Communities of Resistance: The Success and Resilience of Intentional Communities in North America

Author:
Michael Kenny

Supervisor:
L. Anders Sandberg

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Signature of the student

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Signature of the supervisor indicating approval of the Major Project

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Summary (Abstract)

Intentional communities are residential developments that are created by non-corporate actors with the primary purposes of meeting the social and environmental needs to the community. Many intentional communities play an important role in social and environmental movements. In our neo-liberal age, it has become a struggle to establish and sustain an intentional community. The main objectives of this paper is to answer three central research questions related to the issues contemporary intentional communities face:

> (1) How can intentional communities be established in late capitalism, where property ownership, real estate speculation and land ownership concentration has lead to both high urban and rural land values and where cookie-cutter developments are favoured in zoning and by-laws?

> (2) What are the factors that effect intentional communities commitment to social and environmental issues and participation in broader social and environmental movements?

> (3) How can intentional communities successfully thrive long-term in our time and spatial context of late capitalism?

The goal is to examine the situation of North American intentional communities and to determine what conclusions can be made about their establishment, longevity and commitment to its social purposes. The research method used include a review of existing literature on intentional communities and a survey sent to 1302 intentional communities identified at the time of the survey. I conclude that Intentional communities have the power to change our world for the better while providing many additional

benefits to our personal well-being and should be fully supported. I provide a series of

recommendations for intentional communities including adopting best practices,

establishing and sustaining a sense of community, and increasing density. I recommend

that intentional communities organize in order to lobby government to (re-)establish

housing support programs and funding. Finally, I propose that intentional communities

build strong connections to other progressive movements in order to mutually support

and benefit each other.

Preface

        Growing up in Toronto as an only child of mixed heritage in a single-parent household, I had an incredible sense of loneliness for most of my life. I yearned for community, but looking around I saw the absence of community in my life and few opportunities to be part of a community that was not religious or ethnic. We live in an age that generates loneliness and social isolation for many. Modern capitalism creates new distractions and technologies, generating apathy and isolation, and often replacing real life relationships with secondary virtual ones. Under modern capitalism, we are overworked and the built environment generated by it further isolates us. When combined with the nuclear family construct, those who do not fit dominant social structures are further left vulnerable.

        I have since sought to understand how community forms and for solutions to establishing strong communities in the time and spatial context of early Twenty-First century North America under late capitalism. As an activist since my youth, I have increasingly realized that all my activities relates back to community, its establishment and health. As the co-founder and Executive Director of Regenesis, an environmental and community-building organization, we have sought to establish initiatives and programming that helps to generate community, including the establishment of intentional communities. Our intentional community initiative seeks to create an intentional community in the Greater Toronto Area. This intentional community would have a strong commitment to social and environmental justice, affordability and equity. The community itself would exist in a mid-rise building and have a higher density in order to make the project as cost effective and affordable as possible for would-be

residents considering the context of Toronto as a gentrified global city. Since reforming

the intentional community initiative in 2009, we have explored and sought to secure three

different sites in the City of Toronto. Currently, we are looking at a site owned by the

York University Development Corporation. We are currently engaged in educational

outreach to the community; we recently held the first of a series of design charrette

events on July 15th 2014. We are also establishing a pan-university committee that can

ultimately see this initiative to its fruition. My eventual aim to help enough generate

awareness and support for the intentional community concept I have outlined in this

paper, enough so that these communities become common in North America.

Foreword

      This paper, Communities of Resistance: The Success and Resilience of Intentional Communities in North America, has been completed in partial requirements for the degree of Master in Environmental Studies. This paper situates itself in the three component of my area of concentration: Intentional Communities, Social Community and Autonomous Spaces. As the title itself suggests, I argue that intentional communities are autonomous spaces resistant to the dominant ideals and forms of late capitalism. I also investigate and discuss the complex realities of modern intentional communities, including their build and social development as a community. I have been interested in the concept of intentional communities since my youth. As I am currently involved in an endeavour seeking to establish an intentional community in the Greater Toronto Area, an investigation into intentional communities with a major paper was determined as the best form to complete the requirements of my Plan of Study. My goal is to use the data contained in the paper to aide in the development and operations of any future intentional community that I am involved in.

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1. Introduction

Intentional communities have enormous potential to change the way we live and interact with each other and to ultimately transform society towards one that is more sustainable, just and happy. However, intentional communities are not widespread, and often they are currently limited to particular niches of people who actively seek a particular lifestyle in line with their values, can afford to live in such a community, or have special needs. Further, while many intentional communities exemplify the potential of this collectivist concept and lifestyle, some communities bare limitations and complexities revealing issues that need to be addressed, such as a lack of diversity. Intentional communities are residential communities created intentionally by groups of citizens; there are many intentional community sub-types, each of which is defined in Chapter 4. In contrast to most developments, which are profit-driven and developed by corporations, would-be residents and/or non-profit community organizations, labour unions, or progressive faith organizations develop intentional communities for primary purposes other than profit. Intentional communities are formed by those seeking to establish residential communities with different values, culture, lifestyles and supports from the dominant ideals and formations of residential space under capitalism — these dominant forms are cookie-cutter developments designed to maximize privacy and provide lots of space, features that are believed to be appealing to the nuclear family; those not fitting the nuclear family ideal are often marginalized to housing that is separated, categorized (e.g. by age and ability) and most often devoid of community. The result of modern, for-profit development is that people are often left feeling isolated and lonely, lacking community and ultimately unfulfilled and in debt-bondage until their

large mortgage is paid off for their residence. Intentional communities offer a way for housing that is well thought-out and truly reflective of the needs of the would-be residents, instead of relying on and assuming that the free market can create housing that truly responds to our social and psychological needs as human beings. In this way, intentional communities are communities of resistance to capitalism.

In a CBC interview, cohousing expert Ronaye Matthew explains why there are more such communities, stating: "It is very difficult to find land that will accommodate this that isn't already owned by a developer."[1] Historically, the primary expenditure for households was food — now our primary expenditure is housing.[2] Never in human history have we paid so little for food and clothes and as much for housing as we do in our current context. The socio-economic context of modern capitalism makes community-led development increasingly more difficult. Increasing gentrification and real estate investment speculation increase property values beyond what is affordable to most.

The goal of this research project is to determine what makes intentional communities successful in the broadest sense of the term — affordability, community cohesion, accessible and democratic structures, financial stability, and a sustained commitment to social and environmental justice. Each of these has been broken down into three central research questions outlined in the next chapter. In learning about the successes and challenges of these communities, the knowledge gained can provide us with the opportunity to mitigate the obstacles that prevent the establishment and long-

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[1] "Cohousing: Would you live here?" The National. CBC – CBLT, Toronto, ON. 13 May 2011. Web. <http://www.cbc.ca/player/News/TV+Shows/The+National/ID/1928064332/>.
[2] Derek Thompson. "How America Spends Money: 100 Years in the Life of the Family Budget." The Atlantic, April 5 2012. Web. <http://www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2012/04/how-america-spends-money-100-years-in-the-life-of-the-family-budget/255475/>.

term success of intentional communities. This includes overcoming the spatial fix of modern capitalism, which acts as a barrier to anyone hoping to possess land for purposes other than profit. In addition, the knowledge garnered can help bridge the paradox of intentional communities both as a form of privileged escapism and as places where social and environmental justice occur. This can allow future communities to ensure commitments to social and environmental justice beyond just their own community, but into their wider communities, regionally and globally through their participation in wider social movements.

The two most common critiques leveled at most types of intentional communities accuse them of being lifestylist, devoid of any real connections to broader social and environmental movements, and utopian escapist enclaves for privileged white people, devoid of ethnic or class diversity. These accusations, however, do not apply to all types of intentional communities. Housing co-ops are known for their diversity. Collective homes and Catholic Worker collective houses have had very little academic research attention focused on them, both however are well-known for housing activists that are involved in their communities and broader social movements. Further, while many intentional communities are more common in North America and Europe may lack diversity, many more are diverse, and many intentional communities exist in other parts of the world, such as Latin America, Africa and the Indian Subcontinent. This report will address these criticisms, acknowledging but also refuting the lifestyle accusation and offering solutions to the issues of diversity, equity and inclusion. Further, I will contend that intentional communities can play an integral part in social and environmental justice

movements under the right circumstances and commitments, which contrary to the

perceptions of critics, are already common to most intentional communities.

The paper is outlined as follows: In chapter 2, I provide the research questions,

detail the research methodology, and summarize the survey and its responses. In chapter

3, I look at the broader dimensions which intentional communities are situated in and

how contextual factors affect and influence intentional communities. In chapter 4, I

provide a history of the roots of intentional communities and detail the different types of

intentional communities that exist. In chapter 5, I detail the survey results and provide a

discussion and analysis using both the survey results and existing research on each area

of the survey. In the final chapter, I provide a concluding analysis and recommendations

for forming and existing intentional communities relating to their longevity and sustained

commitments to social and environmental justice.

2. Research Methods

This research project was initiated in the summer of 2013 by myself in partial

fulfillment of my requirements of the Master of Environmental Studies program at York

University. My personal involvement in intentional communities is extensive, including

ten years as a member and coordinator or co-coordinator of the Toronto Ecovillage

Project, an initiative to establish an intentional community using cohousing and

ecovillage principles in the Greater Toronto Area. The Toronto Ecovillage Project was

initially called Unite The Caring Cohousing. After a brief hiatus in the mid-2000s, the

initiative reemerged as an initiative of Regenesis, an environmental non-profit that I co-

founded in 2007 and was renamed to its current name. This research project is being

completed with Regenesis and IRIS (Institute for Research and Innovation in Sustainability), an organized research unit at York University, in Toronto, Canada.

This research project seeks to determine how North American intentional communities can be successfully established, achieve longevity and remain dedicated to social and environmental justice in the age of modern capitalism. Each of these three objectives relate to the three central research questions:

(1) How can intentional communities be established in late capitalism, where property ownership, real estate speculation and land ownership concentration has lead to both high urban and rural land values and where cookie-cutter developments are favoured in zoning and by-laws? In navigating the complex relationship with capitalism, can autonomous spaces still be established? If so, what are the costs financially and otherwise; how much compromise with capitalism and the state is necessary in the establishment of intentional communities?

(2) What are the factors that effect intentional communities' commitment to social and environmental issues and participation in broader social and environmental movements? Are the factors that effect participation fixed, such as rural localities or demographic factors, or can connections be established and built towards sustained and engaged actions and movement participation?

(3) How can intentional communities successfully thrive long-term in the time and spatial context of late capitalism? Numerous questions in the research survey focus on the various aspects of their success, including financial stability, community relations and organizational structure. The knowledge gained through the survey and this report will enable myself and others to prevent and better enable us to deal with any challenges

to the survival of an intentional community — its physical space, its social community, or wavering in its commitment to social and environmental issues.

To achieve these objectives, a comprehensive literature review and survey were completed. The results of both were analyzed through the lens of the research questions. The chosen research methods were determined to be the best means of achieving the objectives of the research questions. An online survey was chosen as the method that would be able to reach the largest audience in an expedient manner.

There is a considerable amount of research on intentional communities. However, most research on the topic relates to a specific aspect of intentional communities, is case studies, either on a specific community or comparing a small number of communities, or reflections on the experiences of an individual resident. There is a need for research on what makes an intentional community successful and having longevity. Further, critical analysis is needed if we are to ensure and improve intentional communities as inclusive, diverse and committed to broad social movements and issues, rather than them becoming isolationist utopias for the privileged.

I have not been able to find any attempt at surveying every known Intentional Community in North America. The Fellowship of Intentional Communities allows communities signing up to their directory to complete a detailed form covering various facts related to the community. This research survey has been completed as a broad spectrum survey that poses questions on a variety of subjects related to the successful establishment, continuation and relevance of intentional communities in North America. The questions were derived based on an examination of current literature and identified areas requiring further research and insight. Ethics approval was received from the

Faculty of Environmental Studies. The ethics review process involved a review of the chosen research approach, the survey, and the participant informed consent disclosure and agreement.

The survey consisted of 66 questions formulated to provide insight into the research question. Long answers, short answers, multiple choice, identification and demographic questions were included in the survey. The survey was created using Survey Monkey, a popular online survey service. Thirty-four agencies representing intentional communities, cohousing, ecovillages, housing co-ops, students housing co-ops, collective houses, and Abbeyfield houses were contacted. An attempt was made to contact every intentional community listed in online directories, such as the Fellowship of Intentional Communities, the Cohousing Association of the United States, the Catholic Worker Movement, the Global Ecovillage Network, and the Canadian Cohousing Network. Because the number of housing cooperatives numbers in the thousands, I requested representative organizations of housing cooperatives to send out the survey. In total, 1302 intentional communities were identified in North America — 257 in Canada and 1045 in the United States. Of those, 975 were contacted directly via email(s) and/or website contact forms. Additionally, many communities that were not contacted directly, as I did not have their contact information, were contacted though representative agencies. It should be noted that many more intentional communities exist in North America than are listed in any directory. More specifically, there are thousands more intentional communities, especially housing cooperatives and collective houses in North America.

All respondents were asked to provide their informed consent before they could continue with the survey. 304 responses were received; of these 171 completed

responses to all questions. Of the 304 individual responses, 214 intentional communities

are represented, while 90 are additional individual responses from these communities. 48

intentional communities had multiple individuals respond to the survey. These

communities represent over 15,090 residents. The overall community response rate to

the survey is 21.94%, not including communities that learned about the survey through

their respective representative organizations. Questions were primarily open-ended and

descriptive, allowing respondents to use their own words to define their communities.

Respondents also could choose which questions they wanted to answer or provide further

details.

3. Social and Geo-Political Context

Modern Intentional Communities are embedded in the social and geo-political

realities of the early 21st century North America. To understand the development of

intentional communities, their struggles and the shapes they take, we need to understand

these contextual dimensions. Politically, Canada operates its system of government using

a Westminister parliamentary democracy, while The United States of America uses a

presidential system. Both nations are heavily influenced by wealthy interests. In a recent

study, Princeton University professor Martin Gilens and Northwestern University

professor Benjamin Page determined that the United States was not a democracy, but an

oligarchy dominated by the economic elite.[3]

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[3] Martin Gilens and Benjamin I. Page. "Testing Theories of American Politics: Elites, Interests Groups and Average Citizens." Perspectives on Politics, 12.3 (2014). Web.
<http://www.princeton.edu/~mgilens/Gilens%20homepage%20materials/Gilens%20and%20Page/Gilens%20and%20Page%202014-Testing%20Theories%203-7-14.pdf>.

Our current economic system is what neo-Marxists would describe as late capitalism, an age that sets the stage for the eventual eclipse and replacement of capitalism. According to Antonio Gramsci, in late 'advanced' capitalist societies, compulsory schooling, mass media and popular culture are used to establish a cultural hegemony to indoctrinate the masses into believing no other options exist to capitalism that work.[4] Capitalism on a resource finite planet is essentially a pyramid scheme built on artificial currency, speculation, debt and compounded interest. In novelist Thomas Pynchon's book *Bleeding Edge*, one character states that "late capitalism is a pyramid racket on a global scale."[5] Growth is hinged upon increases in consumption and the global population, coupled with the creation of new markets, products and artificially created debt. Resource scarcity, reduced purchasing power, and mathematically unsustainable debt levels will eventually cause the capitalist bubble to burst. Economic and social theorist Jeremy Rifkin argues differently, claiming that capitalism is already being made obsolete as we near an era of minimal-cost and no-cost production.[6] This is already happening with information goods and with new technologies, such as renewable energy and 3-D printing, that allows easy production and reproducibility resulting in a sharp decrease in consumer demand as individuals shift over to being their own producers.

Geographer Brian Berry has demonstrated that the creation of intentional communities increases during economic depressions, at low points in the Kondratiev

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[4] Antonio Gramsci. Prison Notebooks. Ed. Joseph A. Buttigieg. New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1992.

[5] Thomas Pynchon. Bleeding Edge. New York, NY: Penguin, 2013.

[6] Jeremy Rifkin. "The End of the Capitalist Era, and What Comes Next." Huffington Post, April 1 2014. Web. <http://www.huffingtonpost.com/jeremy-rifkin/collaborative-commons-zero-marginal-cost-society_b_5064767.html>.

wave economic cycles that occur under capitalism.[7] The first wave occurred with the

establishment of utopian communities movement that occurred primarily between 1820

and 1860. A second wave occurred during the great depression, which saw the

establishment of the Catholic Worker Movement and the growth of the Housing

Cooperative movement in North America. A third wave occurred in the late 1960s and

early 1970s, which saw the establishment of numerous communes and collective farms.

