popularity, and attractiveness (Kasser 2002; Kasser and Ryan 1993,

1996; Kasser et. al. 2004; Sheldon and Kasser 2001). These authors debunk a

fundamental assumption of the 'American Dream' with the understanding that striving

for external goals does *not* deliver happiness (Kasser and Ryan 1993, 1996; Kasser 2002;

Kasser et. al. 2004). These strivings instead diminish well-being, damage interpersonal

relationships, reduce quality of life, and promote the overconsumption of resources,

among other things (Kasser and Ryan 1996; Kasser and Sheldon 2000; Kasser 2002;

Kasser et. al. 2004). Conversely, a focus on intrinsic values promotes greater personal,

social, and ecological well-being (Arndt et. al. 2004a, Brown and Kasser 2005; Kasser

2002; Kasser et. al. 2004; Sheldon and Kasser 2001).

Resistance

Because there are so many negative consequences of the way we organize

ourselves socially under the current capitalist, political, economic system, there have

been (and continue to be) myriad attempts at multiple scales to resist it and to find

alternatives. Cresswell (2000) argues that resistance is the use of power to change one's life circumstances. According to Sharp et al. (2000), because power and resistance both take place across space and in places, these entanglements of power and resistance are spatial, and indeed, geographical. Geographers and others have been attentive to the ways in which resistance plays out through space and in place.

In *Geographies of Resistance*, Pile and Keith (1997) examine the ways in which the reorganization of material space can be understood as resistance. They are concerned particularly with the ways in which those resisting forms of domination can exercise power through the reorganization of material space. Examples such as communes and religious enclaves demonstrate this use of a particular place as a form of resistance against the ills of capitalism (Cresswell 2004).

Insights

With this understanding of the impacts of material consumption as structured by capitalism, as well as theoretical attempts to explain resistance to these impacts, I will now briefly outline some of the results and conclusions of my case study. Though only a preliminary summary of the document that follows, this overview demonstrates that the creation of a space of resistance does not have to be an articulated manifesto. The choice of individual residents to move to EcoVillage is an act of resistance, even if residents are not politically active or completely committed to EcoVillage's mission.

Residents understood EcoVillage at Ithaca to be an educational model for mainstream America, demonstrating an alternative to consumer culture. Residents may have more sustainable lifestyles as a result of living at EcoVillage, but are nonetheless required to maintain a mainstream existence with mainstream employment. In general, residents felt that although they may not be politically active, they were making a difference that has impacts beyond EcoVillage itself. It is this impact beyond the lives of the individual residents that I argue allows EcoVillage to be understood as a space of resistance to the ills of consumer culture rather than simply a comfortable lifestyle choice for residents. Through its educational mission, and accompanying outreach, EcoVillage at Ithaca *is* having an impact beyond the lives of the individual residents, however limited. Therefore, it can be considered an effective space of resistance.

This means that EcoVillage, as a space of resistance, has transformative impacts beyond the EcoVillage itself to the broader structures, processes, and dynamics that are dictating social, economic, and environmental life in the United States and other industrialized nations. Granted, this impact may be limited to certain audiences. However, by understanding the ways in which spaces of resistance can scale-up their impact, ecovillage residents and would-be ecovillagers can more effectively harness their individual lifestyle choices to support and encourage widespread social change. EcoVillage at Ithaca provides one solution to the ills of capitalism and consumer culture.

CHAPTER II

LINKING CAPITALISM, CONSUMERISM, WELL-BEING,

AND VOLUNTARY SIMPLICITY

My goods, in order to be mine *and to be enjoyed as such, must be separated from the bodies which have created them. I must not imagine those strange hands which once touched my precious possessions, including those which now lie next to my skin. My sense of possession would be diminished – as well as my good consuming self – if I took seriously those dark, busy fingers, working in conditions far removed from the life-world of my playful self. These anonymous fingers, no matter how many more hours they labour, will never be able to touch in a gesture of ownership a coat, car or table like mine. They will never have a self like mine... My memory can include the production of my self through my consumption; I can tell stories of how I acquired the means to be my present self. But, I have little or nothing to say about the production of my jealously owned commodities. I will not even inquire what continents have contributed to these goods or what languages were spoken by those who laboured to bring me my pleasures... All thoughts like these are to be pushed from the happy consciousness (Billig 1999:319 – 320).*

Patterns of material consumption in the United States, and other industrialized nations, are structured by capitalism, the dominant political and economic system. These consumption patterns have associated economic, environmental, social, cultural, and personal impacts across the globe. Capitalism as a global system results not only in environmental degradation, increased inequality, increased poverty, increasingly concentrated and differentially applied power, but also social, cultural, and personal costs (Heilbronner 1988; O'Connor 1998; Sawyer 1988; Shannon 1996).

These social, cultural, and personal costs include impacts on consumers, such as commodity fetishism, alienation, and materialism. I use these terms to describe the ways in which through the devaluation people and the increased valuation of things found under capitalism, people dismiss the impacts of the consumption choices they make in search of personal identity and fulfillment (Goss 2004). However, there is a growing body of literature describing the ways in which consumers' ability to derive satisfaction from consumption actually decreases with each incremental increase in consumption (Etzioni 1999; Myers 2004; Stearns 2001).

Understanding the impacts of material consumption will help to illuminate some of the possible factors motivating people to create alternatives to consumer capitalism. In this chapter, I will draw from neo-Marxist theories to briefly outline some of the economic, environmental, social, cultural, and personal impacts of material consumption. I will then briefly discuss one response to the impacts of this material consumption: voluntary simplicity.

Economic Impacts

The economic impacts of material consumption result from the capitalist global political economy. These impacts include the concentration of wealth and power in the hands of the world's upper echelon, an increasing wealth gap between the world's rich and poor, increasing inequality, and increased poverty. This inequitable distribution of wealth and power occurs not only within countries, but between them as well, as

described by Dependency Theorists and World System Theorists. Theories of monopoly capitalism explain the role of Multinational Corporations (MNCs) in this concentration of power and wealth. In addition, theories of uneven and combined development expand this conception of siphoning wealth and power to explain how capitalism as a global economic system results not only increasingly inequitable distribution of resources, but also in environmental, social, and cultural degradation (Heilbronner 1988; O'Connor 1998; Sawyer 1988; Shannon 1996).

The Development of Underdevelopment

In the chapter "Capitalism as Regime" of his book *Behind the Veil of Economics: Essays in the Worldly Philosophy*, Robert L. Heilbroner (1988) assesses the accumulation of wealth that occurs in a capitalist system. The purpose of this wealth is unique in history: exchange, represented by commodities. He argues that because some people (Marx's 'labor') do not have access to private property (Marx's 'means of production'), they must access that owned by others (Marx's 'bourgeoisies') in order to earn a living. The owners of private property will profit from this exchange (Marx's 'surplus'), and profit necessarily depends on this imbalance in economic standing (Heilbroner 1988; Marx and Engles 1848 & 1844). Heilbroner (1988:40) argues that "what is of the essence under capitalism is that gains from whatever origin normally accrue to the owners of capital, not to workers, managers, or government officials." 'Capitalism as a regime' is apparent in this concentration of profit within an upper echelon. As a result, there is an

increase in inequality, and a widening gap between the rich and the poor within the capitalist society.

Heilbroner (1988) argues that capitalism generates pressures on 'internal' and 'external' factors. 'Internal factors,' altered by the mandate to seek profit and accumulate wealth, include increases in competition and commodification. 'External factors' can be categorized as macroeconomic, as the commodification mentioned above expands beyond the capitalist society itself, and brings profit-seeking with it. Internationally, this results in "strength at the Center [a.k.a. core] to which surplus is siphoned, and weakness in the Periphery from which it is extracted", which is termed the "development of underdevelopment" (Heilbroner 1988:55). This siphoning results in an increase in inequality, and a widening gap between the rich and the poor, both 'outside' and within the global political economy that is ever transitioning towards capitalism, absorbing those 'outside.' This review helps to illuminate the poverty and inequality that results from the expansion of capitalism.

Dependency Theory and World Systems Theory

World Systems Theory (WST), as described by Thomas R. Shannon (1996) in *An Introduction to World Systems Perspective*, draws from the ideas of Marx, Weber, and Dependency Theorists in responding to modernization and structural-functionalism, the driving theories behind global capitalist expansion. WST draws significantly from Dependency Theory, as defined by Andre Gunder Frank and Amin (Shannon 1996).

Dependency Theorists seek to explain "…the limited progress peripheral countries have made in achieving economic development and general modernization" (Shannon 1996:15). Not only is the imperialistic relationship between the core and periphery exploitative, it is contrived, manipulated, and reinforced to maintain the quality of that relationship. Profits flow from the periphery to core corporations and "the outcome of this pattern of trade is that peripheral countries can never earn enough from their exports to cover the costs of their imports and then to invest in a broad-based program of industrialization" (Shannon 1996:16). Peripheral poverty and dependence on the core is perpetuated through export of raw materials and agricultural products, the appropriation of cheap labor, and the strategic provision of aid and loans. This process, the "development of underdevelopment," was also described by Heilbroner (1988), as discussed above (Shannon 1996). WST theorists hold that "…the economic organization of the world-system consists of a single, worldwide division of labor that unifies the multiple cultural systems of the world's people into a single, integrated economic system" (Shannon 1996:24). The role of the state, then, is to maintain the social class stratification within these systems, which in turn maintains an environment conducive to the productive activities of capitalists. This analysis illustrates not only the poverty and inequality resulting from capitalism, but also the concentration of power in the hands of certain players.

Combined and Uneven Development

'Combined development' describes the process in which the choice of geographic location for MNCs is based on the location of the most profitable combination of political and governmental climate, labor surplus, labor and environmental regulations, and other resources. The most profitable location is one that welcomes an influx of capital via relaxed labor and environmental protections, among other things (O'Connor 1998). In "Theories of Monopoly Capitalism," Malcolm C. Sawyer (1988) argues that MNCs that own and manage enterprises in multiple countries "…weaken the power of workers and thereby lower wages and/or raise the intensity of labour" (Sawyer 1988:67). Because of the reduction in competition between domestic and foreign corporations, monopolies increase. Sawyer (1988) explains that 'monopoly capitalism' theorists (who attempt to understand the oligopolistic behavior of corporations within the capitalist system, the development and progression of that behavior, and its micro- and macro-economic implications) reject the idea that MNCs increase competition, welfare, or economic efficiency. Rather, MNCs extend their own power, while reducing that of workers and national governments. Thus, power is increasingly concentrated in the hands of fewer and fewer MNCs and this power is exercised differentially across the globe.

In the chapter "Uneven and Combined Development and Ecological Crisis," of his book *Natural Causes*, James O'Connor (1998) stresses the impacts of combined development on resource extraction and pollution. As workers are pulled to industrial regions, environmental, labor, health and safety regulations diminish, while exploitation

increases. This reduction of regulations directly impacts people and the environment. O'Connor (1998:197) believes that "what is transferred from the North [a.k.a. core] to the South [a.k.a. periphery] is not just capital and technology but also a cluster of social and environmental costs."

'Uneven development' is defined as the uneven distribution of structures of economic, social, class-based, political, and governmental interactions across the globe. This uneven development results from the uneven distribution of natural resources combined with uneven distribution of power. This "…means that industrial, finance, and commercial capital have accumulated more rapidly, in larger blocks or agglomerations, and with greater political power in some regions than others" (O'Connor 1998:188). O'Connor (1988) argues that this leads to the "development of underdevelopment," described by Marx, Heilbroner (1988), and World System Theorists (such as Shannon 1996), in which natural, surplus, and labor resources are funneled from the periphery to the core.

Uneven development results in an uneven distribution of pollution. O'Connor (1998:191) states that: "the human victims of ecological degradation are typically the rural poor…and the unemployed and underemployed in the cities, as well as the oppressed minorities and poor in the North." O'Connor (1998) further explains that Marx, in his description of uneven development, noted the resulting environmental degradation. This pollution results from the uneven distribution of resource extraction

and depletion. O'Connor (1998) discusses agriculture, deforestation, and the exploitation

of fossil fuels, and their associated environmental insults; as well as the resulting poverty,

migration, health effects, un- and under-employment, among others. He argues: "all in

all, world capitalism, given uneven development, has been a disaster for hundreds of

millions of people" (O'Connor 1998:195).

O'Connor (1998:198) holds that as a result of the drive for profit accumulation as

seen in capitalism:

> Uneven development has resulted in the destruction of many natural resources,
> combined development has added pollution, toxic waste problems, and so on.
> When uneven and combined development of capital are themselves combined, it
> would appear that superpollution in industrial zones may be explained by
> superdestruction of land and resources in raw material zones, and vice versa.

Capitalism as a global economic system results not only in social and cultural problems,

human health issues, increased inequality, increased poverty, increasingly concentrated

and differentially applied power, but also environmental degradation,.

Environmental Impacts

The environmental impacts of material consumption include global climate

change, deforestation, natural resource depletion, air and water pollution, solid and toxic

waste, fisheries collapse, the hole in the ozone layer, species extinction, biodiversity loss,

acid rain, and the list goes on. In "Environmental Harm and the Political Economy of

Consumption," Rob White (2002) argues that an examination the environmental

degradation resulting from human behaviors must be nested in an examination of the

current political economy: capitalism. And, this examination must include the limitations of current environmental regulations in addressing these harms (White 2002). Recent scholarship in this area…

> …has emphasized the dynamic links between the distribution of environmental risk (particularly as it affects poor and minority populations) and the claims of nonhuman nature to ecological justice. Moreover, it has criticized the inadequacies of environmental regulation in philosophical and practical terms (White 2002:83).

White (2002) discusses the inadequacy of the field of criminology, as used in environmental regulation, in responding to environmental harm resulting from activities of capitalist enterprise. The fundamental oversight of environmental criminology and regulation results from an inability to recognize "…the interconnectedness of social and environmental issues" (White 2002:84). This results in the elimination of criticism of capitalist economic expansion despite the finite biosphere, and eliminates a larger analysis of the social construction of nature. The above analysis promotes an understanding of the ways in which capitalism, consumption, environmental degradation, and personal, social, and cultural costs are intimately intertwined.

Personal, Social, and Cultural Impacts

Rob White (2002:98) explains that tackling capitalism as a social and cultural structure must "…include consideration of neoliberalism as an ideology and practice." He argues that the expansion of capitalism promotes the infiltration of material consumption into all aspects of life, the creation of a deep desire to consume, and the substitution of true freedom with only a freedom to choose between products. The substitution of

perceptions of desire with perceptions of need results in socially-constructed needs and forwards this expansive capitalist transformation, resulting in a cycle of increased consumerism.

White (2002:86) holds that "the nature of consumption under capitalism is inseparable from the nature of production," meaning that the: who, what, where, when, why, and how of consumption are all the direct result of decisions made by producers. These choices are driven by capitalist interests rather than the interests of people or governments. In conceptualizing consumption, "…the symbolic place of consumerist ideology as part of the capitalist realization of surplus value (i.e., the production of meaning)" and "…consumerism, as a materially 'lived' ideology…" must be evaluated (White 2002:86). Others argue that late capitalism "…is defined by relations of consumption rather than production" (Billig 1999:316).

Commodity Fetishism and Alienation

In Marx's analysis of capitalism, he identified the concepts of 'alienation' and 'commodity fetishism'. Alienation was originally understood as the estrangement workers experienced as a result of being torn from ownership of the means of production, as they transitioned to work in factories where the means of production were owned by others. People who had an emotive connection to, and control over, the product of their labors, were unalienated. As people were no longer able to sell the product of their labor, but only their labor itself, a cultural and religious societal transformation occurred,

resulting in alienated labor (Marx and Engles 1848 & 1844). Alienated workers were only valued in terms of the relationship of their labor (a commodity) to other commodities. This can be understood as the prioritization of the exchange value of labor over its use value. White (2002:89) draws from Marx's ideas when stating that: "…the alienation of workers from the production process and from the products of their labor is associated with general devaluation of the human world in favor of the world of things."

A related concept is that of commodity fetishism, which describes the process by which consumers dismiss the impacts of their choices on those people who actually produce the products, as well as impacts on the environment. Again the concepts of use and exchange value are important: commodity fetishism results from the primary value of commodities resting in exchange value rather than use value. Michael Billig (1999: 315) in "Commodity Fetishism and Repression" clarifies: "instead of understanding the value of the commodity in terms of the social relations which have produced it, the commodity's value is understood in relation to other commodities." Further, Billig (1999:313) argues that within in the habits of consumerism, lie "…a collective forgetfulness, which can be understood psychologically as a form of social repression... constituted in dialogue and, as such, tied to the routines of everyday life."

Commodity fetishism, some argue, results in the derivation of consumers' senses of personal identity through consumption. Goss (2004:373) argues that under consumer capitalism, "…commodities are possessed of a 'mystical character', which is the

objectifying effect of the *system* of exchange, and that under capitalism individual and social identity is fashioned through consumption." Commodity fetishism results in the incorporation of all aspects of life into patterns of material consumption, the creation of a deep desire to consume, the substitution of perceptions of desire with perceptions of need, and creates socially-constructed needs.

Under late capitalism, alienation and commodity fetishism are reciprocally reproduced. No longer the owners of the means of production, people are no longer defined by what they 'do'. Rather, they are increasingly defined by what they consume. This increases the strength of the link between personal identity and consumed commodities. Billig (1999:318) writes of this reciprocal reproduction:

> ...if the commodities are to be consumed as items of pleasure and as confirmations of the identity of the consumer, then the consumers must routinely not think about the labour relations involved in the production of what they are consuming. This means forgetting about the social relations which lie behind the commodities.

Alienation (resulting from the objectification of labor as a commodity) facilitates commodity fetishism (the dismissal of the impacts of consumption choices) and facilitates the search for personal identity and fulfillment through material consumption.

Materialism and the Search for Well-Being

Peter N. Stearns (2001), in *Consumerism in World History: the Global Transformation of Desire,* agrees that through material consumption, people search for fulfillment, meaning, happiness and identity. This is not a new phenomenon, but rather it

has accompanied consumerism through its proliferation. As consumerism propagated, increases in material standards of living resulted in the creation of "…a set of new problems with other goals in life, associated both with work and with homemaking, which pushed consumerism as a surrogate compensation" (Stearns 2001:57). In addition to meeting basic needs through material consumption, people created new desires which they believed could also be met through consumption. According to Stearns (2001:138, emphasis added), consumerism "…compensates for change, and also provides further change in the interests of apparent personal *fulfillment* and new forms of identity."

If consumption, as structured by capitalism, represents affluent consumers' search for fulfillment, meaning, happiness, and identity, then this leads to the following question: Is satisfaction gained or happiness found through consumption? According to a growing body of literature, consumers' ability to gain satisfaction from consumption actually *decreases* with each incremental increase in consumption. Eventually, a point is reached in which each additional unit of consumption actually decreases satisfaction or happiness, resulting in what I term the 'law of diminishing marginal happiness' (Etzioni 1999; Myers 2004, Stearns 2001).

In "Voluntary Simplicity: A New Social Movement?" sociologist Amitai Etzioni (1999:114) argues that "social science findings...in *toto* seem to support the notion that income does not significantly affect contentment, with the important exception of the poor." The author explains that for the affluent, the relationship between income and

happiness is inverse. In fact, "recent psychological studies have made even stronger claims: that the *more* concerned people are with their financial well-being, the *less* likely they are to be happy" (Etzioni 1999:115). In "Consumerism in World History", historian Peter N. Stearns (2001:142, emphasis added) also investigates this relationship, and refers to recent social science findings that:

> ...major consumer gains in a society – a real move upward in material standards – initially cause a definitive jump in measurable happiness. But after that and in more established consumer settings, *consumerism is irrelevant to claimed satisfaction*, and people enmeshed in milder forms of consumerism may be happier than consumerist zealots.

Psychologist David Myers (2004), in "What is the Good Life?" explains that there is only a feeble link between wealth and well-being. He describes the 'law of diminishing marginal happiness':

> Our becoming better off materially [in the US] has not made us better off psychologically...The conclusion startles because it challenges modern materialism: Economic growth in affluent countries has provided no apparent boost to human morale...It is further striking that *those who strive most for wealth tend to live with lower well-being* (Myers 2004:15, emphasis added).

Finally, he explains "...that those who instead strive for intimacy, personal growth, and contribution to the community enjoy a higher quality of life" (Myers 2004:15).

Tim Kasser and collaborative authors are the most prolific social psychologists studying this relationship between materialism and well-being. These authors describe the negative personal, psychological, and environmental impacts of externally motivated goals, such as the pursuit of money (Kasser 2002; Kasser and Ryan 1993, 1996; Kasser et. al. 2004; Sheldon and Kasser 2001), fame and image (Kasser 2002; Kasser and Ryan

1996; Kasser et. al. 2004; Sheldon and Kasser 2001), and power, possessions, status, popularity, and attractiveness (Kasser 2002; Sheldon and Kasser 2001), all of which can be understood as components of materialism. Finally, these authors explore the possibility of the concurrent satisfaction of personal and environmental well-being (Brown and Kasser 2005; Kasser 2002).

These authors debunk a fundamental assumption of the 'American Dream' with the understanding that striving for money, fame, and image does *not* deliver happiness (Kasser and Ryan 1993, 1996; Kasser 2002; Kasser et. al. 2004). These strivings instead diminish well-being, promote distress, damage interpersonal relationships, reduce quality of life, increase antisocial behavior, promote greed, and promote the overconsumption of resources (Kasser and Ryan 1996; Kasser and Sheldon 2000; Kasser 2002; Kasser et. al. 2004). Conversely, a focus on intrinsic values promotes greater personal, social, and ecological well-being (Arndt et. al. 2004a, Brown and Kasser 2005; Kasser 2002; Kasser et. al. 2004; Sheldon and Kasser 2001).

The work of Kasser et al. suggests that it is not the existence of externally oriented goals *per se* that has such a detrimental effect, but the extreme prioritization of these goals, as seen in the materialistic consumer culture of the United States. This prioritization of materialism and consumerism negatively affects not only peoples' well-being, but also adversely affects the well-being of social interactions, the community, and the environment (Arndt et. al. 2004a; Kasser 2002; Kasser et. al. 2004). On the other

hand, the substitution of intrinsic goals for extrinsic ones can have positive ramifications extending beyond the individual, to the culture, other cultures, and the environment (Arndt et. al. 2004a; Kasser 2002). Rather than attaining happiness via the extrinsic goals promoted by the capitalist 'American Dream,' this research shows that attaining happiness is more likely to be found through pursuits that do not require consumption or environmental degradation (Kasser 2002; Brown and Kasser 2005).

Voluntary Simplicity

One response to the inadequacy of consumerism in offering consumers fulfillment and happiness is voluntary simplicity (VS). This lifestyle demonstrates the correlation between intrinsic orientation, well-being, and ecological sustainability. Studies of voluntary simplicity have demonstrated that people who have prioritized intrinsic goals and values are happier and live in less environmentally damaging ways (Kasser 2002; Brown and Kasser 2005).

Duane Elgin (1993:25), credited with fathering voluntary simplicity and bringing it into the common vocabulary, tells us in *Voluntary Simplicity: Toward a Way of Life that is Outwardly Simple, Inwardly Rich* that:

> ...we can describe *voluntary simplicity* as a manner of living that is outwardly more simple and inwardly more rich, a way of being in which our most authentic and alive self is brought into direct and conscious contact with living...The objective is not dogmatically to live with less, but is a more demanding intention of living with balance in order to find a life of greater purpose, fulfillment, and satisfaction.

Sociologist Amitai Etzioni (1999:109) describes voluntary simplicity as "...the decision to limit expenditures on consumer goods and services and to cultivate nonmaterialistic sources of satisfaction and meaning, out of free will rather than out of coercion by poverty, government austerity programs, or imprisonment." Further, Etzioni (1999:113, emphasis added) tells us that "...the simplicity-oriented philosophies are explicitly *anticonsumerist.*" Kasser (2002:99) categories voluntary simplicity as a social movement "...to abandon the high-paying, high-stress lifestyle necessary to support high levels of consumption, and focus instead on personal growth, nurturing relationships, and helping others."

One component of VS, the rejection of consumerism, involves not only an attempt to alleviate many of the negative social, cultural, political, and environmental impacts of consumerism, but also an attempt to alleviate its personal psychological impacts. In his chapter, "In Search of Consumptive Resistance: The Voluntary Simplicity Movement," Michael Maniates (2002) tells us that the multiplicity of factors that draw people to voluntary simplicity include predominately "job stress," (p.212), and the "... ways that ordinary people caught in the midst of it all might reasonably react to preserve their sanity, their families, and their sense of self-esteem" (p.216). Etzioni (1999:109) echoes these sentiments, explaining that the rejection of consumerism derives from the "...environmental, psychological, and other issues raised by consumerism..." and the fact that "...capitalism does not address spiritual concerns."

Conclusion

The preceding discussion of the economic, environmental, social, cultural, and personal impacts of the consumerism and material consumption illustrates the importance of creating alternative to the current consumer capitalist system. In the next chapter, I turn to a discussion of the creation of alternatives to this system, and particularly the spatial components of those alternatives.

CHAPTER III

SPACE, PLACE, AND REISTANCE

Yet a global strategy of resistance and transformation has to begin with the realities of place and community (Harvey 1989:276).

There is a relationship between the built environment and the functions of capitalism. In *The Urban Experience*, David Harvey (1989) discusses the reciprocal relationship between the urban environment and the functions of capitalism. He argues that capitalism could not have come to dominate without the infrastructure of "a built environment potentially supportive of capitalist production, consumption, and exchange..." (Harvey 1989:24). This built, urban environment allowed for the concentration of labor and capital, which Harvey argues was necessary for the advance of capitalism. The author conceives of urbanity as a 'product' of capitalist 'processes': the forces and activities acting upon and within it. The key here is the idea that this landscape "...*gives definite shape and form to a capitalist urbanization process...*" (Harvey 1989:27, emphasis added). He believes that flows of capital are expressed on the geographical landscape and that this capital flow required urbanization, in some form, to proceed.

In addition playing a role in structuring the urban environment, capitalism also played a role in structuring suburbia (a concept Robert Bruegmann argues against in his

2005 book *Sprawl: a Compact History*). After World War II, the dominant form of

urbanization in the United States became suburbanization, which required...

> ...the rising economic power of individuals to appropriate space for their own
> exclusive purposes through debt-financed homeownership and debt-financed
> access to transport services (auto purchases as well as highways)... It meant the
> mobilization of effective demand through total restructuring of space so as to
> make the consumption of the products of the auto, oil, rubber, and construction
> industries a necessity rather than a luxury. For nearly a generation after 1945,
> suburbanization was part of a package of moves...to insulate capitalism against
> the threat of cries of underconsumption... (Harvey 1989:39)

The housing industry began at this time to use the distinction between 'urban' and

'suburban' to sell its commodity. Harvey (1989:40) tells us that:

> New kinds of communities could be constructed, packaged, and sold in a society
> where who you were depended less and less on class position and more and more
> on how you spent your money in the market. Living spaces were made to
> represent status, position, and prestige.

As a result, material consumption, especially the consumption of housing and real estate,

was conflated with the creation of community and individual attempts to find fulfillment.

> Dolores Hayden, in *Building Suburbia* (2003:18) tells us that:
>
> Excessive private consumption was not inevitable. It was the result of sustained
> pressure from real estate interests and their allies in government to marginalize
> the alternatives to unlimited private suburban growth. As the production of built
> space came to dominate the economy, replacing the production of manufactured
> goods, the pressures increased.

Harvey takes Hayden's argument a step further. He argues that suburbanization has been

actively created by capitalism "...because it sustains an effective demand for products

and thereby facilitates the accumulation of capital" (Harvey 1989:122). There are other

forces that are part of the political economy that actively create suburbanization, and so

"we can...interpret the preference for suburban living as a created myth, arising out of possessive individualism, nurtured by the ad-mad and forced by the logic of capitalist accumulation..." (Harvey 1989:122).

In *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, Jane Jacobs (1961) discusses and critiques the goals, strategies, and physical manifestations of city planning and design as currently implemented. She argues that the current forms of city planning and design have been, and continue to be, manipulated to the benefit of some, and to the detriment of many others. Harvey shares this belief that class relations, to a large extent, structure housing, cities, and suburbs.

John R. Logan and Harvey L. Molotch (1987), in *Urban Fortunes: the Political Economy of Place*, describe in greater detail this manipulation of city planning and design and its uneven consequences. Logan and Molotch (1987) describe the city as a 'growth machine': a group of structural speculators[1] colluding to change the conditions structuring the market, in order "...to change the relationships of a given place to other places..." (p.30) and "...intensify land use in an area" (p.32). 'Growth machines' compete with each other for exchange value and to gain investors. Elites are able to mobilize resources to forward their goals of increased growth, all the time under the guise of 'value-free

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[1] Rather than only speculating and strategically purchasing places, structural speculators instead work to "...alter the conditions that structure the market", and "...to create differential rents by influencing the larger arena of decision making that will determine local advantages." (Logan and Molotch 1987:30)

development'.[2] Collusion among structural speculators results in the physical structuring and re-structuring of cities and neighborhoods, and the determination of their growth trajectories. The result is not only an inequitable distribution of use and exchange values within a city, but also competition among cities to attract capital investment, which further intensifies this inequity. The authors write that the development of suburbs is structured by the same types of collusion among structural speculators that are found in the city, and also results in inequality.

Harvey (1989:251–252) argues that: "the search for alternatives [to the capitalist built environment] has to… be prepared to transform, not only that vast constructed second nature of a built environment shaped to accommodate capitalist modes and spatial divisions of both production and consumption, but also an urbanized consciousness." The urbanized consciousness is defined by "the mass merging of consumerist narcissism and the desire for self-realization..." (Harvey 1898:254). Further, "the problem is to sever the tight connection between self-realization and pure consumerism" (Harvey 1989:254).

In *Studying Cultural Landscapes,* Robertson and Richards (2003:16) remind us that:

> It is… important to realize that the [dominating] powerful cannot control everything, and that landscape and identity formation are a dialogue constantly in process. Contestation is as much a part of a dialogue as is agreement and will therefore equally involve landscape.

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[2] 'Value-free development' is the idea that land use is established by free markets alone. (Logan and Molotch 1987:32)

Contestation has can have as grand an impact on landscape as the forces of domination. Iain S. Black (2003:19), in "(Re)reading Architectural Landscapes," explains that "...landscapes can transform ideologies into a concrete, visible form," and that this can be observed in architectural designs. Landscapes can embody many things: the political economic system, its rejection, and often both. In *City Trenches*, Ira Katznelson (1981:193) writes that today, "...a remarkable consensus of activists is once again turning to the place of residence rather than the place of work as the main locus of insurgent activity..." and "radical change." It is this notion of the place of residence as a site of contestation that I will pursue throughout this work.

Resistance

Any discussion of contestation and resistance must include a discussion of power. There are many ways contestation, resistance, domination, power, space, and place have been described. In the following pages, I will outline several different understandings of the relationships among them.