Intentional communities are a response to the dominant economic and cultural conditions

of their place and time. Contemporary ecologically conscious intentional communities

are no different — they are a response to the hegemonic forces that drive our modern

unsustainable way of living.[8]

If we were to break down intentional communities into two main components, it

would be the community of people and the space the community occupies, both of which

are influenced by the affects of modern capitalism. A growing number of social

scientists are predicting an age of mass unemployment and a growing divide between

knowledge workers and low-paid service and manual labour jobs.[9] Jeremy Rifkin argues

for spaces outside of capitalism where people can contribute to society through

community work; essentially, communities of practice.[10] Communities of practice are

voluntary communities with a higher purpose;[11] as such, Intentional communities are well

suited to this purpose and have the advantage of having physical space in which

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[7] Brian J.L. Berry. America's Utopian Experiments: Communal Havens from Long-Wave Crises. Hanover, NH: Dartmouth College and University Press of New England, 1992.
[8] Joshua Peter Lockyer. Sustainability and Utopianism: An Ethnography of Cultural Critique in Contemporary Intentional Communities. Dissertation. Athens, GA: University of Georgia, 2007.   16.
[9] James Paul Gee. "Communities of Practice in the New Capitalism." Journal of the Learning Sciences, 9.4 (2000), 515-523.
[10] Jeremy Rifkin. The End of Work. New York, NY: Putnam, 1995.
[11] Etienne Wenger, Richard McDermott and William M. Snyder. "Seven Principles for Cultivating Communities of Practice." Harvard Business School Working Knowledge, March 25 2002. Web. <http://hbswk.hbs.edu/archive/2855.html>.

community can gather and participate in activities, meetings and social gatherings, or producing goods collectively. Intentional communities are communities of resistance. I define these communities as united by a set of beliefs that are resistant to many of the dominant systems, ideas and values prevalent under late capitalism. Robert Schehr argues in his book *Dynamic Utopia: Establishing Intentional Communities as a New Social Movement* that they are indeed just that — social movements;[12] I too will argue that intentional communities are a long-established social movement and not merely a lifestylist or privileged trend.

Climate change scientists Kevin Anderson and Alice Bows-Larkins call for "revolutionary change to the political and economic hegemony" as necessary for us to halt run-a-way climate change.[13] Intentional communities offer us a way to do that, providing us alternatives for living and producing. Robert Schehr argues that intentional communities are a social movement and that they "constitute a radical juxtaposition" to the dominant culture and values of our capitalist society.[14] Intentional communities and similar initiatives have been termed "nowtopian" projects, as they aim "to produce a different way of life… [and] to make the world we want to live in now."[15] Marxist theorist C.L.R. James asserted a similar idea, in which people could recognize the new

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[12] Robert C. Schehr. <u>Dynamic Utopia: Establishing Intentional Communities as a New Social Movement</u>. Westport, CT: Bergin and Garvey, 1997. 13.

[13] Kevin Anderson and Alice Bows-Larkin. Interview by Amy Goodman. <u>Democracy Now!</u> Democracy Now, 21 Nov 2013. Web.
<http://www.democracynow.org/2013/11/21/we_have_to_consume_less_scientists>.

[14] Robert C. Schehr. <u>Dynamic Utopia: Establishing Intentional Communities as a New Social Movement</u>. Westport, CT: Bergin and Garvey, 1997. 13.

[15] Chris Carlsson. <u>Nowtopia: How Pirate Programmers, Outlaw Bicyclists, and Vacant-Lot Gardeners Are Inventing the Future Today!</u> (Oakland, CA: AK Press, 2008). 52.

society in the present and thus begin to recognize the possibilities of an alternative, ideal future — which he termed "future in the present."[16]

Pickerill and Chatterton call intentional communities and similar spaces *autonomous geographies* — these are all spaces that challenge and provide alternatives to the dominant capitalist system.[17] Intentional communities are autonomous spaces that while resistant to the dominant capitalist modes of development and space, are not completely autonomous from it, as "there is no such thing as 'autonomy' under capitalism."[18] Capitalism produces new spaces with surplus capital to meet consumer demand; autonomous spaces are created through a process of self-valorization. Hardt & Virno state: "Self-valorization… refers to an alternative social structure of value that is founded not on the production of surplus value but on the collective needs and desires of the producing community."[19] Autonomous spaces, such as intentional communities, are a compromise between the aspiration for total autonomy and the reality of compromise with capitalism and the state.[20]

Pickerill and Chatterton define autonomy and examine its varied usage and meanings, providing five characteristics common to all forms of autonomy. First, autonomy is a complex and multi-layered concept, with numerous and differing

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[16] Geert Dhondt. "Econ-Atrocity. C.L.R. James: The Future in the Present." Centre for Popular Economics. Amherst, MA: Centre for Popular Economics, 2004. <http://www.populareconomics.org/2004/04/econ-atrocity-special-history-of-thought-series-clr-james-the-future-in-the-present/>
[17] J. Pickerill & Paul Chatterton. "Notes towards autonomous geographies: Creation, resistance and self-management as survival tactics." Progress in Human Geography, 30.6 (2006): 730-746.
[18] Paul Chatterton & Stuart Hodkinson. "Why we need autonomous spaces in the fight against capitalism." Do It Yourself: A Handbook for Changing Our World. Ann Arbor, MI: Pluto Press, 2007. 201.
[19] Hardt & Virno, as cited in: Andre Pusey. "Social Centres and the New Cooperativism of the Common." Affinities, 4.1 (2010): 176-198.
[20] Pickerill & Chatterton. 741.

tendencies and trajectories; the most important of which is the desire for autonomy.[21]

Second, autonomy is a temporal-spatial strategy, transcending the globalization-localization binary and through its physical space allows us to learn about the histories of past struggles, relating and applying what we learn to the causes we participate in.[22]

Third is autonomy as interstitiality, the narrow space where both capitalism and post-capitalism exists, permitting activists to live in accordance with their beliefs in light of the contradictions of living in both systems.[23] Fourth, autonomy cultivates resistance and creation, embedding it within our everyday lives.[24] Last, autonomy is praxis.[25] Praxis is the *revolutionizing of everyday life*, as coined by Situationist International. Autonomy enables us to "change the world without taking power;[26] recognizing the dominant narrative of the failure of state-based socialism and providing us with a workable alternative.

Space is socially produced;[27] autonomous spaces are also social produced, however they are produced in a uniquely different way — they are created purposely for the aims of improving their community and the world in some way, rather than being produced for profit or to meet some consumer demand. Wealthy capitalists are finding it increasingly difficult to find investment opportunities and are increasingly turning towards real estate investments. The immediate result is increased gentrification for desirable urban and rural locales; long-term we risk returning to some kind of serfdom where a minority of wealthy families owns almost all the land. Urban intentional

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[21] Ibid. 731-734.
[22] Ibid. 735-736.
[23] Ibid. 736-737.
[24] Ibid. 737-738.
[25] Ibid. 738-739.
[26] John Holloway. Changing the World Without Taking Power: The Meaning of Revolution Today. London, UK: Pluto Press, 2002.
[27] Henri Lefebvre. The Production of Space. Oxford, UK: Basil Blackwell, 1991.

communities and other autonomous spaces can be part of a 'renewed right to the city' —

marginalized people reasserting their collective right to the city. Henri Lefebvre states of

this right: "The right to the city cannot be conceived of as a simple visiting right or as a

return to traditional cities. It can only be formulated as a transformed and renewed right

to urban life."[28] One strategy is squatting. While uncommon in modern North America,

squatting and the occupation of spaces exist elsewhere in the world and the practice of

which has existed since the invention of private property. There are estimated to be over

one billion people currently living on squatted land globally.[29] In North America, the

best known example of squatting is Slab City, a former military base in Southern

California, where approximately 150 permanent residents and an influx of thousands of

snow birds in the winter live tax-free and off the grid in recreational vehicles.

Intentional communities must face considerable negative effects from late

capitalism on its creation, development and longevity. Real estate speculation and land

ownership concentration increases costs and exponentially makes it more difficult to

achieve inclusive and equitable intentional communities. Intentional communities,

through efficient-sharing habits and structures, offer a way to overcome the

overconsumption of modern capitalist life, cookie-cutter residential developments and to

move towards no-growth and de-growth economies.[30] Alternative, post-consumptionist

ways of living are important to our collective and planetary futures. Increasingly people

are looking for ways to live sustainably, ethically and affordably, as individuals are

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[28] Henri Lefebvre. "Right to the city." Writings on the City. Eds. and Trans. Elenore Kofman and
Elizabeth Lebas. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing (1996): 147-159. Originally published in 1968 as Le Droit
à la ville [French].

[29] R. Neuwirth. Shadow Cities: A Billion Squatters, A New Urban World. New York, NY: Routledge,
2004.

[30] Matthieu Lietaert. "Cohousing's relevance to degrowth theories." Journal of Cleaner Production, 18
(2010): 576-580.

impacted by worsening global economic circumstances due to increasing financial

speculation, resource scarcity and global population increases. Intentional communities

offer us a way to resist these realities and are an important tool in our arsenal for

achieving global sustainability through increased efficiency, reduction of waste, and the

sharing economies of intentional community living. It thus becomes important to learn

what makes intentional communities succeed or fail, how they can be created within late

capitalism and ensuring their long-term commitment to broader social and environmental

justice movements.

4. Origins and Types

A community is a unit of social organization, either defined by place (geographic

terms) or socio-cultural criteria (differentiated by either common interest, characteristics,

beliefs, or organizational membership).[31] Intentional communities are communities, both

physical and socio-cultural, that are formed when like-minded people come together to

live together or in close proximity towards a common lifestyle and purpose.[32]

The term community has two major uses — "The first is the territorial and geographical

notion of community - neighborhood, town, city. The second is 'relational,' concerned

with 'quality of character of human relationship, without reference to location."[33] As

noted by sociologist Emilie Durkheim, "modern society develops community around

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[31] David W. Minar & Scott Greer. Eds. The Concept of Community. Chicago, IL: Aldine, 1969; M. K. Smith. "Community." The Encyclopedia of Informal Education. 2011. Web. <http://www.infed.org/community/community.htm>.
[32] Bill Metcalf. The Findhorn Book of Community Living. Forres, Moray, UK: Findhorn Press, 2004.
[33] J.R. Gusfield. The community: A critical response. New York: Harper Colophon, 1975. As cited in: McMillan and Chavis, (1986): 8.

interests and skills more than around locality."[34] The intentional community is less like a

neighbourhood, a place where a collection of people just happen to live together, but

more like a place of worship or a clubhouse, as it is a space that is created out of shared

interests.

Intentional communities are a modern term used to describe communities that are

created for purposes other than profit and through intention of the would-be residents or

some lead organization or individuals. While the definition could be broadly applied to

communities all over the world, it is most commonly used to describe such communities

in the Western context. Pre-capitalism many civilizations and cultures had collective

dwellings and settlements that resemble modern intentional communities. Looking back

at history, we can see the development of the concept. As feudalism slowly began to be

eclipsed and land ownership became accessible to others, what today we call intentional

communities slowly began to form. The earliest such communities can be traced back to

the Diggers religious movement of the 15th century, which attempted to establish agrarian

intentional communities to feed and house the poor.[35] The first large scale occurrence of

intentional communities happened in the 19th century, between 1820 and 1860, with

socialists, theosophists and Christian reformists during the Second Great Awakening each

establishing many utopian communities throughout the world, particularly in the United

States. Subsequent waves occurred for differing reasons. One reason was emigration

from Europe to escape political and/or religious persecution. Red Finns, Finnish people

with left-wing (socialist, anarchist, or communist) views fled to Canada, the United

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[34] Emilie Durkheim, as cited in: D.W. McMillan & D.M. Chavis. "Sense of Community: A Definition and Theory." Journal of Community Psychology, 14, (1986): 8.
[35] Paul Chatterton and Stuart Hodkinson. "Why we need autonomous spaces in the fight against capitalism." Do It Yourself: A Handbook for Changing Our World. Ann Arbor, MI: Pluto Press, 2007. 201.

States and elsewhere between 1900 and 1940, many establishing utopian communities based on socialist and anarchist principles such as cooperativism. Similarly, the Doukhobors, a Christian anarchist sect from Russia, settled in Canada and the United States establishing utopian communities where they could freely express such practices as public nudity. All these early communities were referred to with terms such as utopian communities or communes. The broader term intentional communities slowly began to be used by academics in the nineteen-twenties;[36] later to be adopted by the general public.

Intentional communities are residential communities created purposefully by would-be residents, labour unions or community non-profit organizations, for motivations other than profit. Besides their grassroot origins, these communities are also defined by their sustained commitment to the environment and issues of equity and social justice. The Fellowship for Intentional Community posed the question to intentional community residents: What does intentional community mean to them?[37] Harvey Baker of Dunmire Hollow in Tennessee writes, "An intentional community is a group of people dedicated with intent, purpose and commitment to a mutual concern."[38] Geoph Kozeny of Stardance in San Francisco states: "An intentional community is a group of people who have chosen to live together with a common purpose, working cooperatively to create a lifestyle that reflects their shared core values. The people may live together on a piece of rural land, a suburban home, or in an urban neighborhood, and they may share a single residence or live in a cluster of dwellings."[39]

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[36] Foster Stockwell. Encyclopedia of American Communes, 1663-1963. Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, 1998.
[37] Dan Questenberry. "Who We Are: An Exploration of What 'Intentional Community' Means." Fellowship for Intentional Community. N.d. Web. <http://www.ic.org/wiki/exploration-intentional-community-means/>.
[38] Ibid.
[39] Ibid.

There are many intentional community sub-types, each having somewhat differing focuses on demographics (seniors, students, persons with disabilities, etc.), housing form (cohousing, communal house, etc.) or causes (environmentalism, vegan-punk, Catholic anarchism, etc.). An Abbeyfield home is a communal house of senior citizens. The household will often hire one or more staff persons to assist with daily living tasks. The Abbeyfield concept was created by personal support worker Richard Carr-Gomm in the nineteen-fifties after witnessing the social isolation of seniors.[40] Abbeyfield homes exist throughout the world, primarily in The United Kingdom, Canada, South Africa, Australia and New Zealand, with a few scattered in other parts of Europe, Mexico and Japan. Similarly, Camphill Communities are intentional communities that offer supports for those with developmental disabilities. Austrian doctor Karl König established the first Camphill Community in 1940 in Scotland.[41] Over one hundred Camphill Communities now exist throughout Europe, North American, Africa and Asia.

Catholic Workers is a Catholic anarchistic and communitarian movement borne during The Great Depression era in the United States.[42] [43] There are 198 Catholic Worker houses in the United States and 6 in Canada.[44] The movement has lasted and spread through communal housing — Catholic Workers live lives dedicated to voluntary simplicity, the Catholic faith and social justice.[45] The Catholic Workers operate as a

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[40] Abbeyfield. "The Abbeyfield Story." Abbeyfield. N.d. Web. <https://www.abbeyfield.com/about-us/the-abbeyfield-story/>.

[41] Camphill England and Wales. "Camphill History." Camphill History. N.d. Web. <http://www.camphill.org.uk/about/camphill-history>.

[42] Mark Zwick & Louise Zwick. The Catholic Worker Movement: Intellectual and Spiritual Origins. Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2005.

[43] Mary Segers. "Equality and Christian Anarchism: The Political and Social Ideals of the Catholic Worker Movement." The Review of Politics, 40.2 (1978): 196-230.

[44] Catholic Worker. "The Catholic Worker Movement." Catholic Worker. N.d. Web. <http://www.catholicworker.org/>.

[45] Ibid.

decentralized collective, with each house operating autonomously. Catholic Workers

gain an income through in-house business activities, working outside jobs, or living off

their personal savings.[46]

Cohousing originated in Denmark in the late nineteen-sixties, when some families

got together searching for a better way to share in childcare and meal preparation — the

Danish term for cohousing, *bofaellesskaber,* translates to *living communities*.[47]

Cohousing is commonly defined by five features: (1) participatory design process; (2)

intentional design to maximize a sense of community; (3) private homes and common

shared facilities; (4) residential management; and (5) non-hierarchical structures and

decision-making.[48] The cohousing concept has since spread to other parts of the world,

with communities located throughout Northern and Western Europe, The United

Kingdom, The United States, Canada, Australia and Japan.

Collective houses are communal residences, usually occurring in rented or owned

houses. Their origins are rooted in the anarchist, punk, vegan and queer subcultures and

are the result of marginalized groups seeking community with each other, increasing

urban gentrification and the rising cost of housing. Collective house residents include

everyone from students, working professionals, families, individuals on government

benefits, and full-time activists. Some sharing occurs in collective homes, including the

sharing of food, backyard produce grown, household chores, communal potlucks and

occasionally even money. Said of collective houses: "These houses espouse collective,

non-hierarchical values, believing the mutual support provided strengthens both

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[46] Ibid.
[47] Chris ScottHanson & Kelly ScottHanson. The Cohousing Handbook: Building A Place for Community, Revised Edition. Gabriola Island, British Columbia, Canada: New Society Publishers, 2005.
[48] Ibid.

individuals and communities."[49] Networks of collective houses have sprouted up in

Boston, Massachusetts and Vancouver, British Columbia, both hoping to organize houses

and provide resources and supports. Sub-types of collective houses include: Activist

houses, which provide activists cost-effective residences that allow them to focus on their

activism and that can act as local activist hubs, hosting events, meetings and film

screenings; punk houses are collective houses whose residents are comprised of those

who identify with one or more aspects of the punk, straight-edge (vegan) or anarchist

sub-cultures.[50] Punk houses often serve as hubs for the local punk music scene, hosting

bands and concerts in the house and serving as crash-pads for travellers and visiting

musicians.[51] Catholic worker homes and many student housing cooperatives also fall

under the label of collective homes.

Communes were made famous by the counter-culture movement of the nineteen-

sixties and nineteen-seventies. However, communes have been around for almost two

hundred years in different forms. The meaning of the word commune has changed over

time — it previously was used to describe all forms of what are now called intentional

communities. The modern use of the term communes refers to intentional communities

where resident members have a high degree of sharing amongst themselves, which can

include possessions, property, money and work. Since the nineteen-seventies communes

have declined in popularity in North America.

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[49] Regenesis. "Collective Houses." Regenesis. N.d. Web.
<http://www.theregenesisproject.com/collective-houses/>.
[50] Penelope Green. "Anarchy Rules: The Dishes Stay Dirty." New York Times. 3 Jan 2008. Web.
<http://www.nytimes.com/2008/01/03/garden/03punk.html?pagewanted=all>.
[51] Meaghan Agnew. "Dirty, chaotic, comfortable - welcome to the punk house." The Boston Globe. 13
Dec 2007. Web.
<http://www.boston.com/lifestyle/articles/2007/12/13/dirty_chaotic_comfortable___welcome_to_the_punk
_house/>.