Jeremy W. Crampton and Stuart Elden (2007), in "Space Knowledge and Power: Foucault and Geography", explain that although Michel Foucault's early work focused on the dominant capabilities of power, his "...middle to later work... emphasizes the productive side of power". In *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction*, Foucault (1978:95–96) argues that:

> Where there is power, there is resistance, and yet, or rather consequently, this resistance is never in a position of exteriority in relation to power.... [There is a] strictly relational character of power relationships. Their existence depends on a multiplicity of points of resistance: these play the role of adversary, target, support, or handle in power relations. These points of resistance are present everywhere in the power network... [T]here is a plurality of resistances, each of them a special case...

Further, he argues that resistances "...too are distributed in irregular fashion: the points, knots, or focuses of resistance are spread over time and space at varying densities..." (Foucault 1978:96). In "Space, Knowledge, and Power" Foucault (1984:245) demonstrates that he does not see resistance to power as futile: "...no matter how terrifying a system may be, there always remain the possibilities of resistance, disobedience, and oppositional groupings..."

Tim Cresswell (2000:263), in "Falling Down: Resistance as diagnostic," extends this idea in arguing that "what follows from a Foucauldian conception of power are new ideas concerning resistance." Further:

> Resistance, then, is not opposed to power but is a subset of it. Resistance becomes the deployment of power with the motivation of alleviating or transforming the conditions under which one lives. Resistance thus reconceptualised would not be romanticised as an indicator of power's absence, but rather seen as evidence for power's existence and an intervention that serves to delineate the mode of power in question (Cresswell 2000:264).

Joanne P. Sharp, Paul Routledge, Chris Philo, and Ronan Paddison (2000), in "Entanglements of Power: Geographies of domination/resistance," further this idea, distinguishing between "...*dominating power*... that power which attempts to control or coerce others, impose upon others, or manipulate the consent of others" (p.2) and

"...*resisting power*... that power which attempts to set up situations, groupings and actions which resist the impositions of dominating power" (p.3).

Cresswell (2000:266) argues that "once we see resistance as a deployment and diagnostic of power rather than the opposite, the spatiality of domination/resistance becomes more entangled..." This entanglement is a focus of inquiry and discussion for Sharp et al. (2000:20):

> ...neither dominating power nor resisting power are total, but rather are both fragmentary, uneven and inconsistent to varying degrees, and this realisation prompts us to deploy the Foucauldian dyad of 'domination/resistance'... Such a formulation acknowledges that domination and resistance cannot exist independently of each other, but neither can be reducible to one other...

Sharp et al. (2000) speak of "entanglements of power" (p.20) in which "resistance in one place may therefore be complicit with domination in another, which begins to introduce the entangled geographies..." of power (p.24). Cresswell (2000:265) writes that: "...space constitutes the active medium within which power – both dominant and resistant – happens." Sharp et al. (2000:24) take this further, arguing that "...these entanglements are thoroughly spatial and are indeed themselves inherently geographical." The authors describe a cycle in which "...relations of power are... spun out across and through the material spaces of the world" and these entanglements resulting from power's impact on the material world in turn "...make power happen..." (Sharp et al. 2000:24). From this, they continue with a discussion of the power of resistance as exercised through the reorganization of space.

Place and Resistance

David Harvey (1996:302), in *Justice, Nature and the Geography of Difference*,

argues that the ills of consumer culture…

> …will provoke resistances that increasingly focus on alternative constructions of place… The search for an authentic sense of community and of an authentic relation to nature among many radical and ecological movements is the cutting edge of exactly such a sensibility (Harvey 1996:302).

In *Place: A Short Introduction*, Tim Cresswell (2004:61) elaborates at length on this

concept:

> This search for an authentic sense of place in the world is what Harvey (following Raymond Williams) calls 'militant particularism'. This term indicates the political use of the particularity of place as a form of resistance against the forces of global capitalism. All over the world groups have been and are attempting to build their own places and communities in order to live differently from the mass of people. Communes, organic farms, traveler communities, urban neighborhood groups and religious enclaves are all examples of this.

Akhil Gupta and James Ferguson (1997:6) in *Culture, Power, Place: Explorations in*

Critical Anthropology, agree, positing that "…social and political processes of place

making, conceived less as a matter of 'ideas' than of embodied practices… shape

identities and enable resistances."

Communities are an important component of resistance. Margo Adair and Sharon

Howell (1992:38), in "Women Weave Community" argue that social connections and…

> …community bonds form the basis for support and resistance. Community is essential for meaningful collective action.

Gupta and Ferguson (1997:6 emphasis added) hint at this when they write that "…social

and political processes of place making… *enable* resistances." The authors discuss place

making and resistance in relation to the creation of community. In the context of ethnicity, they argue that within the concept of community rests a "tension" between "essential group identity" and "the sovereign individual subject" (Gupta and Ferguson 1997:13). Community necessarily depends on the contrast between those who are similar to each other within and those outside the community (i.e. different 'others' who are excluded from the community). However, although there are similarities shared by those within the community, there are differences among them as well. As Massey (1997, excerpted in Cresswell 2004:68) argues:

> ...the instances of places housing single 'communities' in the sense of coherent social groups are probably – and I would argue, have for long been – quite rare. Moreover, even where they do exist this in no way implies a single sense of place. For people occupy different places within any community.

These differences within community can include gender, race, sexual orientation, and socioeconomic status, for instance.

Geographies of Resistance

In "Introduction: opposition, political identities and spaces of resistance" of the book *Geographies of Resistance* (edited by Steve Pile and Michael Keith), Pile (1997) argues that resistance is the opposition to power, which takes place through specific geographies: the 'geographies of resistance'. Gupta and Ferguson (1997:18) agree: "resistance can exist only in relation to a 'strategy of power,' and such strategies are shifting, mobile, and multiple."

Geographers and others have been attentive to the ways in which resistance plays

out through space and in place:

> Geographers have, for a long time, engaged in production of radical knowledge --
> from Marxism, through feminism, to post-colonial and queer theory... They have
> been attendant to the geographies of domination and exploitation and the
> possibilities of political struggle... For geographers, political mobilisation is
> commonly seen as embedded in either geographically circumscribed communities
> (as in the politics if turf) or in spatialised communities (as in the geography of
> class). Nevertheless, notions of community and their geographies cannot be
> assumed, nor can their operativeness in resistance... (Pile 1997:4)

The work of Pile and Keith (1997) is one of the first attempts to codify an area of

geographic inquiry dedicated explicitly to resistance.

Domination versus Resistance

The understanding of power forwarded by Pile and Keith (1997) is one of an

'uncoupled' relationship between resistance and domination:

> While there are different forms of control that work through distinct geographies,
> geographies of resistance do not necessarily (or even ever) mirror geographies of
> domination, as an upside-down or back-to-front or face-down map of the world.
> There is – it is argued here – a more troubling effect of thinking through the
> geographies of resistance, that resistance is 'uncoupled' from domination. This is
> not to say that domination and resistance have nothing to do with one another, but
> that there are distinct spatialised modalities of control, and that resistance might
> have its own spatialities..." (Pile 1997:.2).

This understanding of power is contrary to the concept, discussed above, of

'entanglements of power' forwarded by Sharp et al. (2000). These authors argue for an

understanding of power in which "power is operative in moments of both domination and

resistance, and hence can be assessed in both positive and negative terms" (Sharp et al.

2000:3). I will elaborate on this work shortly.

In Pile's (1997:3) understanding, "...resistance seeks to occupy, deploy and create alternative spatialities from those defined through oppression and exploitation." These are *new* spaces, appropriated by resistance. Pile (1997) writes that: "resistance may involve spatialities that lie beyond 'power'..." (p.5) and "...may well operate between the spaces authorised by authority, rather than simply scratching itself into the deadly spaces of oppression and exploitation" (p.13).

> However, the suggestion that power relations might produce discontinuous spaces, which resistance might transgress or move between, implies that there could be other places in the map of resistance. One possible way to remap resistance, then, is to think about the ways in which power relations are incomplete, fluid, liable to rupture, inconsistence, awkward and ambiguous. Now, spaces of resistance can be seen as not only partially connected to, but also partially dislocated from, spaces of domination (Pile 1997:14).

Hence, spaces of resistance are 'uncoupled' from spaces of domination. Resistance operates *outside* power.

Pile (1997:27) writes that "at the heart of questions of resistance lie questions of spatiality – the politics of lived spaces." He argues that resistance is not defined by the power to change things, but by "...the meanings that social actions take on in the practice of everyday life" (Pile 1997:14). This creation of new spaces in which people execute resistance through their everyday practices is the topic of interest for those geographers advancing the concept of 'autonomous geographies', which will be discussed below.

Entangled Domination and Resistance

As mentioned above, Sharp et al. (2000) forward a more nuanced understanding

of domination and resistance, one in which there are *entangled* geographies of power.

Reacting to Pile (and other authors featured in *Geographies of Resistance*), Sharp et al.

(2000:31) argue that Pile (1997) believes...

> ...that resistance can somehow slip outside of power, a dream that resistance is
> possible because all sorts of other people can also dream of evading power... Yet
> we also have reservations, chiefly because at root Pile (if not Thrift)[3] *dis*entangles
> what we regard as always unremittingly *en*tangled. Ostensibly, he is wishing to
> disentangle domination and resistance... but the problem for us is that he tends to
> equate power quite straightforwardly with dominating power...

The authors argue that in the end, Pile and Keith's (1997) *Geographies of Resistance* uses

an overly simplistic understanding of power, and thus fails to uncouple domination and

resistance, simply because the two are inextricably linked and exist within one another.

Shape et al. (2000:27)...

> ...understand the geography of domination/resistance as a contingent and
> continuous bundle of relations; a geography that enacts a contested encounter
> within and between dominant and resistant practices which are themselves hybrid,
> rather than binary, and which are contingent upon and enmeshed within social
> networks, communication processes and economic relations.

The authors argue that given this understanding of entangled power, it is important to

recognize that "...these entanglements are thoroughly spatial and are indeed themselves

inherently geographical" (Sharp et al. 2000:24). The term 'entanglements'

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[3] Nigel Thrift's "The Still Point: Resistance, expressive embodiment and dance" in Pile and Keith's (1997)
Geographies of Resistance

...is intended to signal that relations of power are really, crucially and unavoidably spun out across and through the material spaces of the world. It is within such spaces that assemblages of people, activities, technologies, institutions, ideas and dreams all come together, circulate, convene and reconvene – it cannot but be so – and it is only as a consequence of the spatial entangling together of all these elements that relations of power are established (Sharp et al. 2000:24).

The entanglements "make power happen" (Sharp et al. 2000:24). Further, the geographies are not products of power, but are "...central to the constitution of power relations" (Sharp et al. 2000:25). For this reason, "dominant spatial organisations have to be transcended in the creation of both new subjectivities and new possibilities for relations of power..." (Sharp et al. 2000:26). Again, we see the importance of this creation of new spaces in which people execute resistance in order to create new potential styles of social organization.

Autonomous Geographies

According to Jenny Pickerill and Paul Chatterton (2006:730) in "Notes towards autonomous geographies: creation, resistance and self-management as survival tactics," the term 'autonomous geographies' describes "spaces where there is a desire to constitute non-capitalist collective forms of politics, identity and citizenship...created through a combination of resistance and creation, and a questioning and challenging of dominant laws and social norms." The authors argue that "...autonomous geographies are made through collective decision-making and autonomous social centers" (Pickerill and Chatterton 2006:730). These spaces are labeled autonomous because they embody the ability to freely choose.

The authors examine the importance of the 'everyday practices' in the lives of activists and the ways that protest is not only part of everyday life, but also that everyday life is sculpted into an alternative process that has benefits for society:

> Central to autonomy is an explosive combination of making protest part of everyday life, but also making life into workable alternatives for a wider social good. Autonomous geographies are thus about exploring the practicalities of multiscalar influence – of building a broader oppositional politics through multiple strategies, beginning by enacting change in everyday lives (Pickerill and Chatterton 2006:737).

The authors argue that "given that there is no place outside the reach of capitalist relations, 'new places' have to be created from within, through an attempt – however complicated, contested and fractured – to alter and challenge everyday places" (Pickerill and Chatterton 2006:742). The 'everyday places' being challenged are those that are sculpted by capitalism and globalization.

Many anti-globalization movements, the focus of these authors' inquiries, combine large and rare attacks or protests with everyday acts of activism. Many of these groups have an "explicit autonomy agenda" and employ direct democracy and/or spokescouncils, as well as self-management and voluntary organization (Pickerill and Chatterton 2006:734).

> This multiscalar and mulitfaceted activism manifests itself through global and regional convergences..., through localized autonomous spaces and alternative processes (such as social centers, eco-villages, alternative currencies, food production, housing cooperatives and self-education), and experiments in non-hierarchical organization and consensus-based decision-making (Pickerill and Chatterton 2006:731).

Of note is the authors' use of the word 'space' when discussing autonomous geographies, but their use of specific *places* (in addition to spaces) as examples of these geographies. Although 'geographies of resistance' also employ the word 'space', there is a more nuanced understanding of the difference between space and place, namely that, as Cresswell (2004) describes, place is "a meaningful location" (p.7) while space is "a more abstract concept than place" (p.8), and can include non-places, such as virtual space.

Conclusion

In *Spaces of Hope*, David Harvey (2000:186) argues that:

> Any contemporary struggle to envision a reconstruction of the social process has to confront the problem of how to overthrow the structures (both physical and institutional) that the free market has itself produced as relatively permanent features in the world.

He explains that many thinkers with utopian bents have tended to avoid traditional utopianism and to avoid constructing concrete alternatives to the current modes of social organization. In response, Harvey outlines what he terms 'dialectical utopianism', a form of utopianism that is both spatial and temporal (i.e. has form and process). This dialectical utopianism requires that "…real political change arises out of simultaneous and loosely coordinated shifts in both thinking and action across several scales…" (Harvey 2000:234). These shifts and scales include the personal as political, collectivities, 'militant particularism', institutions, built environments, and the translation of aspirations to reality, among others. Harvey (2000:195) opines:

> There is a time and place in the ceaseless human endeavor to change the world, when alternative visions, no matter how fantastic, provide the grist for shaping powerful political forces for change. I believe we are precisely at such a moment.

The groups that 'militant particularism' describes as "…attempting to build their own places and communities in order to live differently from the mass of people" are the focus of my inquiry in this work (Cresswell 2000:61). It is to two particular types of communities built in an effort to create a way of living different from mainstream affluence that I will turn in the next chapter: cohousing and ecovillages.

CHAPTER IV

"THE AMERICAN DREAM",

INTENTIONAL COMMUNITIES, COHOUSING, AND ECOVILLAGES

Our dependence upon the car and its cohort, the single-family house in the suburbs, has seriously contributed to the fragmentation of the extended family and a lower quality of living for more and more people. We can get up in the morning, get in our car, and drive to work without encountering any other person face to face. Is this the American Dream? *The way our neighborhoods are laid out and our housing is financed ensures that residential areas are segregated by economic class, age, and race.* Is this the American Dream? *It is obvious that the housing industry has not been a social/family/community oriented process, but merely a way of doing business and making a profit, as if a house were like any other product sold over the counter.* Is this the only American Dream? *(Norwood and Smith 1995:18)*

Most noticeable since the end of World War II (1945), the suburban home has been promoted and accepted as a physical embodiment of the 'American Dream' and as capable of providing for all needs, including happiness, explains James Howard Kunstler (1993) in *The Geography of Nowhere: The Rise and Decline of America's Man-Made Landscape.* Dolores Hayden (2003:3), in *Building Suburbia*, explains that suburbia, as "the dominant American cultural landscape," is a "landscape of the imagination where Americans situate ambitions for upward mobility and economic security, ideals about freedom and private property, and longings for social harmony and spiritual uplift." This landscape privileges individualism; "unlike every other affluent civilization, Americans have idealized the house and yard rather than the model neighborhood or the ideal town" (Hayden 2003:5).

In the wake of changes in household arrangements, changes in national demographics, and changes in the environment in the United States, many now hold that this model is outdated (McCamant and Durrett 1989, 1994; Norwood and Smith 1995). In *Cohousing: A Contemporary Approach to Housing Ourselves*, Kathryn McCamant and Charles Durrett (1994:12) explain that:

> The modern single-family detached home, which makes up 67 percent of the American housing stock, was designed for a nuclear family consisting of a breadwinning father, a homemaking mother, and two to four children. Today, less than one-quarter of the United States population lives in such households.

Further, "while the ideals of individualism and the detached single-family house remain deeply embedded in American culture, changing circumstances are leading many people to question the continuing emphasis on these elements of the American Dream" (McCamant and Durrett 1994:199).

Changing household circumstances include a decrease in the size of household units, an increase in the need for women to work outside the home, an increase in the proportion of single parents, the aging of the baby boomers, and an increase in the number of single people who live alone. Changing demographic circumstances include rising home costs, increases in the cost of living generally, and loss of blue collar jobs. In addition, the increasing frequency of mobility for many people results in a lack of a sense of community (McCamant and Durrett 1989). Ken Norwood and Kathleen Smith

(1995:36), in *Rebuilding Community in America*, hold that "we continue to build and to live in a form of housing that does not meet our needs as individuals or as a society."

The point Sherry Ahrentzen (1989:xii) raises in the "Introduction" to *New Households, New Housing* is well taken: the American "...single-family house effectively answers a number of needs for Americans – space, sanitation, security, status, and privacy..." However, there are numerous environmental and social consequences of the current residential landscape. Norwood and Smith (1995:14) hold that in spite of the advantages, the social disadvantages outweigh:

> The social isolation of the single family house, apartment, and condo; the physical separation by ownership rights and fences; the many hours we spend closed off from each other in our cars; and the fewer opportunities for amiable dialogue with other people have all contributed to the breakdown of social cohesion and our capacity to solve shared problems.

The authors hold that the individuality of modern American culture leads not only to alienation and loneliness, but also to an exponential increase in the consumption of natural resources by people "living separately, using energy and resources separately, and bringing separate cars up to the kitchen door" (Norwood and Smith 1995:17). The concurrent collapse of the environment, deterioration of the economy, depletion of natural resources, and the breakdown of our social and cultural support systems are "all effects of the relentless pursuit, by each successive generation, of a 'higher quality of living' synonymous with the American Dream" (Norwood and Smith 1995:13).

Many Americans are beginning to recognize that the single-family house is not beneficially socially, economically, or environmentally, and desire other options (Norwood and Smith 1995). Americans recognize that the things that they crave: "…family, community, a sense of belonging – must now be active sought out" (McCamant and Durrett 1994:9). In addition, there has been increasing acceptance of the link between personal material consumption and degradation of the environment (Meltzer 2005).

Some authors argue, as does Kunstler (1993:112) that "…to transition to a saner way of living… will certainly require a transformation of the physical setting for our civilization, a remaking of the places where we live and work." Hayden (2002:67-68) holds that:

> Between the giant corporations and the tiny houses, environmental alternatives require new social, economic, and architectural innovations as well as new, energy-saving inventions. As environmentalists continue to develop a very effective accounting of the wasteful, destructive patterns of present resource use, reconceptualization of the private home will lead to more concern for neighborhood. Neighborhood scale may be the most productive issue for green architecture in the decades ahead.

Mainstream housing, Louise Crabtree (2005), in "Sustainable Housing Development in Urban Australia" argues, must move away from private ownership and the commodification of land and housing.

Luckily, there are rural, suburban, and urban design strategies that respond to the consequences of our present form of habitation and attempt to make places of meaning

that are more conducive to social, economic, and environmental sustainability. There are new housing forms emerging that can offer economic security and community support (Norwood and Smith 1995). At the same time, these new housing arrangements can help develop the sense of community that Graham Meltzer (2005) , in *Sustainable Community: Learning from the cohousing model*, argues has been shown to increase environmentally-conscious behavior.

Two alternatives are cohousing and the ecovillage. Meltzer (2005:15) tells that "...cohousing has developed in direct response to perceived *social* problems of the late twentieth century – personal alienation and the breakdown of community, in particular." Cohousing is basically an architectural design style that is meant to facilitate interaction within a community whose physical layout has been designed by the residents (McCamant and Durrett 1989, 1994). Ecovillages are distinct from cohousing yet share an emphasis on building a sense of community. Ecovillages are resident-driven communities that seek to live in an environmentally, socially, and economically sustainable manner, while demonstrating this lifestyle to a wider audience. Ecovillage and cohousing communities are intentional communities, which can be understood as a group of people with a shared set of values or beliefs that live together, in a community, to practice those values (Meltzer 2005). In the "Introduction" to *Rebuilding Community in America*, Ken Norwood (1995:xvii) explains that the growing success of these new community arrangements "is testimony that a redefinition of the American Dream is

occurring, suited to peoples' changing needs and desires..." In order to fully understand where these communities are going, a summary of where we have been is required.

"The American Dream"

Scholars, such as Ahrentzen (1989) and Harvey (1989), argue that the residential landscape in the United States is largely a product of the post-World War II era. Dolores Hayden (2002:15) in *Redesigning the American Dream*, tells that after World War II (1939—1945), returning veterans replaced women in the work force, women like 'Rosie the Riveter' who had taken positions in production and manufacturing to help the war effort. Wartime housing had been developed to address equality and integration, and often housed people of all races: female laborers with children, as well as men. In contrast, post-war developments of single-family homes separated the household from the paid labor force and public life, and also embodied Victorian-era gendered stereotypes about the woman's place being in the home. Veterans were encouraged to pursue suburban homeownership to help transform the American economy and city. Younger white workers left the city with their families, headed for the suburbs, leaving blacks, Hispanics, and others behind in the inner cities. In addition, the promotion of single-family homeownership was accompanied by a concurrent discouragement of alternative housing forms, the use of housing starts as an economic indicator, and the growth of the housing industry (Hayden 2002).

The housing industry grew and was intimately intertwined with the real estate, banking, manufacturing, and transportation industries. Hayden (2003:128) explains that "the postwar suburbs were constructed at great speed, but they were deliberately planned to maximize consumption of mass-produced goods and minimize the responsibility of the developers to create public space and public services." In this way, "the dream house replaced the ideal city as the spatial representation of American hopes for the good life" (Hayden 2002:55). The twin goals of building housing to help the economy and putting veterans to work while removing women from the workforce were conflated, so that the economy depended on women's place in the home (Hayden 2002).

To explain the changes just mentioned, a brief history of the factors contributing to the development of post-WW II housing is in order. The 1934 National Housing Act solidified government involvement in the 'private' housing industry by establishing the Federal Housing Administration (FHA), explains Gwendolyn Wright (1981), in *Building the Dream*. Hayden (2003) tells that the Federal Housing Administration (FHA) provided funding to encourage the modernization of old, and construction of new, homes. This funding included the modernization of existing homes, the purchase of electrical appliances, new home mortgages, and the insuring of banks that advanced developers money for the acquisition of land.

After World War II, in the context of McCarthy-era criticism of public housing and planned communities as well as the perceived necessity of the provision of Federal

Housing Administration (FHA) aid to big developers, a specific strategy to combat the post-War housing shortage emerged. This strategy was to boom the housing industry: build as many houses as possible as fast as possible (while paying little attention to community planning). Wright (1981:246) explains that based on this development model, the 1.5 million new housing units built in the two years after WWII were insufficient to meet the demand of the 2.8 million new families that formed during the same time period. Andres Duany, Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk, and Jeff Speck (2000:11), in *Suburban Nation*, note that "town planning, until the 1930s considered a humanistic discipline based upon history, aesthetics, and culture, became a technical profession based upon numbers."

In 1944, the Veterans Administration (VA, now the U.S. Department of Veteran's Affairs) began a mortgage guarantee program for veterans as part of the GI Bill of Rights (Wright 1981). Banks backed by the FHA and the VA gave huge loans for new home construction and no-down-payment mortgages, and this resulted in an expanding housing industry (Hayden 2002; Wright 1981). The emphasis on new homes, argue Duany et al. (2000:8), "…discouraged the renovation of existing housing stock, while turning their [the FHA and VA's] back on the construction of row houses, mixed-use buildings, and other urban housing types."

Levittown, a development built in the late 1940s on Long Island, New York, by William Levitt and Sons, has come to represent the quintessential physical embodiment

of housing industry principles of the time. Levitt and Sons' vertical integration of suppliers and assembly-line style construction of homes resulted in the rapid building of Cape Cod-style homes that would be sold only to white men and their families. The FHA would not approve mortgages for female-headed households or for racially integrated communities at that time (Hayden 2002).

In Levittown, the developers produced 17,000 houses, but with no master plan or infrastructure, and minimal public facilities (Hayden 2003). There were multiple Levittowns built across the country, and other developers followed suit. Because developers did not create the necessary infrastructure, government bodies at the federal, state, and local levels were handed the responsibility of creating adequate infrastructure and social services to meet the needs of new homeowners, and governments often needed federal subsidies to do so. Regardless of local climate, history, aesthetics, or spirituality, the Levittown Cape-Cod and ranch-style homes became the design style most aspired to and the "...the single most powerful symbol of the dream of upward mobility and home ownership for American families" (Hayden 2002:23). And, "to many Americans, the suburban house seemed the only way to provide a good family life" (Wright 1981:258). 'Moving up' became part of the 'American Dream' (Duany et al. 2000).

In addition to FHA financing and VA mortgages, developers such as Levitt and Sons were also subsidized by new federal highway programs. Large-scale government road-building began in earnest in the mid-1950s, supported by the 1944 Federal Highway

Act and the 1956 Federal-Aid Highway Act (Hayden 2003; Wright 1981). As a result, in addition to the privileging of automobiles in residential and commercial building construction (strip malls, shopping malls, big box stores), 'bedroom communities' and 'edge nodes' began to develop outside existing developed areas, from which people would commute to the city for work. In fact, "…what automobile manufactures wanted was to eliminate all other transportation choices" and this desire was realized through blatant collusion (Hayden 2003:159). As John Foster (1999:115) explains in *The Vulnerable Planet*:

> …the enormous present-day dependence of the United States on cars, which today [1999] account for 90 percent of all travel, can be traced to the deliberate dismantling of the nation's earlier mass transportation system. From the 1930s to the 1950s, General Motors (GM)… operating in conjunction with Standard Oil and Firestone Tire, systematically bought up many of the nation's electric streetcar lines, converting them to busses… Meanwhile, GM used its monopolistic control of bus production and of the Greyhound Corporation, on the one hand, and its monopoly in the production of locomotives, on the other hand, to ensure the growing displacement of bus and rail traffic by private automobiles in intercity ground transport – essentially undercutting itself in intercity mass transit in order to make higher profits off increased automobile traffic.

While private entrepreneurs were profiting from the sale of automobiles and the changing patterns of mobility, governments were left with the responsibility of creating the infrastructure. Duany et al. (2000:96) argue that "…subsidized automobile use is the single largest violation of the free-market principle in U.S. fiscal policy."

This form of development indoctrinated new suburbanites into consumer culture, argues Hayden (2003). Not only were people completely dependent on their cars, but they also consumed household appliances, such as TVs, which often were included in

their new-home mortgages. The strategies used to reach the goal of building as many houses as possible as cheaply as possible for as much profit as possible resulted in the complete disregard of solar orientation of houses, solar heating, and housing insulation. Although solar technologies emerged in the late 1800s and were promoted during World War II, American utility companies, such as General Electric (GE), promoted the excessive consumption of electricity made from cheap coal and oil, in order to bolster their profits. This resulted not only in newly enlarged electricity demands to heat houses, but also to cool them, with newly introduced and popular air conditioning. In fact, the utility companies, developers, and builders often colluded to promote each other's industry, a practice not outlawed by Congress until 1978 (Hayden 2003).

Advertising and the media played no small role in this expansion of consumer culture and the promotion of the whitewashed image of the suburbs. Sitcoms and advertisements during the 1950s were televised in the suburban home. In the 'sitcom suburb',

> Race and gender were set against class in a particularly painful way. Racial segregation, always part of the suburban experience, usually managed through deed restrictions, was now enforced by government loan policies and local bankers' red-lining. So was gender discrimination in lending (Hayden 2003:147).

This housing type privileged nuclear families over extended families, men over women, whites over people of color, middle- and high-income over low-income, and young over old. With the coordinated efforts of the "...real estate, banking, and construction sectors,

and the relative weakness of the planning and design professions," as well as FHA

developer subsides, "sprawl became the national housing policy" (Hayden 2003:151).

Redlining and restrictive covenants at this time were openly used to discriminate

in housing based on race and ethnicity. The FHA would not underwrite or guarantee

mortgages on houses in areas dominated by black residents. Banks followed suit and

would not issue private loans or mortgages in areas that had been redlined. Restrictive

covenants prevented suburban integration, supposedly based on the premise of property

value protection. "These policies played a critical role in the deterioration of stable,

working-class communities..." and contributed to the formation of black ghettos (Wright

1981:247).

The 1949 Housing Act responded to the continued post-War housing shortage by

"...guarantee[ing] builders and bankers more substantial profits on large residential

developments" (Wright 1981:246). After the Housing Act, public housing agencies began

constructing housing for poor people unable to afford single-family suburban homes. The

subsidies received for the physical construction of low-income housing paled in

comparison to those received by new homeowners, which included the FHA funding, VA

mortgages, the highway system, and tax deductions. In addition, many private developers

were illegally profiting from building public housing developments by borrowing more

than the cost of construction from banks and pocketing the surplus (Wright 1981).

Hayden (2002:167) tells us that "public housing projects in New York, Chicago, Boston,

and smaller places were, in the 1950s and early 1960s, usually grim, brick structures

badly sited in islands of asphalt, whether three stories high or thirty." These

developments were influenced by Le Corbusier, an early 20th century modernist architect

who designed an 'organized' way to house large numbers of poor, inner-city residents,

based on his model of conglomerates of skyscrapers set in green spaces, termed a

"machine for modern living" (Harvey 1989:256). Le Corbusier is also famous for

inspiring the low-income housing development project, Pruitt-Igoe (Saint Louis,

Missouri), which was considered unlivable and was dynamited in July of 1972 (Harvey

1989; Hayden 2002).[1]

Although alternative forms of housing, such as cluster housing, emerged in the

1960s,

> ...townhouses and trailers and cooperative buildings were consistently presented
> as inadequate, makeshift substitutes for detached suburban dwellings. The new
> housing developments were posed as a threat to the postwar suburban ideal...
> they were seldom connected to a vision of cultural pluralism, different kinds of
> family life, and more diverse communities (Wright 1981:261).

Since the 1980s, strip malls, shopping malls, big box stores, 'bedroom communities', and

'edge nodes' have proliferated, and "new development on the rural fringes of edge nodes

has expanded" (Hayden 2003:181). These developments have encroached on agricultural

land and wildlife habitat, and caused numerous forms of environmental degradation.

Hayden (2003:184) argues that "fringe development surely reflected the desire to escape

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[1] This event, which took place at 3:32 pm on July 15th, 1972, was identified by Christopher Jenks as the end
of modernist architecture and the commencement of post-modern architecture, as well as the end of
attempts by architect to remedy social issues through architectural design (Harvey 1989, Hayden 2002).

central cities with declining infrastructure, pollution, and poor schools, as well as ugly, automobile-scale edge nodes, in favor of places with old-fashioned, pedestrian-scale Main Streets, where residents could take pride in small town character." Many people accepted more numerous and longer commutes to live in the fringe. And the fringe lifestyle required even more space. Some of the bigger houses came to be termed 'McMansions.' Dual incomes became increasingly necessary to maintain such households, resulting in latchkey kids and second-shift moms, who have two jobs, one paid, outside the household, and the other unpaid within (Hayden 2003).