The term ecovillage was created in 1991 by Robert and Diane Gilman as a broad term to describe ecologically-focused intentional communities.[52] The Gilman's were commissioned by the organization Gaia Trust to identify examples of intentional communities that were living in a sustainable way.[53] They define an ecovillage as a "human-scale, full-featured settlement in which human activities are harmlessly integrated into the natural world in a way that is supportive of healthy human development and can be successfully continued into the indefinite future."[54] The Gilman's describe five key features of ecovillages, which include: (1) human-scale communities; (2) full-featured settlements, which means a mix of residential, commercial, leisure, and other amenities; (3) harmless integration of human activities into nature; (4) healthy human development, which includes the mind and body; and (5) the long-term sustainability of our activities.[55]

Housing cooperatives are legal structures that allow collective groups of people to share the ownership of a residential building or complex. There are many different variations on housing cooperatives. Rental cooperatives are operated by a cooperative organization for the benefit of the resident members in perpetuity; the residents have a say in the operation of the cooperative, but have no ownership stake. Ownership cooperatives allow resident members to purchase and sell their shares (or unit) in the cooperative, shared ownership of the common space, and cooperative management of the

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[52] Michael Blouin. The Urban Ecovillage Experiment: The Stories of Six Communities that Hoped to Change the World. Unpublished paper. Claremont, CA: Pomona College, 2007.
[53] Mary Garden. "The eco-village movement: Divorced from reality." The International Journal of Inclusive Democracy, 2.3, 2006. Web. <http://www.inclusivedemocracy.org/journal/pdf%20files/pdf%20vol2/The%20eco-village%20movement.pdf>.
[54] Robert Gilman and Diane Gilman. Ecovillages and Sustainable Communities: A Report for Gaia Trust. Langley, WA: Context Institute, 1991.
[55] As cited in Blouin, 30-31.

residential building. There are 6,400 housing cooperatives in the United States,[56] and 2,200 in Canada,[57] with 1,200,000 and 90,500 units respectively. Housing cooperatives can be residential buildings, townhomes, houses, or student dorms. Not all housing cooperatives can be considered intentional communities, as many lack or have lost the communitarian aspect common to intentional communities. Housing cooperatives that are intentional communities, with defined values and communitarian lifestyles, are increasingly being called living co-ops.

The oldest cooperative on record is The Shore Porters Collective of Aberdeen, Scotland founded in 1498.[58] The first housing cooperative on record was created in 1720 in Rennes, France.[59] The modern cooperative movement can trace their origins to the Rochdale Society, a consumer cooperative founded Great Britain in 1844, and the establishment of the Rochdale Principles, a set of guiding ideals that all cooperatives would later follow or adapt.[60]

In the late 1800s, the cooperative housing model was introduced in the United States to the New York area, however there was limited growth elsewhere until after World War One when the need for affordable housing became great.[61] Students in the United States also became involved in the cooperative movement, establishing the first student housing co-op at Northwestern University in the Chicago area in 1886. Most

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[56] National Association of Housing Cooperatives. Housing Cooperatives in the United States. Washington, DC: NAHC, 2012. Web. <http://www.uwcc.wisc.edu/pdf/Coop%20Housing%20USA.pdf>.
[57] Cooperative Housing Federation of Canada. "Cooperative Housing in Canada – History." Cooperative Housing Federation of Canada. N.d.   Web.
[58] The Shore Porters Society. "Our History." The Shore Porters Society. N.d. Web. <http://www.shoreporters.com/shore-porters-history.php>.
[59] Richard Siegler and Herbert J. Levy. "Brief History of Cooperative Housing." Cooperative Housing Journal, (1986): 12-19.
[60] David Thompson. "Co-op Principles Then and Now (Part 2)." Cooperative Grocer, 53, 1994. Web. <http://www.cooperativegrocer.coop/articles/2004-01-09/co-op-principles-then-and-now-part-2>.
[61] Siegler and Levy.

initial student housing co-ops were for female students only, as they had a greater need

for affordable housing to be able to continue with school.[62] Greater government

financing and assistance became available after World War Two for housing cooperatives,

allowing affordable (low-income) housing cooperatives to be established.[63] Student co-

operative housing also grew thanks to the establishment of NASCL (the North American

Student Cooperative League) in the 1940s, which later became The North American

Students of Cooperation (NASCO) in 1968. The organization provides financing,

development assistance and training.[64]

The first student co-op in Canada opened at the University of Guelph in 1913.

The Guelph Campus Co-op operates a co-op bookstore and numerous student housing

residences.[65] In Canada, the housing cooperative movement came about in the nineteen-

thirties thanks to the student cooperative movement, as students became increasingly

concerned about social justice issues during that time.[66] Toyohiko Kagawa, a Japanese

clergyman and co-op advocate, traveled the world spreading the cooperative message to

young people. After attending a speech by Kagawa, students began establishing

cooperatives on university campuses in Canada, including the Campus Co-Op,

established in 1936 at the University of Toronto.[67] Government financial support was

eventually won in Canada in the nineteen-sixties, resulting in the establishment of over

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[62] Deborah Atlus. "A Look at Student Housing Cooperatives." Fellowship for Intentional Community.
N.d. Web. <http://www.ic.org/pnp/cdir/1995/32altus.php>.
[63] Gerald Sazama. "A Brief History of Affordable Housing Cooperatives in the United States." University
of Connecticut Department of Economics Working Paper Series, 1996-09 (1996).
[64] Atlus.
[65] Guelph Campus Co-op. "History." Guelph Campus Co-op. N.d. Web.
<http://www.guelphcampus.coop/the_coop/history>.
[66] Cooperative Housing Federation of Canada.
<http://www.chfcanada.coop/icahousing/pages/membersearch.asp?op=country&id=2>.
[67] Campus Co-operative Residence. Vignettes from the History of Co-op." Campus Co-operative
Residence. N.d. Web. <http://www.campus.coop/index.php/history>.

2000 housing cooperatives before programs were cut in the nineteen-nineties.[68] Since

then, housing cooperative starts have significantly declined.

5. Survey Results and Discussion

171 completed responses to all 66 questions and 133 partial responses to the

survey were received. For those respondents who choose to identify themselves, 55.2%

of respondents are current or former board members and 38.1% of respondents were

founding members. 34 of 50 states and 4 of 10 Canadian provinces are represented in the

survey. The jurisdictions with the most respondents include California (33),

Massachusetts (23), British Columbia (19), Ontario (18) and Washington (17). It should

be noted that all of these states and provinces are politically centre-left leaning.

State/Province	# of Respondents
Alabama	1
Alaska	0
Arizona	7
Arkansas	0
California	33
Colorado	8
Connecticut	0
Delaware	0
District of Columbia	3
Florida	1
Georgia	1
Hawaii	1
Idaho	6
Illinois	6
Indiana	4
Iowa	3
Kansas	1
Kentucky	3
Louisiana	0
Maine	3
Maryland	1
Massachusetts	23

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[68] Cooperative Housing Federation of Canada.

Michigan	4
Minnesota	9
Mississippi	2
Missouri	9
Montana	0
Nebraska	0
Nevada	0
New Hampshire	1
New Jersey	0
New Mexico	3
New York	14
North Carolina	6
North Dakota	0
Ohio	0
Oklahoma	2
Oregon	9
Pennsylvania	2
Puerto Rico	0
Rhode Island	0
South Carolina	0
South Dakota	0
Tennessee	1
Texas	5
Utah	0
Vermont	3
Virginia	2
Washington	17
West Virginia	2
Wisconsin	5
Wyoming	0
Alberta	3
British Columbia	19
Manitoba	0
New Brunswick	0
Newfoundland	0
Northwest Territories	0
Nova Scotia	0
Nunavut	0
Ontario	18
Prince Edward Island	0
Quebec	4
Saskatchewan	0
Yukon Territory	0

Table 1 – Respondents by State/Province

Figure 1: Respondents by State/Province.

13. Type of Intentional Community? Please check all that apply.			
		Response Percent	**Response Count**
Abbeyfield House		0.0%	0
Catholic Worker House		4.8%	11
Cohousing		**49.1%**	**112**
Collective House		14.5%	33
Commune (Income-Sharing)		8.8%	20
Ecovillage		13.2%	30
Housing Co-op		15.4%	35
Housing Co-op, Student		7.0%	16
Off-grid		3.1%	7
Senior-focused		2.2%	5
Sexuality/Gender-focused		0.9%	2
Spiritual community		19.3%	44
Other (please specify)			54

Table 2 – Type of Intentional Community

Communities varied in population, from zero (e.g. recently closed community) to 1300. Most communities who responded had populations in the 15 to 75 range. Some housing co-ops and cohousing communities had larger populations. Home-based intentional communities, such as Catholic Worker Homes and Collective Houses, had smaller populations — 3 to 15 on average. Communities identifying themselves as cohousing account for 49.1% of all survey respondents. After cohousing, spiritual communities accounted for 19.3% of respondents, followed by housing co-ops (15.4%), collective houses (14.5%) and ecovillages (13.2%). Other communities include communes (8.8%), student housing co-ops (7%) and Catholic Worker houses (4.8%).

Other mentioned forms of intentional communities include Camphill communities, which respondents described as "lifesharing communities." Unfortunately, no residents or staff of Abbeyfield houses responded to the survey.

5.1. Location and Amenities

The research findings showed that intentional communities are commonly found in urban, suburban and rural locations, however urban intentional communities were more common, accounting for 71.7% of communities. 20.5% (50 respondents) were located in the core of large urban cities, while 16.4% (40 respondents) were located in the inner and outer suburbs. Medium sized cities, with a population of 100,000 to 500,000 accounted for 21.7% (53 respondents), while small cities with populations of 20,000 to 99,999 had 13.1% (32 respondents). Small towns and rural locations accounted for 9.0% (22 respondents) and 19.3% (47 respondents) respectively.

14. Which best describes your location?		Response Percent	Response Count
Large Urban Center – Core/Downtown		20.5%	50
Large Urban Center - Inner-suburban Suburbs		16.4%	40
Medium sized-city (population of 100,000-500,000)		**21.7%**	**53**
Small city (population of 20,000-99,999)		13.1%	32
Town or Village		9.0%	22
Rural		19.3%	47

Table 3 – Geographic Location

Question #24 asked: Does your intentional community have more than one location? The overwhelming majority of communities reported only having one location, with only 13.3% of communities reporting having one or more location. For those with more than one location, in most cases, they were located nearby, in the same neighbourhood or municipality. Question #25 asked: Have you ever moved locations? If so, what were the reasons? 15.3% of intentional communities reported moving at some point during their existence. The two most common reasons were shifting from renting to owning (12) and growth of the community (9). Many communities often start out by renting or leasing a house before they attempt to purchase a site. Other reasons given for moving include conflict with landlord (3), moving somewhere less expensive (3), with less restrictive laws (2), to a more rural area (2), fire damage (2), lease expiration (2), conflict with neighbours (1), and a desire to move elsewhere (1). Four respondents were unable to provide any reasons for previously moving. Collective houses, Catholic Worker Homes and faith-based collective houses were more likely to move during their existence — this is due to the precariousness of renting versus owning housing. A couple communities reported moving over long distances, including from Philadelphia to Seattle and from California to Missouri.

Question #50 asks respondents to choose which best describes their ownership or rental situation. Only 10.9% of intentional communities reported renting or leasing their entire site. 3.5% of intentional communities had a mixture of renting, leasing and ownership, most common of which is ownership of the buildings, but not the land.   The vast majority of intentional communities, 77.4%, are owned by the community, either through individual deeds, a cooperative, land trust, non-profit or a business entity. 8.2%

of intentional communities reported being owned by a single individual. One intentional

community reported squatting at their current location.

50. Which of the following best describes your intentional community?:			
		Response Percent	Response Count
Entire site is rented or leased		10.9%	16
Land is leased, buildings are owned		1.4%	2
Land donated, now own the land		4.1%	6
Use of the land donated, don't own the land or buildings		0.7%	1
Use of the land donated, own the buildings		1.4%	2
Site found and donor(s) purchased land outright		4.8%	7
Site found and members purchased land outright		31.3%	46
Site purchased and a lone individual held the mortgage		8.2%	12
Site purchased and members individually held their own mortgages		**32.0%**	**47**
Site purchased and mortgage held collectively		21.8%	32
Other (please specify)			60

Table 4 – Property Status

Question #21 asks respondents to name any amenities present in their intentional

community. These amenities help make life easier through mutual aid, sharing, social

enterprise income generation for the community and providing collective spaces in which

to share activities and organize for causes. The top five answers provided include

meeting space (81.5%), community gardening or agriculture (76.2%), event space

(62.6%), workshop space (51.5%) and a library (48%). Besides the options listed in the

table, respondents mentioned many other amenities. All cohousing communities

mentioned they have a common dining hall and kitchen. Many also mention that they

have multiple workshops or that they have a workshop for a specific purpose, such as

clay making, music, sewing and automobile maintenance. The survey included an open-

ended option where respondents could state other amenities that existed in their

community. Other mentions included: basketball court (2), bike storage (6), campsite (1),

carsharing (1), chapel (4), children's playroom (35), commercial kitchen (5), daycare

centre (1), exercise room (19), games/recreation room (9), greenhouse (4), gymnasium

(1), homeless shelter (3), homeschooling centre (1), labyrinth (1), meditation room (2),

music room (3), playground (8), private/charter school (3), sauna/hot tub (16), sawmill

(1), sports field(s) (4), swimming pool or pond (7), teen hangout room (2), tennis court

(1), tv/media room (8), visitors rooms (37), yoga studio (4), and a yurt (1).

One point to note is that 31.4% of respondents reported either having the

community directly support homeschooling or having one or more resident families that

were homeschooling their children. Many communities reported having private

alternative or charter schools on site, while one stated they have a homeschooling centre

and two others mentioned organizing a regional homeschooling co-op. In America, in

regions where charter schools are permitted there is an opportunity to establish alternative

schools that are more in line with the values of intentional communities. I should note

that while charter schools started as a progressive movement to promote alternative

education, the idea has been hijacked by the political right in the United States to promote

an agenda of privatization of the education system.[69]

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[69] Democracy Now! "Part II: Leading Education Scholar Diane Ravitch on The Death and Life of the Great American School System." Democracy Now! 8 Mar 2010. Web.

**21. What facilities and amenities do you currently have? Please check all that apply.**
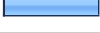
		Response Percent	Response Count
Art Studio(s)/Creative space/Gallery space		30.0%	68
Bike repair shop		15.9%	36
Café, Bar or Restaurant		8.4%	19
Community Garden/Urban Agriculture		76.2%	173
Computer lab(s)/Tech-space		17.6%	40
Environmental/Sustainability Center		7.5%	17
Event space/Performance space		62.6%	142
Food coop		15.0%	34
Free school (Freeskool)		5.3%	12
Free store		11.9%	27
Hostel/Bread & Breakfast/Inn		10.6%	24
Meeting space(s)		**81.5%**	**185**
Infoshop/Activist Center		4.8%	11
Library/Borrowing Center		48.0%	109
Office space(s)		39.2%	89
Printshop/Printing press/Publishing		3.1%	7
Store(s)		10.1%	23
Theatre/Screening venue		17.2%	39
Workshop (Woodworking, mechanical, etc.)		51.5%	117
Other (please specify)			120

Table 5 – Amenities

<http://www.democracynow.org/blog/2010/3/8/part_ii_leading_education_scholar_diane_ravitch_on_the_death_and_life_of_the_great_american_school_system>.

Many communities also reported having businesses on-site, either owned by individual members, rented to individuals outside of the community, or cooperatives owned collectively by the community. Many alternative health practitioners, architects, artists and artisans, bakers, bookkeepers, chefs, coaches, counselors, consultants, crafters, engineers, filmmakers, lawyers, massage therapists, midwifes, musicians, psychologists and writers had their own home businesses or practices on-site. Consultancies on-site often related to activities of the intentional community, such as natural building techniques, housing management and development, or sustainable agriculture — many also had educational components to their consulting work, such as courses and workshops. While many said businesses were located on site, some neglected to specify the types of businesses. For those that specified businesses and cooperatives on site, they include a bakery (1), bed and breakfast (2), beekeeping (1), bookstore café (1), café (1), car-sharing coop (2), Christmas tree farm (2), clothing manufacturing (1), clothing store (2), community supported agriculture (4), composting (2), craft store (1), dairy (1), daycare (2), education centre (2), electricity coop (1), farm (12), fiber arts (1), food coop (6), free school/homeschooling centre (1), furniture store (2), grocery store (1), herb company (1), herbal tea company (1), manufacturing company (3), new age product distributor (1), private school (3), Quaker meeting house (4), recycling company (3), restaurant (1), retreat centre (1), seed distribution (3), summer camp (1), temple (1), thrift store (3), United Church of Canada (1), vision quest centre (1), woodworking (1), yoga studio (1), and a Zen centre (1). The manufacturing companies mentioned produced artisan glass, eco-clothing, outdoor shade structures and solar panel mounting racks. Self-employment, on-site businesses and employment with the community can help meet

ecological, social justice and well-being goals by eliminating the need for commuting

daily to work and creating ethical and environmentally sustainable products and services.

Further, intentional communities with community-owned businesses are able to generate

income that can be put towards the community.