Consequences of "the American Dream"

As a result, Hayden (2002:60) argues, "dream houses got out of control economically, environmentally, and socially because they carried unacknowledged costs: they wasted available land; they required large amounts of energy consumption; and they demanded a great deal of unpaid female labor." In addition, the dominance of the single-family suburban home has increased inequality at multiple scales and altered Americans' ability to perceive solutions to social and economic ills. The consequences of the current conceptual and physical structure of both cities and suburbs are many.

The environmental costs of the structure of our built environment are profound. With the privatization of households and the destruction or isolation from community facilities, each family must purchase appliances and consumer goods for their individual households, including refrigerators, stoves, and home furnishings. Many early

"...appliances were often designed to increase rather than minimize the use of energy: in some cases the same manufacturers sold both consumer appliances and municipal generating equipment, as a reinforcement of corporate interests" (Hayden 2002:65). Water usage also increased with the use of new appliances such as clothes washers and dishwashers, having dramatic effects in arid and semi-arid environments. In addition, these appliances expanded "...the American practice of using water as a medium of carrying waste away, rather than preserving water for needed human use and recycling garbage and human waste as compost" (Hayden 2002:65). This growth has other negative environmental effects, including a reduction in air and water quality; the loss of open space, wildlife habitat, and aesthetic qualities; the loss of biological diversity; and other threats to ecosystems (Logan and Molotch 1987).

The social costs of the built environment are many. Kunstler (1993:59, emphasis added) argues that:

> Modernism did its immense damage in these ways: by divorcing the practice of building from the history and traditional *meanings* of building; by promoting a species of urbanism that destroyed age-old *social arrangements*...; and by creating a physical setting for man that failed to respect the limits of scale, growth, and the *consumption of natural resources*, or to respect the lives of other living things. The result of Modernism, especially in America, is a crisis of the human habitat: cities ruined by *corporate gigantism*..., public buildings and public *spaces unworthy of human affection*, vast sprawling suburbs that *lack any sense of community*, housing that the un-rich cannot afford to live in, a slavish obeisance to the needs of automobiles and their dependant industries *at the expense of human needs*, and a gathering *ecological calamity*...

Hayden (2002:57) connects Kunstler's critique to American dissatisfaction:

> The personal happiness of many Americans has been undermined by poorly designed housing and public space, yet few of us employ the language of real estate development, architecture, or urban planning to trace the contours of loneliness, boredom, weariness, discrimination, or financial worry in our lives... In part this is because we think of our miseries as being caused by personal problems rather than social problems.

Duany et al. (2000) concur with Hayden's (2002) assessment in that the physical design of the suburbs has led to many of these negative consequences.

As mentioned above, there are currently rural, suburban, and urban design strategies that respond to these social and environmental consequences. These housing strategies include cohousing and ecovillages. Both of these types of communities attempt to make places of meaning that are more conducive to social, economic, and environmental sustainability. And, both drew inspiration from the intentional communities that preceded them.

Intentional Communities

The concept of community is not unproblematic. As Meltzer (2005:2) explains, a simple, non-geographical definition characterizes community as having "...a certain quality or measure of social interaction within a group and... shared ties or common interests of its members." More traditional definitions of community include "...three essential characteristics: social interaction, shared ties and common geographical location" (Meltzer 2005:2). Hence, 'community' falls squarely within the realm of geographic inquiry.

Contrary to the homogenizing concept of community that is status quo in common parlance, as well as implicit in many traditional definitions, Panelli and Welch (2005), in "Why community?" argue for a more complex understanding. They explain that:

> Geographers have increasingly recognized that communities are not homogeneous social formations but contain great diversity and are meaningful in a variety of material, relational and political ways. This has resulted in the apparently contradictory notion of 'community with difference'... (Panelli and Welch 2005:1589).

The authors argue that because the social relations that take place in community "...can be observed in practices or performances that are spatially constituted," these practices and spaces can help us understand the "...dominant meanings and relations of community..." (Panelli and Welch 2005:1593). These practices and spaces illuminate the ways in which communities are vulnerable to alteration and struggle via both internal and external forces, as well as the diversity that exists within 'community.'

With this understanding that the concept of 'community' is complex and heterogeneous, the following discussion of communities may homogenize the members of the communities, as well as the types of communities, discussed. However, a detailed and nuanced explanation of the differences, struggles, and changes that exist within each type of community would require a meticulous attention to context, relations, practices, and spaces that is beyond the scope of this review.

This given, the first type of community to discuss is the intentional community.

Meltzer (2005:2) defines an intentional community as:

> ...a group of mostly unrelated people living together and dedicated *by intent* to specific common values or goals... Intentional communities generally place a high value on the sharing of land, housing, buildings and facilities. Shared facilities symbolise communal values and goals, and serve to represent the group as a collective...

There are many types of intentional communities, such as cohousing, ecovillages, Kibbutzim, religious/spiritual communities, egalitarian communities, communes, and student co-ops (Meltzer 2005).

In Geoph Kozeny's (2005a) "In Community, Intentionally," the author argues that intentional communities are created based on a dream of a better life, a life that incorporates something that is apparently missing in mainstream life. He explains that:

> All intentional communities have idealism in common – each one was founded on a vision of living in a better way, usually in response to something perceived as lacking in the broader culture. Many communities aspire to provide a supportive environment for the development of members' awareness, abilities, and spiritual growth. Most seek to create a life that will satisfy shared human cravings: security, family, relationship, fellowship, mutual cooperation, creativity and self-expression, as well as a sense of place, a sense of belonging. (Kozeny 2005a:12)

Intentional communities incorporate an intention to create a more supportive and satisfying way of life.

Avoiding the homogenization of difference within and among communities (discussed above), Norwood and Smith (1995) argue that because of the uniqueness of each community and the characteristics of its members, a unifying definition is

impossible to create. However, they identity several characteristics common to intentional communities:

> Many of these communities practice a high level of group process, gender equality, and democratic self-management, and make use of consensus, conflict-resolution, and personal growth techniques… Instead of retreating from society, many see themselves as building a new and better society, while making the best use of conventional institutions (Norwood and Smith 1995:45).

Norwood and Smith (1995:44) explain that although many current "Intentional Communities have formed around a combination of agrarian, ecological, spiritual, religious, and political orientations" that guide the everyday lives of residents, these communities lack the charismatic leaders and the rigid principles and dogmas of past Utopian communities and socialist cooperatives. Rather, current intentional communities result from the need people feel "…to create an alternative to a stressful and impersonal society" (Norwood and Smith 1995:45). Kozeny (2005a:13) agrees, arguing that the defining characteristic of those who are involved in intentional communities is that they "...are not satisfied with the status quo."

In "State of the Communities Movement," Laird Schaub (2005) explains that people choose intentional communities for various reasons, including a desire to remove oneself "...from a world that doesn't work and creating a sanctuary that does," "experimenting with innovative relationships to place, to sustainable technologies, or to money," and the cultivation of "spirit" (Schaub 2005:19). In addition, those who live in intentional communities often have a commitment to cooperation, mutual responsibility, and to the promotion of the concept of community to the broader society (Norwood and

Smith 1995). The majority of those involved in intentional communities were raised in mainstream culture (Schaub 2005).

Although the affluence levels of various communities vary, the age, socioeconomic status, and educational attainment level of individual members of these communities is not reflective of demographics of the wider population. Kozeny (2005a:14) tells us that currently, within intentional communities, "there is a disproportionate representation of people in the 25- to 50- year old range... [and] the well-educated white middle class is represented in proportions greater than in the mainstream." Regardless of the fact that many of these communities are on the periphery of the mainstream, the values of the members of intentional communities are often in line with those of conventional folks.

All intentional communities claim an interest in diversity, but the majority of participants are white, middle-class, well-educated environmentalists and liberals (Norwood and Smith 1995; Schaub 2005). Schaub (2005) explains that there are tensions that exist within the communities movement because of this exclusivity. The affluent, who have been raised with privilege and money in mainstream culture, find it difficult to function in situations with more equitable distribution of power. In addition, those in communities that were created by affluent, educated people find it difficult to make working class people feel welcome. The author explains that many communities make

further exclusions, by not making many special provisions for people with disabilities or the elderly.

While the majority of intentional communities are rural (farms or forests), many are now appearing in urban settings (large houses, converted buildings, or existing blocks). Often, those forming intentional communities will, as a group, build or re-build their homes themselves. Common to these developments are "natural energy, self-reliance, and economic independence through community-based enterprises" (Norwood and Smith 1995:58).

There are myriad barriers to the creation and maintenance of intentional communities, including laws, regulations (especially zoning regulations), issues with common ownership and financing of property, interactions with neighbors, and propaganda. Even so, Norwood and Smith (1995) identify 350 intentional communities in the United States at the time of their writing. Schaub (2005) argues that 0.03% of the North American population, or 100,000 people, live in an intentional community, at the time of writing. Globally, intentional communities can be found in Israel, Australia, Canada, Europe, India, and other countries (Norwood and Smith 1995).

History of Intentional Communities and Shared Housing

Sigrid Hallin (1991), in *Planning for a New Everyday Reality*, explains that in the 19th century, many of the first intentional communities and shared housing arrangements

were founded on the writings of the French utopian, philosopher, and socialist Charles

Fourier. In "Early European Collective Habitation", Norbert Schoenauer (1989:47) tells

that Fourier "...proposed the formation of a cooperative society based on social units...

inhabiting a common building with a new domestic arrangement – centralized kitchen

service." This idea of centralized household amenities was increasingly accepted,

especially in Europe, by the end of the 19th century.

Also during the 19th and early 20th centuries, as Karen A. Franck (1989) explains

in "Overview of Collective and Shared Housing," a variety of collective housing and

settlements emerged in North America, including utopian communities, as well as

religious and secular communities. Most of these communities were rural, especially

those formed between 1820 and 1850 (Franck 1989). These communal settlements had

between 12 and 3000 residents, and even though some were quite short lived, others

lasted many years, even to the current day.

Hallin (1991:35) explains that many of the intentional communities that began at

that time were, or still are:

> ...characterized by a strong social or religious conviction shared among the
> members and they tend to be isolated and more or less self-supporting agrarian
> societies. The Shaker communities, for example, strove to make their villages an
> earthly heaven and practiced gender equality, common ownership of goods,
> celibacy and pacifism... In Canada, the agrarian communes are represented by the
> Hutterites...

The Hutterite colonies still exist, and while the majority of them are in Canada, there are still colonies in the United States and other countries as well.

In addition to rural religious communities, there was also secular shared housing emerging in North America. Because of the lack of common religious or philosophical convictions, these are not considered intentional communities (Franck 1989). Many new styles of collective housing emerged in the United States during the 19th century. In New York, for instance, there were apartment hotels (a.k.a. family hotels), which:

> ...offered permanent residence in private suites of living rooms and bedrooms, supplemented by shared dining rooms and parlors. Middle-class families with children and young couples often lived in such buildings (Franck 1989:17).

As discussed by Elizabeth Cromley (1989) in "Apartments and Collective Life in Nineteenth-Century New York," New York also had cooperative/collective apartments, such as the Hudson View Gardens established in 1924 (Cromley 1989; Franck 1989). This type of shared housing included services for residents (such as a restaurant, barber shop, and maid service), as well as a variety of dwelling styles, from family apartments to private rooms with shared kitchens. Cooperative/collective apartments were especially popular in the 1870s through the 1890s, and the people who lived there had conventional, mainstream lives. In addition, there were cooperative living clubs, such as the Jane Club in Chicago, established in 1898 for single, young, women in the workforce (Franck 1989). This type of shared housing had private bedrooms, and a shared social room and kitchen.

During this time, similar types of shared housing were being established in Denmark, Sweden, Germany, Switzerland, England, the United Soviet Socialist Republic (U.S.S.R.), and Austria (Franck 1989; Schoenauer 1989). In these urban communities, Franck (1989:18) explains,

> …meal preparation and other housekeeping tasks were performed by building staff, and the buildings were designed for various types of households, including families with children. Collective housing in Europe, however, was more often part of a larger political or social agenda than it was in the United States.

In Denmark, during the early 20th century, builder Otto Fick developed a new model for apartment living, which would lead to the development of the *kollektivhus* (or collective house), the first of which was built in 1903. This new model, which included multiple residences and services, was most often developed by local authorities or housing professionals (McCamant and Durrett 1989; Schoenauer 1989). This model would very soon be imitated in Scandinavia and other European countries. In Sweden, the first collective apartment, Hemgården in Stockholm, was completed in 1909, and the first collective house in 1935 (Schoenauer 1989).

Schoenauer (1989) explains that in other parts of Europe, collective housing also gained steam in the early 1900s. In Germany, 1909 saw the completion of five collective houses with shared kitchens, based on a 1901 book by social democrat Lily Braun in which she proposed "housekeeping cooperatives" (Schoenauer 1989:55). The following year, an apartment building with a shared kitchen was completed. Switzerland saw the

initiation of the first collective housing project in 1915. At the same time, England was developing catering flats (similar to apartment hotels) and cooperative quadrangles (based on the ideas of British urban planner Ebenezer Howard). The first cooperative quadrangle in England was completed in 1913 (Homesgarth in Letchworth), and the second in 1915 (Meadow Way Green, also in Letchworth). In Russia, new shared housing similar to the *kollektivhus* was being built as early as 1919. Schoenauer (1989) tells that between 1926 and 1930, 30% of all new residential accommodations built in Russia were shared housing. However, the 1930s saw the beginnings of continued debates about the benefits and disadvantages of collective housing (Shoenauer 1989).

Also during the early 20th century, the Israeli kibbutz, which certainly can be considered an intentional community, emerged. Hallin (1991:36) explains: "the kibbutz developed as an unusually egalitarian and democratic society, with an ideological insistence on complete equality and direct democracy." In these communities, people both live and work together. At the time of writing, Hallin (1991) reports that, 260 kibbutzim house 3% of Israel's population. The Israeli kibbutz still exists today.

As discussed above, following World War II, the United States saw a precipitous decline in collective living arrangements. Franck (1989:4) explains that at this time,

> ...the single-family detached house, long an American ideal, became affordable to many more families. Prime along its characteristics are spatial and social privacy and self-sufficiency: ideally it is to be occupied only by members of a single household who are related to each other by blood or marriage; no spaces or

> facilities are to be shared with other households; and all household tasks are to be performed by each household, separately.

Privatization and isolation became the norm, for both homes and the people occupying them. At this time, communities in which people both worked and lived became extremely rare (Hallin 1991). And, the types of housing with central dining became of use only to special needs groups, such as students and the elderly (Franck 1989).

There was a surge in the popularity of collective housing and intentional communities in the 1960s and 1970s, most well known by the 'hippie communes' of that time. And, there has been a recent surge in interest in collective housing and intentional communities since the 1990s. Schaub (2005) argues that recent changes in the communities movement are distinct from those of a generation ago, for several reasons. First, the prevalence of computers reduces certain geographic barriers. For example, telecommuting makes living in community easier. Second, the increased laws and zoning regulation of recent times pose new and unique challenges, making developing new communities more difficult. And third, there are now people over 50 years old coming to shared housing and intentional communities for the first time, more than ever before, adding to the diversity of these communities.

The current surge in interest in shared housing and intentional communities has much to offer contemporary society. Drawing from the work of Dolores Hayden (1977), in *Seven American Utopias*, Hallin (1991:36) posits that:

The importance of flexible and open-ended plans, user participation in the design process, a balance between private and communal spaces, the physical connections between private and communal spaces, innovative design, and simplification and standardization, are important principles that can be gleaned from these early experiments in communal living.

Cohousing, which will be discussed next, is a more recent type of intentional community that takes these architectural components discussed by Hallin into consideration as part of an attempt to physically design a settlement that deepens the sense of community among residents.

Cohousing

Though some, such as McCamant and Durrett (1994) and Franck (1989) argue that cohousing is not an intentional community because of the lack of lack of common religious or philosophical convictions and the lack of charismatic leaders, others argue that cohousing is a form of intentional community. Meltzer (2005:2) believes that cohousing can indeed be considered an intentional community because these "...groups form with the explicit *intention* of creating a socially cohesive and mutually supportive community." The common value set that is characteristic of intentional communities can be found in cohousing residents' valuing the development of community.

McCamant and Durrett (1994:17), in introducing the concept of cohousing to the American public in 1988 with the publication of *Cohousing: A Contemporary Approach to Housing Ourselves* (originally published in 1988), define cohousing; they state that "based on democratic principles, cohousing developments espouse no ideology other than

the desire for a more practical and social home environment." In "Cohousing in Denmark", McCamant and Durrett (1989:95) beautifully summarize the characteristics of cohousing:

> Each household has a private residence and shares extensive common facilities with the larger community. The common facilities typically include a [common house with a] kitchen and a dining room where dinners are served two to seven nights a week; children's playrooms, which also may house organized child-care and after-school programs; workshops; a meeting/living room; and laundry facilities. Although individual dwelling units are designed to function self-sufficiently and include their own kitchens, the common facilities, and particularly the common dinners, are an important aspect of community life [both socially and practically].

Norwood and Smith (1995:57) add that:

> The basic layout of these communities consists of approximately 20 to 30 (or more) private units of various sizes clustered around village-like courts or streets… Extensive shared gardens and orchards, recreation areas, and open space are common features…

Cohousing is a particular architectural design style and development process that is meant to facilitate community interaction and deepen social ties.

In "Designing Neighbourhoods for Social Interaction", Jo Williams (2005:201) states that residents of cohousing communities are of various ages and religions, and have various interests and household structures, "however, in terms of affluence, social class, race, education and attitudes cohousers are a fairly homogeneous group." Most cohousing communities are located close to metropolitan areas so that the building sites are affordable, but work, school, and other urban amenities are not far off (McCamant and Durrett 1989).

While there can be variations in development size, design, location, mission, vision, priorities and type of ownership structure[2], there are several common characteristics historically shared by cohousing communities. McCamant and Durrett (1989, 1994:43) argue that there are four characteristics that are always incorporated into cohousing communities:

> These four characteristics – participatory process, intentional neighborhood design, common facilities, and resident management – have come to define cohousing. None of these is unique, but the consistent combination of all four is. Each characteristic builds on the others and contributes to the success of the whole.

Given that the combination of these four characteristics is essential to cohousing, and that they are consistently found in all cohousing communities, a brief discussion is in order.

Characteristics of Cohousing

In the participatory development process, "residents organize and participate in the planning and design process for the housing development, and are responsible as a group for all final decisions…" (McCamant and Durrett 1994:38). Residents initiate the planning and design of their community, and control it throughout the development process. Even though the participatory design process is fraught with frustrations and time lags, the bonds that form during this intense time bolster the sense of community

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[2] McCamant and Durrett (1989:98) explain that: "[c]ohousing developments employ a variety of financing mechanisms and ownership structures: privately owned condominiums, limited-equity cooperatives, rentals owned by nonprofit organizations, and a combination of private ownership and nonprofit rental units."

among residents once the development is built and occupied (McCamant and Durrett 1994).

The second characteristic consistently incorporated into cohousing is intentional neighborhood design: a design that encourages a sense of neighborhood and community among residents (McCamant and Durrett 1989, 1994). Residents-to-be have a strong desire to facilitate the development of a sense of community and belonging through the physical layout of the community. As McCamant and Durrett (1989:100) explain:

> Beginning with the initial programming, residents consistently emphasize design aspects that 'increase the possibilities for social contact' rather than those that protect individual privacy.

Although a sense of community is established through the participatory design process, it is sustained via the physical design of the community (McCamant and Durrett 1994).

Design that encourages interaction can be seen in the characteristic layout of cohousing communities. This layout includes two rows of housing, on either side of a pedestrian street. Cars are not permitted within cohousing communities, but are relegated to the periphery. The entrances to the homes face each other, so that residents have a distinct transition between the public spaces (i.e. the common facilities, shared walkways, and home entrances) and the private space (home interiors). In addition, the homes themselves tend to incorporate a transition from public to private space. Usually the kitchens are facing the shared walkway (public), and living quarters are on the opposite side of the house (private) (McCamant and Durrett 1994).

Williams (2005:222) explains "…that the key design features that encourage social interaction are: proximity to buffer zones; good-quality, accessible, functional, diverse communal spaces with ample opportunity for surveillance; and finally, private units (with restricted facilities)." Residents need a "balance between public and private," according to Meltzer (2005:120), so that they "…can control their exposure and accessibility to others." This is certainly a critical issue within cohousing communities, but the presence of both private homes and common facilities allows residents to create this balance (Franck 1989).

The third characteristic of cohousing is the presence of common facilities. The most important common facility is the common house, which includes a kitchen that is used for common meals that are prepared by several members of the community for all residents. Other facilities generally included in the common house consist of shared laundry facilities, children's and teen's rooms, guest rooms, and office spaces. In addition, common facilities can include community gardens, open space, playgrounds, and other recreational areas.

As well as encouraging interaction among residents, the common facilities are "…designed for daily use, to supplement private living areas" (McCamant and Durrett 1994:38). This allows for a reduction in the size of the private homes, another characteristic of cohousing communities (Meltzer 2005). This tendency towards smaller

homes results from the common facilities that can, as an extension of residents' private homes, house shared amenities that each individual home no longer needs to incorporate independently, such as guest rooms, laundry facilities, and office space (McCamant and Durrett 1989; Meltzer 2005). Many communities deliberately reduce the size of their private homes in order to be able to incorporate more and better common facilities (McCamant and Durrett 1989). In fact, Meltzer (2005) explains that cohousing homes are half the size of average new homes in America. And, cohousers "…live in more compact building *types* than they did previously – contrary to an overwhelming national preference for detached family dwellings" (Meltzer 2005:122). Thus, the benefits of common facilities are both social and practical (McCamant and Durrett 1994).

The final characteristic common to all cohousing developments is the resident responsibility for the ongoing management of the community (McCamant and Durrett 1989; Williams 2005). After the community is built, residents use community meetings as a forum in which to make decisions that involve all community members. This self-governance can employ a variety of decision-making structures, consensus and voting strategies being popular among them. In addition to self-governance, residents are responsible for the ongoing physical maintenance of the community. Usually, all adults must participate in work groups, which either rotate duties or are allotted specific task sets (i.e. landscape maintenance, common house cleaning, common meal preparation) (McCamant and Durrett 1994).

There are several other characteristics that are shared by many cohousing communities. Norwood and Smith (1995) explain that sharing, cooperation, and intergenerational extended families are important to many cohousers. In addition, the interaction between, and synthesis of, the social interactions and the physical form of the community are also important (Norwood and Smith 1995). Meltzer (2005:3) identifies that many cohousers share "a commitment to living more simply than 'normal' in smaller, less elaborate dwellings with fewer material possessions." Many seek to reduce the stress and travel dependence of mainstream life. Some practice voluntary simplicity (Kirby 2004).

Benefits of Cohousing

There are many benefits reaped by cohousing community members. Living in community provides the opportunity for greater access to resources and services as a result of the combination of various community members' interests and skills. The sharing of resources results in less pressure on individuals and families, less monetary expenditure, and smaller ecological footprints. The presence of shared facilities and services allows residents to have access to amenities that single households might not be able to afford, such as workshops and guest rooms (Franck 1989; McCamant and Durrett 1989). Some community members participate in barter systems and local economies. In addition, many communities offer the opportunity for income generation through individual and cooperative efforts, such as growing food and home businesses.

Along with resource sharing and the resulting reduced material consumption, the employment of resource-conserving designs, technologies, and behaviors, such as composting and recycling, reduce community members' ecological footprints (Norwood and Smith 1995; Williams 2005). In addition, buying food in bulk and eating from local or community gardens helps residents further reduce their ecological footprints (Norwood and Smith 1995). As community members' needs are met on site, their need for resource-consuming transportation is reduced (Norwood and Smith 1995). Importantly, because of exposure to greater environmental consciousness and education as a result of living in community, residents often become more environmentally-aware and demonstrate behaviors that reflect this (Williams 2005).

There are numerous social advantages of sharing a strong sense of community, including a sense of belonging and the development of respect for others. However, the majority of community members must be dedicated to participation, cooperation, group activities, and the use of the common facilities for these social advantages to develop (Franck 1989). Franck (1989:6) posits that:

> The regular sharing of meals saves individual households the time and effort of preparing every evening meal on their own (and of the related efforts of grocery shopping and cleaning up)... The shared spaces also provide greater opportunity for sharing child-care responsibilities. Beyond the security and support extended by the presence of others, there is the social interaction and companionship generated by joint activities, particularly the sharing of meals and their preparation, which make for a richer domestic life for adults and for children...

Norwood and Smith (1995) agree that this community support network offers benefits to the entire community in terms of freeing up personal time, providing emotional support,

and offering opportunities for personal growth. Cohousing communities create child-friendly environments not only because of their pedestrian-friendly nature, but also because the community serves as a large, extended family and support network. Finally, most community members are able to balance private and public life, although it can be a challenge (Franck 1989). It is important to note that these are the espoused benefits of cohousing. There are also numerous disadvantages, which will be discussed in the results section of this document.

Cohousing arose as a "...response to perceived social problems of the late twentieth century – personal alienation and the breakdown of community, in particular" (Meltzer 2005:6). In addition, cohousing is a response to "...the isolation and impracticalities of single-family houses and apartment units" (McCamant and Durrett 1994:12). Instead of a lonely and detached existence, cohousers strive for a rich community life in which they have supportive relationships (Meltzer 2005). Projects such as cohousing, argues Crabtree (2005:342) "...highlight and reflect the conscious reinterpretation of home and neighbourhood to more directly address and nurture their political, social, economic and ecological realities." As such, cohousing is a definitively mainstream alternative which is applicable to most Americans (Meltzer 2005).

History of Cohousing

Cohousing emerged in Denmark in the 1960s a response to the challenge of balancing privacy and community and the desire for shared community facilities. The

first inklings of cohousing occurred in the mid-1960s when Danish architect Jan Gudmand-Hoyer gathered with friends in a discussion of the disadvantages of standard housing and the possibility of other options (Norwood and Smith 1995; McCamant and Durrett 1989, 1994). Gudmand-Hoyer's (1968) article "The Missing Link Between Utopia and the Dated One-Family House" garnered much enthusiasm (McCamant and Durrett 1994). Many people contacted him, expressing interest in building the type of community he described. At the same time, another author, Bodil Graae (1967), published an article entitled "Children Should Have One Hundred Parents," also about the cohousing concept (McCamant and Durrett 1994). Both of these articles inspired numerous new cohousers in Denmark. In 1968, these two authors and other came together to build a *bofaellesskaber*. *Bofaellesskaber* is translated directly from Danish as 'living community', but known as cohousing in the United States (McCamant and Durrett 1994).

In 1972, the first cohousing community, Saettedammen (outside of Copenhagen, Denmark) was built by 27 families who sought a sense of community deeper than that available in standard housing, including Hildur and Ross Jackson, who were pivotal in the institutionalization of the ecovillage movement (McCamant and Durrett 1994). There were other communities, as well. By 1973, the Jonstrup community had 33 families moved in. In 1976, the Nonbo Hede community was completed, and was the third cohousing community in Denmark. The first rental cohousing development was Tinggården, which is touted as a positive example of the "government-subsidized

nonprofit housing" that has caught on among nonprofit housing developers in Denmark

(McCamant and Durrett 1994:141). Owner-occupied cohousing was taking off at this

time as well. In fact, Denmark had 12 owner-occupied cohousing communities by 1980.

Nearly all of these were resident-initiated (McCamant and Durrett 1994).

Alison Woodward (1989:72), in "Communal Housing in Sweden", explains that:

By the mid-1970s many criticized the large-scale service house model and pleaded for smaller projects that might encourage an informal exchange of services between neighbors. Demands for housing better suited to the creation of community and the easing of everyday life came from at least two groups -- the rejuvenated women's movement and the more amorphous alternative living movement.

Those dissatisfied with standard housing and supporting the development of cohousing

emphasized both the social and the material advantages of this living arrangement.

People recognized that not only could living in community address financial and time

constraints for families (by providing amenities that would otherwise have to be

purchased individually), but also offers an improved quality of life found through sharing

experiences and deepening social relationships. These social and material advantages

became increasingly conceptually intertwined over time (Woodward 1989).

Although most cohousing communities are resident-initiated, the concept has

gained increasing support from the Danish government (McCamant and Durrett 1989).

Denmark's Ministry of Housing, in 1981, passed legislation that facilitated the ease and

affordability of financing cohousing communities. And since that time, the Danish

government has provided loans to cohousing communities, most of which are limited-equity cooperatives. The government has also provided rental subsidies for low-income residents, which many non-profit housing developers have utilized (McCamant and Durrett 1994).

From the 1980s onward, cohousing has become increasingly popular. Denmark had 22 cohousing communities by 1982, 67 by 1988, and 140 by 1993 (McCamant and Durrett 1989 & 1994). These communities, most of which are still in existence, include between 6 and 40 homes, with the majority between 15 and 33. They house between 40 and 100 people each. By the 1980s, cohousing had become "...an accepted, mainstream housing alternative" in Denmark (McCamant and Durrett 1989:96).

At the same time as *bofaellesskaber* was gaining popularity in Denmark, other European countries were independently experimenting with similar housing strategies. For instance, in the Netherlands, the *centraal wonen* (or central living) include the same four characteristics as cohousing (participatory process, intentional neighborhood design, common facilities, and resident management), but rather than having common facilities in the center of the community, "...clusters of four to eight households usually share a living, kitchen, and dining area" (McCamant and Durrett 1994:149). After five years of planning, the Netherlands's first *centraal wonen,* Hilversum, was completed in 1977 (McCamant and Durrett 1994).

Similarly, during the 1960s and 1970s, Sweden saw resurgence in the *kollektivhus* of the early 1900s (Woodward 1989). Most of these new projects were publicly-financed, so that support services could be administered through multi-family communities. They differed from the early *kollektivhus* in that each resident had a complete, private dwelling, rather than having meal preparation and other services performed by building staff (Franck 1989; Woodward 1989). The goal, as was the case in the development of cohousing, was improved quality of material and social life (Woodward 1989). By the 1980s, there were many different management and occupancy structures, but "…the communal model in Sweden came to mean multigenerational, multifamily housing that included communal facilities and the potential for common meals" (Woodward 1989:74). The majority of these shared housing facilities are high-rise buildings with more than 50 private homes (McCamant and Durrett 1994). However, because most multi-family housing in Sweden is publicly-financed, this type of housing does not carry a negative stigma (Woodward 1989).