5.2. Founding and Development
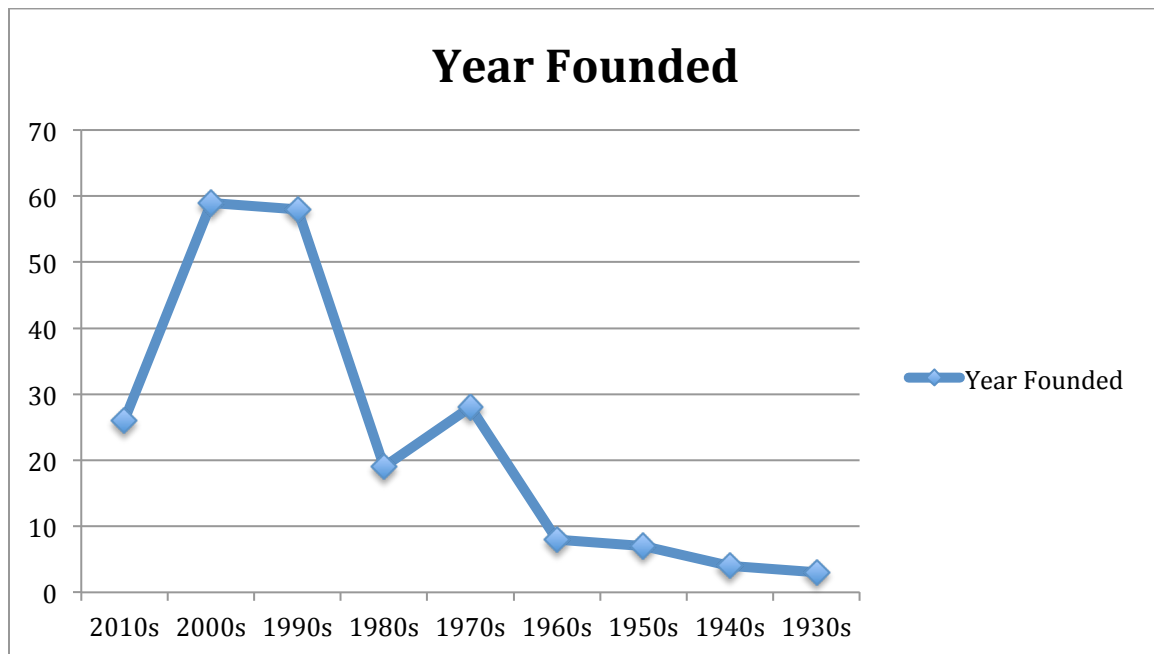
Year Founded

Table 6 – Year Founded

With almost 90% of forming communities failing,[70] it is important to understand

the factors related to development in order to determine what factors are common

between communities that do succeed in becoming established. Question #8 asks: When

was the group founded? Most communities who responded were founded in the 1990s

and 2000s. Question #53 asks: How many people were involved in the founding of your

community?   Most communities were founded by two to twelve people. Not shown on

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[70] Diana Leafe Christian. Creating a Life Together: Practical Tools to Grow Ecovillages and Intentional Communities. Gabriola Island, BC: New Society Publishers, 2003.

the chart, 10 responses indicated 35 or more founding members, with the top answer

being 75. 26 respondents did not know how many individuals were involved in the

founding of their community.
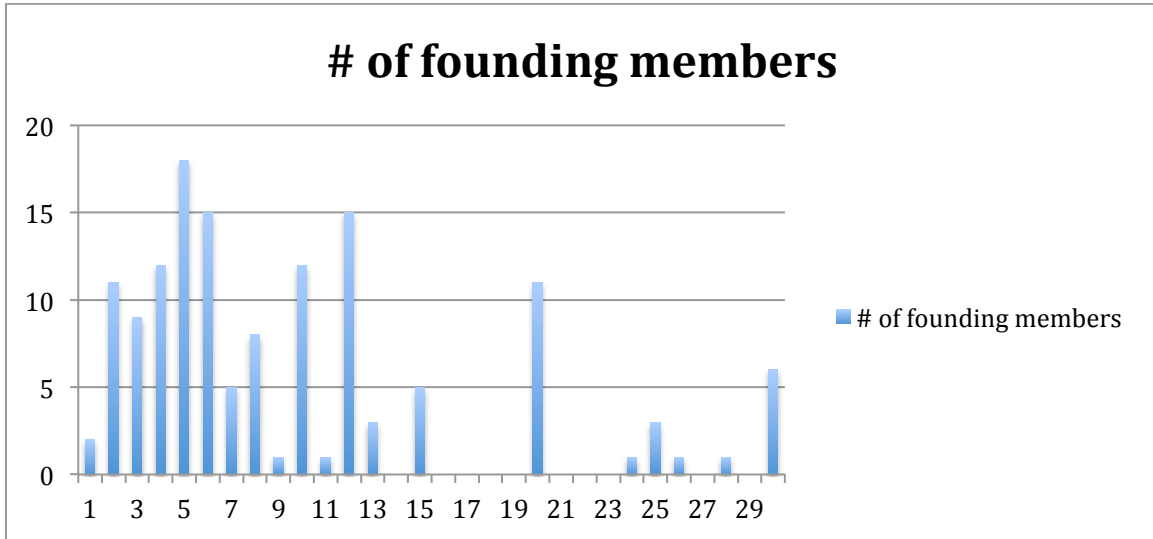
Table 7 – Number of Founding Members

	Months/Years between formation and occupancy
No Answer	18
Unknown	28
Immediate	40
1 month	2
2 months	1
3 months	3
4 months	2
6 months	3
7 months	1
8 months	1
< 1	2
1 year	7
2 years	16
3 years	11
4 years	15
5 years	18
6 years	12
7 years	5
8 years	6
9 years	2
10 years	2
11 years	2
12 years	1
50 years	1

Table 8 – Time Between Formation and Occupancy

Question #16 asks if the land is owned or leased and if buildings were constructed or already existing. The most common answer was that land was purchased and new buildings built (42.5%). 28.1% purchased existing buildings, 15.4% purchased existing buildings and built new buildings, 11.8% rented or leased, while 2.3% have land leases and constructed new buildings. Other answers include having the building and/or land donated, having a private developer purchase and build the community, having the land owned by another legal entity (e.g. religious organization, land trust), an individual owning the land and renting out units, squatting, or hybrids of the provided options.

16. Which of these best describe your Intentional Community? Please elaborate if needed.		Response Percent	Response Count
Leasing or renting existing building (s)		11.8%	26
Purchased existing building(s)		28.1%	62
Purchased existing building(s) and built new buildings		15.4%	34
Purchased land and built new buildings		**42.5%**	**94**
Leased land and built new buildings		2.3%	5
	Other (please specify)		50

Table 9 – Property Status at Purchase

Question #27 asks: How was your site found? Most reported finding their site through a real estate agent or listings. A wide variety of other pro-active methods were used including driving around, investigating a desired property in the neighbourhood, cold calling the owner of a desired site, hiring a consultant, and through word of mouth and extended social networks. For those who used personal networks, some found property owned by the relative of a member, through friends, or via "relational

conservations with neighborhood allies." One respondent mentioned searching carefully across the entire country for an appropriate site, as they did not want to have to deal with restrictive zoning or building codes. One respondent said the group went so far as to approach a large national organization to conduct a search of their properties. Other methods include purchasing property through the hired developer or builder. Some groups were provided with assistance in the process, including property search assistance provided by a municipality or a non-profit organization. Others exerted less effort in the site search process, often having property donated through an existing relationship with an organization. Other examples include purchasing the property currently lived in, having a local non-profit approach the group with a property for sale, and having an individual turn their house into a housing coop. One respondent said a member involved in land acquisition for a non-profit and was able to pass on potential properties to the group.

Question #29 asks: Was the site for your intentional community provided at a discount or donated? 23.2% of respondents reported property as being donated or discounted to the intentional community. Many indicated the property was donated outright, either through a transfer of the deed or through perpetual $1/year leases held by a charitable organization, religious or educational institution. One community reported the transfer of ownership from an individual to a land trust. Another mentioned how the previous property owner eventually became a member of one community and subsequently forgave the mortgage. A number of respondents reported property discounts, typically sold below or at-cost to the intentional community. Financing or funding were provided to a few communities, often through the form of a vendor take-

back mortgage provided by the seller. Opportunities for donated or discounted properties exist, but often require long-standing established relationships to exist before any consideration is given to the effect.

Question #48 and #49 respectively asks: How was the land purchase financed? If a mortgage was provided, who provided the mortgage? Most indicated mortgages were obtained either through a credit union or bank. Canadian Lending institutions include: Bank of Montreal, Canadian Western Bank, ScotiaBank, Toronto Dominion, VanCity Credit Union and other local credit unions. U.S. lending institutions include: Agricultural Credit Association (AGChoice), American Bank of Commerce, Appalachian Community Federal Credit Union, Bank of America, Capital Bank, Chase, Exchange Bank (California), First Republic Bank, Holy Rosary Credit Union (New Hampshire), KeyBank, Seattle Metropolitan Credit Union and various small local credit unions and banks. Government agencies were also noted lenders, including CMHC and BC Housing. Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation is a housing agency of the Government of Canada that provides mortgage-related services and funding for affordable housing. BC Housing is a government agency in British Columbia, Canada whose mandate is to provide government subsidized housing. Other communities mentioned they were self-financed, borrowed from a local supporter or from a private social venture fund. These questions did not apply to some communities who were either renting, leasing, provided free use of property or had property donated.

Question #56 asked: What difficulties were encountered in founding your intentional community? For those communities that reported difficulties, the most common were obtaining financing, finding affordable and suitable space and slow

government approval processes. Financial reasons were commonly mentioned, including some members having inadequate personal finances, committed people dropping out prior to purchase and being effected by the U.S. Housing Crash — says one resident on the housing crash: "By the time stable newcomers began buying units, the pioneers were exhausted, resentful and disillusioned." Conflict and decision-making were also factors. Internal conflict, gaining the acceptance of the wider community, deciding the location for the community and setting up consensus methods so as not to be dominated by any segment, majority or minority, of the community were all difficulties reported by respondents. Other founding difficulties reported include longer than expected construction times, finding suitable or likeminded people and overcoming the learning curve of starting something from scratch.

5.3. Structure and Decision-Making

Question #44 asked respondents: What is the current legal status of your intentional community? 49.3% of respondents indicated private ownership — this includes ownership of the entire community by a sole individual or private ownership of your unit. 25.4% of intentional communities were legally registered non-profit organizations or charities, 19.1% were collectively owned, 13% were legally businesses, 11.7% were legally registered cooperatives, 5.6% were non-legal entities and 4.3% of communities were owned by a land trust. One respondent indicated their community was squatting.

Many respondents chose to specify further, with most indicating a condominium ownership, private ownership over your own unit and shared ownership over the

collective spaces, with a condominium or home-owners associations to govern
community and manage the shared spaces. A number of communities from British
Columbia and Alberta indicated their ownership structure as strata, which is legally
similar to condominiums. Strata title, while used commonly in a number of countries in
the world, is only used in these two Canadian provinces in North America. A handful of
communities indicated a religious organization or post-secondary institute owned their
buildings.

44. What is the current legal status of your Intentional Community? Please elaborate as needed.		Response Percent	Response Count
Private Ownership		**49.4%**	**80**
Shared Ownership		19.1%	31
Member Co-operative		10.5%	17
Worker Co-operative		1.2%	2
Non-legal entity		5.6%	9
501(c)(3) Non-profit Organization (U.S.)		19.8%	32
Limited Liability Corporation (U.S.)		9.3%	15
Non-Profit Organization or CRA Recognized Charitable Organization (Canada)		5.6%	9
Business		3.7%	6
Community Controlled Land Trust		3.1%	5
Independent land trust (not controlled by the community)		1.2%	2
Absentee Landlord/Squatted		0.6%	1
Other (please elaborate as needed)			91

Table 10 – Legal Status

Question #45 asks: Does your intentional community offer memberships? If so, what are the conditions of membership? Can non-residents be members?

Most communities offered some form of membership. Membership can require a probationary trial period, interview, having the membership application reviewed by a committee, signing a member agreement, and attending orientation or training. Training covered topics such as non-violent communication and sociocracy, a consensus-based system of governance. For those that required a membership fee, the fee varied from $10 to $25,000 — some were one-time fees, while others required an annual membership fee. Members were also required to place a down payment or deposit, keep up with their rent or mortgage, follow any agreed upon rules and participate in the community. Some intentional communities do not offer memberships. For those that allowed non-resident members, this was usually done to allow exposure to the community for a potential future residency. Non-resident members typically have the same involvement requirements as resident members. Some communities had non-resident members from the neighbouring communities who were involved in activities such as community gardening.

Question #46 asks respondents: How are decisions made and who is involved in the decision-making? Almost every community indicated the use of consensus or modified versions of consensus, such as C.T. Butler's Formal Consensus Method or sociocracy. Others used a simple or super-majority vote, or used these when consensus failed. For those that are legal entities, most used a combination of a board of directors, committees and general member meetings to make decisions. Collective houses and Catholic Worker homes, which are typically not legally registered entities, used consensus-based methods at general members meetings. Weekly or monthly meetings

were most common. For those who delineated the power differences in their answers, most communities placed more decision-making power directly with the membership instead of the board or committees. A few communities indicated they had property managers who made some decisions. A handful had authoritarian power structures, with decisions resting in the hands of one or a few individuals – most of these were spiritual communities. One respondent called the leadership of their community a "benevolent dictatorship."

Question #55 asked: What membership involvement requirements or expectations does your intentional community have? Almost all communities had some kind of membership requirements. Typically, they include paying your rent, mortgage and/or dues, participation in the community, weekly or monthly chores, attending and participating in meetings, attending and participating in communities events such as weekly communal dinners, and serving on one or more committees. Some collectives houses emphasized non-violence, no illegal activity and no free-loading as requirements. Most spiritual and activist communities had additional involvement requirements related to meetings, involvement in planning and additional labour. In addition, many spiritual communities had participation requirements related to spiritual activities such as meditation or prayer. The odd community indicated other restrictions such as a criminal background check, commitment to vegetarianism, or no alcohol.

5.4. Conflict and Difficulties

Conflicts and difficulties are common occurrences for any endeavour. Intentional communities face difficulties that are common to real estate development, democratic

organizations and new or unfamiliar concepts. Question #30 asked respondents: Was

there opposition to location at your current site, either by members or by the wider

community? 34.8% reported no opposition, while 23.4% were unaware of any conflict or

opposition. 41.8% of respondents said some type of site-related conflict did occur; with

about 1/3rd stating the opposition was only minor. Disputes with neighbours were

common, often driven out of ignorance and fear with the concept of intentional

communities — some respondents even mentioned references to hippies or the Waco,

Texas incident used in reference to them. More extreme examples of opposition included

lawsuits by neighbours or a neighbourhood association and one community who had the

Ku Klux Klan burn a cross on their front lawn. Other external disputes occurred

primarily with the municipality over issues such as zoning and taxation. Internal

conflicts occur primarily over site selection, with the extreme results leading to lawsuits

or splitting of the community.

Question #57 asks: Besides financial, what difficulties have been experienced

operating your intentional community? The majority of responses that had difficulties

indicated internal problems as most prevalent — the most common of which is

interpersonal conflict within the community, though much of it was minor. These

include individuals with difficult personalities, often related to degenerative diseases or

mental health, philosophical differences, and disagreements over community initiatives

and projects. In some cases, communities have had to rescind and evict members.

Workload and volunteer support were also common issues, with some members not

pulling their share of the labour or not participating in community life. Lastly, some

communities had difficulties with

finding suitable new members, filling vacancies and turnover. The only commonly mentioned external difficulty related to the law, as many states, provinces and municipalities do not have laws, policies, building codes or zoning supportive of intentional communities.

There is a good amount of research on interpersonal relations in intentional communities. While some may view intentional communities as harmonious utopias, many dispute this idealistic view, even claiming they are even disharmonious — one former resident states "We have people [in the community] who are so dysfunctional in themselves and in their relationships that they have to suck every bit of happiness out of other people."[71] Hildur Jackson of the Gaia Trust calls conflict the greatest challenge that intentional communities have to face.[72] Intentional communities should regularly evaluate their community in order to identify and address problems before they become critical. Hackman and Oldman identifies three qualities crucial for group success: (1) quality and quantity of the work produced; (2) the experience is more positive than negative; (3) the structures in place enhance, not hinder, the ability of the group to work together.[73] Many communities employ extensive membership selection processes that include interviews, exploratory or provisional phases, orientations, mentorships, regular site visits and education on decision-making and conflict resolution processes.[74] Some communities use trained facilitators for meetings or conflict resolution, either trained

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[71] Mary Garden. "The eco-village movement: Divorced from reality." The International Journal of Inclusive Democracy, 2.3, 2006. Web. <http://www.inclusivedemocracy.org/journal/pdf%20files/pdf%20vol2/The%20eco-village%20movement.pdf>.
[72] Hildur Jackson. "Introduction." Creating Harmony: Conflict Resolution in Community. Holte, Denmark: Gaia Trust (1999): xi-xv.
[73] Richard J. Hackman & Greg R. Oldham. Work Redesign. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1980.
[74] Sarah Gyorog. Lessons from Community: Embracing and Engaging in Constructive Conflict. Thesis. Boston, MA: University of Massachusetts, 2004.

members or external facilitators.[75] Law professor Mark Fenster recommends intentional

communities set up legal covenants amongst its members to prevent conflict.[76] Meltzer

found that communities that have existed for longer are generally more stable.[77]

Question #58 asks respondents: Has your Intentional Community ever

experienced conflict with your neighbours, neighbourhood community or other

organizations? The most reported conflicts were related to noise complaints against the

intentional community, typically for hosting parties. Some communities reported a

specific individual neighbour with personal grievances against the community as a source

of ongoing conflict. Reasons for their grievances include having their view blocked by

the intentional community or not wanting fences taken down. Some of the complaints

border on the ridiculous, such as "adjacent neighbours wanted to change by-laws to

prevent us from eating together outside." Many conflicts with neighbours were the result

of fear-driven unjustified opposition to the community that dissipated with offending

neighbour moving away, or with time, getting to know the community and educational

efforts.