Cohousing was brought to the United States by architects McCamant and Durrett, who traveled to Denmark and between 1984 and 1985 lived in or visited 46 cohousing communities (McCamant and Durrett 1989 & 1994). These authors formally introduced the idea of cohousing to the United States with their 1988 publication of *Cohousing: A Contemporary Approach to Housing Ourselves* (Norwood and Smith 1995). Cohousing fills a particular niche in the United States because of growing concern with consumerism among many people (Meltzer 2005). Meltzer (2005:10) explains that: "Americans living

in cohousing have reconceputalized their domestic space needs, enjoying habitable spaces for their qualities and livability, not their material content and associated status symbolism." As a result, cohousing has taken off; according to Wonderland Hill Development Company[3], there are now over 80 communities in the United States. Currently, cohousing is not only seen in Denmark, the United States, the Netherlands, Sweden, Norway, Germany, France, and Canada, but also in Australia, New Zealand, Japan, Korea, and certain countries on the African continent (McCamant and Durrett 1994; Meltzer 2005)

Historically, cohousing communities have been initiated by a group of people with a common vision who come together to plan the community. This planning process often takes years and communities can fail due to lack of access to knowledge and resources, as well as divergent interests. Recently, because they recognize that cohousing serves the needs of an increasingly large number of Americans, development companies have emerged that are producing 'speculative' (developer-driven) cohousing communities (McCamant and Durrett 1994). Wonderland Hill Development Company, for instance, has designed and built 17 cohousing communities.

This type of development challenges the resident participation aspect of the final design, possibly affecting the future cohesion of the communities (Jackson in Jackson

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[3] Wonderland Hill Development Company is a for-profit development company based in Boulder, Colorado, specializing in using the cohousing concept to design and build new residential communities.

and Svensson 2002:158; McCamant and Durrett 1994). As McCamant and Durrett (1994:280) speculate: "…without active participation in the planning process, residents are unlikely to make extensive use of the common facilities." Regardless of the problems of including developers in the design and building of cohousing communities, there are potential benefits of 'speculative' cohousing (Norwood and Smith 1995). For example, 'speculative' cohousing communities draw people who would not otherwise participate in a lengthy planning process, thereby broadening cohousing's appeal to the general public. However, without one of the four defining characteristics of cohousing, perhaps a new term will be needed to describe these new communities.

Ecovillages

Ecovillages are one type of intentional community. Broadly, ecovillages are deliberately-created communities whose members strive to modify consumer culture, live in a socially and environmentally sustainable manner, practice voluntary simplicity, create a supportive social environment, and cultivate meaning, life satisfaction, and fulfillment (Bonnette 2004; Kirby 2004; Svensson in Jackson and Svensson 2002). Ecovillages and cohousing are not mutually exclusive: ecovillages can employ the cohousing architectural model and process, but not all ecovillages use cohousing and few cohousing communities are ecovillages.

Defining Ecovillages

Robert Gilman developed a clear definition of the ecovillage in 1991 with his

publication of "The Eco-village Challenge". This definition has since been used by

academics and activists alike. He defines the 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 (Gilman
> 1991).

This definition is connotatively loaded, and thus deserves some discussion.

By "human-scale", Gilman (1991) refers to the size of the community. He

believes that a community of no more than 500 to 1000 people allows community

residents to know each other and to influence the direction the community is taking

(Gilman 1991). Jan Martin Bang (2005), in *Ecovillages: A Practical Guide to Sustainable*

Communities, holds that the ideal number of ecovillage residents is between 50 and 500.

By using the term "full featured settlement", Gilman (1991) is describing a

"settlement, in which the major functions of life – food provision, manufacture, leisure,

social life, and commerce – are all present in balanced proportions." This is referring to a

mixed-use community, in which all aspects of life are integrated and present within a

small radius. It is important to note that this is not referring to an isolated or completely

self-sufficient settlement, but one in which there are multiple avenues of employment

with in the community, as well as ecovillagers who are employed outside the community,

outsiders who are employed within the community, and services outside the ecovillage that community members will access (i.e. airports, hospitals) (Bang 2005; Gilman 1991). In fact, the connection between cohousing communities and their surrounding communities is an important relationship to cultivate.

The phrase "human activities are harmlessly integrated into the natural world" refers to more than ecological sustainability. It also refers to an eco-centric (rather than anthropocentric) worldview, which values other forms of life on a par with humans (Bang 2005; Gilman 1991). In terms of ecological sustainability, this phrase is referring to the conscious and conservative use of natural resources. Instead of a disposable approach to natural resources, Gilman (1991) encourages a cyclic approach. To accomplish the harmless integration of human activities into the natural world, ecovillagers must:

> ...find ecologically friendly ways to: preserve natural habitats on the village land; produce food, wood, and other bio-resources on site; process the organic waste produced on site; render harmless any initially toxic waste from the village; recycle all solid waste from the village; process liquid waste from the village; avoid adverse environmental impacts off site from the production and delivery of any products brought in from off site; avoid adverse environmental impacts off site from the use and disposal of any products (Gilman 1991).

Current methods employed within ecovillages that work towards this goal include growing food, the use of renewable energy, composting, recycling and limiting the use of harmful substances (Gilman 1991).

By "supportive of healthy human development," Gilman (1991) is advocating for "...a balanced and integrated development of all aspects of human life – physical,

emotional, mental, and spiritual." He is referring to the fulfillment of the needs of both the individual community members and the community as a whole (Bang 2005; Gilman 1991).

The phrase "can be successfully continued into the indefinite future," means sustainability in the broad sense (Bang 2005; Gilman 1991). There are three components of sustainability: ecological, social, and environmental. In order for a community to be sustainable, all three of these components must be addressed. Gilman (1991) explains that that this is difficult because there are many hidden ways in which communities can be "living off the capital accumulated in other parts of the society; or dependent on unsustainable activities elsewhere; or not inclusive of a major aspect of life (such as childhood or old age)." This component of ecovillage life requires a commitment to being fair and non-exploitative in present dealings with other parts of the world, in dealings with the non-human world, and in dealings with forms of life that will come in the future (Gilman 1991).

It is important to discuss a common response to the ecovillage concept. Many recognize that various non-industrialized indigenous communities today do live in something similar to an ecovillage, and many past traditional agricultural villages throughout the globe could also be considered something similar to an ecovillage. With this recognition, it would appear that those involved in the ecovillage movement are advocating for the adoption of an indigenous village structure or a return to an idyllic

past. However, this is most decidedly not the case (Dawson 2006; Gilman 1991; Norwood and Smith 1995).

Current traditional agricultural villages house a significant proportion the world's population. However, Gilman (1991) argues that very few people…

> …would describe these villages as either full-featured or supportive of healthy human development. The work is hard, life expectancy is short, opportunities for personal development and education are few (almost non-existent for women), and the diversity of livelihoods is small… In addition, the harmony between these villages and the natural environment has often depended on low population densities – a luxury we no longer have... And finally, traditional villages are hardly paragons of harmony between humans. Village life is often, from a modern point of view, painfully patriarchal. Beyond the household there is feuding and mistrust within villages, between neighboring villages, and toward the world beyond.

Rather, ecovillages "… are a distinctly post-industrial… phenomenon" (Gilman 1991). This is because ecovillages address post-industrial situations, including environmental degradation, global population growth, the presence of new technologies (including scientific, communication, and renewable resource use technologies), new forms of human organization, and new levels of human understanding and awareness of our place in the universe (Gilman 1991).

Gilman's (1991) definition of the ecovillage, and the above discussion of his views, is a useful starting point. However, this definition has been criticized by other ecovillage scholars and activists, including Jonathan Dawson (2006), in *Ecovillages: New Frontiers for Sustainability*, for its imprecision and for its aspirational nature. Dawson

(2006:21) argues that Gilman's (1991) definition "…points to the goal towards which ecovillages seek to move rather than a state which any has yet achieved."

However, Dawson (2006) tells that formulating a new definition is a formidable challenge. Jackson and Svensson (2002:5) concur and believe that that this is because although…

> …ecovillages build on a common vision, they differ greatly from each other according to the difference in focus placed on their ecological, social, and/or cultural spiritual-dimensions. They are also greatly influenced by different climactic conditions, their natural environment and prevalent local cultures.

Any generalizations risk a homogenization of the diversity of ecovillages that exists. Regardless, Dawson (2006) does identify five fundamental characteristics that are common to all ecovillages. These include: "the primacy of *community*" within ecovillages, that "…ecovillages are *citizen's initiatives*", that ecovillages "…are in the business of *wresting back control over their own resources*", that each ecovillage has a "*strong body of shared values*", and "…that ecovillages act as *centres for research, demonstration and (in most cases) training*" (Dawson 2006:34-36). A brief discussion of each of these points is in order, as they lead to a new definition of the ecovillage.

The first characteristic, the emphasis of community within ecovillages, Dawson (2006:34) argues is "a response to the alienation and solitude of the modern condition." This emphasis on community helps satisfy a desire to connect deeply with others in community, to be useful and valued, and to use less through sharing resources with other

community members. Dawson (2006:34) uses the term "citizen's initiatives", the second

characteristic, to describe the fact that these communities are resident-driven and more

self-sufficient that mainstream society. In many cases, residents not only design, but

build their own homes as well, often using local and recycled materials. The desire to

take back control over resources, the third characteristic, is argued to be an action in

opposition to economic globalization. Dawson (2006:35) believes that ecovillages are

"…an attempt to win back some measure of community control over the various

dimensions of human life: how we grow our food, build our houses, generate our energy,

create our livelihoods, entertain ourselves and each other." The fourth characteristic, the

shared values Dawson (2006) mentions, refers to spirituality (as distinct from religion) as

well as commitment to a wider cause (environmentalism, community development, or

local economies). Finally, this role that ecovillages accept as educational centers and

models, and the resulting sharing of ideas, technologies, and way of life with a broader

audience, is a key function (Dawson 2006).

From these five characteristics, Dawson (2006:36) proposes a new definition of

ecovillages, defining them as:

> Private citizens' initiatives in which the communitarian impulse is of central
> importance, that are seeking to win back some measure of control over
> community resources, that have a strong shared value base (often referred to as
> 'spirituality') and that act as centres of research, demonstration and (in most
> cases) training.

With this new definition, the purpose of ecovillages beyond the lives of the individual

residents becomes clearer.

Characteristics of Ecovillages

According to the Global Ecovillage Network[4], there are 375 ecovillages in the world and 85 in the United States. There are ecovillages in many countries, including Sri Lanka, Senegal, Tibet, India, Australia, Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Mexico, Italy, Denmark, Scotland, and Wales. Andy Kirby (2004) in "Domestic Protest: The Ecovillage Movement as a Space of Resistance" explains that by and large, ecovillages in the United States are a distinctly white, middle-class endeavor.

Hildur Jackson and Karen Svensson (2002), in *Ecovillage Living: Restoring the Earth and Her People*, argue that ecovillages are created based on a combination of three dimensions: ecological, social, and cultural/spiritual. The ecological dimension includes environmental sustainability, but as mentioned above, sustainability includes social and economic factors as well. Jackson and Svensson (2002:75) argue that:

> The strength of the ecovillage movement is that social-economic sustainability is just as noticeable and important as the ecological aspect. Most ecovillages are based on community as a central motivation for their existence. This is one hundred percent so for the cohousings on which many ecovillages build.

McCamant and Durrett (1994) explain that cohousing communities and ecovillages fit nicely together, given that they have many goals in common.

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[4] The Global Ecovillage Network (GEN) is an association of people and communities striving to build sustainable communities. GEN will be discussed later in this chapter.

However, it is important to make a distinction between cohousing and ecovillages because the two concepts have become increasingly intertwined over time. Dawson (2006:23) explains the difference:

> Ecovillages take the social dimension still further [than cohousing, and] are altogether more radical in their approach... The community dimension of life in ecovillages is stronger than in cohousing projects: residents have less private space, many more members work within the community (often for wages well below those in the mainstream economy) and a good number have some element of income-sharing or other ways of redistributing economic wealth among the members.

The two have become blurred because many ecovillages have adopted cohousing as a means of streamlining the design and build process. And, many cohousers have expressed discontent at the lack of deep community orientation or the lack of radical social and politically radical behavior that exists within cohousing communities.

However, cohousing and ecovillage residents share common goals and strategies when it comes to community. For instance, many ecovillages and cohousing communities use consensus decision-making structures. This form of decision-making requires unanimity (or near unanimity) for any decision to be made. Using consensus usually results in slower decision outcomes, but "...the aim is to seek accommodation, to find ways of arriving at a synthesis of the best in divergent perspectives and to avoid the alienation of minorities..." (Dawson 2006:55). Also in both types of communities, people seek a support network to raise children, more leisure time, less time spent at work and commuting, and diversity (Jackson and Svensson 2002).

In addition, many residents of both ecovillages and cohousing communities react to the ills of the global economy through the practice of voluntary simplicity, the deliberate choice to live with less material consumption (discussed in the second chapter of this document) (Dawson 2006; Kirby 2004). However, residents of ecovillages often take a stronger approach to disassociating from the global economy. For instance, members of ecovillages often accept an even lower level of material consumption than members of cohousing communities. Regardless, ecovillagers are able to maintain financial salience. This results from the reduced level of monetary expenses that accompanies a reduction in material consumption. This allows ecovillagers to reduce their need for income, and gives them more time to pursue new ways to support themselves that are in greater alignment with their values (Jackson in Jackson and Svensson 2002). As ecovillagers reach greater levels of self-sufficiency, resulting from the local production of food and energy as well as resource sharing within the community, their need for monetary income is further reduced.

In ecovillages, many other ways of disassociating from the global economy can be found. Many ecovillages share economic resources using some form of redistribution of wealth (Bang 2005; Dawson 2006). Many use alternative currencies and banking systems, such as local exchange trading systems (LETS) and community supported agriculture (CSA) (Bang 2005; Dawson 2006). In addition, many ecovillages have on-site business ventures that do support the ecovillage financially. Jackson and Svensson (2002:66-68) identify some of these business activities; they include:

> Ecovillage design, ecological building, permaculture consultancy, renewable energy, and water treatment... consultancy in community skills... home-based work... education... living and learning centers... ecovillage tourism... food production... healthcare, psychological and physical... health products... arts and crafts... media, printing and publishing... shops... [and] mail order businesses.

In fact, diverse combinations of these various alternative economic strategies have resulted in ecovillage economies that are quite vital (Dawson 2006). Dawson (2006:50) argues that "it is the unique combination of community and economic strategies that enables people to bring back into alignment their desire for justice and sustainability with their aspiration to live well and happily."

Another point on which ecovillages and cohousing communities differ is in the sweat equity put into the construction of the communities. In cohousing communities, residents usually participate in the design process, but less often in the construction process. As mentioned above, in most ecovillages, residents not only design, but build their own homes as well (Dawson 2006). In both cases, however, participating in the design process builds community cohesiveness and identity (Bang 2005).

One component of ecovillages is the use of resource-conserving and resource-generating 'technologies' (the term technology used in the broad sense). Dawson (2006) points out that there are both low-tech and high-tech technology options employed within ecovillages. He explains that in either case, these approaches help ecovillagers reduce their ecological footprints. Regardless the type of technology used, Dawson (2006:43) holds that the use of these technologies is holistic and integrated...

...enabling them to increase internal resource flows and reduce the need for external inputs... These benefits are partly a function of intentional design, partly a function of scale: it is simply easier for resource flows to be integrated and waste reduced in communities at the ecovillage scale.

The holistic approach to resource conservation and generation is easily visible in the approaches many ecovillage residents have taken to food, water, and energy (Bang 2005).

Bang (2005) outlines some of the strategies and approaches in each of these three categories. In terms of food production, many ecovillages use one or several of these options: permaculture, integrated pest management (IPM), organic farming, biodynamic farming, hydroponics, rooftop gardens, composting, and closed-loop systems in the production of food for individuals, households, and market (Bang 2005). In addition to fruits, nuts, and vegetables, many ecovillages produce arable crops and livestock as well. In terms of water management, ecovillage have been known to employ: optimum water-use strategies, rainwater capture, greywater systems, bio-swales, dams, aquaculture, flowforms, and biological sewage systems (such as living machines[5]) (Bang 2005). In terms of energy production, many ecovillages use one or several of the following: hydropower (usually micro-hydro), wind generators, solar power (photovoltaics and solar

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[5] Living machines are a form of biological sewage treatment which uses "... a series of tanks through which the waterborne material flows... [each of which] contains an ecosystem built up from materials... includ[ing] microbes, invertebrates, plankton, fish, flowers, mollusks, and shrubs" (Bang 2005:167). The living machine can "...grow food, treat sewage, detoxify harmful human chemicals, regulate climates in buildings, transform wastes and generate fuels" (Bang 2005:167).

hot water), biomass energy[6], hay box cooking, geothermal heat, pedal power (machines

constructed from bicycles), hydrogen fuel cells, and heat drawn from animals (homes that

house animals on the ground floor and humans on the floors above) (Bang 2005). In

terms of energy conservation, methods employed include the reduction of overall

transportation requirements; the choice of modes of transportation that require less

energy; the use of energy efficient heating, cooling, lighting, and window systems; the

use of natural cooling systems and passive solar heating systems; and the use of efficient

ventilation (Bang 2005). In addition, during both the construction and maintenance of

ecovillages, many ecovillagers optimize the use of materials, reuse materials, minimize

waste creation, avoid the use of materials that have high embodied energy[7], use local and

recycled materials, use natural materials, avoid materials that adversely affect indoor air

quality, avoid materials that deplete the ozone layer, avoid the use of old growth timber

and pressure treated wood, and avoid purchasing items with large amounts of packaging

(Bang 2005).

Challenges Faced by Ecovillages

There are numerous challenges of ecovillage living, from the ways in which

ecovillages interface with wider political dialogues to the dynamics that occur on the

ground in individual communities. On the broadest scale, Dawson (2006) argues that in

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[6] Biomass energy can be generated using organic materials produced on-site, using coppicing for timber production, vegetable oil produced on-site, or alcohol produced from any type of sugar or methane from sewage and manure, for instance.

[7] The energy required to bring materials from extraction to installation is referred to as that material's embodied energy.

the face of the increasing concentrations of wealth and power that exist in the current global economic system, the ecovillage movement is removed from the mainstream political discourse. This hinders the ability of the ecovillage movement to articulate its message in this theater. In addition, the movement is hindered by its lack of templates that could be widely disseminated to those interested in ecovillage living, who could follow those guidelines to build a new community (Dawson 2006).

At the ecovillage-level, there are numerous challenges identified by Gilman (1991). To begin, the requirements of environmental sustainability to the ecovillage provides a formidable obstacle. One could argue that it is nearly impossible to ensure that all of the ways in which ecovillages are built and maintained, as well as the behaviors of ecovillage residents, are environmentally benign (Gilman 1991). In addition, the social and economic components of sustainability implicitly include equity. Again, it may be nearly impossible to ensure that all of the ways in which ecovillages are built and maintained, as well as the behaviors of ecovillage residents, do not exploit other people or places, currently or in the future (Gilman 1991). Ecovillage governance structures must also ensure the absence of exploitation, and the presence of community interaction and a variety of activities (Gilman 1991).

There are challenges on the individual level. Andy Kirby (2003), in "Redefining social and environmental relations at the ecovillage at Ithaca" identifies that residents face situational, interpersonal, and personal challenges. The situational challenges include

issues of ecovillage location and economics. Ecovillage homes in the United States, which often include high-tech technologies for resource conservation and production, can be quite expensive (Kirby 2004). In addition, ecovillage settlements are all privately funded, further reducing their affordability (Dawson 2006). As a result, there is a tension for many American ecovillagers between voluntary simplicity and the affordability of ecovillage life. On the interpersonal scale, Kirby (2003) identifies boundary, communication, and consensus issues. He argues that boundary issues, such as where an ecovillage resident or household wants to sit within the community's continuum of public to private, can be a significant challenge. Regardless of these challenges, the ecovillage movement has grown significantly since its institutional beginnings in the early 1990s.

History of the Ecovillage Movement

As Albert Bates (2003a) explains in "A 73-Year-Old Ecovillage in the Land of Ice and Fire," the first ecovillage was created in Iceland in the late 1920s (Sólheimer). And, as Bates (2003b) elaborates in "Ecovillage Roots (and Branches)," as early as the 1970s a few ecovillages were independently coming into being. These included *Mother Earth News'* educational center (Henderson, North Carolina) and *ökodorf* (Gorleben, Germany), which was formed in support of an anti-nuclear protest. Ecovillages continued to form independently since that time, but were not networked or organized under one organization or association.

In the 1970s in Denmark, several cohousers were looking to other forms of intentional community that could go beyond the social benefits offered by cohousing (Bates 2003b; Jackson in Jackson and Svensson 2002). These cohousers included Danish social activist Hildur Jackson, and her Canadian entrepreneur husband Ross Jackson, who were both involved in the emergence of the cohousing movement in the 1970s (Dawson 2006). They were two of the founders of Saettedammen, the first cohousing community in Denmark, established in 1972 (Jackson and Svensson 2002). After living there for 20 years, the Jacksons wanted:

> ...to be part of a more comprehensive experiment, which, if all people lived that way, would create a sustainable Earth. This was not possible within the boundaries of our existing cohousing (Jackson in Jackson and Svensson 2002:158).

They had created the Gaia Trust a few years prior, in which they had earmarked funds to be used in forwarding ecological and radical low-impact settlements, many of which were inspired by the intentional communities movement (Bang 2005; Dawson 2006).

At the same time, in the Untied States, Diane and Robert Gilman, who were co-owners and editors of *In Context* magazine, were using their publication to investigate sustainable communities and highlight the finest of them (Dawson 2006). In 1990, the Gaia Trust, under the administration of Hildur and Ross Jackson, solicited the Gilmans to do a study of sustainable communities and their best practices (Bang 2005; Dawson 2006). The report, entitled "Ecovillages and Sustainable Communities" was published in 1991 and showcased the best practices among international examples. Furthermore, the

Gilmans recommended ways in which the Gaia Trust could have the greatest influence in catalyzing the ecovillage movement (Dawson 2006). The same year, the Jacksons held a meeting in Denmark engaging a network of people interested in ecovillages, which was followed by several years of networking and discussion.

Then, in 1995 the Gaia Trust funded the "Ecovillages and Sustainable Communities: Models for the 21st Century" conference held at the Findhorn Foundation in Scotland. The following year, at the United Nations' UN-HABITAT Conference in Istanbul, Turkey, they formally launched the Global Ecovillage Network (GEN) (Dawson 2006; Jackson in Jackson and Svensson 2002). With the goal of working globally to promote the development of sustainable settlements and articulating a positive vision for social change, GEN marked the beginning of the institutionalized ecovillage movement (Dawson 2006).

The Ecovillage as a Model

Kirby (2004) argues that "the ecovillage movement offers a critique of the current social mode, proposing that environmental degradation follows from social degradation." In addition to a critique, the ecovillage movement offers a positive vision for social change in the form of a solution to environmental degradation and social alienation (Kirby 2004). Kirby (2004) argues that the concurrent deepening social relationships within the community and deepening relationship community members develop with the environment is precisely this solution.

Dawson (2006) explains that most of the attention that ecovillages garner is directed towards the technological features they incorporate, features that are often subsequently adopted by the wider society. But, Dawson (2006:54) also believes that "ecovillagers themselves lay at least as much emphasis on the social dimension: the challenge of finding satisfactory and inclusive forms of community governance and wellbeing." He holds that the particular characteristics of ecovillages allow them to innovate more rapidly and more courageously, which gives them more power as agents of change. However, he believes that the community facet of the ecovillage is equally important. It is precisely this combination of foci that makes the ecovillage a powerful model.

As mentioned above, many ecovillages accept this role as a model. Dawson (2006) argues that the sharing of ideas, technologies, and way of life with a broader audience is a key function of ecovillages. He believes that:

> What makes ecovillages especially effective as catalysts for change is that the primary objective of activities... is less to do with making life comfortable for ecovillage residents than demonstrating the viability of new, more ecologically benign approaches that they then promote and disseminate (Dawson 2006:43).

Svensson (in Jackson and Svensson 2002:10) holds that the ecovillage model is "...widely applicable model for the planning and reorganization of human settlements in the 21st Century." Although ecovillages aspire to a perhaps unattainable ideal, they have been identified as an alternative everyday space that represents another option to

consumer society by academics, such as Kirby (2004) and Jenny Pickerill and Paul

Chatterton (2006) in "Notes towards autonomous geographies." Many tout them to be

strong models of activism (Bonnette 2004). It is this point to which I will turn in the last

two chapters of this document.

CHAPTER V

METHODS: A CASE STUDY OF ECOVILLAGE AT ITHACA

In coming to recognize that our production is actually consumption of finite natural resources (Rees 1997[1]), and that this activity produces waste products that threaten the stability of the biosphere on which we depend, the notion of sustainability becomes of paramount importance... Whereas some individuals have reacted from a personal sense of dissatisfaction with the status quo as represented by contemporary consumer society, others have been moved by the implications on social and environmental levels to seek change. In this way, the intersection of personal concerns for establishing viable community and living environmentally, and more global concerns for the future of our society and the global environment, find expression in the creation of an environmentally oriented community like EVI [EcoVillage at Ithaca]. (Kirby 2003:325)

During July of 2007, I visited EcoVillage at Ithaca (also known simply as EcoVillage), in upstate New York, to gain a greater understanding of the community, its residents, and its relationship to the rest of the world. I used qualitative methods, including participant observation and semi-structured interviews, to explore the role EcoVillage, as a community, plays in resisting the ills of global capitalism. I also investigated the residents' perceptions of their own, personal role in resisting the ills of global capitalism as activists.

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[1] Rees, W. E. 1997. "Ecological footprints and the imperative of rural sustainability." Pp. 41-78 in *Rural Sustainable Development in America*, edited by I. Audirac. New York, NY: Wiley.

Qualitative Methods

I chose qualitative methods because this research style allowed me, as the researcher, to be visible in the research process. This research style also provided me with permission to openly incorporate my own values into my research agenda, including what questions I pursue and the use to which I put my findings. Finally, qualitative methods are best-suited to exploring the interactions between individual people and the larger structures that influence their lives.

Elspeth Graham's (2005) chapter in Flowerdew and Martin's *Methods in Human Geography: a guide for students doing research projects* explains the historical and current status of "Philosophies Underlying Human Geography Research." Graham (2005) argues that "…geographical research is based on philosophical assumptions or choices" (p.6) and that "…even the most philosophically inarticulate researcher makes philosophical choices simply by doing research" (p.8). These philosophical choices are many, and include the epistemological position a researcher takes regarding the nature of truth, and the existence of objectivity. In choosing qualitative methods, I have taken the position that truth is not objective, but only partially knowable. Knowledge is situated, and I must recognize that I am, as a researcher, also embedded in the social and cultural web that I am researching.

Researchers make other philosophical choices, such as decisions regarding the degree to which her/his activist agendas, or at least her/his values, are incorporated into

the research questions posed, and the audience to which research is presented. Graham (2005:29) explains that to some "the point of research... is not simply to add to knowledge but to change the world for the better." From this, I have gained an understanding that it is entirely appropriate, even necessary, to incorporate my values into my research questions and methods. In my quest to understand people's experiences of the ways in which they have resisted specific structures, processes, and dynamics, and the impact of that resistance, I can, without reservation, adopt a goal of putting that knowledge towards making the world a better place. Taking this idea further, Janice Morse (1994:58), in "Designing Funded Qualitative Research," identifies "...'reform focused' or 'problem-focused' ideas, in which the underlying purpose of the project is political, with predetermined goals..." Morse's identification of this possibility legitimates my own incorporation of politics into the research questions I am choosing to ask and the ways in which I am choosing to answer them.

Winchester (2005:5) states that one of the two questions that can be answered with qualitative methods is: "what is the shape of societal structures and by what processes are they constructed, maintained, legitimized, and resisted?" Qualitative methods aided my search to understand the degree to which EcoVillage at Ithaca can be understood as a space of resistance and EcoVillage residents can be understood as activists. Participant observation and semi-structured interviews helped me to gain general insights about daily life in the community, as well as an understanding of the thoughts of individual residents.

Participant observation allowed me to gain a better understanding of planning and decision-making, the rhythm of daily life, community activities and celebrations, and the relationship EcoVillage residents have with the town of Ithaca. According to Robin A. Kearns (2005:193) in "Knowing Seeing? Undertaking Observation Research," another chapter in Hay's book, participant observation fosters:

> ...contextual understanding. Here the goal is to construct an in-depth interpretation of a particular time and place through direct experience.

As a result of my immersion in the daily life and activities of EcoVillage residents, I gained a greater understanding not only of EcoVillage at Ithaca, and also of its residents.

Semi-structured interviews blend the advantages and disadvantages of unstructured and structured interviews. Kevin Dunn (2005:89) tells us in "Interviewing," a chapter of Iain Hay's *Qualitative Research Methods in Human Geography*, that semi-structured interviews are "content focused" and allow for "flexible questioning." With semi-structured interviews, I was able to ask the same questions of all interviewees, which I could then systematically compare. And, I was free to pursue interesting themes as they arose. Semi-structured interviews provided me with a window onto individual residents' thoughts, opinions, motivations, challenges, and aspirations.

EcoVillage at Ithaca

EcoVillage at Ithaca is located on the West Hill of Ithaca, in the Finger Lakes region of New York, as seen in Figure 1. As Liz Walker (2005), co-founder of EcoVillage and Director of the nonprofits, explains in *EcoVillage at Ithaca: Pioneering a Sustainable Culture*, the village covers 175 acres[2], but only 10% of that land has been developed. There are two distinct neighborhoods, the First Neighborhood Group (FROG) and the Second Neighborhood Group (SONG). Each neighborhood has 30 duplex homes, but covers only 3 to 4 acres. The two neighborhoods have different histories, design and build processes, and personalities. However, they are both based on the cohousing model and they both incorporate green building techniques and technologies. Together, the two neighborhoods house about 170 people.

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[2] EcoVillage land originally covered 176 acres, but one acre was eliminated from the holding, leaving 175 remaining acres.
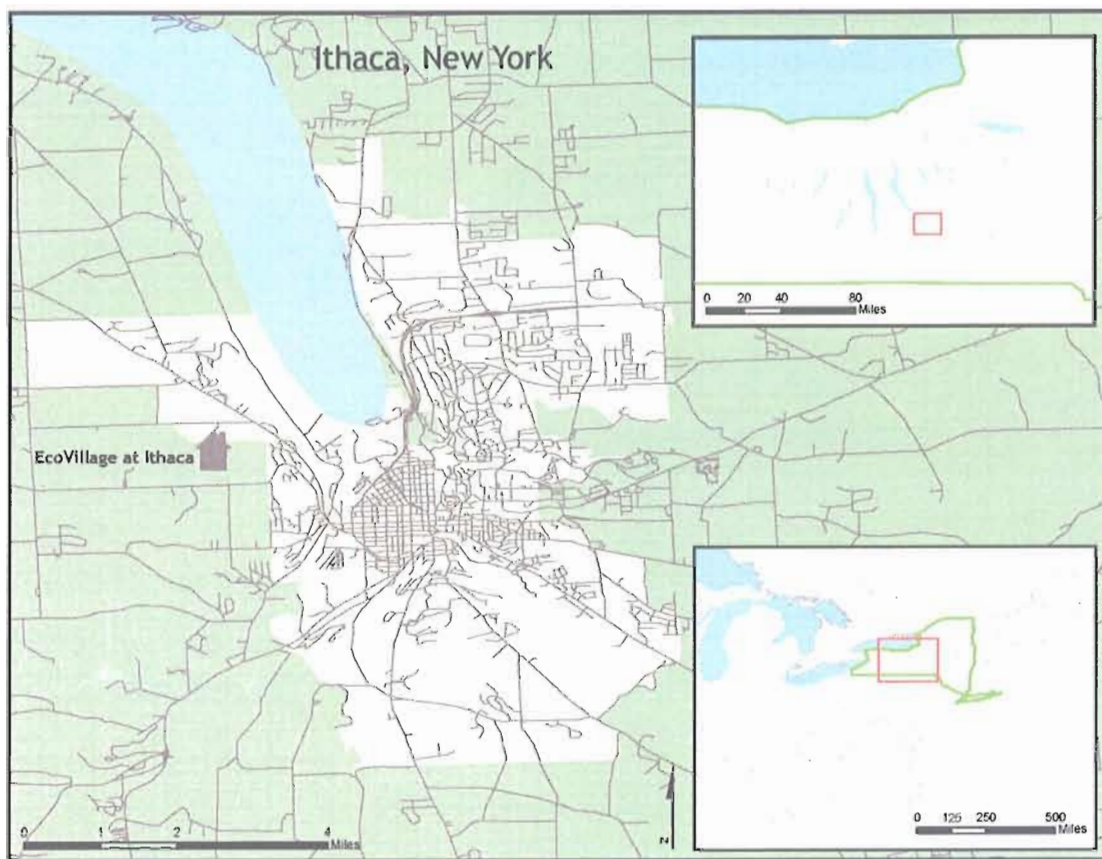
Figure 1. EcoVillage at Ithaca is located on the West Hill of Ithaca, in the Finger Lakes region of New York State. Cartographic design by Justyna Goworowska and Diana Fischetti.

The remaining 90% of EcoVillage's land has been conserved as open space in the form of wooded lands, meadows, wetlands, and agricultural lands. Fifty five acres are held in a conservation easement by the Finger Lakes Land Trust. These 55 acres include the privately-owned organic community supported agriculture (CSA) West Haven Farm. In addition, EcoVillage has a you-pick berry farm, which is also a CSA and a private business.

The EcoVillage at Ithaca Mission Statement, entitled "Towards Systemic Change" and adopted in 1994, states that...

> The ultimate goal of EcoVillage at Ithaca is nothing less than to redesign the human habitat. We are creating a model community of some five hundred residents that will exemplify sustainable systems of living – systems that are not only practical in themselves, but replicable by others. The completed project will demonstrate the feasibility of a design that meets basic human needs such as shelter, food production, energy, social interaction, work and recreation while preserving natural ecosystems (Walker 2005:7)

The goal of EcoVillage, as understood by residents, is to create a model of sustainable living that is appealing to mainstream America, while at the same time reducing the ecological footprint of residents and increasing meaningful relationships within the community.

This mainstream orientation is critical to make explicit, as it has both positive and negative ramifications that will be discussed throughout this document. As Dawson (2006:30) states: "central to the concerns of the designers of Ecovillage at Ithaca from the outset was ease of replication by middle-class Americans..." Jackson and Svennson (2002:174) agree that EcoVillage "...is one of the most mainstream initiatives... in the USA." This mainstream orientation has made EcoVillage a very high-profile and visible demonstration project (Dawson 2006).

History

As Walker (2005) explains, the original vision for EcoVillage at Ithaca was conceived by Joan Bokaer in 1990. Bokaer quickly recruited Liz Walker, whom she met at the Global Walk for a Livable World that same year. In 1991, Bokaer spoke in Ithaca, New York about her dream. As Bokaer (1991) envisioned in "The Ecological Imperative:"

> A pedestrian village would not only address most of the major ecological problems of our times, but could also improve the quality of our lives. A highly interactive social life of diverse people would flourish in a setting of clustered housing with some shared resources, a mixed-use human-scale village center and lots of open land. It would address many of the problems faced by modern families such as chronic time crunch, isolation, and lack of care for young children and the elderly. In addition, energy-efficient housing, the sharing of many resources, the lack of needed to own a car, and the production of food on-site can push the cost of living way down.

Also in 1991, Bokaer, Walker, and others held an Envisioning Retreat, which catalyzed the formation of the EVI nonprofit organization, sponsored by the Center for Religion, Ethics, and Social Policy (CRESP), a nonprofit organization affiliated with Cornell University. CRESP's mission is to "foster vital and caring communities to provide a foundation for a world of peace, mutual understanding, and respect for all life" (Walker 2005:167). CRESP is also dedicated to helping new nonprofits get off the ground.

This same year, the West Hill property was identified and those involved decided to purchase it for $400,000. With relief, Walker (2005:129) tells that:

> The 175-acre West Hill property that is now our home could have looked entirely different. In 1991, Lakeside Development Corporation owned the land and planned to build 150 homes on 1-acre (0.4-hectare) lots. Ninety percent of the

land would have been taken over by roads, houses, and manicured lawns. The remaining 10 percent would have been left as open space to satisfy a requirement of the Town of Ithaca. The areas left would have been the ones to wet or steep to build on. Developments like the ones proposed by Lakeside are gobbling up land all over the US. There is little room left for wildlife, agriculture, or simple open space. People are completely dependent on cars to get to work, take their children to school, or find recreation. And it can be very lonely living in a bedroom community. Yet this is the 'American Dream,' the model of development we are exporting to communities around the world.

EcoVillage at Ithaca was envisioned and designed specifically to model an alternative to this version of the 'American Dream.'

Using donated money (which was also used for closing costs and attorney's fees) the visionaries put $20,000 towards the purchase price. Because of the non-traditional nature of the proposed development, non-traditional lending mechanisms were required. Walker and Bokaer solicited and gained loans from 10 separate lenders amounting to $380,000. These loans were structured into two separate mortgages, one for $120,000 (gained from one individual lender) and the other for $260,000 (gained from a mortgage pool containing all the other lenders). In June of 1992, they purchased the property. This same year, EVI gained its nonprofit status. The plan was to pay $30,000 per year towards the mortgages, beginning after the completion of the first neighborhood. The idea was that the development of successive neighborhoods would create the revenue needed to cover the cost of these payments.

Shortly after the land was purchased, the planning process began. As Walker (2005:21) explains:

> Once we had purchased the land, the next step was to figure out what to do with it. We had to decide where to build the village, where to situate the farm, and what acreage to leave untouched. We also had to pay off that whopping mortgage. We entered an intensive and participatory land use planning process that involved many people, hours of research, and multiple meetings. Everyone felt the need to connect deeply with this place.

This land use planning process included the formation of a Land Use Planning Council that presented its findings to the Land Use Planning Forum. The Council investigated "...agriculture, natural areas and recreation, neighborhood siting, transportation, village siting, and water/waste management" (Walker 2005:24). This planning process also included the creation of "Guidelines for Development" and an "Envisioning Plan." During this time, McCamant and Durrett held a workshop with the new EcoVillagers, to aid in the cohousing design of the village.

The planning of the first neighborhood group (FROG) lasted until the final site plan was approved by the Town of Ithaca and groundbreaking in 1995. The group had hired development managers, who were architect-builders sympathetic to their goals, to aid in the design process and implement the build process. The houses were designed by the residents, who during the design process divided into four groups based on the square footage each thought they would need. Each group designed their floor plan collectively. As Walker (2005:138) explains, in the case of FROG: "...although [the residents were] heavily involved in the decision making on design, [the neighborhood] had a very controlled design and construction process with managers who were clearly in charge." FROG's 30 duplex homes were completed in 1997, as shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2. View of FROG. The Common House is on the left and the neighborhood stretches to the right. The back windows of these homes over look the pond. Photo courtesy of James Bosjolie.[3]

Time and cost overruns during the construction of FROG, including a fire that destroyed eight homes and the Common House, amounted to approximately $20,000 per home. As a result, EcoVillage could not afford to make the mortgage payments to its

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[3] The photos contained in this document that depict people were provided by James Bosjolie, who is an informal media coordinator for EcoVillage. He has already gained permission from those whose images are in the photos to use them for magazine articles, EcoVillage's website, other outreach materials, and in any other way he sees fit to promote EcoVillage's mission. Hence, these photos represent no violation of Human Subjects Protocol.

lenders. So, under the guidance of Walker, the Second Neighborhood Group (SONG) was initiated. SONG could raise money by purchasing some of the land. This money could be used to pay off the mortgages. The planning of SONG began in 1996.

There were other measures taken to help remedy the mortgage situation. For instance, EVI (the nonprofit) donated 35 acres to FROG. And, two residents who were also lenders in the mortgage pool forgave their $130,000 loan, with the stipulation that 55 acres of EcoVillage be place in a permanent conservation easement. Because of the cost and time overruns, no payments had been made towards the mortgages in five years. As a result, one of the lenders foreclosed on his $120,000 loan (separate from the mortgage pool), but agreed to give Walker one year before foreclosure and agreed to waive all interest. Thus the 'Save Our Unlimited Land' (SOUL) Partnership was formed, which gained loans of $108,000 each from five future residents, and the remaining $12,000 from a non-resident. Later, one of these residents threatened to foreclose, which made salient the need for a long-term solution to the land debt.

In 1998, the village formed the 'ISLAND Agreement' (i.e. Infrastructure and Land), to delineate how FROG, SONG, and EVI (the nonprofit) would share these community elements. In 1999, three years after the planning of SONG began, the majority families involved dissolved due to the loss of low-income housing funding for the project. So, in 2000, EVI gained a $100,000 low-interest loan from Equity Trust, a

community land trust (CLT) to plan the infrastructure of SONG. And shortly thereafter, new families joined.

As Walker (2005:139) tells:

> SONG's design and build process took a much looser approach that allowed for more creativity and owner-builder participation than did FROG's. But it also traveled a bumpier road.

For SONG's design and build process, a construction manager was hired, who with "...the SONG residents teamed up in a highly participatory process that included the construction, financing, and subcontracting for the whole project, as well as the management of the subsidized housing" (Walker 2005:140). The development of SONG took place over two phases, with Town approval received and construction beginning in 2001. Figure 3 shows the 175 acres of EcoVillage land during the construction of SONG.

Figure 3. An aerial photo of EcoVillage at Ithaca (with topography and soils superimposed) during the construction of SONG. Image courtesy of James Bosjolie.

The design of the individual SONG homes did not involve the same participatory process employed in FROG. Rather, individual residents designed their own homes, incorporating any green building techniques or technologies they desired. The development of SONG involved much more resident sweat equity than the development of the FROG homes. In fact, the SONG Common House was built entirely by residents.

Although the "...SONG homes have unmistakable personality, reflecting the individualized taste, choices, and often labor of their owners," Walker (2005:140) argues that:

> Without a clear group consensus on standard home size or features, it was also easy for SONG residents to get seduced by 'house envy' or 'feature creep' – adding a bow window here, a meditation loft there – without realizing how the costs would add up.

However, an $112,000 grant from the Federal Home Loan Bank grant was used to subsidize six of the homes in SONG to make them more affordable. The first 14 SONG homes were completed in 2002, and the next 16 (begun in 2002) were completed in 2003. The completed neighborhood can be seen in Figure 4.

Figure 4. SONG as viewed from the CRUX (a.k.a. the bridge joining the two neighborhoods, at the center of EcoVillage). Photo by author.

However, at this time, the mortgage problem was still looming. As a result, Walker proposed the "Debt-Free in 2003" campaign, asking residents to contribute money to the nonprofit to pay off the land. Residents participated and they raised the money they thought they owed. However, accounting errors and cost overruns in the construction of SONG amounted in another $23,000 in debt.

To raise this additional money, some proposed subdividing and selling another lot on West Haven Road (the built-on residential street). However, others believed that "by subdividing and selling, we would be engaging in the very land use practices we were trying so hard to avoid" (Walker 2005:37). To evade this issue completely, one resident granted a $23,000, four-year, interest-free loan to be paid by each of the 60 community households. This was paid back in four years by each household contributing $8 a month. In 2003, the mortgages were paid off, less than 12 years after the purchase of the land.

It is important to take a moment to explain the organizational structure of EcoVillage. There are actually two nonprofit organizations, EVI Inc. and EVI CRESP, which own the land and make the financial decisions for EcoVillage. They use a typical Board of Directors voting decision-making structure (and share the same Director and Board). Each neighborhood is a cooperative corporation that uses consensus decision-making. There is also the Village Association (or VA), which owns the road and the infrastructure. The VA represents the people in decisions that involve everybody and also uses consensus, with a 70% fallback for deadlocks. In addition, there are committees for nearly every topic area.

Currently, EcoVillage has 60 homes in two neighborhoods, and houses approximately 170 people. Although an early site plan, Figure 5 shows the layout of the undeveloped land, two neighborhoods, farms, pond, roads, and paths. Residents span a variety of household structures, including singles, families of all ages, and retired folks

(Kirby 2003). Residents also have a variety of occupations, from clerical to social work to software design to academia (Kirby 2003).

Figure 5. An early site plan of EcoVillage at Ithaca. Although some elements are not yet in place on the ground, such as the Education Center and the third neighborhood, this illustration accurately notes the location of the undeveloped land, two neighborhoods, farms, pond, roads, and paths. Image courtesy of James Bosjolie.

Design Characteristics

As mentioned above, Bokaer's original vision for EcoVillage was inspired by

McCamant and Durrett's (1988) *Cohousing* book. The Board of EVI decided early on (in

1992) that EcoVillage was aspiring to influence middle-class Americans with its

neighborhood design (Walker 2005). As Walker (2005:56) explains:

> We hoped to lead by example and model a new direction in housing. Our densely
> clustered, community-oriented homes would be constructed to be super-insulated
> and passive solar, and we intended to set them in neighborhoods surrounded by
> plenty of open land.

The eventual goal for EcoVillage is to have up to five cohousing neighborhoods on the

site, densely clustered homes, a village center, an education center, and farming (Kirby

2004; Walker 2005). Kirby (2004) explains that with five neighborhoods on 175 acres,

the population density of a typical suburban neighborhood could be achieved, but would

be concentrated on a much smaller proportion of the land, thus allowing open space to be

preserved and put to agricultural use. The ecological and social sustainability goals of

EcoVillage are a moving target, but one that residents hope to pursue in manifesting the

entire vision (Walker 2005).

Kirby (2004) reports that with the measures already in place, residents of

EcoVillage may consume as little as one third the resources of a comparable typical

household. These measures include green building, which is not only a design style, but

"...a whole philosophy of design that incorporates ecologically friendly buildings with careful land use and design" (Walker 2005:135). However, these measures also include the encouragement of a sense of community that results in deepened social relationships and resource sharing. Because the design characteristics of EcoVillage address both social and environmental sustainability, a brief discussion of each is in order.

EcoVillage at Ithaca is formally described as a cohousing ecovillage (Dawson 2006). The cohousing design directly addresses the social sustainability goals of EcoVillage. As seen in Figure 6, the cohousing design characteristics discussed earlier in this document are all present, including clustered homes facing shared pedestrian pathways, the restriction of cars inside the neighborhoods, and common facilities.
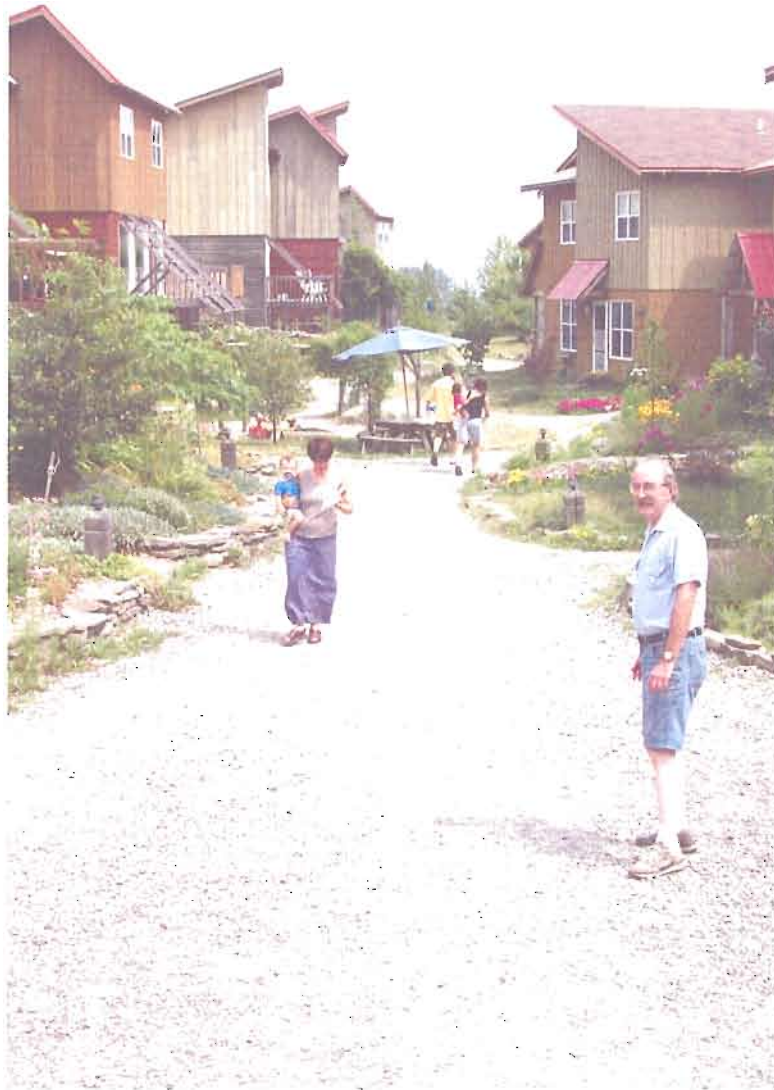
Figure 6. FROG pedestrian street lined with houses, with a view of the Common House. Photo courtesy of James Bosjolie.

Each neighborhood has a community garden, a playground, and a common house.

The SONG playground and common house can be seen in Figures 7 and 9. The FROG

common house is depicted in Figure 10. The common houses have shared laundry

facilities, office space, Children's and Teen's rooms, guest rooms, multi-purpose rooms,

and shared industrial kitchens for common meals. The entire village shares a pond that is

fed by runoff from the EcoVillage itself. The pond is used for recreation, including

swimming and socializing, as well as for fire suppression (Kirby 2003). In addition, the

entire village shares a sauna, fueled by propane, depicted in Figure 8.

Figure 7. Playground in SONG common area. Photo by author.

Figure 8. Sauna shared by all residents. Photo courtesy of James Bosjolie.

Figure 9. SONG Common House, as seen from the center of the neighborhood. Photo by author.

Figure 10. FROG Common House, as seen from across the pond. Photo by author.

The common house provides the venues for common meals. Common meals are neighborhood-specific, but the entire village is invited. FROG has common meals 3 times per week, and SONG has them 2 or 3 times per week. Participation in the common meals is optional, as is participation in other community events (such as meetings, work parties,

etc.) (Kirby 2003). Residents sign up for cooking and cleaning duties. Those who plan to eat a common meal also sign up in advance, so that the cooks know the volume of food to prepare (Kirby 2003). In Figure 11, EcoVillage residents enjoy a common meal in the FROG common house.

Figure 11. FROG residents sharing a common meal. Photo courtesy of James Bosjolie.

As Kirby (2003:326) argues:

The decision to draw the houses together and cluster the community in the midst of an open and wild landscape creates a living metaphor for the ecovillage

philosophy. The compactness of the dwelling space amid the immense openness of the natural environment serves to turn the attention back toward the village itself. The houses look inward to the central ribbon that connects them, a safe, pedestrian space that encourages chance encounters. In such a setting, establishing and maintaining connection with others becomes easier.

However, this propensity for chance encounters necessitates a deliberately designed balance between public and private space. As in most cohousing communities, EcoVillage homes have a more public façade, including a kitchen, facing the shared pathway, and a more private backside, including bedrooms, facing away from the pathway. Dawson (2006:82) explains that EcoVillage "...developed a significantly stronger communitarian ethic than most conventional cohousing initiatives..." evidenced by such things as the dedication many residents have towards each other, the village, and its educational mission; the workshops held by and for residents; and the fact that many residents are either employed on-site or work from home.

The green building technologies and techniques employed at EcoVillage directly address the environmental sustainability goals. Residents' ecological footprints are reduced through a number of measures. The clustering of homes and the smaller square footage of individual homes (facilitated by shared common space) reduce not only direct impacts on the surrounding landscape, but also resources used on operating and maintaining households. Duplexes reduce building surface area and thus save on heating and cooling energy resources and costs. Although not all homes have small square footage, all the homes at EcoVillage are duplexes.

Passive solar homes, such as that depicted in Figure 12, further reduce heating and cooling energy requirements. These homes have the majority of windows (which are double- or triple-glazed) on the south side of the home, mass walls or floors[4], and awnings. Passive solar homes are designed to maximize natural heating in the winter by accessing and retaining the sun's heat, and maximize natural cooling in the summer by deflecting the sun's heat. All FROG homes, and most SONG homes are passive solar.
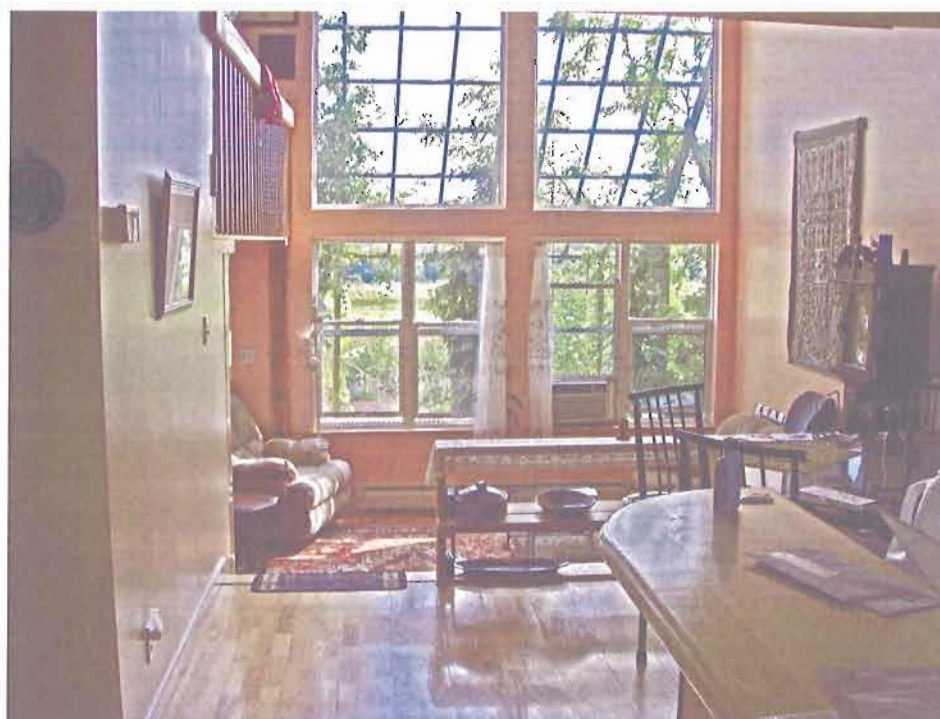

Figure 12. Interior of a passive solar FROG home. Photo by author.

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[4] Mass walls or floors are made of materials designed to absorb heat or cool and then radiate over a sustained period of time. In the case of passive solar in the winter, for example, mass walls or floors absorb the winter sun, heat up, and radiate heat throughout the night or longer.

Walker (2005:136) explains that "at FROG, we use approximately 40 percent less gas and electricity than other typical homes in the north-eastern US." FROG has five basic floor plans, designed by the residents. These floor plans vary from a 900-square-foot one-bedroom to a 1,650-square-foot five-bedroom. All the homes are stick-frame construction, with double walls, which are insulated by cellulose, made from recycled newspaper and blown in. Further

> Almost all the homes have a large, triple-glazed window wall on the south side and a cathedral ceiling, making the space feel light and open. And there are mezzanines, open to the living room below, that can be used as office space. Homes in FROG are very standardized, with few custom features (Walker 2005:139).

This lack of custom features has benefits and disadvantages. Walker explains (2005:139):

> The result [of a uniform design] was less individual creativity, fewer cost overruns... and a more standardized product. Our homes are smaller and, on average, less expensive than their SONG counterparts. And they have fewer 'green' features, such as pholovoltaics (solar electric panels) or composting toilets. Unlike our SONG neighbors, FROG residents had neither the satisfaction not the headaches of 'building your own.'

In addition, the standardized design allowed for shared heating systems, further maximizing the efficient use of resources. Every four homes in FROG share one boiler to heat the house and water. Finally, no FROG home has a full-size oven. Residents use the common house oven for baking.

Walker (2005) explains that in SONG, 'Eco-Block[TM]', a polystyrene building

block that is highly insulative, has been used for some foundations and, in those cases,

were assembled and installed by community members. Further, all homes have earth

berm basement insulation. Many SONG homes used structurally insulated panels (SIPs)

for insulation[5]. Some houses are timber framed, many of which were framed by

community members. Some houses are strawbale construction, such as the duplex in

Figure 13. Some use heat recovery ventilators (HRVs). One fourth of EcoVillage homes,

all of which are in SONG, generate their own electricity using solar photovoltaic (PV)

panels. Some SONG homes have solar hot water heaters, as well. PV panels and solar hot

waters are evident in the SONG homes imaged in Figure 14. As stated above, all the

homes are custom, and thus all are different. Some homes have composting toilets, which

help conserve water and treat wastes on site. The SONG common house, built entirely by

residents, is made of local and regional materials as well as Forest Certified Lumber. The

common house is LEED certified, which is the US Green Building Council's Leadership

in Energy and Environmental Design Green Building Rating System[TM].

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[5] SIPs are panels used for building that are made of a rigid foam core sandwiched between two layers of (usually) strand board. The panels are easy to install, reduce the requirement for timber in home construction, and have high insulative capacity.

Figure 13. Strawbale duplex homes in SONG. Photo by author.

Figure 14. Passive solar, solar hot water, and solar photovoltaics (PVs) in SONG. Photo by author.

Throughout EcoVillage, those involved in the design and build process were attentive to several things, such as the use of ecologically-friendly materials and resource-conserving appliances. Paints, varnishes, and other chemicals that do not off-gas were chosen in an attempt to preserve indoor air quality. High-efficiency appliances and low-flow bathroom fixtures were installed. The plumbing was installed, in many cases, so that it could easily be retrofitted to accommodate solar hot water or greywater recovery. In addition, the embodied energy of many resources and materials was considered, and dealt with through the selection of local materials, the reuse of materials, the use of recycled materials, and recycling (Walker 2005).

Dawson (2006) argues that EcoVillagers' footprints are further reduced through their transportation choices. Many residents carpool, car share, use public transportation,

or ride their bikes. Some vehicles run on alternative energy sources. Many residents also share errands. In addition, Dawson (2006) estimates that 60% of working adult residents works at least part time on-site. This further reduces the need for transportation.

Finally, the presence of the organic CSA West Haven Farm, the berry farm (shown in Figure 15), and the community gardens (shown in Figure 16) further decrease the need for transportation, of both the organic products themselves and the EcoVillage residents who would otherwise travel to town to purchase agricultural products. The 10-acre West Haven Farm had, in 2002, over 150 CSA subscribers (Jackson and Svennson 2002). With CSA and local farmers' market customers, West Haven Farm continues to feed approximately 1,000 people a week during the growing season (Dawson 2006; Jackson and Svennson 2002).

Figure 15. The berry farm in early life. Photo courtesy of James Bosjolie.

Figure 16. SONG community garden. Photo by author

Outreach and Education

Outreach and education are a fundamental part of EcoVillage at Ithaca's mission. As Dawson (2006:32) sums up, "consistent with its core educational objective, EVI places a strong emphasis on communicating its experience to the wider world." Through its openness to academic inquiry, its partnerships with the local colleges and university, its on- and off-site classes and workshops, its initiatives in local politics, its involvement with the Global Ecovillage Network (GEN), and its widespread media attention, EcoVillage aims to catalyze change beyond the boundaries of the village itself.

EcoVillage's openness to academic inquiry is evident. By 2006, six masters students and two doctoral students from around the country had completed research projects on EcoVillage life (Dawson 2006; Walker 2005). EcoVillage has other strong ties to academia. As mentioned above, EcoVillage at Ithaca was formed with support from the Center for Religion, Ethics, and Social Policy (CRESP), a nonprofit organization affiliated with Cornell University. And, EcoVillage continues its ties with Cornell, through both the offering of classes and workshops and the teaching appointment at Cornell of at least one EcoVillage resident. In 2002, EcoVillage formed a partnership with the Environmental Studies Department at Ithaca College (IC). Using a National Science Foundation (NSF) matching grant, EcoVillage and IC have worked together to create a 'Science of Sustainability' curriculum (Dawson 2006; Walker 2005).

Dawson (2006:32) explains that "this partnership has been highly fruitful, leading Ithaca College to make a commitment to become 'one of the premier college campuses in the country, modeling sustainability in all aspects' according to the Provost."

EcoVillage's pioneering work is in its affiliations with academic institutions, as this is a unique and quite mainstream approach for an ecovillage (Walker 2005). However, EcoVillage is also "...committed to increasing its teaching capacity" by creating a group of educators *within* EcoVillage that can teach college and adult-education courses (Walker 2005:181). In addition, there are plans to build an EcoVillage Education and Research (EVER) Center on-site.

However, EcoVillage at Ithaca's sustainability outreach and education is not only oriented towards conventional educational avenues. In 2003, EcoVillage was a major contributor to a formal proposal to form a 'Sustainable Tompkins County,' the county in which Ithaca is located (Walker 2005). Dawson (2006:31) explains that "committees associated with this scheme are working on a city car-share scheme, a green development in the city, waste management, sustainability circles in the schools and many other initiatives."

EcoVillage's scope reaches beyond local government, as well. EcoVillage is an active member of the Global Ecovillage Network (GEN). As a result, members of EcoVillage met with Hildur Jackson at Findhorn in 2004 to develop "...a standardized

introductory training session about ecovillage design that could be taught in ecovillages around the world" (Walker 2005:185). In addition, EcoVillage, in collaboration with Senegalese colleagues, decided to locate the Third International Ecocities Conference in Yoff, Senegal. This ultimately led to the formation of the Senegalese Ecovillage Network (Dawson 2006).

As well as local, regional, national, and international notoriety among those involved in sustainability education and the ecovillage movement, EcoVillage has received attention and recognition through the media (Dawson 2006; Walker 2005). EcoVillage has been spotlighted by such media outlets as USIA-TV, CNN TV, Nickelodeon, *E Magazine, The Washington Post, Chicago Sun Times, San Francisco Chronicle, American Demographics, Progressive Architecture, The Cornell Magazine, Popular Science, Earth Island Journal, In Context, Co-op America Quarterly, Utne Reader, The New York Times, Parenting Magazine, Cohousing Magazine, Communities Magazine, Mother Earth News, Residential Architect,* and National Public Radio (including *Morning Edition, All Things Considered,* and *Living on Earth*) (Walker 2005).