Many communities reported serious conflicts. These include threats to sue by

neighbours, general harassment, vandalism, complaints to city hall, and racist neighbours.

Some notable conflicts included ongoing attacks from a biased municipal councilor, a

neighbour who kidnapped chickens, protests against a university to reopen a student

housing coop, and being physically attacked by neighbours with law enforcement being

dismissive of the situation. Again, many of these conflicts seem utterly ridiculous on the

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[75] Ibid.
[76] Mark Fenster. "Community by Covenant, Process, and Design: Cohousing and the Contemporary
Common Interest Community." Journal of Land Use & Environmental Law, 15.1 (1999): 3-54.
[77] Graham Meltzer. Sustainable Community: Learning from the Cohousing Model. Victoria, BC: Trafford
Publishing, 2005.

part of the neighbour — one respondent reported that: "one neighboring developer sued the LLC so that our common house was not built until his 5 town homes were sold."

The best solution to avoiding conflict with neighbours is preventing it in the first place. Now this can come with some difficulty, as the intentional community concept is foreign to most. One community reported having conflict resolution processes and education in place that included their neighbours. Forming communities should make an effort to educate their neighbours through educational seminars and town halls. Once a community is established, each should find ways to connect with their neighbours such as hosting a neighbourhood event, making programming at the intentional community accessible to neighbours, or resident members participating in neighbourhood life.

5.5. Finances

In addition to the questions related to finances during the development of the community, two additional financial questions were asked. Question #51 asked respondents: Are financial difficulties significant or recurring issues for the continued existence of your intentional community? 21.7% of intentional communities reported ongoing or recurring financial issues and 5.7% reported some financial difficulties. Additionally, 5.7% reported having past financial difficulties. The reasons provided were diverse. Many communities suffered after the United States housing bubble. It created difficulty qualifying for loans and renegotiating mortgages. The resulting drop in housing values forced many individuals to sell and move because of the recession, while many units remain unsold. One respondent mentioned that three units have remained unsold for six years. A couple of communities that built just before the housing bubble

said their units remained overpriced in comparison to their local housing market, making selling units exceedingly difficult. One respondent mentioned the removal of an assumability clause in their mortgage has resulted in their financial difficulties, as they are now forced to renegotiate every time someone leaves or joins the joint mortgage. Another given reason is the cancellation of government affordable housing programs and rental subsidies. In Canada, affordable housing subsidies to housing coops are not being renewed by the Canadian government, which potentially could result in the eviction of thousands of impoverished residents.[78] One respondent from a Catholic Worker said of financial difficulties: "Sure. We're a Catholic Worker. Voluntary poverty is part of it." Some respondents mentioned that finances were an issue with regards to expansion or purchasing a property. Besides the financial difficulties of the community, numerous respondents also reported individual members having financial difficulties.

Question #52 asks: Is your site property tax exempt? 15.7% of respondents stated their community was partially or completely exempt from property taxes. Reasons for exemptions included being a non-profit, land trust or religious organization, housing low-income individuals or seniors, being located on university land, agricultural use of the land, or conservation programs or easements. A couple of respondents mentioned their communities are eligible for tax reductions, but have not applied. One community mentioned going to court to challenge the municipal taxation on their property, stating: "We lost in county court to over turn this ruling and our attorney advised we probably have to fight it to the US Supreme Court to win since it is revenue for the county and state and we are the first program like this." Municipalities should consider tax incentive

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[78] Erika Tucker and Vassy Kapelos. "Fears of evictions across Canada as feds end co-op housing subsidy." Global News. Jan 22 2014. Web. <http://globalnews.ca/news/1100348/co-op-housing-subsidy-to-end/>.

programs to lure intentional communities for the numerous benefits they bring to the wider community. In addition, intentional communities can be less burdensome on municipal resources as they have the potential to be highly self-sufficient though practices such as efficiency and off-grid projects, alternative schooling or homeschooling, providing on-site resources and social programs and generating less waste.

5.6. Benefits and Opportunities

Intentional community residences and the resulting lifestyles provide many benefits and opportunities for residents and the wider community. Three questions were posed to survey respondents:

#59. What benefits do you feel your intentional community has created?

#60. What role does your intentional community play within your neighbourhood, city or wider community?

#61. What opportunities has your intentional community created?

Previous studies that have examined the social or environmental benefits of intentional communities, correlate benefits between intentional communities and energy reduction,[79] childhood safety,[80] social and health benefits,[81] increased quality of life,[82]

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[79] Jason R. Brown. Comparative Analysis of Energy Consumption Trends in Cohousing and Alternative Housing Arrangements. Thesis. Cambridge, MA: Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 2004.
[80] Roza Tchoukaleyska. "Co-housing childhoods: parents' mediation of urban risk through participation in intentional communities." Children's Geographies, 9.2 (2011): 235-246.
[81] Konstantin Kehl & Volker Then. "Community and Civil Society Returns of Multi-generation Cohousing in Germany." Journal of Civil Society, 9.1 (2013): 41-57.
[82] Kenneth Mulder, Robert Costanza and Jon Erickson. "The contribution of built, human, social and natural capital to quality of life in intentional and unintentional communities." Ecological Economics, 59.1 (2006): 13-23.

and reduced consumption.[83] Respondents similarly identified community, lifestyle and environmental benefits to intentional community living. The most mentioned benefits were related to social and individual wellbeing. Much of these centred around the development of relationships and community; answers included: enriched social lives, a sense of belonging and community, emotional support, being surrounded by like-minded people, the prevention of social isolation, the inclusion of vulnerable populations (e.g. those with special needs, seniors, etc.) and the establishment of safe space for sexual and gender minorities. Also mentioned were improvements in children's well-being, the opportunity to host visitors, shared activities (e.g. gardening, movie nights, etc.) and connections with the wider community or neighbourhood. Improvements in health and lifestyle were also commonly noted. These include health benefits from eating locally grown organic food and less stress, resulting in family life and child rearing that is easier.

Residents' responses also revealed other common benefit themes, including environmental, economic, educational and activism-related benefits. Environmental benefits mentioned included a reduced carbon footprint, the ability to live off-grid and reduced consumption through sharing. Brown found similar results demonstrating energy usage reduction in intentional communities.[84] Jarvis found that through shared space, items and tasks, cohousing residents were able to reduce their consumption.[85] Economic benefits were frequently mentioned — they include the cost savings and affordability of intentional communities, collective resources (e.g. workshop, bike repair shop, etc.), mutual aid, job-sharing and shared common spaces. Educational benefits

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[83] Helen Jarvis. "Saving space, sharing time: integrated infrastructures of daily life in cohousing." Environment and Planning A, 43.3 (2011): 560-577.
[84] Brown, 2004.
[85] Jarvis, 2011.

respondents provided include skills development, personal growth opportunities, support for homeschool and alternative education and the opportunity to learn about collectivism.

Despite the criticism some have leveled at intentional communities with regards to involvement in social and environmental causes, activism and community involvement were repeatedly mentioned. Activities include political organizing (e.g. electoral campaign for a progressive city councilor, hosting public forums), initiative organizing and operations (e.g. community garden, festivals, food coop, radio station, CSA, child care), social movement organizing, community involvement and leadership, supporting specific causes, and assisting vulnerable populations (e.g. homeless, refugees, battered women, etc.) with space, money or volunteer support. Outside of the five main response themes that I have classified, other responses mentioned beautiful properties, child and community safety, liberty, and self-sufficiency.

Intentional communities bring numerous benefits to the neighbourhoods, municipalities and regions they are embedded in. Intentional communities and their residents participate and organize a wide range of activities, events and initiatives that benefit the wider community. Politically, intentional community residents are considerably more active than the average citizen. They are often deeply involved in activism and community organizing. One respondent even mentioned that they have helped make the political culture of their region more liberal. Many residents participate in or operate local initiatives such as community gardens, organize community events and festivals, and contribute to neighbourhood improvement and beautification. Many communities serve as a local or regional hub for environmental and social justice activism and education, doing so through educational demonstrations, free classes and

workshops (often done through a 'freeskool') and offering a space where organizing and events can take place. As social movement hubs, they serve as a place where wider social movement networks and local actors can connect. Many communities are also involved in endeavours to aid the poor, or in local food initiatives such as café, food coops and CSAs (community supported agriculture). The overall exposure increases the interest of the general public in intentional communities. With all the benefits that intentional communities provide to their wider community, municipalities should be actively seeking out emerging intentional community groups in order to provide them with development assistance, financing and discounted or free government land.

Intentional communities provide many opportunities for its residents. Economic opportunities in particular standout as many respondents stated they were able to become self-employed, establish and operate their own business, or work on-site in the intentional community. Social opportunities include networking, new friendships, having travellers stay in the community, the opportunity for polyamorous relationships and as one respondent states: "connecting social innovators to the broader community." Many communities focus on a vulnerable or marginalized segment of society — one respondent from a Camphill Community reported their community provides "a meaningful life for people with disabilities." Supportive housing on the intentional community model can significantly improve the quality of life of people living with mental, developmental or physical disabilities.

As with the benefits question, opportunities for improved well-being were also reported. One respondent said intentional communities offer the opportunity for "happier… more contributory lives," and allowing more free time — to give back, for

child rearing, activism, recreation and other activities. Intentional communities also facilitate exciting life experiences and memorable events, such as festivals, musical or theatrical works, community movie nights or talent shows. These communities also provide opportunities for shared activities, such as gardening, cooking or craftmaking. Intentional communities present a challenge to boredom on a level that can compete with modern technology, and in doing so can provide an alternative to modern lives often dominated by electronic games, internet usage and television. In my opinion, the greatest challenge to social and environmental justice is the apathy generated by these modern technologies, coupled with overwork and isolation generated by modern capitalism and its built forms. Intentional communities challenge all these problems by establishing a strong social community, providing the organization and spatial supports for a wide-variety of activities to take place, and providing on-site work and self-employment opportunities.

Often overlooked by researchers and intentional community experts, intentional communities can provide a great environment for personal development to occur. Respondents to the survey repeatedly mentioned the personal development opportunities intentional communities afford. These include opportunities for spiritual growth, dietary improvement, fitness, artistic and cultural experiences, and educational opportunities such as developing leadership skills, free classes, alternative schooling and internships. Intentional communities also allow for personal development through giving back to the community, whether it be through volunteer opportunities, activist meetings hosted by the community, local food production, green initiatives such as a community café, or the ability to more easily get involved in social and environmental causes. Other

opportunities mentioned included research opportunities for students and faculty, housing

stray animals, and bringing intentional communities and green technology to the

mainstream.

5.7. Commitment to Social and Environmental Justice

Critics of intentional communities argue they are merely 'life-stylist' strategies,

absent from participation in social movements and ultimately a distraction against

producing systemic change.[86] One critic states: "It smacks of retreatism: the world can

go to hell, but we'll be okay!"[87] The life-stylist accusation typically comes from Marxist

academics and radical left activists who prefer to embed themselves within urban life,

and as such, are better able to access social movements — they restate Lefebvre's

observation that "revolutionary movements frequently if not always assume an urban

dimension,"[88] while at the same time failing to see most intentional communities occur in

urban environs. These critics fail to see the value or ability of intentional communities to

mobilize, focus and support social movements and social movement actors. Critics also

fail to see that these communities occur in urban, suburban and rural environments, and

that some types of intentional communities, such as communal houses and Catholic

Worker homes have purposely and explicitly committed to social and environmental

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[86] Takis Fotopoulos. "The Limitations of Life-style Strategies: the Ecovillage 'Movement' is NOT the Way Towards a New Democratic Society." Democracy & Nature, 6.2 (2000): 287-308.
[87] Mary Garden. "The eco-village movement: Divorced from reality." The International Journal of Inclusive Democracy, 2.3, 2006. Web.
<http://www.inclusivedemocracy.org/journal/pdf%20files/pdf%20vol2/The%20eco-village%20movement.pdf>.
[88] Henri Lefebvre, as cited in: Harvey, David. Rebel Cities: From the Right to the City to the Urban Revolution. London, UK: Verso, 2012. Xiii.

justice and their residents most often participate in social movements. Some housing co-ops, ecovillages and cohousing residents are also known as hotbeds of activism and organizing, thus it is not a stretch to imagine more intentional communities having or forming with wider considerations to the outside world and social movements. Even some intentional communities in rural locations are acknowledged as taking part in broader social movements.[89] The emotional and physical support systems, coupled with reduced living costs and healthier lifestyles, could reenergize individuals and provide an ideal space for organizing efficiently. Intentional communities have been demonstrated as successfully supporting the adaptation of sustainable practices and technologies.[90] An intentional community "life-style" can reduce the need for commuting, for both work and activist organizing, and lower the cost of living thus reducing the amount of hours one needs to work in order to afford urban living. The Global Ecovillage Network states, "The motivation for ecovillages is the choice and commitment to reverse the gradual disintegration of supportive social/cultural structures and the upsurge of destructive environmental practices on our planet… [ecovillages] represent an effective, accessible way to combat the degradation of our social, ecological and spiritual environments."[91] Many intentional communities also aide in the alleviation of poverty. Housing cooperatives, collective homes and student housing coops all provide a collective means of providing affordable housing. Women, who are more at risk of falling below the

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[89] Louis Meijering, Paulus Huigen and Bettina Van Hoven. "Intentional Communities in Rural Spaces." Tijdschrift voor Economische en Sociale Geografie, 98.1 (2007): 42-52.
[90] Bella Marckmann, Kistren Gram-Hanssen & Toke Haunstrup Christensen. "Sustainable Living and Co-Housing: Evidence from a Case Study of Eco-Villages." Built Environment, 38.3 (2012): 413-429.
[91] Global Ecovillage Network. "History." Global Ecovillage Network. N.d. Web. <http://gen.ecovillage.org/about/wiaev.php>.

poverty line, make up the majority (55-70%) of residents in cohousing.[92] Some Catholic

Worker homes and faith-based intentional communities provide accommodations for the

homeless. All these demonstrate commitments to social justice and poverty alleviation,

further disproving the critics.

There are differences between rural or urban communities and their relationships

to social movements. Rural communities are ideal for retreat and training centres,

activism that focuses on written works, most art forms, and media (audio, video, online),

and commercial initiatives related to food and artisan production. An example of this is

the Beehive Design Collective in Machias, Maine, an intentional community art

collective that focuses on anti-globalization and global justice issues. Their activism

includes graphic art campaigns, creative-commons art work that is available online and

reproduction and distribution encouraged, touring globally, and training and workshops at

their Maine studios. Further, they have embedded themselves in town life, participating

and helping to organizing town events and festivals. Urban communities are better suited

for mobilization, direct lobbying for policy change, certain art forms (street theatre, street

art), propaganda and education for the masses. For those intentional communities in

urban environs, they should consider the advice of Marxist geographer David Harvey,

who said: "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."[93] The

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[92] Dick Urban Vestbro & Liisa Horelli. "Design for Gender Equality: The History of Cohousing Ideas and Realities." Built Environment, 38.3 (2012): 315-335.

[93] David Harvey. Spaces of Capital: Towards a Critical Geography. New York, NY: Routledge, 2001. 254.

intentional community movement must ally with other social movement, organize and fight to preserve or (re-)establish collective housing rights and supports.

While critics exist, the growing academic consensus is that intentional communities are ideally suited as places of resistance. Author Jan Martin Bang states: "ecovillage examples can still show people that these things work and a working system speaks louder than a thousand protest demonstrations.[94] Historically intentional communities were founded and based around particular ideas, such as utopian socialism.[95] The prevalence of some politically neutral intentional communities relates to their location in late capitalism, as we are dominated by apathetic attitudes, the comforts and pleasures provided by capitalism. Capitalism induces apathy through the comforts, distractions and pleasures it provides, and the mythology of capitalist triumphalism — the myth that capitalism has won once and for all and that all other possible systems do not work. Further, market mentalities dominate and are the most prevalent — the idea where decisions are primarily based on economic and consumerist factors and all other factors are secondary, such as the environmental, health, and well-being.[96] Many refuse to acknowledge the inherent injustice in the system from their privileged positions, choosing to withdraw instead of engaging in the difficult work of dialogue and social transformation. This absence of the political needs to be challenged, if not in existing apathetic communities, in all forming and new intentional communities.

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[94] Jan Martin Bang. Ecovillages: A Practical Guide to Sustainable Communities. Gabriola Island, BC, Canada: New Society Publishers, 2005. 190.
[95] Megan Salhus. Resistance and Conformity: The Dialectic of Urban Cohousing. Dissertation. Toronto, ON: York University, Faculty of Environmental Studies, 2008. 167.
[96] Ibid. 156.

One critic argues that intentional communities are merely co-opting

environmental terms and that one can live environmentally in any context.[97] I contend

that living lightly, healthy, happy and as part of a community can be difficult to do in

isolation. Further, healthy and environmental sustainable lifestyles are becoming

increasing expensive, with organic food and products priced at a premium, and without

the power of alternatives such as a collectives or the ability to grow your own food is

simply out of the reach of many. Environmental health experts have also proven that

minorities and the poor are at greater risk to toxic exposure.[98] Intentional communities

provide the opportunity to alleviate the greater environmental health and dietary risks

associated with those of lower incomes. As political involved citizens, being a resident in

an intentional community allows for a greater degree of self-care and community-care,

allowing rest, rejuvenation and the ability to take a break. I believe it is unrealistic and

even extremist to expect that all residents of intentional communities be on the frontlines

of social movements. Those few who criticize intentional communities from the far-left

do so from a perspective that lacks grounding in the realities, diversities and complexities

of everyday life, failing to recognize that each individual has their own providence and

perspectives. Some communities will inevitably be more politically involved because of

who is involved and the ability and interest of each resident in that community, while

others will not. Instead of stereotyping intentional communities as homogeneous, those

who are concerned about the lack of environmental and social justice participation within

[97] Mary Garden.
[98] S. Harris Ali. "Environmental Health and Society." Health, Illness and Health Care in Canada, 4th
Edition. Eds. B. Singh Bolaria & Harley D. Dickinson. Toronto, ON: Nelson (2008): 370-387; Richard
Hofrichter. "Critical Perspectives on Human Health and the Environment." Reclaiming the Environmental
Debate: The Politics of Health in a Toxic Culture. Ed. Richard Hofrichter. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press
(2000): 1-15.

intentional communities need to get involved, inspiring and organizing others to action instead of targeting intentional communities, as these are communities with residents that are far more like-minded and willing to participate in social movement than those from traditionally developed communities.

Purpose and motivation

The survey posed three questions related to the founding purposes and motivation for intentional community living:

#31. What was the original purposes for the establishment of your community?

#32. Has your commitment to these purposes grown, remained steady, or declined?

#54. If founding members, what were the motivations for the creation of your intentional community? If you joined the community later, what were your motivations for joining?

A majority of respondents indicated the desire to live in an enriching community and to live sustainably as the two primary motivating factors for establishing or moving into an intentional community. Various commentaries from respondents reiterate these two desires:

We wanted to live in a supportive community with shared ideals.

To be part of a community which fosters environmental sustainability and neighborliness.

To recreate the environment of stimulation and support I found in dormitory living in college.

I live best in intentional communities.

My motivations for joining the community were the appeal of the people already there, the desire to live my values of environmental and social justice, and the interest in cooperating with other people to make a larger impact.

To live in a community, where people know each other, share resources, socialize and live together. Also to live with a smaller footprint and more sustainably.

Other commonly mentioned answers included living with liked-minded people, a commitment to social justice, simple living, spiritual reasons, support with child rearing, creating supportive housing, affordability, and a general dissatisfaction with the existing housing market and stock. One respondent says their community was established "to live with like-minded activists and to potentially collaborate with each other on projects." Another respondent, this one from a Christian community, states: "To feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, clothe the naked, welcome the stranger, visit the prisoner, and comfort the sick." When asked has the commitment of your community grown, remained steady, or declined, 32.1% said their commitments have grown, 54.5% said they have remained steady and 13.5% reported them declining. For those that have declined, allowing new residents in who do not share the same values or have not been educated in cooperative living and aging of the original founders were the primary reasons provided for the decline. Says one housing coop respondent: "Declined through lack of education, original values being lost, few original members left. Also the huge need for affordable housing means many people looking for cheap or subsidized housing without necessarily any knowledge of or belief in cooperative living." Similarly, a cohousing resident says: "We have had to rent our several of our units to cover our costs while trying to sell the remaining unsold units, we are in a minority."

Where commitments did not exist or were weak

In the survey, when examining why some communities lacked a commitment to social and environmental justice or was weak in this area, various reasons were provided. Questions #33, #34, and #35 ask: Has a commitment to social and environmental justice been explicitly made by your intentional community at its founding or at a later date? If not, what are the reasons why? If yes, has the commitment to social and environmental justice grown, remained steady, or declined? The responses can be categorized into eight categories:

(1) Already taking action

(2) Acknowledging the deficit as a work in progress;

(3) Acknowledging both the deficit and need for action to be taken;

(4) Acknowledging the deficit, but not the need for action;

(5) Individualism (i.e. not the community's place to take communal action)

(6) What they already do is adequate

(7) Has not come up or been considered

(8) Rejection of the need

Of those from communities already involved and taking action on environmental and social justice issues, most proudly asserted it. One respondent stated "Lacking? Sometimes it takes inappropriate priority." Some communities were still developing what actions and approaches they would take on environmental and social justice issues, each at varying stages in their development. This includes everything from having had discussions that have not led to anything, to having committed to action but recognizing more should be done. Some stated the community was doing their best given their circumstances.

For those who recognized the need but rejected action, they provided external reasons for this, blaming the community, leadership, or how busy people were with their modern lives. Some respondents complained about the apathy of their fellow community members and the unwillingness of the community leadership. One said, "[I am] not willing to invest my energy in changing this organization." Another stated "I feel at a loss to improve the situation." Some mentioned that there were not enough interested people to take the lead on these issues. A respondent even mentioned "resistance from the majority of community members." Blame shifting onto others in the community or the leadership of the community was the most commonly stated excuse for lack of action. Not enough time was another common theme, with respondents stating: "Our members have busy urban lives that require a great deal of commitment." One said: "Yes, commitment is lacking but I'm too busy to do anything about it." Other circumstantial explanations included the community having critical or important issues to deal with, such as structural issues, financial/debt issues, or having restrictions on how the property is used.

Some felt no need for action was needed or felt their existing actions were adequate. One respondent stated, "I personally don't think there is a problem." Another attempted to justify the lack of a commitment to broader environmental and justice causes by asserting their green lifestyle is enough, stating: "I think the work that we do and the value that we bring by modeling sustainable and community living is of deep value. Even if there is a lack of social and environmental justice… I don't think there are changes that need to be made in that direction." Similarly, another community said providing low-cost housing is enough. Some spiritual-focused communities asserted no

such need, as their focus is what psychologist Philip Zimbardo would describe as future-oriented transcendental time perspective, meaning they are focused on 'life after death'[99] — this is in contrast to many spiritual-focus intentional communities that have strong connections to social and environmental justice rooted in the Christian social gospel or other progressive faith traditions.

Individualism, especially amongst American intentional communities, was a common response to the question. Some respondents stated that it is up to the individual to commit to activities outside of the community; and many acknowledge that this does occur. Those with individualist perspectives made statements such as "[it is] best left up to individuals," or "I prefer being free to follow my own conscience in the way I choose." The common themes in their answers include not wanting to force or impose on anyone with differing points of view and acknowledging that members in the community have vastly different philosophies. It would be interesting to further examine, compare and contrast those intentional communities that are built around more collectivist ideals and perspectives and those that are more individualist in their leanings. I suspect there is a correlation between the escapist tendency in intentional communities and communities that are more individualistic than collectivist. Such communities would likely be more isolationist and lack connections to broader causes or movements.

In order to connect both existing and future intentional community residents to environmental and social action, I believe it is imperative for residents to learn about the histories and struggles of intentional communities. In North America today intentional communities are rarely contentious, however historically they have been undermined and

[99] Philip Zimbardo and John Boyd. The Time Paradox: The New Psychology of Time That Will Change Your Life. New York, NY: Simon and Schuster, 2008.

attacked by government and the political right, including historical utopian communities

up until the communes of the nineteen-sixties and seventies. Further, we lack laws in

most jurisdictions that recognizing the unique complexities of intentional communities

including by-law restrictions that make intentional communities unfeasible in some

jurisdictions, or having a legal status optimal to cohousing instead of the existing options

of a member share cooperative or condominium. By learning about the struggles of

establishing intentional communities, we can relate these struggles to wider social and

environmental struggles through a popular education process. Activists Cobarrubias and

Casas state:

> Activists do not know how to learn from their history – how to keep it
> alive – or even how to produce and share our own history with others...
> Often, even simple things like keeping track of a collective's activities,
> being able to share its history with others, are left by the wayside in the
> grind of daily activist work or organizing response actions. Groups that
> are fighting against the same exact targets don't know what people three or
> four years did, what worked and what didn't. Sometimes it's a question of
> a lack of historical memory - not only of what movements did a 100 or 70
> years ago but of what they did 10 & 20 years ago.[100]

Indeed, many respondents did not even know simple facts about the history of the

intentional community they live in such as when it was founded, and few knew about

how the community came about and the struggles they endured to establish a successful

intentional community. According to social movement scholars, institutional and cultural

memory is crucial to the success of activism and organizing.[101] If we are to increase the

capacity and potential of intentional communities as places where social change and

organizing can occur, we must learn about our own histories and struggles and connect

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[100] Sebastian Cobarrubias and Maribel Casas. "On the Road: the US Social Forum." Infoshop News. 13
Jun 2007. Web. <http://www .infoshop.org/inews/article.php?story=20070613102922644>.
[101] Donatella Della Porta & Diani, Mario. Social Movements: An Introduction. Malden, MA: Blackwell,
1999. 184-5.

them to broader issues and social movements. Through this, we can create and transform more intentional communities as key centres for social change to occur in order to bring about a more sustainable, just and equitable world.

What communities were already undertaking

Intentional communities are known for being more environmentally and socially committed than traditional residential communities. Community respondents were asked to identify what their community was already doing towards addressing environmental and social justice issues. Their answers can be classified into four broad categories: (1) lifestyle; (2) education; (3) organizing and social movement participation; and (4) social aid and support.
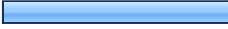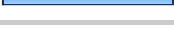
22. What sustainable technologies and practices does your community use?		Response Percent	Response Count
Alternative Energy Generation – Geothermal		11.0%	19
Alternative Energy Generation – Solar		44.8%	77
Alternative Energy Generation – Wind		4.7%	8
Composting Toilets		18.6%	32
Greywater Harvesting		29.1%	50
Passive Solar		40.7%	70
Permaculture		41.9%	72
Rainwater harvesting		**60.5%**	**104**
Solar water heating		31.4%	54
Other (please specify)			86

Table 11 – Sustainable Technology Use

Green tech and permaculture featured prominently in the environmental actions communities had taken. These include the use of green technologies for energy and water use reduction, alternative energy generation, living off-grid, and sustainable food production practices. These were all part of a broader commitment to simple living and waste reduction that many communities strongly participated in. Some communities went further in their commitments by becoming zero-waste communities and eliminating the need for garbage collection from their local municipality.

In Question #22, respondents were asked to specify what green technologies were used by their community. Rainwater harvesting (60.5%) was the most commonly used green technology or practice, followed by solar generation (44.8%), permaculture (41.9%), passive solar heating and cooling (40.7%), solar water heating (31.4%) and greywater harvesting (29.1%). Less common practices and technologies included composting toilets (18.6%), geothermal (11%) and wind generation (4.7%). Other answers include aquaponics (2), biodiesel vehicles (2), composting and vermiculture (15), composting toilets (1), electric vehicles (2), extra insulation (10), micro-hydro generation (2), off-grid (1), pavement-free (1), radiant floor heating (3), rocket stove (1), solar oven (1), straw-bale construction (2) and wood gasification (1). Regulatory hurdles are a recurring problem for some communities wanting to install green technologies. One respondent noted that "municipal regulations make much of this difficult or impossible," while another echoed similar sentiments: "we wanted to do these, but were restricted by finances and municipal regulations."

The commitment to sustainability by intentional communities was also demonstrated through food production and diet. 52.6% of intentional communities

encouraged or subscribed to a local diet and 51.8% to organic diets. 32.8% and 24.1% of

intentional communities encouraged or subscribed to vegetarianism or veganism

respectively, while 28.5% sought to eat GMO-free diets. 79.2% of communities

produced a portion of their own food, however many communities reported minuscule

amounts, ranging from 1-5%. Most of these were urban intentional communities with

limited access to suitable land for urban agriculture. Communities located in rural areas

grew as much as 100% of the food they consumed on site. Connections should be made

between rural and urban intentional communities, through CSAs, food coops and other

partnerships, that will mutually benefit both communities. Such ventures would provide

urban communities with improved access to healthy, organic local foods while allowing

rural communities to generate some income.

43. Does your community encourage or subscribe to any particular dietary restrictions? Please select all that apply.		Response Percent	Response Count
Omnivorous (plans and animals)		51.1%	70
Mostly Vegetarian		37.2%	51
Vegetarian		32.8%	45
Vegan		24.1%	33
Organic		51.8%	71
GMO-Free		28.5%	39
Raw/Mostly-Raw		6.6%	9
Local		**52.6%**	**72**
Religious dietary restrictions (Kosher, Halal, etc.)		4.4%	6
Other (please describe)			95

Table 12 – Diets

Question #26 asked: What specific actions, campaigns, or initiatives does your intentional community participate in that demonstrates your commitment to social and/or environmental justice? Similarly, Question #37 asked: What role does you intentional community play within the activist community in your city/town/region? Many communities support social aid and the work of other organizations, including through hosting events and fundraisers and allowing outside organizations to use their space for meetings and organizing. Many individual members are involved in community organizing and with local, national and intentional non-profit organizations outside of the intentional community. Organizations listed include Amnesty International, Food Not Bombs, Move On, Occupy Movement, Greenpeace, Council of Canadians, Christian Peacemaker Teams, Transition Town movement, local environmental groups and local anti-poverty groups such as the OCAP (Ontario Coalition Against Poverty), and protest groups such as the Raging Grannies. Numerous social movements were also indicated, including:

(1) Peace movement activism, including support for war resisters, faith-based peace activism and anti-drone activism;

(2) Environmental movement activism, including organizing against nuclear power, fracking, deforestation, and climate change related issues such as stopping new oil and gas pipelines such as Kinder-Morgan;

(3) Food movement activism related to agricultural production and permaculture, the promotion of organic and local food, slow food diets, vegetarianism/veganism, and dumpster diving;

(4) Social justice movement activism including immigrant and refugee rights and support, anti-prison pipeline (prison reform, prisoner support, prison abolition), solidarity activism with first nations, social equity, reproductive justice, LGBTQ+ rights, anti-human trafficking and anti-globalization (e.g. G-8 protests);

(5) Anti-poverty activism, including advocacy for affordable housing and homelessness relief, organizing a local transit riders union;

(6) Housing movement activism included involvement with local, region, national and international housing organizations, including cooperative housing, cohousing and ecovillage organizations and networks.

Residents participate and help organize a wide variety of activities and initiatives that help enrich the social fabric of their wider communities. These include events, such as local community festivals, arts and music festivals, community potlucks, Seedy Saturdays, and workshops. Initiatives founded or supported include a local literary society, operating community gardens, food cooperatives, vegan restaurants, CSAs (Community Supported Agriculture), DIY bike repair, environmental education centres, a local indie non-profit radio station and a free store. Social movement solidary included participating in protests, rallies and marches, participating in local/regional collectives, providing legal support for activists, and activist videomaking. These communities also often acted as guesthouses for activists, travellers and the homeless; some also provided direct financial and goods support to the poor. One respondent from The International Society for Krishna Consciousness (Hare Krishnas) said their communities are establishing 'devotee care' social programs. Many intentional communities were

established with the primary purpose of creating affordable housing, including supportive housing, for low-income individuals, seniors and those with disabilities — this fact should not be discounted, as many in such communities are limited in what outside participation they could provide for creating social changes. Political involvement was also indicated by numerous respondents, including lobbying efforts to change or establish municipal by-laws or state/provincial/federal legislation and involvement in the Green Party. Within communities, many offered public tours and skills-building workshops, socially responsible investing of community assets, and a few indicated their residences shared finances.

While most communities indicated some collective activities related to environmental and social justice, most of this important work was done by individual community members' involvement with many different organizations and causes. Some communities choose not to commit as a community to any causes, but still choose to offer support to community members and outside organizations for environmental and social justice. A number of communities hosted the offices of a charitable, non-profit or activist organization. Organizations housed on premise that were named include the Canadian Worker Coop Federation, Catholic Peace Fellowship, Leaf for Life (nutrition education NGO), Fellowship for Intentional Community, Sirius (environmental education NGO), Arm-Of-The-Sea Theater, a women's shelter, an NGO that provides home repair and gardening services to low income households and a local environmental NGO. Few communities indicated no participation what-so-ever in environmental and social justice.

Communities with particular political ideologies, primarily anarchism or progressivism, or religious leanings, such as Catholic Workers, Jesuits, Pagans,

Mennonite, Quakers, Unitarian Universalists or the United Church of Canada,

observingly had deeper commitments to social and environmental justice by the depth

and breath of the activities they organized or participated in. One respondent observed:

"We do have several Unitarian Universalists living here. There seems to be a

philosophical fit with Unitarianism and intentional community." Politically, another

respondent noted: "no one has found a Republican living in cohousing." Faith and

politics can serve as powerful motivators for social and environmental justice. Many of

these intentional communities were founded with the purpose of serving others, either by

providing social programs or through activist organizing — most often by younger folks.

Progressive faith and political communities should take note of this phenomenon as a

successful means of organizing. Many dwindling progressive faith groups should

consider forming intentional communities as means of involving younger people.

Younger people are increasingly leaving organized religion, viewing religion as

irrelevant to their lives — Rev. Howard Bess believes churches are out-of-touch with the

progressive values of younger people, are too rigid and dogmatic in their teachings, and

are no longer involved in community work and social justice.[102] Faith-based intentional

communities provide a means to demonstrate faith-based action, while providing

affordable collective housing and support for like-minded young people of progressive

faiths. There is even a multi-denominational collective house, Faith House in Ottawa,

that can serve as a model for similar houses.

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[102] Howard Bess. "Are We Becoming an Atheist Nation? 3 Reasons Young People Are Abandoning Religion." AlterNet. 28 Nov 2010. Web. <http://www.alternet.org/story/149002/are_we_becoming_an_atheist_nation_3_reasons_young_people_are _abandoning_religion?paging=off&current_page=1>.