Walker (2005) argues that this combination of notoriety, mainstream orientation, exploration of social and environmental sustainability, and education positions EcoVillage to help form the movement it is a part of. She holds that EcoVillage "...is a living laboratory that draws from the best alternative practices in land use, organic agriculture, community living, green building, and energy conservation" (Walker

2005:3). She argues that ecovillages have much to offer the world. Through living out their ideals and modeling a new culture, EcoVillage residents both learn from and teach each other. And, EcoVillage is committed to teaching the general public, as well. As Walker (2005:220) states: "...if we are going to change the world, it is crucial that we reach out and share our commitment, our sweat, our despair, and our joy." Further, she holds that ripple effects that are already emanating from EcoVillage can be seen in local government, colleges, and the university, as well as nationally and internationally.

Data Collection

In "Red Carpets and Slammed Doors: Visiting Communities," Geoph Kozeny (2005b) advises readers on entering communities as a visitor. He details ways in which visitors should approach and contact communities, how visitors can participate in the communities they are visiting, and how visitors can frame questions without offending. The author argues that visitors must clearly understand their own purpose and goals in visiting, and then must be open about those with community members. Significantly, Kozeny (2005b:25) argues that "it's important to be clear about your underlying motives so that both your expectations and the community's are realistic." In addition, he explains that it is critical to offer information about oneself, not only request it.

When visiting a community, Kozeny (2005b:24) argues, it is important to "...remember: the community you want to visit is also somebody's home." Further, it is vital to contribute to the community during a visit. The author explains that "often... the

most appreciated contribution is your willingness to pitch in to help with whatever boring

chore needs doing at the moment" (Kozeny 2005b:25). He believes that visitors will be

protected from unpleasant situations if they are attentive to group dynamics and awkward

situations, and remain sensitive. When conducting research, whether academic or for

personal interest, Kozeny (2005b:26) holds that this attentiveness will allow visitors to

"pick up pieces of the hidden story," something vital to participant observation. Further,

he urges visitors "to dig deeper, learn how to ask friendly but penetrating questions,"

something vital to both participant observation and interviewing (Kozeny 2005b:27).

Participant Observation

Because I prioritized service-oriented research (i.e. giving back to the community

in the spirit of reciprocity) I participated in many community activities and work projects.

I wanted to ensure that the community was gaining as much benefit from me during my

visit as I was gaining from it. I did not want to simply 'mine' the community for

information. For this reason, I volunteered to assist in the creation of promotional

educational materials for EcoVillage, such as a poster that was presented by the

EcoVillage at Ithaca – Ithaca College partnership at the 'Greening the Campus VII'

conference, which is shown in Figure 17. I also volunteered to create an electronic

version of hand-written survey responses collected from EcoVillage workshop

participants, to tend a community member's garden and houseplants during his brief

absence, to help soundproof the Second Neighborhood Group (SONG) Common House

dining area, to cook common meals, to do dishes following common meals, and to help

residents with gardening. I also helped several families move into new EcoVillage homes

or to move from one EcoVillage home to another.

Figure 17. 'Greening the Campus VII' Conference poster created by author for the EcoVillage at Ithaca – Ithaca College partnership, to be presented at Ball State University, September 2007.

I understood that the only way to meet people was to pitch in and help with projects. And, the informal conversations that arose during group work were a valuable way to glean information about community life. Near the end of my stay, I joined a tour of EcoVillage conducted for outside visitors, which gave me the change to compare my perspective of EcoVillage to that of people who had never been there before.

Because EcoVillage life has no shortage of meetings, I was in a position to attend numerous meetings, both on-site and off. On-site meetings included Built Environment Committee meetings, a Village Association meeting, an EcoVillage at Ithaca (EVI) Board of Directors meeting, a 'Green Cluster' (the next proposed development at EcoVillage, now known as TREE) meeting with potential future residents, and a showing and critique of an educational slideshow presented by Joan Bokaer. Off-site, I participated in a meeting among representatives of EcoVillage at Ithaca and Ithaca College dealing with their Sustainability Initiative partnership, as well as an 'EcoCities' meeting among Ithaca community members, many of whom were involved in 'Sustainable Tompkins'.

During my two week stay, I paid for lodging in the First Resident Group (FROG) Common House for the majority of the time, and was hosted by a resident for my last two nights. It was with this resident and others that I took part in a 'game night', watched home movies and looked at photos, cooked lunches and dinners in their homes, swam in the pond, and generally socialized. I joined community celebrations and watched a live

performance from a visiting bluegrass musician in the FROG Common House. I attended

Ithaca's GrassRoots Festival of Music and Dance with several EcoVillage residents, as

well as another music event in Ithaca. With EcoVillage residents and visitors, I cooked a

few and ate even more common meals, and did my share of after-dinner dishes.

I also made a strong effort to gain a sense of the place, to develop my own

relationship with the land. I did this mainly through exercise: running and hiking on the

many EcoVillage trails. I also volunteered at West Haven Farm, swam in the pond

several times, and took an on-site yoga class. These were not all solitary experiences, as

developing a connection with a place was not something that I believed required solitude.

Participant observation allowed me to gain a better understanding planning and

decision-making at EcoVillage. Participant observation also allowed me to gain a sense

of the rhythm of daily life, allowed me the opportunity to participate in community

activities and celebrations, and allowed me the occasion to better understand the

relationship EcoVillage residents have with the town of Ithaca.

Semi-Structured Interviews

While at EcoVillage, I conducted eight semi-structured interviews with nine

participants. Of these participants, eight were EcoVillage residents, and one was a visitor.

These interviews were conducted in the homes of participants and nearly all participants

declined the opportunity to use a pseudonym. This is because EcoVillage has a very open

communication style amongst residents and many participants felt that they could be comfortably public with their commentary. Each interview lasted between thirty and ninety minutes and all were recorded using a digital recorder.

Because I conducted these interviews towards the end of my stay, I was in a position to use the knowledge I had gained during my participant observation to ask more provocative and illustrative questions than I would have been otherwise. My interviews were the ideal compliment to my participant observation experience. To view my interview questions, refer to Appendix A.

CHAPTER VI

RESULTS

Cohousing demonstrates a physical, instrumental, and social context within which pro-environmental attitudes and behavior are nurtured and sustained. Residents are able to fashion their physical surroundings (i.e. their buildings and neighborhood) to accord with their aspirations in ways not available, or even conceived of, within mainstream society. Their architecture and site planning facilitate interaction, which builds familiarity. Social intercourse is encouraged and further supported by intent. Familiarity facilitates 'consciousness raining' and the spreading of 'functional knowledge.' Relationships of substance evolve, leading to increased sharing, support, and trust. Bonding occurs, which cements attachment to people and place and a growing 'sense of community.' Feelings of belonging feed a sense of self and encourage participation in 'civic' life, which in turn builds skills, confidence, and a sense of self-efficacy. Empowerment provides impetus for the application of awareness and attitudes in practical ways.... in such a society there is a lot of energy and motivation and abilities for improvements and change (Misztal, 1996:216)[1]... So whilst much of the... data indicate less than substantive change in levels of consumption or pro-environmental behavior, it must be borne in mind that all cohousing communities in North America are in their infancy (Meltzer 2000:129).

In this chapter, I will review the results of my qualitative methods case study of EcoVillage at Ithaca, then discuss the rationales residents believe influenced their decision to move to EcoVillage. A review of residents' thoughts about mainstream American culture and the impacts of consumerism will follow. Then, I will consider EcoVillage as a model of sustainable living and investigate the efforts of those living there to create and maintain a sustainable culture. And finally, I will talk about the major critiques residents have of EcoVillage life. The conclusion of the chapter will be a brief

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[1] Misztal, B.A. 1996. *Trust in modern societies*. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press.

introduction to the question of EcoVillage's impact on the rest of the world, the topic I will turn to in the final chapter of this document.

Why Move to EcoVillage at Ithaca?

Kirby (2003:327) explains that in his research of EcoVillage at Ithaca, he found that this particular community was appealing to would-be residents...

> ...on both personal and global/ideological levels. In personal terms, at the same time as commitment to the EVI project held out the promise of a fulfilling way of life that would serve to confirm self-identity as a socially or environmentally concerned individual, in a wider sense it provided an opportunity to demonstrate a viable alternative to the present social mode. In personal terms this commitment provides for the balancing of the sacred/expressive aspects of making a life with meaning against the purely instrumental aspects of making a living.

Kirby (2003) found that most residents were concerned more with the creation of a socially connected community than simply with environmental issues when deciding to move to EcoVillage. Additionally, he found that many residents had been social or environmental activists prior to moving and wanted to continue that portion of their lives. Further, Kirby's (2003:332) research implies that:

> ... prior to moving to EVI, residents experienced a sense of dissonance between their identities and the behaviors that they were constrained to follow, and which were seen to perpetuate the degradation of the social and ecological environments.

He argues that by moving to EcoVillage, residents found the "consonance between identity and behavior" that they were seeking (Kirby 2003:332).

In my research, I also found that participants expressed myriad reasons for moving to EcoVillage. Some residents moved because they were hoping to experience a

greater sense of community than that found in mainstream culture, and to focus on

deepening social relationships. Several of these residents were very inspired by the

consensus decision-making model. Others felt something was lacking in their mainstream

existence, while others simply felt the move was a logical next step in a quest to live out

their values and to push the envelope in that respect.

Some moved because they felt strongly about EcoVillage's environmental and

sustainability agendas, including land stewardship, farms, resource sharing, and the

employment of green building and renewable energy technologies. Others connected

deeply with the land, the aesthetics and sense of place, and the surrounding natural and

urban fabric of Ithaca, New York. Still others were attracted to the educational mission

and the idea of being a model to mainstream society and an articulation of a positive

vision for social change. Some residents had more of a utopian vision when coming to

EcoVillage. And others were seeking a sense of insulation from mainstream society, for

some in which their children were safe to play, raised by the village.

However, most would-be residents were attracted to multiple components of

EcoVillage and moved to experience all of them. As one resident, Laura[2], explained:

> ...the reason why we were inspired by community: it's twofold. It's very much
> our environmental values and wanting a place that at least had a commitment to
> those ideals. And secondly, a commitment to the concept of intentional

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[2] Many of my semi-structured interview participants explicitly did not want me to use pseudonyms. This is because EcoVillage has a very open communication style amongst residents and many participants felt that they could be comfortably public with their commentary. In this document, you will find some pseudonyms and some real names, although I do not make a distinction between the two.

> community and building relationships and consensus decision-making…
> Sometimes you'll talk to people here and they'll say they 'oh, I came because of
> the environmental agenda' and some people will say 'I came to build community'
> and you'll find some people who, like me, that wanted the… dual experience.

As Laura further explained:

> What drew me to this place above all other places we researched is that it was a
> combination of models. And it made it truly unique. That you had the cohousing
> model, you had this organic agriculture model, you had this educational mission,
> and this ambition to pursue a certain level of land stewardship. So you bring those
> things together in one place and it makes for an interesting mix of opportunity.

Elan, EcoVillage Education Coordinator and resident, was also attracted to a combination

of EcoVillage's characteristics:

> It was a combination of cohousing with a vision, similar education mission here
> as my own, Ithaca being an outstanding place to live and proximity to family…
> But, what I liked about it in particular was its access to mainstream people. So I
> felt this was a place where I could have a lot of impact. So even though it didn't
> give me the full inspiration I wanted in terms of an integrated way of looking at
> things, I still felt like it was a really powerful choice to make and it's something
> that my family could live with.

Above all, EcoVillage's environmental agenda, its focus on deepening social

relationships, its educational mission, and its mainstream orientation emerged as the

dominant draws for residents when choosing to become part of this community. In

conflict with their appreciation of EcoVillage's attachment to the mainstream (for reasons

of promoting the educational mission and for reasons of personal comfort and

employment), many residents expressed deep concerns about the condition of mainstream

American culture.

Thoughts on American Culture

There was a strong sentiment among nearly all participants that mainstream, affluent, American society is flawed in serious ways. Several themes common to many participants arose, including the feeling that mainstream people are oriented towards external goals, that they are outwardly oriented in their unsatisfied quest for happiness and life satisfaction, that there is a lack of interconnection among people, and that many are unable to find deep meaning in life. As Elan told me:

> I... feel people live hollow lives. They're so busy pursuing the external stuff that they wouldn't even know what it means to have a deeply purposeful sense of life...There are certain transformative moments in everyone's life when people have that sense of wholeness and purpose. But, people don't expect to have it as a norm. They get it in little pieces, but... most of the rest of the time they're kind of bumbling through on automatic pilot. And it's really, really sad.

Residents have specific personal goals that they believe living at EcoVillage will help them achieve. For many, these goals include increasing life satisfaction by reducing external orientation and deepening social relationships and connectedness within the community.

Consumerism

When probed specifically about consumerism, many participants criticized the false link between material consumption and happiness that is forwarded in mainstream culture. Participants expressed concern for the global strength of corporations, the uneven distribution of wealth, and the ways in which many Americans are unaware of the

impacts of their consumption choices (i.e. commodity fetishism). One resident, Steve,

explained to me this false link between material consumption and well-being:

> I sort of think of it [consumption] as sort of an ersatz. It's a replacement for...
> things that might make more of a difference. I mean, we are bombarded from day
> one with messages that basically say: 'You suck; if you had this, you wouldn't
> suck as much'... Advertising does not prop up people's self-image. It tears it
> down. And then we've destroyed many of the societal support structures... And
> you get this message that buying is what's gonna do it. And it never does because
> it doesn't. So you need to buy more. So, it's... a great scam but it doesn't work
> very well for the people in it.

Another resident, Harry, felt the same:

> Well... the culture is... it's a buy, buy, buy culture. So, they always want you to
> buy more. You will be happy... You can't be happy unless you have the latest
> BMW or the latest house or the latest vacation in Mexico or whatever...
> Otherwise you can't be happy. Of course, that's the message they're sending you.
> People fall into that trap, and of course, it's absolutely wrong... you will never be
> happy with consumerized things because the more grasp for things, the more you
> grasp for things. You never get to the end... You'll never be satiated. And you'll
> get really unhappy after a while. There's always another step, like in keeping up
> with the Joneses. There's always another step. So, it's always like a rat race... The
> happiest people are not people who necessarily have a lot of... material goods.

Because of this understanding, many EcoVillage residents deliberately shun excessive

material consumption, and look to other means of achieving fulfillment.

Evident in the preceding quote, many residents criticized what they termed 'the

rat race' or 'the treadmill', the life situation of many Americans in which they are

continually seeking life satisfaction through consumerism – a means that cannot fulfill

the end. As Elan explained:

> On the whole, I think if you're life is busy with making the money to get all the
> goodies that you could get... to get a better car, and a better computer, and a
> better boat, and a better house, and a better college education. If your life is...

busy doing that, then you could stay real busy getting the better house, college education, computer, and house. Then, you're not a happy person. Your life is mortgaged off to a treadmill.

The majority of participants expressed their belief that because of this combination of external orientation and lack of satisfaction, many Americans are alienated, lonely, and unaware of how or what to do to alter in their lives to relieve the situation.

Collapse

Dawson (2006) discusses, in broader terms, many of the social, economic, and environmental issues he perceives exist in the world today. He argues that an increase in the price of fossil fuels, an increase in damage resulting from global warming, a decrease in food supply (because of reduced availability of fossil fuel-based agricultural inputs), a decrease in water quality and/or quantity, a decrease in soil fertility, a financial-market catastrophe, and terrorist attacks all threaten to destroy our current gloablized system. Like Dawson, participants also expressed concern for the catastrophic environmental, economic, and social changes currently occurring as a result of excessive material consumption in industrialized nations, as structured by capitalism.

There was a strong sentiment among nearly all participants that this is a precarious system on the verge of collapse. As one resident, Kelly, explained:

> It's [capitalism has] been going on for 400 years and... it's reaching some sort of pinnacle now, where the whole world is capitalized almost. And the crash is coming. And what's coming after, unfortunately... when systems like this have collapse in the past... they don't go down easy. You know like feudalism, slavery

systems... empire systems often go down with a lot of war and stuff like that. So, hopefully we can mitigate the circumstances... mitigate... this crashing paradigm.

Most were quite matter-of-fact about their expectation that globalized capitalism, although offering some benefits, was going to change dramatically. However, most people I talked with focused more discussion on how society, at the local, regional, national, and global levels, would cope with this fundamental change. As Kelly continued:

> It's gotta come down sooner or later and then what do we build after? ... Capitalism I guess is tied into oil... so that's peaking... Who knows what's gonna happen with that. I mean eventually, we're gonna have to get back to local economies... It's not that radical to me to think that we're gonna live locally 'cause... we did live locally in this country up until... 100 years ago, for the most part.

Dawson (2006) also expresses uncertainty about how the changes will play out. He believes that:

> ...there is substantial evidence that we are moving ever closer to the edge of a cliff... There is much uncertainty about how the transition will unfold and over how long a period. It may be the result of a consciously chosen path of 'powering down' or, as looks progressively more likely, imposed upon us by a rupture that dislocated the entire system (Dawson 2006:76).

Dawson (2006:77) believes that life will have to "become simpler and more decentralized" for people to survive. Many residents believed that EcoVillage offers one tool with which industrialized society can combat looming environmental crises and the crashing capitalist paradigm by living a simpler, more bioregional life, as suggested by Dawson (2006).

EcoVillage as a Model

Many residents understood the role of EcoVillage at Ithaca to be that of a model, an example to society of an alternative way to organize socially, economically, and environmentally. In response to this belief that capitalism is nearing its end and the environment is being destroyed, participants talked of the necessity of creating a new paradigm. As Liz, EcoVillage Co-founder, Director, and resident, explained to me:

> ...I fully expect that we are going to be facing very hard times economically, environmentally, socially. You know, I think we're in for some real difficulties as we find fuel costs skyrocketing with peak oil, and global warming disruptions. And so, I think now more than ever before, I think that we all need to learn again, at this time in history as a human species, how to be content with fewer material goods and more spiritual and social connection. I think that's really what brings people true happiness and satisfaction... And so, I think true satisfaction is figuring out how we can make a more equitable society in which people, all people, have enough to live and are able to have the care that they need, whether it's food or lodging or staying warm in the winter or having health care. And, so we need massive re-ordering of our priorities in I think this country more than any place else really needs that.

In this new paradigm, people have reduced levels of material consumption (especially fossil fuels), a more localized economy, and a transition to means other than consumerism of seeking happiness and life satisfaction. Norwood and Smith (1995) argue that to take hold, this new paradigm requires living examples for others to follow. They articulate that:

> By... emphasizing the models for change that already exist and by inventing new ones – ones that balance the international economy with a strong bioregional economy – we will move towards a more joyous and fulfilling lifestyle that will serve our needs with a wider range of options (Norwood and Smith 1995:14).

Residents believe that EcoVillage offers one model for this new paradigm.

Many participants recognized that letting go of the 'American Dream' would be challenging for many, but believed that as people leave the 'rat race' or step off the 'treadmill' the benefits in terms of life satisfaction, natural resource security, and self-reliance would outweigh the challenges. As one repeated EcoVillage visitor, Will, argued:

> The more that we can do as culture, particularly western Americanized culture… to simplify, particularly with regard to oil, the geopolitical ramifications of our oil use, the better off everyone is… Even from a self-reliance standpoint, if you can wean yourself from the utilities and from these giant corporations, how much more secure is your family or your community? There are so many unintended benefits of living in community… the more of this that we get, the more stable our entire society becomes… As you free yourself from the treadmill of having to work and enriching a small percentage of the population… you're able to…provide for your own needs within your community.

Participants believed that individuals, society, and the natural environment will benefit in terms of life satisfaction, fulfillment, and security from a shift to this new paradigm.

Educational Mission

Participants understood EcoVillage's mission to implicitly include an educational component, as well as the articulation of a positive vision for social change. In addition, participants understood that EcoVillage was created with the intent of modeling sustainable culture to middle-class, mainstream Americans. As EcoVillage co-founder, Director, and resident Liz Walker (2005:161) explains in *EcoVillage at Ithaca: Pioneering a Sustainable Culture*, EcoVillage…

> …is designed to be a living example of a more sustainable way of life – one that demonstrates both social and ecological alternatives to the status quo… Our educational style can best be described as experiential, project-based learning…

> As residents we are engaged in a fascinating social experiment. We have endless opportunities to test out methods of strategic planning, consensus decision making, conflict resolution, and creative parenting. And we can experiment with such things as community celebrations, green building, native landscaping, and alternative transportation. We truly are a learning community... At the same time we are eager to share what we learn with the broader public. Although most of our teaching takes place with college students, we also host visitors of all ages and backgrounds. And we are educational partners with others who are creating a wave of new approaches to solutions-based learning.

Dawson (2006) believes that the greatest success of ecovillages in general results from the creation and maintenance of ties to mainstream society, particularly with regard to education.

Although many had critiques of targeting this mainstream audience, most believed that this is a strategic means to affecting change within a population that is required to change the most. As Steve explained:

> ...ecovillages for the well-off are OK because... those are the people you need to reach, both because they are the people who are using most of the resources and because they're the people who are looked at as a model.

In addition, many expressed that EcoVillage demonstrates to these mainstream folks the option of having a higher quality of life, with reduced material consumption and benefits for the environment, without experiencing a painful sacrifice, as the following quotes illustrate.

> In this particular example what we're trying to do is show that even middle-class Americans can greatly reduce their consumption and have a far better quality of life at the same time (Liz)

> It's a place where people could see that hopeful change, systemic change, is really possible. And they can see that we're all very regular people muddling through. We're not eco-zealots, we're not.... weirdo nuts... But... that's the most useful

> message here is that this is an attractive, achievable way to live. It's not about painful sacrifice; it's about smart transitions... So it really makes people shift their ultimate, suburban, American paradigm and see that you can still have green, still have privacy, and yet have community and connectedness and cooperation and shared vision, shared work... all those things that make life feel so rich (Elan).

EcoVillage at Ithaca is not demanding that middle-class America stop being middle-class. Rather, it is demonstrating a way to continue a middle-class existence, while reducing the negative impacts of a consumption-based lifestyle, deepening social relationships, and working towards sustainability. EcoVillage works to change the perception, articulated by Meltzer (2005:4) that ecovillages and other...

> ...alternative lifestyles are neither attractive to, nor viable for, most mainstream folk... Perhaps their most important function is to model important aspects of a future sustainable society, demonstrating that consumerist values *can* be resisted if the circumstance and the will exist.

In sum, EcoVillage aspires to demonstrate to middle-class folks how to create a more socially, economically, and environmentally sustainable culture.

Building a Sustainable Culture

McCamant and Durrett (1989:109) argue that resident participation in the development process, although a complicating factor, "contributes significantly to the community atmosphere" in cohousing communities. They argue that "bonds between residents are spawned during the planning and design process as the group works together on issues closely tied to their personal values" (McCamant and Durrett 1989:109). Further, they hold that the common facilities facilitate the continuation of the community ties that form during the development process. Meltzer (2005) similarly

argues that collective action bonds people with one another and with a place, thereby fostering a sense of community.

Many participants expressed the feeling that having participated in the design and building of the community, their homes, or making contributions to EcoVillage in other ways (such as participating in consensus decision-making or work parties), augmented their sense of ownership of, and investment in, EcoVillage. Harry explained how his participation in physically building community, as well as consensus-decision making, increased his sense of ownership of the community:

> ...if you actively, actively participate in what you do, what you say actually does change things. So you feel it's more that you own it more. You own the process, you own the house, you own the community, you own the development. And, therefore... you have a greater stake in the whole thing.

Elan used the example of building the SONG Common House together with other residents to illustrate a similar sentiment:

> We put a ton of collective energy into the... second floor of the SONG Common House which was reused from a gym at Cornell. It was heading for the dump. And we put a lot of sweat and tears into that gorgeous maple floor... And that's always going to be something that makes me cry. It was just so beautiful and so much work, but it's like we did it together.

Residents told that this strength of commitment and strength of community derived from the process of physically building a community together empowered them to make meaningful changes in their lives, in terms of material consumption and interpersonal communication, for instance. This sentiment reinforces McCamant and Durrett's (1989) assertion that community bonds are formed through this process.

Maintaining a Sustainable Culture

McCamant and Durrett (1989) argue that the physical design of cohousing communities provides for casual interaction, which provides a social atmosphere that has not only practical, but interpersonal advantages. McCamant and Durrett (1989:111) argue that residents value "…chatting with neighbors, feeling comfortable asking them for a cup of sugar or to watch the children, and allowing children to wander freely around the development." This latter benefit, the creation of a child-friendly community allows residents greater personal freedom than the single-family house neighborhood. This is because, as Meltzer (2000:125) explains, "the community becomes an extended family."

In my interviews, residents echoed these sentiments of McCamant and Durrett (1989) and Meltzer (2000). Residents articulated that the physical design of the community facilitated interaction among neighbors and a child-friendly environment. Of greater import, they expressed that through living out their values together with a community of similarly-minded individuals, they felt that they were doing something meaningful that would have an impact beyond their own lives and make a difference in the world.

A widespread belief among residents was that EcoVillage facilitates the creation and maintenance of a sustainable culture. With its common facilities, pedestrian streets, and shared work and play, the design of EcoVillage, combined with the group support

found in community, facilitates resource sharing and reduced material consumption. As

Elan explained:

> Having the village scale stabilizes things because there's always somebody with a resource you need and they're always somebody who wants a resource or skill that you have. So, you really get this experience of 'I live in a world where I belong, where I feel connected, where resources are available to me, where I'm not utterly dependent on commercial, corporate stuff to get what I need in life.' You have that unmistakable experience here… There's shared child care, there's shared parenting circles, there's shared community garden wisdom…

In addition, many participants expressed that there was continual learning amongst

EcoVillagers about how to make a more sustainable life.

Changing Behavior

Many, such as Mary E. Clark (1995) in "Changes in Euro-American Values

Needed for Sustainability" and E. Scott Geller (1995) in "Integrating Behaviorism and

Humanism for Environmental Protection," argue that participating in community leads

people towards more pro-environmental behavior. Clark (1995) argues that the current

Euro-American worldview is maladaptive, especially in the face of pressing concerns

about the sustainability of these lifestyles. She argues that this worldview has promoted

selfish and anti-environmental behavior. However, humans have a deep need for

belonging, which fosters a sense of personal identity and the derivation of meaning. By

nurturing this need, Clark (1995) holds that Euro-American society will adopt lifestyles

that are more personally satisfying and more environmentally-friendly. Geller (1995)

elaborates, arguing that personal control, self-efficacy, optimism, empowerment, self-

esteem, and belongingness promote caring and altruism, including demonstrating

environmentally-friendly behaviors and motivating others to do the same. These characteristics strongly mirror the intrinsic values Kasser and collaborative authors argue promote greater personal, social, and ecological well-being (Arndt et. al. 2004a, Brown and Kasser 2005; Kasser 2002; Kasser et. al. 2004; Sheldon and Kasser 2001).

Meltzer (2000:110) agrees that although many scholars have documented the connection between consumption and environmental degradation, very few scholars have probed the "…contextual determinants of pro-environmental behavior change." He believes that cohousing communities are an excellent venue for this type of research. In his own research of cohousing communities, Meltzer (2000:110) found that community plays a strong role "…in the transference of environmental awareness into attitude and practice."

Primarily using survey techniques, Meltzer (2000) conducted a study of environmentally-friendly behavior modification and the motivations for such changes in cohousing communities. He explains that people are not limited by their capacity to change their behaviors, but by their knowledge about how to do so. Although many Americans are familiar with practices such as recycling, they are not as familiar with such concepts as voluntary simplicity, for example. Meltzer (2000:119) explains that:

> When members of cohousing groups join with little knowledge of such practices, they inevitably come into close contact with others who do. During the development phase, and for the life of the community, there is opportunity for members with established environmental practice to influence others less

committed. It can happen overtly via discussion, education, or leadership, or covertly through socialization and/or behavior modeling.

As the above quote hints, (Meltzer 2005:129) argues that there are two forms of interaction that help to raise "…environmental awareness and… spread… knowledge about how to apply environmental values in practice." These are interpersonal influence (or behavior modeling) and exchange (or direct education).

Meltzer (2000) holds that interpersonal influence is subtle, but effective. He explains that many of his survey respondents reported that "…the behavior of neighbors informs and influences their own pro-environmental practices" (Meltzer 2000:120). And, it is the facilitation of certain practices within cohousing communities that allows residents to have environmentally-friendly lifestyles that they would not have considered in mainstream life. Further, many of his respondents communicated that community support was the strongest influence on their environmental behaviors (Meltzer 2000). Meltzer argues that the reduced material consumption that comes with living more simply and more environmentally-aware is a direct affront to the commodity fetishism found in the mainstream.

In terms of exchange (or direct education), Meltzer (2000:122) argues that the quality and quantity depends "…upon the quality of social relationships within the group, being most likely to occur in a context of mutual respect and receptivity." He argues that

daily contact reinforces learning and results in enduring pro-environmental behavioral and attitudinal changes.

As stated above, many of my interviewees expressed that there was continual learning within the community about how to make a more sustainable life. Residents were encouraged to change their behavior through peer pressure, which could be either positive or negative. And, residents noted that direct education was not only directed towards those outside the community. Rather, direct education occurred in many loci along the continuum from formal to informal exchange, including workshops, discussions, e-mail exchanges, and other forms of wisdom sharing.

Reduced Material Consumption

Meltzer (2005) also found that cohousing residents' environmentally-friendly practices were enhanced by the sharing and support present in their social relationships within the community. He explains that there are two main ways sharing occurs within cohousing communities: informal sharing of personal possessions and formal sharing of common facilities. Meltzer tells that proponents of cohousing hold that sharing reduces material consumption, because residents are able to live in smaller houses and consume fewer material goods. Similarly, McCamant and Durrett (1989:120) assert that cohousing facilitates resource sharing, including car sharing, and that "...community facilities certainly make it easier for residents to adjust to smaller units."

In my research, EcoVillage residents confirmed Meltzer (2005) and McCamant and Durrett's (1989) assertions. In large part because of resource sharing, many residents expressed that they had significantly reduced their material consumption as a result of living at EcoVillage. Steve told me that a strong community was necessary to make the changes that are required to live sustainably…

> …because that's what make living close together feel like a plus rather than a minus. That's what makes it easy to share things. That's what provides some sort of reinforcement for acts of simplicity that… do make your life more difficult, like not owning something. I think… there's stuff I don't buy because I can borrow it, or we've got it in the common house, that I otherwise might have to have. In that sense it influences that behavior a lot because those facilities are there… It's easier to do it in a group. It's both psychologically easier and physically easier.

As did Meltzer (2005), I found that within the community, the impact of a strong sense of community in terms of resource sharing is twofold. There is the concrete material reality of having one resource that can be used by all. And, there is also pressure within the community to share resources and support for doing so. Meltzer (2005) articulates this twofold impact of a strong sense of community, arguing that this comes in the form of practical support and moral support.