Intentional communities attract people who are already involved in activism and social change and those who are more open to getting involved. Further, they facilitate further involvement by creating a shared environment with likeminded people. This motivates people to become involved or increase their involvement. Intentional communities provide an environment that allows for cross-pollination and networking amongst social change agents. It also becomes easier to get involved, as you have likeminded individuals nearby and you have available space for meetings, events, workshops, brainstorming, etc. This makes intentional communities dangerous to the established order, as it would allow people wishing to create social change a venue to easily organize and mobilize.

What could be done to improve the commitment?

Survey participants were asked what could be done to increase and improve involvement of intentional community residents in social and environmental justice causes. Question #41 asks: If you feel the commitment to social and environmental justice is lacking within your intentional community, what changes or actions would you recommend to increase the commitment to social and environmental justice? Dialogue and talking more were the most commonly given responses. However, the respondents each provided different takes on what they felt was important about dialogue. Some felt regularly scheduled opportunities to talk were important. Some emphasized the process of getting to know each other and reaching a level of mutual understanding. Others proposed asking important questions, such as what are our communal values and beliefs, and asking what is important and what are we doing here. Some felt the complete opposite though, stating that too much talking was occurring and not enough action.

Stratmann, Ferreiro and Narayan recommend on-going engagement, visioning and strategic planning, and the development of a strategic action plan to ensure follow through.[103]

Many suggested improvements to the community itself, including making the commitment more explicit in their mission statement, more educational events such as film screenings, adopting environmental and social policies (e.g. zero-waste), implementing new green technology, sustainable food and agriculture production, more on-site food production, housing outside non-profit community and activist organizations and establishing a fund to allow low-income people to live in the community. Some suggested improving individual choices within the community by making it easier to make conscious choices related to food and energy usage. The establishment of environmental and social justice initiatives was also suggested, such as car sharing, free stores and community kitchens. Structural changes were also frequently mentioned, including establishing a committee to address environmental and social justice issues, improving the selection of like-minded residents, and making participation in environmental and social justice a requirement of residency. These types of commitments are crucial to preserve the commitment to environmental and social justice long-term.

Overall, respondents believed in the potential of intentional communities to effect wider social changes. Says one respondent: "That we meet and be clear about what we think of the world, what we have done here [at our community] and see if there are things

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[103] Judith Stratmann, Laura Weiss Ferreiro & Rumy Narayan. <u>Towards Sustainability - Analysis of Collaborative Behaviour in Urban Cohousing.</u> Thesis. Karlskrona, Sweden: Blekinge Institute of Technology, 2013.

that we believe we could work on collaboratively, given our physical resources, and trust

that is here from us living in close proximity. I believe we could do a lot." Another

noted the ability of an intentional community to fertilize individuals to create projects and

initiatives outside in the wider community. Forster and Wilhelmus note in their study of

the famous Scottish ecovillage Findhorn that a number of key individuals played a role in

the development of the community and its environmental commitment.[104] Fostering

initiative and leadership in the structure and education can help create an environment

where more people can step forward into leadership roles in the community.

One respondent indicated that as members integrate more with the community

and leave their former lives as urban workers behind they are increasingly able to

participate in such activities. As time passes and residents integrate and settle into the

community, the ability of intentional communities to fertilize activism and community

involvement becomes more evident; less stressful lives, like-minded individuals who

provide supports, greater awareness and access to broader networks, educational

opportunities, space access and proximity all contribute towards an environment more

suited towards activist and community organizing. The contributions provided by

intentional community residents to their wider communities are invaluable. These

contributions enrich the lives of everyone in the wider community through the

community initiatives and local activism. Intregrating new members needs to be a

priority for all intentional communities. Providing new residents with a mentor, personal

invitations to community events (to allow intregration and networking), making new

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[104] Peter M. Forster and Marijke Wilhelmus. "The Role of Individuals in Community Change Within the Findhorn Intentional Community." Contemporary Justice Review: Issues in Criminal, Social, and Restorative Justice, 8.4 (2005): 367-379.

members aware of both the collective and individual involvement with social and environmental issues via new member orientations and ongoing educational workshops, and providing on-going education were all recommended suggestions for increasing our participation in social justice and environmental movements.

One factor that requires further analysis in the locality of an intentional community and how it positively or negatively affects the intentional community. Commenting on the growing gentrification of a large global city, one participant of an activist house states: "Moving the community to a more affordable city or town, preferably one with a university, as we could develop a connection to the activists at the school. A community needs to either [sic] explicitly have social and environmental justice as their core purpose, or they need to be located near a centre of activism (a university, a sizeable urban centre, etc.) in order to be connected to broader social movements and stay connected to them." Local, regional and national factors can affect a community's ability to survive, its connections to broader social movements, its ability to be self-reliant and much more.

5.8. Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Demographics

Issues of equity and inclusion need to be addressed when discussing intentional communities in the context of social and environmental justice. This is especially true when it comes to particular types of intentional communities, such as ecovillages, cohousing and communes, which critics contend lacks diversity. Professor Tendai Chitewere raises the concern that intentional communities will repeat the mistakes of the

environmental movement and merely become defined by the experiences of the white, middle-class.[105] She states: "Ecovillages as they are currently designed and situated embody white privilege" — she argues that intentional communities must address equity and justice concerns and that intentional communities must be linked to broader environmental justice issues and social movements, rather than merely being individualistic and focusing on living a green lifestyle.[106] In addressing this situation, we must look at the factors that result in many North American intentional communities becoming enclaves of middle-class and upper-class white people, including them having the means to purchase and the free time to organize. Systemic inequality and racism needs to be addressed through activism in order to ensure favourable policies and financing is available to establish affordable housing for people of all means.

The communities in the survey averaged about 64 residents (of 237 respondents to the question). The recommended density for ecovillages is under 500 people,[107] and between 12 and 36 dwellings for cohousing.[108] However, I argue that challenging the notions of density attached to particular types of intentional communities (cohousing and ecovillages) is necessary if these types of communities are to remain affordable in regions where gentrification is a problem. Housing cooperatives have no such limit, with some survey respondents reporting having over one thousand residents. We must face a reality that the economic limitations of living in a world where land increasingly becomes objects of capitalist speculation will result in a scarcity of affordable places to live.

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[105] Tendai Chitewere. "Equity in Sustainable Communities: Exploring Tools from Environmental Justice and Political Ecology." Natural Resources Journal, 50 (2010): 315-339.
[106] Ibid. 339.
[107] Michael Blouin. The Urban Ecovillage Experiment: The Stories of Six Communities that Hoped to Change the World. Unpublished paper. Claremont, CA: Pomona College, 2007.
[108] Chris ScottHanson & Kelly ScottHanson. The Cohousing Handbook: Building A Place for Community, Revised Edition. Gabriola Island, British Columbia, Canada: New Society Publishers, 2005. 4.

Commitment to the inclusion of affordable units can no longer be a nice option, but must become a necessity for all intentional communities.

The survey posed five questions related to equity and inclusion. Question #62 asks respondents to estimate the age range of their fellow residents. Question #63 requested the respondent estimate, in percentages, the ethnicity of the residents of their community. Question #64 asks if the respondent's community is welcoming of LGBTQ+ residents. Question #65 similarly asks if their community is welcoming of those who are polyamorous. The final question, Question #66, asks what policies or actions does the intentional community have in place in order to address issues of equity and inclusion.

Age

Intentional Communities have residents from all age brackets. At 26.67%, the 18-29 demographic was reported as the highest portions of residents. This is likely due to student housing cooperatives being almost exclusively geared towards this age bracket and collective houses reporting significantly higher portion of residents in this age bracket. The lowest reported bracket were children and youth ages 0-17. This result is more difficult to explain, as intentional community life is ideally suited for families with children. The most reasonable explanation is that the growing number of niche intentional communities geared towards seniors, students or persons with a disability skewed the results. It could also reflect declines in the birth rate of non-immigrant Canadians and Americans. Another possible explanation could be the higher response rate received from young adults, childless individuals and empty-nesters who had more free time to complete the online survey.

62. Please rank, in percentages, the age range of the residents of your intentional community. Estimate if needed.

	Response Average	Response Total	Response Count
60+	23.10	3,096	134
45-59	22.57	3,047	135
30-44	20.16	2,843	141
18-29	**26.67**	**3,574**	134
0-17	13.93	1,713	123
		answered question	161

Table 13 – Age of Residents

	I.C. Response	U.S. Population	Canadian Population
Caucasian	82.36%	63.7%	76.7%
African	5.23%	12.2%	2.9%
East Asian	6.45%	4.7%	7.6%
South Asian	4.61%		4.8%
Hispanic	6.10%	16.4%	1.2%
Arab	1.26%	-	1.8%
Aboriginal/Native	2.46%	0.7%	4.3%
Polynesian/Pacific Islander	1.00%	0.2%	-
Mixed	5.66%	2.9%	0.5%
Other	2.64%	6.2%	0.3%

Table 14: Comparison of survey responses to U.S. and Canadian census data on population

63. Please rank, in percentages, the ethnicity of the residents of your intentional community Estimate if needed.

		Response Average	Response Total	Response Count
Caucasian		82.36	13,425	163
African		5.23	293	56
East Asian		6.45	413	64
South Asian		4.61	249	54
Hispanic		6.10	384	63
Arab		1.26	39	31
Aboriginal/Native		2.46	91	37
Polynesian/Pacific Islander		1.00	23	23
Mixed		5.66	317	56
Other		2.64	66	25
		answered question		163

Table 15 – Ethnicity of Residents

Ethnicity

In comparison with the population of the United States and Canada, intentional communities have a higher Caucasian resident population than both countries. Intentional communities have 18.66% more Caucasians on average than the U.S. population and 5.66% more than the Canadian population. The reported number of intentional community residents of African or Hispanic ethnicity were considerably lower than their percentage of the U.S. population, 6.97% and 10.3% lower respectively. This

reinforces the accusation made by some academics and activists that intentional communities are utopian enclaves of white people. I do not believe this accusation is true of all types of intentional communities. Some forms of intentional communities, such as housing coops and collective homes, are known for being diverse, however they only accounted for 29.9% of respondents. Further, I believe there is a geographic discrepancy, as most intentional communities are established in Canada, the U.S. Northeast and U.S. Northwest, which have lower populations of those of African or Hispanic ethnicities.

There are some statistical limitations to this question. It is difficult to make further statistical conclusions on the representation of other ethnicities in intentional communities as their numbers are small and statistically there is the potential of overestimating the percent of non-Caucasian minorities. There are also discrepancies between U.S. and Canadian census methods with regards to the reporting of ethnicity or race. For instance, the United States census does not include Arab as an ethnicity on their census and groups together East Asians, Southeast Asians and South Asians. Of the Hispanic population in the United States, 53% further identify as white, 42.7% as some kind of mix, 2.5% as black, 1.4% as Aboriginal and 0.4% as Asian.[109] Finally, if intentional communities were further divided by type, certain types of communities might statistically show significantly larger ethnic disproportions to the average populations of their country. In particular, cohousing and ecovillages need to address questions of diversity. Perhaps it is not merely the rural or suburban locales of many of these communities that effect their lack of diversity, but that each community needs to have an

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[109] Karen R. Humes, Nicholas A. Jones and Roberto R. Ramirez. Overview of Race and Hispanic Origin: 2010. Census Brief. Washington, DC: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010. Web. <http://www.census.gov/prod/cen2010/briefs/c2010br-02.pdf>.

internal dialogue amongst the membership as to what other factors might be limiting

diversity.

64. Is your community openly accepting and welcoming of homosexual and queer individuals?		Response Percent	Response Count
Yes		97.0%	160
No		3.0%	5

Table 16 – Acceptance of LGBTQ+

LGBTQ+

The survey showed overwhelming support for LGBTQ+ individuals, couples and

families. Most spirituality-focused communities also showed their support. Responses

also indicated that some communities were majority or entirely queer. Some respondents

mentioned their community explicitly indicates in promotional materials that they

encourage LGBTQ+ applications and are an accepting, 'queer-friendly' community that

does not tolerate discrimination. Of the few intentional communities that do not accept

homosexual and queer people, most cited religious reasons.

Polyamory

65. Is your community openly accepting and welcoming of those in polyamorous relationships?		Response Percent	Response Count
Yes		59.7%	77
No		40.3%	52

Table 17 – Acceptance of Polyamory

Polyamory is a broad term which is used to describe people who "openly conduct sexual relationships with multiple partners."[110] Polyamorous relationships are "openly conducted, emotionally and/or sexually intimate connections among numerous people."[111] Polyamory is not swinging, nor is it religious-based polygyny (the practice of one man marrying multiple woman) — polyamory is loving, egalitarian relationships between three or more people. Polyamory includes open relationships, emotional and/or sexual, and polyfidelity, where individuals in the relationship "remain sexually exclusive within a group that is larger than two people."[112] Polyfidelity is also practiced commonly amongst neo-pagan religions such as Wicca. It should be noted that some polyamorous relationships include asexuals and is often exclusively non-sexual. Many see the various forms of polyamory and the "practice of intentional non-monogamy" as "part of a larger cultural conversation questioning heteronormative monogamy."[113] Various forms of polyamory have historically been more common than monogamy in many places. According to the Ethnographic Atlas, an annual publication started by the internationally renowned anthropologist George Murdock, of 1,231 societies listed, 186 were monogamous, 453 had occasional polygyny and 588 had more frequent polygyny; another study identified 53 societies (in addition to 28 previously identified) where polyandry, the practice of one woman marrying multiple men, is practiced.[114] [115]

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[110] Elisabeth Sheff. "An Introduction To Polyamory: Definitions, Terminology and Details." Society for Sex Therapy and Research 32rd Annual Meeting, March 8-11 2007, Atlanta, Georgia. Washington, DC: Society for Sex Therapy and Research, 2007.
[111] Ibid.
[112] Ibid.
[113] Melita J. Noël. "Progressive Polyamory: Considering Issues of Diversity." Sexualities, 9.5 (2006): 602-620.
[114] J. Patrick Grey. "Etnographic Atlas Codebook." World Cultures, 10.1 (1999): 86-136.
[115] Katherine E. Starkweather and Raymond Hames. "A survey of non-classical polyandry." Human Nature, 23.2 (2012): 149-172.

Author and simple living advocate Ernest Callenbach states: "In the long sweep of human history, the nuclear family will probably be seen as a very brief aberration, brought about by the special needs of industrial capitalism and the isolated suburban living made possible by cars, but insufficient for nurturing and supporting human beings."[116] Polyamory and polyfidelity are often seen as futuristic and part of the liberal progressive trend that societal attitudes are moving towards.[117] Some go so far as to argue for an environmental case for polyamory. Sexuality scholar and author Serena Anderlini-D'Onofrio argues in her book *Gaia and the New Politics of Love: Notes for a Poly Planet*, that practice of polyamory has a remarkable transformational ability. The increased love and trust in our polyamorous relationships, the biochemical effect achieved, and the new perspectives that make us more aware of our place in this world and the fragility of our environment all can help divert us from the destructive path that mainstream society is currently on and towards one that is sustainable and just.[118]

The difficulty with polyamory is that it poses a challenge to the dominant narratives of society of compulsory monogamy and heteronormativity. For too long polyamorous relationships have been stigmatized and marginalized. Our beliefs, identities, relationships and desires are social constructions shaped by the culture in which we live, and this in turn shapes our sexuality — this shapes how we come to understand ourselves using what concepts are available to us in our place and time.[119]

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[116] Ernest Callenbach. Ecotopian Encyclopaedia for the 80's: A Survival Guide for the Age of Inflation. Berkeley, CA: And/Or Press, 1980.

[117] Paul Chase. Neopaganism: A Twenty-First Century Synthesis of Spirituality and Nature. Thesis. Gainesville, FL: University of Florida, 2003. 59.

[118] Yehudis Schorr. "Gaia and the New Politics of Love: Notes for a Poly Planet, by Serena Anderlini-D'Onofrio." Book Review. Journal of Bisexuality, 10 (2010): 168-173.

[119] Ani Ritchie and Meg Barker. "'There Aren't Words for What We Do or How We Feel So We Have To Make Them Up': Constructing Polyamorous Languages in a Culture of Compulsory Monogamy." Sexualities, 9.5 (2006): 584-601.

In the media, hegemonic family narratives dominant, and what few portrayals of polyamorist individuals exist are inaccurate and stereotypical.[120] The greater danger exists to ones personal life — "Currently Americans' sexual choices carry enormous impacts on their legal, economic, health and parental rights."[121] The North American context, particular in the United States, is concerning for those practicing polyamory; says one British polyamorist: "[British] people might disapprove, but they won't try to mess up your life. In America, they might call social services."[122]

Polyamory is more commonly found within intentional communities than elsewhere. Most famously, the Kerista Commune was a group of collective houses and flats of practicing polyfidelitists in New York City's Lower East Side, and later the Height-Ashbury neighbourhood of San Francisco.[123] Other polyamorists intentional communities include Sandstone (1969-1976, Los Angeles, CA), Brook Farm (1841-1847, Boston, MA), Oneida Community communes (1848-1881, primarily New York state), and Nashoba Commune (1825-1828, Germantown, TN). Many other well-known intentional communities openly accept polyamorists, such as Dancing Rabbit (Rutledge, MO) and Twin Oaks (Louisa, VA). However, many intentional communities still reject those who openly practice polyamory. 40.3% of respondents said their communities do not accept those in polyamorous relationships.