Meltzer (2000, 2005) argues that these forms of support and sharing result in reduced material consumption of many different items and services. For instance, mutual aid and informal childcare, "…can save money, alleviate stress and imbue relationships with substance" (Meltzer 2005:142). In addition, the comfort residents feel among each other and their sense of community supports their living harmoniously at higher densities

than in middle-class mainstream neighborhoods, thus reducing environmental impact (Meltzer 2000, 2005).

There are also systems in place in cohousing communities that promote a reduction in the consumption of material resources. Meltzer (2000, 2005) found that waste management systems (free boxes, repair, reuse, recycling, and composting), food procurement practices, and common meals all contribute to pro-environmental behaviors among residents. Furthermore, sharing vehicles promotes biking, walking, car-pooling and the use of public transportation. In addition, because cohousers combine errands with other members of the community, and because "vocational, social and recreational opportunities" are offered at home, residents are able to further reduce their use of automobiles (Meltzer 2005:116).

At EcoVillage, I found that participants did report reduced material consumption resulting from many of the factors identified by Meltzer (2000, 2005). However, many residents recognized that although they had smaller ecological footprints than mainstream Americans, that continued reductions in material consumption were still necessary. This quote from Elan illustrates:

> Ecovillage is half as consumptive as the rest of America, and America is five times as consumptive as it needs to be. So we've got a long way to go. But... we're definitely, firmly on the right track.

Moreover, several participants articulated tensions that exist between the levels of material consumption of various residents.

Some residents expressed that other residents were still consuming at very high levels, which was a disappointment. Others felt that they themselves were still consuming at higher levels than they would like, mainly because of EcoVillage life requiring residents to maintain one foot in mainstream culture. For example, Walker (2005) notes that in the face of societal dependence on automobiles, most EcoVillage families have two cars and use them everyday. As Lucy, a resident, said:

> I see levels of consumption here that shock me…. And that we're an ecovillage…
>
> …the part that's hard for me about living here is I'm actually a way more go towards simplicity person than this infrastructure makes easy.

Phebe, another resident, expressed a similar feeling:

> …one of the things I would like to see here is a way for each other to keep challenging each other to think about our consumption and to really, significantly change it. 'Cause… that's one of the aspects of my dissonance here, is the consumption that goes on here. I don't see much of difference here than elsewhere else, frankly. Not a significant difference, and… including me… The point is, is to have that be a priority of being here. That's why we're here. And, really challenge each other to find ways to make a huge difference in our consumption.

These and other residents explained that they are perceived by others, and by themselves, to be consuming too much. However, they articulated that the mainstream orientation of EcoVillage, which attracts many professionals, requires residents to secure employment in mainstream culture. This creates a situation in which residents are compelled to consume more than is sustainable. Residents explained that in terms of travel, especially by automobile and airplane, they were personally challenged by their own consumption. As Laura explained, this was also the case with consumer purchases:

> And then suddenly you feel like you should bring your purchases in in the dark so that you can have some privacy around when you *do* choose to consume (laughs)… I live here right in the middle of the neighborhood and have to pass this intersection in order to get into my house and I... I feel a little uncomfortable about that sometimes. Sometimes I just have to have days where I'm an average person.

In sum, EcoVillage residents share a desire to create a more sustainable culture. In many ways they do so. The commitment residents feel towards EcoVillage and its mission that stems from building community results in greater ease in making meaningful changes in residents' lives, including sharing resources and reducing material consumption. However, many residents feel that this is not enough, that they need to be pressing each other and themselves to an even greater degree so that they consume fewer material items and reduce their consumption of fossil fuels.

Residents' Critiques of EcoVillage

In addition to critiques about the levels of material consumption that exist at EcoVillage, many participants leveled numerous other critiques. The majority of participants took the opportunity to discuss with me the 'challenges' of EcoVillage life to heart, and spent a significant portion of time airing their concerns and troubles, and sometimes venting. However, although many residents experienced significant frustrations about EcoVillage life, they were quick to espouse the benefits, expressing that like any neighborhood, there was a mixture of benefits and frustrations.

Kirby (2003) identifies that one of the main benefits of EcoVillage living is connectedness. He notes five types of connectedness: "connection with the wild landscape... with community... with a cultivated landscape of benign human activity... a sense of personal integration... [and] connection through time/intergenerational sustainability" (Kirby 2003:331). Kirby (2004) argues that the "spatial arrangement of its [EcoVillage at Ithaca's] built form" contributes to this connectedness among residents. In addition, residents identified the benefits to children as a positive aspect of EcoVillage life (Kirby 2003). Norwood and Smith (1995:53) identify other potential benefits, including:

> ...family support, co-ownership, resident control, more personal and family time, companionship, co-parenting, childcare and after-school activities, environmental protection, energy savings, gardening and food processing, access to urban culture and conveniences, and reduced use of the car. But more than that, people yearn for a deeper human connection to others in a common place where they can say, 'We belong'.

Nearly all of these benefits were identified by EcoVillage residents, as discussed in the preceding pages.

In my research, I found that for most residents, the benefits outweigh the frustrations. Kirby (2003) also found this to be true. Everyone he interviewed had "positive evaluations and experiences of life at EVI" and "...expressed that benefits outweigh drawbacks" (Kirby 2003:328). This is why, even in the face of considerable questioning about whether EcoVillage was the right place to be, participants choose to remain.

The main challenges residents identified to me had to do with the mainstream orientation of EcoVillage life, related issues of affordability and time, and the feeling that the community and individuals were not making strong enough efforts towards sustainability. Other challenges include diversity and the treatment of minority populations. These will all be discussed below.

Diversity

EcoVillage, as a community, struggles to augment its socioeconomic and ethnic diversity (Walker 2005). As already mentioned, EcoVillage is primarily a white, middle-class community (Kirby 2004; Meltzer 2000). Meltzer (2000), in his survey of cohousing residents, found that 80% have a college education, 50% have either a master's or doctoral degree, and 95% are of European descent. As Norwood and Smith (1995:354) articulate, in the case of cohousing there is a need to extend this lifestyle to minority populations:

> The recent success of CoHousing communities demonstrates how increasing numbers of people can live better for less by learning to share meals in a common house, reduce car trips, and save costs, energy, time, and resources. Thus far, these substantial benefits have been enjoyed mostly by the middle class. The challenge now it so expand the advantages of living better for less to the lower income population groups who are increasingly being abandoned to declining income and fewer options, yet are being sent the double standard message that they cannot impose an adverse environmental impact as they try to improve their standard of living.

They argue that cohousing has the potential to provide a tool for *everyone* to have "… a chance to heal and recover from pseudo-individuality, consumerism, alienation, poverty,

homelessness, environmental degradation, and addiction to the car" (Norwood and Smith 1995:354).

In addition to racial, ethnic, and religious minorities, as well as those at a socioeconomic disadvantage, the need to extend community life to minorities also includes those who are differently-abled. Walker (2005) identifies, and residents expressed to me, the need to incorporate infrastructure for accessibility into the community. This accessibility includes not only that for people using wheelchairs, but also for the aging and elderly, as well as those with ailments such as Multiple Chemical Sensitivity (MCS) (Meltzer 2005; Walker 2005). As Meltzer (2005:143) notes, it is "...difficult to accommodate all the needs of members with ailments such as hypersensitivity to chemicals and synthetics" and "...consideration is not often extended to the common house" (Meltzer 2005:143). Although EcoVillage did extend MCS considerations to the SONG Common House, at the time of my visit, there were continuing negotiations about how to accommodate people with these types of illnesses in other common spaces.

Mainstream Orientation

As mentioned above, EcoVillage at Ithaca has an explicitly mainstream orientation. This means that the goal is to create a model of sustainable living that is appealing to mainstream America. This orientation necessitates the maintenance of a particular standard of living within EcoVillage: a middle-class standard of living. The

majority of frustrations that residents discussed revolved around this middle-class

mainstream nature. There is a tension between the power this mainstream orientation

gives EcoVillage as an educational model of sustainable living, and the obstruction this

mainstream orientation erects that prevents residents from pushing the envelope towards

more sustainable lifestyles.

Related to this mainstream orientation requiring residents to maintain mainstream

employment is the issue of time. Walker (2005:212) identifies this challenge:

> Time constraints affect everyone at EVI. Many of us feel stretched by our
> multiple responsibilities. There are neighborhood and village-wide meetings to
> attend and committees and work parties that need participants. As we grow and
> develop, complex community issues also arise and need to be resolved. Then
> there are all the tasks associated with making a living and having a family. And
> some people in our community have high-powered jobs. If they were less driven,
> then they would have more time to enjoy a slower-paced life and contribute more
> to community and educational activities... Of course time pressures are not unique
> to EcoVillage. In general North Americans face more of a time crunch than do
> individuals elsewhere in the world (Walker 2005:212).

Kirby (2003:328) also found that living in community contributes as much complexity to

residents' lives as it eliminates. Residents expressed to me that they were challenged by

the time demands of EcoVillage life. Many residents explained that setting personal

boundaries, although also challenging, was the only solution to this challenge.

Affordability

Another challenge of EcoVillage life is affordability. Franck (1989) explains that

one disadvantage of the cohousing model is that a private home in a cohousing

community is not likely to be more affordable than a home (house or apartment) in a traditional American neighborhood. McCamant and Durrett (1994), Meltzer (2000, 2005), and Kirby (2004) also argue that homes in cohousing communities are not affordable and have approximately the same cost as similarly-sized housing in their area. EcoVillage residents were concerned about affordability, but attributed this challenge more to the mainstream orientation than to the cohousing model, *per se*.

Many residents believed that the mainstream orientation increases the cost of all aspects of EcoVillage living, including the infrastructure costs when developing, and the green building and renewable energy technologies, for instance. This forces residents to maintain one foot in mainstream culture so that they can make enough money to live there. As Kelly stated:

> It's also very... expensive to live here. So, that's sort of exclusionary. The main culture here is middle-class people who work and then do this on the side... There's just sort of a pipe dream of... being sustainable down the road, and it is something to work towards, especially with the big-systems things, like... solar energy and getting off the grid...

Harry also felt that EcoVillage life was expensive, and discussed the number of white-collar workers living there. However, he accepted this condition as part of the mainstream orientation:

> People here are professional. I think one-fourth to one-third of the people who live in this neighborhood have Ph.D.s... We have several Cornell instructors who live here. We have a lawyer. We have a naturopathic physician. So it's mainly a professional community. Because of the house prices, you can't [be affordable]... People keep complaining because we want to be affordable... When you come right down to it, because by the time you get through... the infrastructure [we can't be affordable].

Walker (2005) explains that housing affordability is indeed an issue. She explains that:

> FROG homes that originally cost $90,000 to $150,000 in 1996 are selling at
> $130,000 to $175,000 or more just eight years later. SONG homes, originally
> intended to be even more affordable, now range from $120,000 to $300,000
> (Walker 2005:210).

She articulates a hope that EcoVillage does not become an upper-middle-class and wealthy enclave. Walker (2005) explains that finances not only affect housing prices, but also the nonprofit and the financial resources put towards infrastructural improvements, such as energy generation and on-site waste treatment.

In addition to requiring that the majority of residents maintain employment outside of EcoVillage, this middle-class orientation and influencing the affordability of purchasing and renting homes there, it also influences the ways in which EcoVillage is organized and run. As Harvey (1989:184) sums up:

> All manner of oppositional movements have come to grief as they stumble upon
> the rock of money as the central and universal source of social power. It takes
> money, we can conclude, to construct any alternative to the society predicated on
> the community of money. This is the essential truth that all social movements
> have to confront; otherwise it confronts and destroys them.

EcoVillage at Ithaca has confronted the power and necessity of money by maintaining a mainstream existence in which the activities of residents and the EcoVillage itself can be income-generating.

EcoVillage Is Not Sustainable Enough

There is also a tension between the power this mainstream orientation gives

EcoVillage as an educational model of sustainable living, and the obstruction this

mainstream orientation erects, which prevents residents from pushing the envelope

towards more sustainable lifestyles. Lucy explained that EcoVillage is not making as

significant efforts towards greater sustainability as she would like:

> Pushing the edge, like a person needs to be stretching and growing and that I
> don't see happening as much here as I'd like. There are little pockets and there are
> individuals and there are little initiatives... [but] if I had my own homestead, I'd
> have my orchard planted, I'd have my solar panels, I'd be as off grid as I could.

Kelly expressed a similar sentiment:

> It's not all that hard... I would want it to be a little more radical. Like 'yeah, ok,
> we're gonna have chickens here,'... just have chickens here, you know... We
> could do so much so quickly so easily in the next year. This place could be, if we
> wanted to, completely transformed into a hugely more sustainable place. But, for
> right now, the people... that are mostly here and mostly in the leadership are more
> into... education and seem to be happy with... more in their comfort zone of
> straddling the line between living like... 'we're not that far out there,' like 'you
> can't really attack us so much because look we're kind of like middle-class
> normal, regular people. We're doing this.' We're trying to tow that into this more
> sustainable thing.

As Dawson (2006:33) explains "...the goal of... EVI... is to create a model that will be

attractive to and replicable by mainstream, middle-class people, thus making some

compromises in terms of the purity of the experiment."

As hinted at in the above quotes, participants also expressed considerable

disappointment in the lack of a significant consciousness shift among residents. Many

believed that, among residents, there was not a significant commitment to sustainability

or to EcoVillage's mission. As Phebe lamented:

> That is one of the big causes of dissonance for me here is... even... the structural
> changes aren't enough for me, but the paradigm change is really lacking... in a
> holistic way here. Like I said, there are pockets of people who are more or less...
> But, ultimately I think, it's really lacking in significant consciousness shift here.

Elan expressed something similar, emphasizing the diversity of commitment to the

creation of a sustainable culture that exists among residents:

> ...there isn't a strong coherence of vision here. Some people are really committed
> to living sustainably as much as possible and influencing the planetary situation as
> powerfully and systemically as possible. And there's other people who really like
> it here because it's a nice place to live and they like their neighbors and they think
> it's much better than the rest of most of the opportunities they could have had, but
> they're not... pioneer activists. So, there's a broad range in here... For some
> people they're much more comfortable in their individualized, middle-class
> background and other people are ready make decisive and profound changes.

This resulted in the perception that the efforts made by residents or EcoVillage as a

whole are not enough.

Making a Difference

Regardless of the tension that exists between the power this mainstream

orientation gives EcoVillage as an educational model of sustainable living, and the

obstruction this mainstream orientation erects that prevents residents from pushing the

envelope towards more sustainable lifestyles, many participants expressed the feeling that

as part of a mainstream educational model, the lifestyles of those living there are making

a difference, having an impact locally and globally. As residents expressed:

> It helps me feel like I'm making a difference [that] this place gets a lot of attention (Steve)

> I think this very place is a statement and a model. So just being here and having made the effort and to be here says something. It might just be, like I say, a step on to something else, but it's definitely a step and a very positive one (Phebe).

However, most participants (other than those with careers specifically dedicated to the sustainability education mission of EcoVillage) did not consider themselves political activists.

Participants drew distinctions between what I term 'soft activists' and 'political activists'. Soft activists are those who believe that the personal is political and that the collective lifestyle choices of numerous individuals who are living out their values can add up to significant social change. Political activists are those who are visionary, pioneering, and public in their activism. Most of those at EcoVillage thought of themselves as soft activists. Many felt that through EcoVillage's educational mission, its outreach, its on-site workshops, its tours, its notoriety, and its openness to visitors, they were performing a sort of 'soft activism'. These quotes illustrate how residents perceive their living at EcoVillage as 'soft activism':

> ...Right now... I would say that living here feels like an... act of activism.... And, the energy that I do put toward any of my committee commitments... around trying to support the mission here. It certainly isn't the... bolder, more public activism... of moving beyond (Laura).

> ...my activism is much quieter now and it's much more about... living alternatively (Laura).

> ... I have basically elected a kind of soft approach to changing the system: the show a better way approach to changing the system rather than the go out there

and... try to get people to wake up and smell the coffee and the whole political scene... (Steve).

... that feels like a type of activist, but it's not like you're out there in the trenches (Lucy).

The vast majority of the residents I interviewed relied almost entirely on their everyday lifestyles to make a difference in the world, both in terms of demonstrating another way of living to others, and in terms of reducing the impacts of their material consumption choices. As a result of this lack of political activism among residents, one could argue that EcoVillage at Ithaca is simply a comfortable lifestyle choice for residents.

However, one could also argue that political activism is not necessary in impacting others by making significant changes in one's own life. Many residents believe that the small changes in their own lives can add up to have a cumulative effect that results in large-scale transformation of social structures. As Kirby (2004) argues, in the case of EcoVillage:

> The adoption of practices that aim to reduce their ecological footprint are intended to address global inequalities through ensuring that the products of exploitation and repressive practices find no place in their domestic environment.

Steve explained that he believes the most promising avenue to having a broad impact is to make changes as a member of a group:

> ...somehow if feels more like its making more of a difference to be part of a group that's doing it. Partly because it's more people and I think also because it's more visible.

> I'm having most of my effect in a relatively small radius around me, but I'm hoping that will... make a broader difference... It might not be significant... How much difference can one person make?

The majority of residents felt that individual changes made in isolation would certainly not have the impact that would individual changes made as a group that is highly visible and working to influence others.

Bang (2005) notes, the relationship between EcoVillage and the broader world is fundamental. There are some communities that are completely oriented towards their own insulated and protected self-sufficiency; there are other communities that are oriented towards creating a comfortable lifestyle for themselves.

> But it is here that we are developing the techniques and technologies which will eventually give birth to a truly sustainable society, caring for the environment and the people. For an ecovillage to have relevance into the future – and for me to want to co-operate with it and feel that we share some worldview – it is essential that it be outward-looking and open. To develop a training center is one way to express this in concrete terms. Inviting people to join for longer or shorter periods, to learn alongside each other and then go back into the larger social context with new ideas and techniques... If we only build ecovillages that are an escape from the problems of the larger society, we will have achieved very little. Only by engaging with the society around us, inviting people into us, can we hope to achieve change in the larger society (Bang 2005:36).

It is to this concept of EcoVillage's impact on the rest of the world that I will turn in the concluding chapter of this document.

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSIONS

The socioeconomic and environmental solutions to our present crisis do not lie in each person trying harder than before as lone individuals or isolated nuclear families. They lie in our working more effectively with each other in a system of cooperative enterprise by sharing property, resources, responsibilities, and purposes – that is the essence of ecological living and the way toward a sustainable society. As the old American Dream collapses, we can continue to be lone individuals, compromising our dreams, our lives, and our environment, or we can make a bold declaration of what happiness, family life, good neighborhoods, and a healthy planet and world society really mean to us. To meet those desires, we must learn how to rebuild America with community as a sustainable foundation (Norwood and Smith 1995:47).

Patterns of material consumption in the United States, structured by capitalism, have associated economic, environmental, social, cultural, and personal impacts. Capitalism as a global system results not only in environmental degradation, increased inequality, increased poverty, increasingly concentrated and differentially applied power, but also social, cultural, and personal costs. These costs include impacts on consumers, such as commodity fetishism, alienation, and materialism, (i.e. the dismissal of the impacts of the consumption choices made in search of personal identity and fulfillment). In fact, consumers' ability to derive satisfaction from consumption actually decreases with each incremental increase in consumption. Understanding these negative consequences of the way we organize ourselves socially under the current capitalist political economic system allows for an understanding of the motivations people have

for, and the importance of, the myriad attempts at multiple scales to disrupt it, resist it, and to find alternatives.

Given these myriad impacts that result from our current global political economy, Meltzer (2005:164) argues that "...the vast majority of human beings will either choose, learn, or *be forced* to live radically differently in order to survive with others in a civilised manner." This new manner of living will include greater local self-sufficiency and reduced demand for material resources (Meltzer 2005). Hayden (2002:77) also holds that "we need to reconstruct the social, economic, and spatial bases of our beliefs about individual happiness, solid family life, and decent neighborhoods." She further argues that:

> Between the giant corporations and the tiny houses, environmental alternatives require new social, economic, and architectural innovations as well as new, energy-saving inventions. As environmentalists continue to develop a very effective accounting of the wasteful, destructive patterns of present resource use, reconceptualization of the private home will lead to more concern for neighborhood. Neighborhood scale may be the most productive issue for green architecture in the decades ahead (Hayden 2002:67).

Meltzer (2005) also believes that the neighborhood is the most effective scale at which to implement this new manner of living. He argues that this manner of living is more feasible and more fulfilling if done in collaboration with others. Further, he holds that cohousing is a demonstration of how to implement this new manner of living, to live with reduced demand for material resources, and to gain greater life satisfaction from means other than consumerism, without a reduction in quality of life (Meltzer 2005).

This research is an exploration of the degree to which EcoVillage at Ithaca can be understood as a space of resistance and EcoVillage residents can be understood as activists. This investigation is important because it helps to illuminate whether EcoVillage at Ithaca is simply a comfortable lifestyle choice for residents, or has transformative impacts beyond the EcoVillage itself.

My research questions have been:

1. To what degree is EcoVillage at Ithaca a space of resistance to the ills of capitalism and consumer culture?

2. To what degree do the residents of EcoVillage at Ithaca interpret their choice to live there as an activist act of resistance?

3. How are these different scales of resistance, at the EcoVillage and resident level, related?

These questions revolve around the degree to which domestic (i.e. home-based) resistance, performed in organized collaboration with others, poses a solution to the ills of certain broad-scale structures, processes, and dynamics. Human behaviors, at both individual and collective scales are an outcome of human agency. Behavior can be understood as operating within social structures, but scholars argue about the ability of this behavior to impact those structures.

Some scholars view behavior as an outcome of the structures, processes, and dynamics of social organization; others view behavior as a force which shapes these

structures, processes, and dynamics. I adopt the perspective of Giddens, whose Theory of Structuration, as paraphrased by Graham (2005:24), explains that "human agents are seen both as operating within a specific social context (structure) and as active in determining the precise outcome of their social interactions." As Winchester (2005) explains, the academic examination of the interactions between human agency/behavior and broad-scale structures, processes, and dynamics, is best pursued using qualitative methods. Further, qualitative methods are particularly well-suited to investigating resistance to large-scale structures, processes, and dynamics. Winchester (2005:5) states that one of the two questions that can be answered with qualitative methods is: "what is the shape of societal structures and by what processes are they constructed, maintained, legitimized, and resisted?" (Winchester 2005:5)

Resistance

The relationship between capitalism and the built environment is deeply ingrained in both the physical and cultural landscapes of America. Resisting either capitalism or the structure of the built environment (which is supportive of capitalism and of material consumption) requires that the false link between consumerism and well-being, which is part of the 'American Dream', be confronted and severed (Harvey 1989). Because of the myriad personal, social, economic, and environmental impacts of material consumption, as structured by capitalism, resistance to the ills of capitalism are afoot.

This resistance to the ills of capitalism is by no means futile. Sharp et al. (2000:12) note that "...certain readings of Foucault can convey the impression of a dominating power so diffuse, so unspecific and yet so all-encompassingly effective that resistance against it is not only futile but impossible to achieve." In contrast, Sharp et al. (2000:20) argue that understanding the ways in which power relationships exist at multiple scales and interact with each other "...does not necessarily commit us to a kind of intellectual and political quietism: a shrug of the shoulders in the face of power's apparent all-pervasiveness, elusiveness and complexity." This sentiment relates to Giddens' Theory of Structuration, discussed above, which describes that although large-scale processes, structures, and dynamics do influence the parameters of social interactions, humans are able to influence how those interactions play out within those parameters.

Norwood and Smith (1995:37) similarly argue that:

Although many people have felt powerless with little control over society's problems, it is time to turn the process around by demonstrating that the tools are available for making positive change... we need to honestly look at our own daily living practices and the 'system.'

Again, we see the importance of keeping individual, everyday practices as well as large-scale structures, processes, and dynamics in mind when making efforts to alter societal problems. Harvey (1989) also forwards the importance of being attentive to the multiple scales of social existence. He argues that:

...it is just as geographically unprincipled and naïve to ignore the qualities of a global process as it is to ignore the distinctive qualities of place and community.

> Practices fashioned only in the latter terms define a politics of adaptation and submission, rather than of active resistance and socialist transformation" (Harvey 1989:276).

Pile (1997:4) urges readers to keep in mind "that, as much as resistance seeks to undermine or throw off control over exterior spaces, the interior world is also colonised by hegemonic norms and values."

Resistance, Space, and Place

Resistance has been important theoretical component in my analysis of EcoVillage at Ithaca, and particularly the geographies of resistance. Because power takes place across space and in places, the entanglements of power are spatial, and thus, geographical (Sharp et al. 2000). This understanding illuminates the importance of being attentive to the ways in which resistance plays out through space and in place. It also offers resistance movements a leverage point: place. Specific places can be used as a form of resistance against the ills of capitalism and consumer culture (Cresswell 2004; Pickerill and Chatterton 2006).

Regardless of the particular ways in which social relationships and the act of place-making interact to produce these particular places, they undoubtedly demonstrate an alternative approach to social organization. However, this understanding does not completely explain the degree to which these particular places are spaces of active resistance to the ills of consumer culture.

Pile and Keith (1997) examine the ways in which those attempting to resist forms of domination can exercise power through the reorganization of material space. The authors are concerned particularly with the ways in which those resisting forms of domination can exercise power through the reorganization of material space. These authors and those exploring 'autonomous geographies' are interested in the creation of new spaces in which people execute resistance through their everyday practices, creating new styles of social organization (Pickerill and Chatterton 2006; Pile and Keith 1997).

There are many avenues and strategies through which change can be enacted, which exist at multiple scales. Pickerill and Chatterton (2006), with their theory of 'autonomous geographies', argue that among the myriad avenues, strategies, and scales through which dominating power can be resisted, one foundational strategy that operates at the scale of the individual is this everyday resistance. The 'everyday places' being challenged are those that are sculpted by capitalism and globalization.

Sharp et al. (2000:26) argue for "… the possibilities for resistant spatialities full of new possibilities for social existence." Following other scholars theorizing about resistance[1], Sharp et al. (2000:26) hold that:

> …there is no hope for revolutionary politics and activism having any effect without there being a change in the spatial organisation of society: the material and discursive spaces that make up modern life, the spatial connections that exist between, and creating, individual and groups, therefore need to be altered.

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[1] See Foucault (1978, 1984) and Lefebvre (1991)

> Dominant spatial organisations have to be transcended in the creation of both new subjectivities and new possibilities for relations of power.

As Pile (1997:30) explains, this transcendence of the dominant spatial organization of society results in "…throwing away imposed maps, unfolding new spaces, making alternative places, creating new geographies of resistance." Pile (1997) emphasizes the ways in which resistance results in the occupation, deployment, and creation of new spaces. Pickerill and Chatterton (2006:742) share this focus on the creation of new spaces, arguing that:

> Given that there is no place outside the reach of capitalist relations, 'new places' have to be created from within, through an attempt – however complicated, contested and fractured – to alter and challenge everyday places.

Pile (1997:17) again reminds us that we cannot focus only on the reworking of "external physical space, but must also engage the colonised spaces of people's inner worlds."

Adair and Howell (1992:39) specify this focus on the types of new spaces that must be created, arguing that social change work must focus on "the reclaiming of community [which] is the only hope and promise for healing out society." Similarly, Katznelson (1981), Harvey (1996), and Cresswell (2004) all argue that community and the place of residence are important loci of resistance. Katznelson (1981:193) argues that today, "…a remarkable consensus of activists is once again turning to the place of residence rather than the place of work as the main locus of insurgent activity…" and "radical change."

Pile (1997:12) argues that previous analyses of resistance[2], "...tend only to consider political those actions which are public and/or overt and/or collective – thus rendering private and/or covert and/or personal forms of resistance, which are not considered 'Political' or part of 'The Movement', invisible." The study of everyday resistance makes visible the private and personal forms of resistance, such as those that are being performed by from the place of residence and community. This is also the case with the forms of resistance being performed by the individual residents of EcoVillage, albeit collectively. This is a point to which I will return later in this chapter.

EcoVillage at Ithaca as a Model

In my qualitative research, I found that residents believe EcoVillage at Ithaca to be an educational model for mainstream America, demonstrating an alternative to consumer culture and an alternative way to organize socially, economically, and environmentally. Many voiced that this model is of critical important in the face of what they saw as a need for a new societal paradigm (whether chosen or imposed). Participants understood EcoVillage's mission to implicitly include an educational component, as well as the articulation of a positive vision for social change. In addition, participants understood that EcoVillage was created with the intent of modeling sustainable culture to middle-class, mainstream Americans. Although many had critiques of targeting this mainstream audience, many believed that this is a strategic means to affecting change within a population that is required to change the most. EcoVillage is demonstrating a

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[2] See Harvey (1993a, 1993b) and Castells (1983)

way to continue a middle-class existence, while reducing environmental impacts and deepening social relationships.

There is agreement among many scholars that ecovillages and cohousing demonstrate the success of the synergy of multiple sustainability components and that ecovillages and cohousing are appealing to mainstream society (Jackson and Jackson 2002; Jackson and Svensson 2002; Meltzer 2000). As Meltzer (2000:130) explains, in the case of cohousing:

> Cohousing will not, in itself, be able to turn environmental degradation around. Yet its lessons have great relevance for mainstream society. Cohousing demonstrates the importance of 'community' to environmental and social sustainability... Cohousing demonstrates the means by which people might live in civilized and enduring propinquity within a mainstream context.... For environmental degradation to be addressed in a meaningful way, the conserver lifestyle must be compatible with a mainstream orientation. Such is the potential demonstrated by the cohousing model.

In the case of ecovillages, Jackson and Jackson (2002) and Jackson and Svensson (2002) believe that ecovillages fulfill a need for full-scale models that demonstrate to mainstream society how the different elements of sustainability can be synchronized and how these models can be replicated. Jackson and Jackson (2002:130) argue that as an alternative to economic globalization, "the ecovillage movement has a historic significance in... directly addressing the threefold need for resourcing people and their living environment, and providing concrete examples of alternatives to commercial globalization."

Jackson (in Jackson and Svensson 2002:98) argues that education and outreach
are critical functions of ecovillage demonstration models:

> Teaching and communication are lifelines for ecovillages… Visiting or following
> a course at an ecovillage is an experience which provides people with knowledge
> of sustainability principles through immersion in the ecovillage lifestyle. It has the
> power to change people's lives.

Because of this fact that many ecovillages deliberately model a more sustainable way of
life through outreach and education, "...these communities are powerful activist
models..." (Bonnette 2004:5). In addition, Kirby (2004) believes that by way of "the
construction and demonstration of a single ideal model that could be duplicated
throughout the country," ecovillages, and EcoVillage at Ithaca in particular, can be
thought of as "...a mode of protest that was novel, non-violent and total in scope." This
role of EcoVillage as an activist model and a form of protest will be discussed in greater
detail in the pages that follow.

Also of import is the feeling among scholars that cohousing and ecovillages
provide this model during a time when it is much-needed (Bonnette 2005; Dawson 2006;
Jackson and Jackson 2002; Meltzer 2005). For instance, Meltzer (2005) believes that the
community-scale organization of cohousing will be its most significant contribution to
future societies. In discussing ecovillages, Dawson (2006:77) states that "… the types of
applied research, demonstration and training that ecovillages are engaged in are precisely
those that will be needed to navigate the rough waters ahead."

Bonnette (2005:5) holds that in the face of an impending new societal paradigm, ecovillages are a "...physical manifestation of a world-scale paradigm shift beginning in local communities..." Jackson and Jackson (2002:130) similarly argue that:

> The ecovillage movement is... a reaction to the crisis [of commercialism], but in a positive and constructive mode, based on personal action in changing lifestyles in keeping with the longer term needs of a global society in ecological balance. They may well be the models for the rest of the world to turn to, when the reality of the current crisis is finally acknowledged.

According to Dawson (2006:77) regardless of whether people believe that society as we know it is collapsing or simply believe that future societal organization will require people to be more self-sufficient, it will be critical to ensure that "...the wisdom, the models and the technologies developed within ecovillages are mobilised for the wider public good."

However, no scholar argues that ecovillages are a panacea for all global societal, environmental, and economic problems, and some express strong critiques of ecovillages and cohousing (Bonnette 2004; McCamant and Durrett 1994). As Bonnette (2004:8) tells, she is "...not convinced that ecovillages are the only way into a sustainable future." McCamant and Durrett (1994) elaborate on this sentiment. For instance, the authors express concern that cohousing could become nothing more than a socially-based gated-community. They state that:

> ...cohousing might further emphasize already existing American patterns of residential and social segregation. Certainly, cohousing could be applied as just another variation on the walled-in, planned communities of the affluent; but such exclusivity runs counter to one of the primary reasons for the concept's appeal –

the desire for an integrated residential environment (McCamant and Durrett 1994:202).

In addition, they argue that given their small size, "...cohousing developments have limited impact on larger urban and regional design issues (McCamant and Durrett 1994:279). They do make valuable contributions to livable settlement design, including the integration of employment and housing, better transportation options, and community cohesion. They offer one solution, but not the only one (McCamant and Durrett 1994).

Community and Behavior

In my research, I found that the general experience of residents was that EcoVillage at Ithaca facilitates the creation of a sustainable culture and residents reported having more sustainable lifestyles as a result of living at EcoVillage. In addition, many participants expressed that there was continual learning amongst EcoVillagers about how to make a more sustainable life. In large part because of the resource sharing, many residents expressed that they had significantly reduced their material consumption as a result of living at EcoVillage.

Scholars have also examined this relationship between community and pro-environmental behavior. As Meltzer (2005:152) argues, "...cohousing has demonstrated a physical instrumental and social context within which pro-environmental attitudes and behaviour are nurtured and sustained." He argues that cohousing architecture and site design, as well as the purpose behind cohousing, promote interaction among residents.

The familiarity that results promotes awareness-raising, the spread of knowledge, as well

as sharing and support. The empowerment that residents experience creates a sense of

control over their lives, and allows residents to cultivate their motivation to address

environmental issues and reduce their consumerism (Meltzer 2005).

The importance of the role the collaborative element of cohousing plays in

fostering more pro-environmental behavior cannot be understated. As Norwood and

Smith (1995:37) explain:

> Working alone as individuals will not take us far enough along the road to
> responsible ecological living and the rebuilding of community in America. Efforts
> to this end are often thwarted because we lack the collective power of
> commitment to a common purpose. Such as change requires personal
> empowerment through a social support base, whether it be an extended family or
> a larger community of people.

In fact, Meltzer (2005:167) believes that community collaboration is of such importance

that in working to facilitates social change, community building…

> …should precede or at least accompany structural measures. Rather than the
> allocation of services, such a 'social planning' process should begin by
> encouraging greater interaction between people in everyday life.

A strong sense of community allows people to tackle issues that might seem

insurmountable in isolation. Meltzer (2005:171) argues that community sharing and

collaboration has the potential to "…deliver a culture far more benign, sustainable and

satisfying of basic human needs than any in human history."

Panelli and Welch (2005:1609) formulate a conception of community that is based on the sharing of everyday activities; "that such communities may be articulated in both social and place-specific forms through everyday patterns of life." Community is continually reformed through the negotiation by individuals of their experience of individuality and difference. It is through contact (potential and actual) with other people via the repetition of everyday activities that individuals formulate their sense of community. People feel most connected to their communities when they are perceived (by others and themselves) to be supporting the group (Panelli and Welch 2005).

Residents of EcoVillage not only form and re-form their sense of community though their formal and informal interactions on an everyday basis. Residents also form and re-form their sense of community through the process of physical community-building and maintenance. Because of this strong sense of community, and the support structures it includes, residents are able to support each other in participating in more sustainable behavior. It is precisely the everyday nature of this social process that defines it as resistance. As Pile (1997:14) argues, "...it is not so much the act – and its structural determinations – that defines resistance... but the meanings that social actions take on in the practice of everyday life."

Spatial Change Alone Cannot Make Social Change

As mentioned above, responses to the social and environmental consequences of the suburban and urban built environment, as well as responses to the built environment

itself, are many. There are suburban and urban design strategies that respond to these consequences and attempt to make places of meaning that are more conducive to social, economic, and environmental sustainability. These responses include such design strategies as cohousing, ecovillages, green building slow growth[3], and New Urbanism[4], for instance. Some authors argue, as does Kunstler (1993:112) that "...to transition to a saner way of living...will certainly require a transformation of the physical setting for our civilization, a remaking of the places where we live and work."

It is important to keep in mind, however, that a narrow focus on architecture as a means to solving society's social and economic ills is insufficient. Jacobs (1961:113) argues that:

> ...other things may be more important than housing, however, and... there is not a direct, simple relationship between good housing and good behavior...When we try to justify good shelter instead on the pretentious grounds that it will work social or family miracles, we fool ourselves.

Hayden (2002:222) asserts the same critique: that "architecture cannot bring about revolution; spatial change by itself can't effect social change." Of course, changing the

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[3] One response has been the 'slow growth' movement of the 1980s by homeowners, environmentalists, planners, and others who seek to manage growth and at the same time incorporate 'green building' and mixed use (blending residential and commercial space) while promoting pedestrian traffic and public transit and discouraging vehicular traffic. The Urban Growth Boundary (UGB), also a component of the 'slow growth' movement, is a mechanism employed "...to slow scattered growth, bound it, and shape it" (Hayden 2003, p.195).

[4] Architects adopting New Urbanism strive to "...elaborate a cozy past, where old-fashioned family life is honored in neo-traditional houses gathered into beautifully landscaped enclaves" that promote community interaction (Hayden 2003, p.201). Seaside, Florida, designed by Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk and Andres Duany (co-authors of *Suburban Nation* in 2000) and used as the set in the film *The Truman Show* (starring Jim Carrey), is a splendid example of this architectural style.

built environment, or making a new one, does require changes in both architecture and economics, but changing the built environment, in itself, cannot revolutionize society. Economic, social, environmental, and architectural restructuring are all needed in conjunction to meaningfully remodel our built environment.

In essence, in Jacob's and Hayden's views, although we want to look towards architectural and planning solutions to our social ills and economic needs, social change must precede any meaningful and impacting architectural restructuring. Americans arguably need to redefine the 'American dream' to include meaningful work and relationships, and different conceptions of success and individuality. Architectural solutions fall short because the satisfaction Americans seek from their single-family dwellings is of a type that cannot be met by architects or planners.

In addition to misplaced reliance on architecture to catalyze social revolution, many of the responses to the ills of capitalism and consumer culture, (including cohousing, ecovillages, green building slow growth, and New Urbanism) are all still reliant on growth. And as American consumerism and consumption of resources continue to increase and sprawl marches on, these responses are unable to facilitate sweeping change. Hayden (2003:229) tells us that:

> ...new designs alone cannot redeem a throwaway culture organized around obsolescence and the continual consumption of undeveloped land and new products. Housing is tied to the political economy. Better architecture cannot, in itself, change the larger patterns of social and economic exploitation developed by growth machines which profit from round after round of fringe development.

In essence, if the social and economic underpinnings of housing design are flawed or inappropriate, no amount of architectural innovation will remedy this.

It is argued that even if the social, economic, and environmental underpinnings of housing and community design are appropriate, the architecture in itself will not facilitate sweeping change. As Meltzer (2005:15) states:

> The matter of whether design *per se* can help build a sense of belonging or a sense of community is extremely vexed. There is a long and much discredited history of *architectural determinism* which might once have held that strangers moving into an appropriately designed community would likely cohere as a community.

On the other hand, in the case of cohousing, "the involvement of prospective residents in the design and development of cohousing… builds social cohesion and commitment within the group before inhabitation of the project" (Meltzer 2005:15). By way of this participation, a sense of community is created in cohousing that does have the capability of changing residents' behaviors.

However, a sense of community that does not facilitate pro-environmental behavior and reduced material consumption will not alone offer resistance to the ills of consumer culture. Hayden (2003:229) holds that:

> …the problems of excessive fringe suburban development require more than better design…To turn patterns of excessive consumption into patterns of wise use that can be sustained forever would require severe limits on land use, energy use, and new construction.

At EcoVillage at Ithaca, the sense of community derived from participation in the design process that facilitates pro-environmental behavior combines with a dedication to the reduction of the ecological footprint of residents. It is with this combination of factors that design can influence sweeping societal change.

Material Consumption at EcoVillage

Although the general belief among residents was that EcoVillage facilitates the creation of a sustainable culture and an accompanying reduction in material consumption, several participants expressed tensions that exist between the levels of material consumption of various residents. Some felt that other residents were still consuming at very high levels and others felt that they themselves were still consuming at higher levels than they would like.

This tension surrounding levels of material consumption implicates EcoVillage's influence as a mainstream model, and hence its power as a space of resistance. If residents are not significantly reducing their levels of materials consumption beyond that which is easily facilitated by the physical design of the ecovillage, this brings into question the degree to which EcoVillage at Ithaca is creating a sustainable culture. And, it brings into question the degree to which EcoVillage at Ithaca is contesting the ills of consumer culture.

Consumption as Resistance?

When considering resistance, it is important to keep in mind that "certain resistances are themselves a reproduction or extension of dominating power rather than a challenge to it" (Sharp et al. 2000:23). Because resistance is a form of power itself (Cresswell 2000), Gupta and Ferguson (1997:18) argue that resistances "...are always capable of being tactically appropriated and redeployed within another strategy of power..." Resistance is capable of "...reconfirming or strengthening existing identities, ironically contributing to maintaining the status quo" (Gupta and Ferguson 1997:19).

Sharp et al. (2000:22) quote Haynes and Prakash (1991) to illustrate that "...moments of resistance are also constantly conditioned but the structures of dominating social and political power, hinting that resisting power is constantly in danger of replicating the structures of the dominant." Further, the authors explain that:

> Resistance in one place my therefore be complicit with domination in another, which begins to introduce the entangled geographies about which we shall speak further. To reflect more abstractly on this issue, we would propose that individuals and groups are commonly subject to contradictory consciousness, supporting some aspect of the social order while opposing others. As Mitchell (1990)[5] notes, even resistance practices are partially conditioned by hegemony, since their logics of enactment accept, at least in part, the larger structures of political and economy power: there is no autonomous consciousness or completely self-determining subject who thoroughly escapes the effects of hegemonic practices (Sharp et al. 2000:24).

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[5] Mitchell, T. 1990. "Everyday metaphors of power." *Theory and Society* 19:545-577.

Cresswell (2000:260) argues much the same thing, that "it could equally be the case that the vast majority of choices we make are far from resistant by rather serve to reproduce existing forms of domination."

Along with this blurring of the lines between resistance and domination comes an issue that complicates this analysis. It could very well be the case that the form of domination being reproduced in resistance is consumer culture. This can easily be seen in green consumerism and the green building industry, for instance. In these cases, material items are still being consumed, but these items are shrouded by a veil of 'green.' As Cresswell (2000:256) argues:

> People making choices, consuming, resisting. These will be seen as evidence for everyday heroism and the analysis will stop there.

It is indeed possible that the residents of EcoVillage at Ithaca participate in this consumption disguised as resistance. It is possible that EcoVillage is not challenging consumer culture, but rather facilitating only a different form of consumerism that still rests comfortable within the global capitalist political economy and consumer culture.

Jackson (in Jackson and Svensson 2002:129) argues that:

> To resist it [modern consumerism], one needs knowledge about its true implications, and the will to make a conscious choice and stick with it through hard times. One also needs some strong political arguments...

Many residents of EcoVillage are aware of the complex implication of their consumption choices, have made deliberate choices to reduce the social, economic, and environmental

impacts of their material consumption, and have strong political arguments behind their doing so. In addition, because these actions are, at least to some degree, collaborative and promoted as an educational model, I argue that residents are participating in a form of resistance, however little the actual impact.

Mainstream Orientation

There is also a tension between the power its mainstream orientation gives EcoVillage as an educational model of sustainable living, and the obstruction this mainstream orientation erects, which prevents residents from pushing the envelope towards more sustainable lifestyles. For instance, the majority of residents must maintain a mainstream existence with mainstream employment in order to afford to live at EcoVillage. This mainstream employment reduces the amount of time and energy residents can dedicate to on-site sustainability improvements and increases residents' transportation requirements, for example. Again, this challenges EcoVillage's role as a space of resistance.

Activism

Regardless of the tension surrounding EcoVillage's mainstream orientation, many participants expressed the feeling that as part of a mainstream educational model, the lifestyles of those living there are making a difference, having an impact locally and globally. However, most participants did not consider themselves political activists. Participants drew distinctions between what I term 'soft activists', those who believe that

the collective lifestyle choices of numerous individuals can add up to significant social change, and 'political activists', those who are visionary, pioneering, and public in their activism. Most of those at EcoVillage thought of themselves as soft activists.

Kirby (2004) also makes this distinction between political and soft activism, which he terms "...active and domestic protest," arguing that soft or domestic activism is not perceived to be as dangerously threatening to the status quo. This lack of perceived threat may make mainstream Americans more receptive to the ecovillage and cohousing models. As Kirby (2004) explains: "...protest, whether a demonstration in the context of specific events or domestic protest in the form of the creation of alternative spaces, represents the most radical form of attitudes that are already beginning to find acceptance in the general population."

In general, EcoVillage residents felt that although they may not be political activists (or active protesters), they are making a difference that has impacts beyond EcoVillage itself. Many felt that through EcoVillage's educational mission, its outreach, its on-site workshops, its tours, its notoriety, and its openness to visitors, they were performing a sort of soft activism. As Kirby (2004) articulates:

> Whether on religious, political or social grounds, all community builders believed that social change could best be achieved through the construction and demonstration of a single ideal model that could be duplicated throughout the country.

This is "...a mode of protest that was novel, non-violent and total in scope" (Kirby 2004). With these statements, Kirby identifies the construction of a community that functions as a replicable model as a form of protest.

EcoVillage at Ithaca as a Space of Resistance

The vast majority of the residents I interviewed relied almost entirely on their everyday lifestyles to make a difference in the world, both in terms of demonstrating another way of living to others, and in terms of reducing the impacts of their material consumption choices. It is this impact beyond the lives of the individual residents that I argue allows EcoVillage to be understood as a space of resistance to the ills of consumer culture rather than simply a comfortable lifestyle choice for residents.

However, as a result of this lack of political activism among residents, one could argue that EcoVillage at Ithaca is simply a comfortable lifestyle choice for residents. Some residents are not completely committed to the mission, some have not significantly reduced their levels of material consumption, and some are living at EcoVillage simply because of the community and the quality of life. If residents are not significantly reducing their levels of materials consumption beyond that which is easily facilitated by the physical design of the ecovillage, this brings into question the degree to which EcoVillage at Ithaca is creating a sustainable culture. One could also argue that without complete commitment by all residents to the creation of a demonstration model of sustainable culture, EcoVillage cannot be considered an activist space. This implicates

EcoVillage's influence as a mainstream model, and hence its power as a space of resistance. And, it brings into question the degree to which EcoVillage at Ithaca is contesting the ills of consumer culture.

However, I argue that EcoVillage residents are certainly living in a place that is designed specifically to model a way of living that represents an alternative to consumerism and capitalist culture. Indeed, their everyday lives are a part of this model. Further, because of its outreach activities and educational mission, EcoVillage at Ithaca is having an impact beyond the lives of the individual residents.

The scope of this impact is not unproblematic, however. EcoVillage's educational outreach is received by a niche audience that is primarily made of up the educated middle-class and/or those already involved in the ecovillage movement or with cohousing. This is evidenced by the fact that EcoVillage's outreach is achieved primarily through three avenues: conventional education and academia, media recognition (mainstream and alternative), and participation in the ecovillage movement, such as involvement with the Global Ecovillage Network (GEN). Although the model EcoVillage presents is relevant, because of the currently limited scope of its impact, it may not be significant. This question of the impact of EcoVillage on various audiences is in need of further investigation. Nonetheless, although the potential impact of EcoVillage is far greater than its current scope, it likely does have an impact. It is this impact beyond the lives of the individual residents that I argue allows EcoVillage to be understood as a

space of resistance to the ills of consumer culture rather than simply a comfortable

lifestyle choice for residents.

I have investigated this particular case in which an alternative place of residence

has been created as a site of contestation and as a model of another way to live. Pile

(1997:12) argues that many past analyses…

> …of oppositional politics tend only to consider political those actions which are
> public and/or overt and/or collective – thus rendering private and/or covert and/or
> personal forms of resistance, which are not considered 'Political' or part of 'The
> Movement', invisible…

This analysis of EcoVillage at Ithaca makes visible exactly this type of 'personal',

domestic resistance that Pile (1997) believes needs to be illuminated. In reaction to the

tribulations of consumerism, the residents of EcoVillage at Ithaca have built a community

in which they can focus on deepening social connections and fostering sustainability.

Although not directly resisting capitalism *per se*, EcoVillage is a place deliberately

created to demonstrate an alternative to consumer culture, and to provide a venue for

residents to eschew some of the *ills* of capitalism.

As mentioned above, Pile and Keith (1997), in their explorations of 'geographies

of resistance', and Pickerill and Chatterton (2006), in their explorations of 'autonomous

geographies,' are interested in the creation of new spaces in which people execute

resistance through their everyday practices, creating new styles of social organization.

Pickerill and Chatterton (2006:731) identify ecovillages as "…localized autonomous

spaces and alternative processes" through which activism is manifested. Kirby (2004) also identifies the ecovillage as an alternative everyday space that represents an alternative to consumer society. He states that the ecovillage uses "the spatial arrangements of its built form" to promote connections among residents and their environment (Kirby 2004). Further, Kirby (2004) argues that part of the creation of a space of resistance is the exclusion of the dominant American culture in support of the development of a new societal and environmental paradigm. He states that "an emphasis on supporting sustainable practices such as organic agriculture, bioregional initiatives, recycling, and the practice of voluntary simplicity, flies in the face of the consumptive and globalizing force represented by the dominant social mode" (Kirby 2004).

Kirby (2003:327) states that residents of EcoVillage "…see themselves as progenitors of cultural change". As Walker (2005:167) explains, she conceives of EcoVillage's education and outreach activities…

> …as a series of concentric circles. The innermost circle consists of our intensive one-on-one work with individual students (interns, graduate students, and those doing independent studies). The next circle consists of the semester-long courses that we teach at EcoVillage. Tours and conferences make up the next circle, followed by additional circles having to do with media coverage and other outreach.

Walker (2005) and EcoVillage residents consider each of these concentric circles an avenue to create change. As a result, each of these concentric circles can be considered everyday spaces of resistance.

In addition to the outer circles mentioned by Walker (2005), there is also EcoVillage at Ithaca's membership in the Global Ecovillage Network (GEN). Through participation in this institutionalization of the ecovillage movement, EcoVillage participates in what Foucault (1978:96) calls "…the strategic codification of these points of resistance that makes revolution possible…" Norberg and Hodge (2002:175) argue that the growth of resistance is "…strengthened by thousands of grassroots initiatives that are reweaving the fabric of community, restoring ecosystems and rebuilding local economies, of which ecovillages are some of the most holistic and therefore important."

Social Movements

Leslie Sklair (1995:352) in "Social Movements and Global Capital," argues that in order to combat global capitalism, social movements must look towards "…disrupting capitalism locally and finding ways of globalizing these disruptions, while seizing the opportunities to transform it that democracy provides." In the context of labor movements and 'New Social Movements' (NSMs; which are grassroots-based), Sklair (1995:343) argues that because both operate within the politics of scale, their only chance for success "is by disrupting the local agencies with which they come into direct contact in their daily lives, rather than the more global institutions whose interests these agencies are serving directly, or, more often, indirectly…" The author asserts the power of local action to illustrate its necessity in the success of efforts to modify the current social and economic order. Sklair (1995:344) advances his own Global Systems Theory, which focuses on "transnational practices" which "…operate in three spheres, the economic

[institutionalized in MNCs], the political [exemplified by the transnational capitalist class], and the cultural-ideological [embodied in consumerism]." Sklair (1995)contends that because the accomplishments of global capitalism have relied on operation in all three spheres, success of social movements also relies on operation in all of these three spheres. In sum, rather than looking towards only disrupting global institutions, social movements may have more success with local disruptions involving the functions of daily life.

Katznelson (1981) argues something similar. He forwards the understanding that "…community-based strategies for social change in the United States cannot succeed unless they pay attention to the country's special pattern of class formation" (Katznelson 1981:194). In essence, he holds that community-based social movements must incorporate the larger structures, dynamics, and processes in to their efforts. In fact, Bonnette (2004) argues that this multi-scalar focus is one defining feature of radical environmentalism. The other features she argues define radical environmentalism are: grassroots beginnings, a focus "on local communities and resources on every organizational level, but also maintaining a global eye… [and] living as a model of this change…" (Bonnette 2004:18).

Harvey (1989) also argues that social movements must operate at multiple scales simultaneously to succeed. He states:

> Any political movement that does not embed itself in the heart of the urban process is doomed to fail in advanced capitalist society. Any political movement that does not secure its power within the urban process cannot long survive. Any political movement that cannot offer ways out of the multiple alienations of contemporary urban life cannot command mass support for the revolutionary transformation of capitalism (Harvey 1989:254).

Also importantly illuminated in the preceding quote is the necessity of incorporation of what Harvey terms the 'urban process.' This can also be understood as the processes by which society organizes its living, working, social, and recreational lives.

The arguments of Sklair (1995), Katznelson (1981), and Harvey (1989) all illustrate the importance of affecting change at multiple scales and globalizing local disruptions. In the case of EcoVillage at Ithaca, this globalization of local disruptions is affected through the role of educational model. The most significant impact EcoVillage residents can have has very little to do with their individual ecological footprints, and everything to do with participation in this educational model. Again, although the current scope of impact resulting form EcoVillage's educational outreach is limited, EcoVillage can be considered a space of resistance.

Naïve Calculus

Even the residents that *are* committed to the educational or sustainability components of EcoVillage's mission can certainly be accused of believing in what I term a 'naïve calculus', the idea that small changes in the lives of individuals can add up to have a cumulative effect that results in a large-scale transformation of social structures

(Elgin 1993; Maniates 2002). As Pickerill and Chatterton (2006:738) explain, 'autonomous geographies', the forms of everyday resistance they explore, "…are based around a belief in prefigurative politics (summed up by the phrase 'be the change you want to see'), that change is possible through an accumulation of small changes, providing much-needed hope against a feeling of powerlessness."

As Kirby (2004) argues, when people take an approach to the world in which they accept responsibility for "the wider social and ecological environments that sustain us, and promote… an ethic of stewardship over continued exploitation," they feel compelled to create their…

> …own domestic space of resistance that presents an irresistible form of protest to the globalizing industrial/capitalist system. The message that emerges from a community such as the Ecovillage at Ithaca is – if we don't buy it, they can't sell it.

This statement of Kirby's (2004) demonstrates the tension that exists between the domestic space of resistance and protest against the ills of the capitalist system and the 'naïve calculus' that may exist at EcoVillage and other spaces of everyday resistance.

As a result of just these types of tensions, scholars have questioned the scale of the impact of everyday resistance, arguing that although it does improve the quality of life of participants, it does not have the ability to transform the global capitalist economy.[6] For instance, Maniates (2002:209) argues that in the case of voluntary

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[6] See Pickerill and Chatterton (2006) for a discussion of this critique.

simplicity, those practicing this lifestyle have a narrow impact resulting from the tendency of those involved to "...overemphasize individual culpability for materialism at the cost of frank talk about the political and economic structures that manufacture." This, and similar critiques about other everyday forms of resistance, evokes Sklair's (1995) globalization of local disruptions, the iteration of the importance that social movements interfere with all three spheres (economic, political, and cultural-ideological). If EcoVillage at Ithaca fails to broaden the scope of local disruptions by ignoring broader-scale structures, processes, and dynamics and if EcoVillage fails to globalize its local disruptions, its status as a social movement, and hence a space of resistance, is compromised.

Admittedly, there is a tension between the lack of transformative impact of the choices of individual EcoVillage residents and the impact EcoVillage itself has as a demonstration of an alternative to middle-class, mainstream American culture. However, it can be argued that there is room, or space, for resistance at all scales. I believe that through its educational mission, and accompanying outreach, EcoVillage at Ithaca *is* having an impact beyond the lives of the individual residents. Therefore, it can be considered an effective space of resistance.

Conclusions

Kirby (2004) tells that the ecovillage movement and the anti-globalization movements have risen in tandem. Further, he argues that "engaging in a domestically-based protest offers the potential for modeling a positive response to a social situation

that is viewed as untenable, inequitable, corrupt, and repressive" (Kirby 2004). And, although the middle-class has not historically posed significant challenges or resistance to the dominant structures, processes, and dynamics (such as capitalism and consumer culture), the middle-class has been attracted to ecovillages and their less threatening appearance.

In this document, I have argued that although the individual residents do not necessarily consider themselves political activists, the EcoVillage itself is a new space in which residents execute resistance in their everyday practices. In addition, as a result of its educational mission and outreach activities, EcoVillage can be understood as an activist space and can be considered a space of resistance to consumer society. This understanding implies that acts of resistance do have the potential to have impacts beyond the lives of those resisting, and perhaps have the potential to meaningfully change society. As Bang (2005:190) so accurately describes, "ecovillage examples can still show people that these things work and a working system speaks louder than a thousand protest demonstrations."

APPENDIX

SAMPLE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Can you tell me about your life before moving to EcoVillage.
    a. What was satisfying and what was dissatisfying?
    b. How did you feel about yourself, your lifestyle, and your material consumption?

2. Why did you decide to move to EcoVillage?

3. How do you feel differently about yourself now?

4. Do you feel differently about 'mainstream' society now? In what way?
    a. How do you view yourself in relation to 'mainstream' society now?
    b. How do you view ecovillage in relation to 'mainstream' society now?

5. What do you feel your role is in society now versus before? Was this a deliberate change?

6. What neighborhood do you live in?
    a. Is this the only EcoVillage neighborhood you've lived in?
    b. If not, why did you move?

7. What does EcoVillage mean to you?

8. Does the built form of EcoVillage (houses, landscaping, pond) have meaning to you?
    a. Do the community/your interactions with other residents have meaning to you?
    b. How do you connect with this place?

9. How has living at EcoVillage influenced you?

10. How does the way EcoVillage is physically set up influence your behavior?

11. What is your role in the community?

12. How do you make your house feel like YOUR home?

13. Can you briefly take me through a typical day for you?

14. Are there any benefits beyond those you receive from your choice to live at EcoVillage (to friends, family, the land, the world)? If so, what are they?

15. Does how you feel about EcoVillage change based on how you feel about things that are going on in your life (i.e. family challenges, work challenges, neighborhood challenges)?

16. How do you feel when you leave and then return after a period of time?

17. Why do you continue to live here?

18. Would you say that EcoVillage is a part of who you are? How so?

19. What other things make you who you are?
    a. We all have multiple roles (personal identity, role in a family, role in a workplace, etc.). Can you briefly list the roles you play in your life?

20. Is your spirituality related to EcoVillage in any way? If so, how?

21. Are your politics and role as a citizen related to EcoVillage in any way? If so, how?

22. What goals are you achieving/concerns are you addressing by living here?

23. What do you believe are the reasons for EcoVillage's continued success?
    a. What could EcoVillage do better?

24. How do 60 households from two different neighborhoods make a village?

25. Is there a collective, cultural identity among the people who live here? Tell me about it.

26. How does visiting EcoVillage affect newcomers (students, visitors, new residents)?

27. In your mind, what is the most important characteristic of EcoVillage?

28. Do you see EcoVillage as being created in reaction to anything? If so, what?

29. Do you see EcoVillage as creating something new? If so, what?

30. What do you believe to be EcoVillage's primary mission (role in the world)?

31. What do ecovillages in general have to offer the world (role in the world)?

32. Do think that all the ecovillages that are coming into being is a social movement?

33. Do you think of ecovillages as the most powerful tool we can use in America to fix the many problems we now face? Globally?
    a. What other tools to you believe are helpful?
    b. What influences do you think 'mainstream' Americans need in order to change their lifestyles?

34. What are the current major challenges for you at EcoVillage (conflicts, accountability, enforceability)?
    a. Past major challenges?

35. What are the disadvantages of living at EcoVillage?

36. How is living at EcoVillage different from what you expected when you were considering moving here or when you first arrived?

37. What do you think were the most important considerations when your neighborhood was being built?

38. Did you participate in the design of your house?
    a. If so, was this participation important to you and why?
    b. What did you gain from you participation?

39. What green building features in the community and in your house are of particular use to you and why?
    a. What would you like to understand better about green features in your house and in the community?

40. What are some of your favorite cultural, natural, and built features of EcoVillage? Why?
    a. What are some of your least favorite? Why?
    b. What is the most important aspect of living in your neighborhood now?

41. How do you feel about future development at EcoVillage?
    a. How do you feel about the Green Cluster, in particular?
    b. What information would better help you to formulate an opinion?

42. What do you think would be the most important thing to incorporate into the Green Cluster and why?
    a. What do you not want to see?

43. How do you feel about multiplexes and high density buildings?
    a. How do you feel about communal living and financial arrangements?

44. Tell me how you feel about the impact of your current material consumption choices (on the environment and on workers)?

45. How do you think most Americans feel about material consumption?
    a. Is this different from how EcoVillage residents feel?

46. How do you think materialism, (i.e. orienting oneself towards external goals [money, image, etc.] rather than internal goals [friendships, personal growth, etc.]), affects people?

47. What do you think the relationship is between material consumption and happiness/well-being/life satisfaction?
    a. Is this different from the relationship is between income and happiness/well-being/life satisfaction? How?

48. What do you think people really want out of life?
    a. What do you really want out of life?
    b. Does living at EcoVillage help you attain these things?

49. Tell me what you know about 'voluntary simplicity'.

50. What do you think of capitalism as the dominant global economy?
    a. What alternatives do you envision?

51. Do you think there is a relationship between capitalism and the way most of America has been built up?

52. How would you like to see my efforts used to help EcoVillage?

53. Are there any questions I should have asked that I didn't?

54. Is there anything else you'd like to share with me?

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