The potential illegality in the United States is mentioned by respondents as one possible reason to deny polyamorists residents in their community — polyamory is no

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[120] Ibid.
[121] Noël.
[122] Helena Echlin. "When two just won't do." The Guardian. 14 Nov 2003. Web. <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2003/nov/14/gender.uk>.
[123] Kerista Commune. "History of the Kerista Commune." Kerista Village Handbook. San Francisco, CA: Kerista Village, 1979. Web. <http://www.kerista.com/herstory.html>.

longer illegal in Canada, but in a legal grey area after a 2011 British Columbia Supreme

Court ruling. Some respondents repeated stereotypes and misconceptions about

polyamory by generalizing previous negative experiences with polyamorists as a

justification for their opposition:

> In my experience, these are unstable relationships; whereas I accept the concept that they may be stable and long-lasting, I have enough doubt to be personally skeptical about accepting such a household into the community.

> We lived with a poly woman who aggressively hit on every guy member and visiting guy… We lived with a poly man who preyed on multiple women, and then he got involved in a [member] couple who were breaking up. So in our experience living with poly people leads to drama and violation of others' boundaries. In general we have found that the couples (poly or not) we accept need to be secure and pretty stable, otherwise that instability leaks out and affects the whole community. So I wouldn't totally rule it out, but in general, it's a red flag.

> I personally don't believe in this kind of arrangement, and the only times I have seen people trying this it has only resulted in lots of conflict and eventual break-up at the expense of those involved and those around them.

Many faith-based intentional communities also rejected polyamory citing religious

restrictions, while other faith-based communities had other restrictions on who could live

that would make polyamory difficult or impossible (e.g. limited to married monogamist

couples, monasteries of celibate individuals, or restrictions of sexual activity while living

in the community).

 Some respondents provided mixed answers, both for and against polyamory. One

intentional community respondent, while indicating their community's acceptance of

polyamorists, said: "I do not think their lifestyle was 100% accepted." A couple of

respondents indicated they had no idea what polyamory is. Many communities

mentioned that the issue has not come up yet, and as such cannot provide an official

position. Interestingly, perhaps as a reflection of American individualism, many indicted that polyamory and what others did in their bedroom was none of their business.

With regards to experience, a few communities indicated they were entirely polyamorous, either currently or at one point. Many communities had polyamorous families or members in polyamorous relationships, and some had founders or leaders that were polyamorous. One respondent proudly indicated: "Our society would be way better off if polyamorous and polyfideltious relationships were the norm."

Addressing issues of discrimination against those who are polyamorous and transforming polyamory from a pathologized to normalized practice will have to take place primarily on a societal level. We live in a mononormative society as a result of cultural hegemony of cultures and religions not accepting of the practice, particularly the monotheistic Abrahamic religions, which all but Islam forbid any form of poly relationship. Even within Islam, polygamy is marginalized and stigmatized amongst more progressive strains of Islam. Our modern society further pathologizes poly relationships with attacks coming from all fronts — from atheists and second-wave feminists who see religious-based forms of poly relationships as an affront to women's rights, to fundamentalists Christians who oppose poly relationships on religious grounds, to liberal Muslims who view polygamy as oppressive. Those who practice polyamory are unfortunately often grouped together both legally and in the media with religious-based polygamy. Committed forms of poly relationships, whether it be polyfidelity (non-religious commitment), polygamy (one man, many wives), polyandry (one woman, many husbands), or group marriages are most commonly attacked by these groups, while open forms of polyamory are more tolerated by the general public as fundamental to our sexual

civil liberties. The irony of the current dominant societal attitude towards polyamory is that cheating or sleeping around casually (and often callously) with however many people is much more accepted in our society, but loving committed relationships between three or more individuals is criminalized and greatly stigmatized. Despite polyfidelity being egalitarian and mostly non-religious, shaming against committed poly relationships is common from both liberals and conservatives, as for many individuals poly is an issue that comes too close to home, as many probably think along the lines of: If my husband/wife/partner wanted a poly relationship, it would upset me greatly and I could not tolerate it.

Those challenging our dominant understandings of poly relationships are an odd-mix of liberal and conservative-libertarian elements, including sex-positive third-wave feminists, queers, neo-pagans, civil libertarians, voluntarists, anarchists, Young Liberal Muslims and Young Greens. Civil libertarians, anarchists and voluntarists support basic freedoms, including sexual freedoms, freedom of association, and the freedom to marry whoever you choose. Article 6.2 of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights states: "Marriage shall be entered into only with the free and full consent of the intending spouses" — spouses not spouse.[124] Queers are sexual and gender minorities outside of the dominant heterosexual or gender-binary definitions; usage of the term Queer is meant to assert a political and sexual/gender identity outside of the current socially accepted and dominant ideas about sex and gender. Neo-pagans religions are reasserting pre-monotheistic religious practices and beliefs, including the practice of various forms of committed and non-committed polyamory. Young Liberal Muslims

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[124] United Nations. "The Universal Declaration of Human Rights." <u>United Nations</u>. 1948. Web. <http://www.un.org/en/documents/udhr/index.shtml>.

(YLMs) is a recent phenomenon of feminist, queer-positive and poly tolerant young

Muslims; they support LGBTQ+ rights and queer members of their community, and they

believe it is up to each Muslim woman to decide for herself on questions such as whether

she wears a hijab or chooses to marry a man with another wife. Young Greens are young

people involved with Green Parties around the world, such as in Australia, Canada,

Germany and Sweden, whom have attempted to pass party policy supporting the

decriminalization and/or legalizations of polyamorous relationships.[125] The prospect of

the acceptance of polyamory seems eventually likely in highly developed countries in

Northern and Western Europe and Commonwealth nations such as Canada, Australia and

New Zealand.

Inclusion and equity

Issues of inclusion and equity need to be formally addressed if those intentional

communities that are utopian enclaves of privileged white people are to become

something more. The question then becomes how would a community, either established

or forming, go about addressing these issues? We can look to communities that have

already engaged in processes and created formal policies that address issues such as

discrimination, diversity, inclusion and equity; but beyond that, it needs to become more

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[125] Alan MacDonald. "Canada: Green Party votes down polygamy law repeal." Polyamory in the News.
22 Aug 2010. Web. <http://polyinthemedia.blogspot.ca/2010/08/canada-greens-may-push-to-decriminalize.html>;
VEXNEWS. "BIG LOVE: Greensparty polyamorists push for equality in Marriage Act." VEXNEWS. 4
March 2013. Web. <http://www.vexnews.com/2013/03/big-love-greensparty-polyamorists-push-for-equality-in-marriage-act/>;
Gudmundson. "Queer miljöpolitik." Gudmundson. 28 July 2004. Web.
<http://gudmundson.blogspot.com/2004/07/queer-miljpolitik.html>;
Julio Lambing. "Geschichte der polyamoren Bewegung in Deutschland, Österreich und Schweiz."
Polyamory.de. N.d. Web. <http://www.polyamory.de/geschichte-der-polyamoren-bewegung-deutschland-%C3%B6sterreich-und-schweiz>;
GRÜNEN JUGEND. "Queer dir deine Welt - Queere Resolution 2013." GRÜNEN JUGEND. 24 March
2013. Web. <http://www.gruene-jugend.de/node/17429#gothere>.

of a priority. Says one respondent: "I don't think we are very good at achieving the diversity we'd like to have." Says another: "We discussed the need for intentional inclusion, but we failed to make it a priority."

The mission statement and by-laws of the community should have provisions addressing these issues. Policy changes are another good place to start. The adoption of anti-discrimination policies, either written and explicit or implicit through the values of the existing and would-be members, would help towards establishing a culture of inclusion and equity. I include implicitly, as many communities shun formal processes and policies, preferring a motto of live and let live. Many respondents indicated such views, with one stating: "We're more about conversations than policies." Many communal houses lack formal policies and procedures due to their small size and often limited existence. One respondent stated their community's response to discrimination is that "sexist, racist, homophobic, transphobic and polyphobic comments are not tolerated. Anyone who makes such comments are asked to leave." A variety of reasons were given why these issues lacked the need for more formal process. Religious principles were cited as a reason for discrimination not occurring. One respondent specifically mentioned that "social pressures ensures there is no discrimination." Many mentioned shared values prevent it, while others cited individualism and a respect for "autonomy and self-determination." A handful mentioned the U.S. Fair Housing Act prevents discrimination, implying no such policies with the community are needed.

Formal procedures and policies are viewed as a doubled-edged sword, though I prefer to see them as a paradox. On one hand they encode universality and fairness, on the other, they take away the human element and deny the uniqueness of each situation to

be judged and dealt with according to its unique circumstances. The question should not be whether or not to establish formal policies and procedures, but how can policies and procedures be created in a way that respects the uniqueness of each circumstance. A community of people who are close to each other can make better assessments on the circumstances and offer solutions that remedy a situation rather than targeting and punishing the individual offender. Such a holistic approach seeks to get at the root of the problem. Remedies could include sharing circles, facilitated anti-oppression/anti-racism training, or community-wide summits.

One issue related to policy change is who has the power to make these changes. In most cases, it was a board of directors, a committee, or the general members, but for some respondents, this is not clear in their community. Clear procedures for issues such as interpersonal grievances and conflicts need to be set in place in order to avoid unnecessary escalation. Education should be a key policy itself in order to address members and potential members who may possess non-inclusive attitudes. Communities also need to look at how they screen and admit members, selecting members they believe would respect the values of the community. Some stated that currently "anyone can move in" to their intentional community as units sold or rented openly on the free market with no screenings or restrictions.

Decision-making and meeting processes are another place that can be designed to foster inclusion and equity. Consensus-based methods (if members are properly trained in them) and the absence of hierarchy in decision-making would bring more marginalized voices to the table, allowing them to participate in the design of policies that will affect them. Some communities reported strong policies and procedures aimed at inclusion and

equity. These included having an equity code, requiring new members to undergo anti-oppression training, and ongoing education. Other communities reported already having a high degree of diversity; says one respondent: "We've never had to do anything formal about it, [as] we're a bunch of queer polyamorous pagans."

Gaining diversity is a trickier subject. Without preexisting diversity, those from minority backgrounds may be hesitant to join such a community. One intentional community resident stated: "By happenstance, the four founding members all identified and presented as male, so we had a hard time finding any women to join the co-op." One resident mentioned their community advertises for new members in media specific to minority communities (e.g. African-American, LGBTQ+, etc.)

Diversity in individuals from a variety of income levels is another issue inherent in intentional communities. While some intentional communities, such as housing co-ops, communal houses and catholic worker homes, are designed to include those with lower income, however many ecovillages and cohousing developments have become enclaves of upper-middle class white people. One recommendation that some intentional communities have established is an affordability fund to assist low-income earners. Ultimately, however, for intentional communities to be made available to poor on a larger scale, a rebirth of the affordable housing movement needs to organize and mobilize in order to obtain land, grants and financing from government.

A key part of inclusion is building community. Many respondents commented on things their community already does or that they would have them do to build community. Practices and suggestions include community dinners, regular emotional check-ins at meetings for resident members, open dialogue on all issues, conflict-avoidance

techniques (e.g. using 'I' statements, avoiding blaming/judging any individual), training in communications and anti-oppression, and allowing all the opportunity to speak (e.g. pass-the-stick method). One respondent suggested the creation of a forum for the "airing of feelings."

In order to address discrimination, individuals need to realize the importance of self-reflexivity. Activist academic Kamilla Pietrzyk argues that those engaged in environmentalism and social justice need to be self-reflexive; she states "Reflexive thought needs to be at the forefront of contemporary activism if activists are to develop the kind of intellectual and creative capacities necessary to correctly identify and analyze the deeply rooted systemic problems of capitalism as well as their own biases."[126] Reflexivity would help to reduce discrimination and promote understanding, particularly towards polyamorous individuals. Polyamory faces greater hurdles, as there is a lack of real and honest portrayals of poly- people in the media and mainstream culture that the general public could relate to on a human level, thus the onus is placed on those who are poly- and their allies to educate others, generate awareness, and establish dialogue to demonstrate they are normal human beings that just happen to have different romantic and sexual orientations and lifestyles. Intentional communities can do their part by including anti-discrimination training in orientations for new members that includes a section on polyamorous relationships and the discrimination they face (which can be contrasted to mononormativity), in addition to sections addressing all other forms of discrimination, racial, gender or otherwise.

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[126] Kamilla Pietrzyk. "Activism in the Fast Lane: Social Movements and the Neglect of Time." Fast Capitalism, 7.1 (2010). Web. <http://www.uta.edu/huma/agger/fastcapitalism/7_1/pietrzyk7_1.html>.

6. Conclusions and Recommendations

The conclusion will examine each of the three research questions, providing a final analysis and recommendations:

(1) How can intentional communities be established in late capitalism, where property ownership, real estate speculation and land ownership concentration has lead to both high urban and rural land values and where cookie-cutter developments are favoured in zoning and by-laws? In navigating the complex relationship with capitalism, can autonomous spaces still be established? If so, what are the costs financially and otherwise; how much compromise with capitalism and the state is necessary in the establishment of intentional communities?

Author Diana Leafe Christian claims that almost 90% of forming communities fail because of financial difficulties, internal conflict, or both.[127] High property values and the lack of available land in high demand areas make it exceedingly difficult to establish intentional communities that are affordable in many jurisdictions. As noted in the survey results, communities with established relationships to organizations, faith groups and government received considerable assistance and support towards establishing their communities. Relationship building and education are essential, more so in gentrified environments. Without the support of the wider community and the buy-in of key influencers or decision-makers, the venture will become difficult to achieve. Government, government agencies, non-profit organizations, labour unions, educational institutions and religious groups often have available land and possibly even funding or financing that could be provided. In particular, the intentional community movement

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[127] Diana Leafe Christian. <u>Creating a Life Together: Practical Tools to Grow Ecovillages and Intentional Communities</u>. Gabriola Island, BC: New Society Publishers, 2003.

would benefit from strengthening its relationship to the labour union movement and other cooperatives. Historically, the labour movement and more progressive Christian denominations have helped to develop, fund and provide land to housing cooperatives. In Ontario, Canada, the few new housing cooperatives to be developed since the funding cuts of the early nineteen-nineties are the result of such partnerships. Examples include 60 Richmond East in Toronto, which was developed in partnership with the UNITE HERE Local 75 labour union, and the Grand House Student Housing Cooperative in Cambridge, Ontario, which was supported and funded by the Canadian Alternative Investment Cooperative, an alternative investment fund established by progressive faith groups. The possibility of joint ventures between two or more such entities with the goal of establishing an intentional community should be examined where appropriate. Similarly, groups should seek out likeminded financiers or developers. Credit unions, union pension plans and alternative investment funds such as the Canadian Alternative Investment Cooperative are progressive, community-oriented and committed to social and environmental justice. Finding a similarly minded developer or construction firm is more difficult as few exist, as most design cookie cutter residential developments and aim to cost-cut where possible. Rural communities could employ sustainable construction methods, such as strawbale, compacted earth, earthships and cordwood, which can be completed with volunteer labour, avoiding a developer all together. Urban communities should look into developing a relationship with green architects, as they often have established relationships with smaller construction firms more likely to be adaptable to green construction methods, materials and technologies. Establishing groups in both rural and urban locations should aim to establish communities where it is more affordable

and not in gentrified areas. In particular, cities that serve as global centres of commerce will likely lead to fruitless efforts — look instead to the surrounding region for more affordable opportunities.

Squatting is a political tactic that has been used successfully in Europe to gain control of abandoned buildings and turn them into intentional communities. However, the political culture in North America, especially the United States, makes success unlikely in all but the most progressive cities. Squatting has previously been successful when a group would squat an abandoned municipal building with a progressive city council in power that would be willing to turn over the property. Another similar tactic that can be employed by activists seeking to use abandoned properties — seeking a $1/year lease for the property from whoever holds the land, be it government, an educational or religious institution, labour union or a philanthropist. These would require some effort to educate the public, mobilize and lobby city officials to make a property turnover campaign successful.

Long-term intentional community activists from all forms of intentional communities need to unite together on their lobbying and organizing activities. Efforts should be made to lobby all levels of government to enact changes favourable to the creation and long-term viability of intentional communities. This includes new forms of legal recognition in some jurisdictions to recognize cohousing, the (re-)establishment of support programs for the creation of intentional communities, government funding, financing or access to financing via government provided mortgage insurance.

The other major factor influencing establishing groups is internal conflict. This can be mitigated or mediated through a number of measures. First, all intentional

communities should set out to have a clear vision and purpose early on — this may also include defining the approximate size of the community and the geographic scope of where the community might be established. Clearly defined conflict resolution and mediation processes should be in place in case conflict should arise. One area of particular focus should be meeting facilitation and procedures. Proper training in consensus-based methods and having a trained facilitator guide meetings can help prevent conflict from arising and maximize the effectiveness of time spent at meetings. Careful attention should also be given to how new members are brought into the group. Orientation sessions, ongoing mentorship and training in such subjects as anti-oppression, consensus-based decision-making and conflict resolution can help new members fully integrate into the group. Reaching out to established communities and choosing the best practices that fit ones' community can help achieve all of these measures.

There are some further considerations emerging groups should think over — unless there is strong support, emerging groups should consider getting involved in existing intentional communities. Alternatively, if there are similar emerging groups nearby considering merging if both groups are compatible. Many existing communities struggle to find new members. If needed, common ground can be reached by adapting the mission of the existing community to include the interests or values of the new members. Too often for emerging groups the matter seems to be more about control or the perceived image of the group or community. For those who take the time and sit down with others living in or interested in the intentional community lifestyle one will find great commonality in terms of the values, beliefs and outlooks.

Intentional communities, as autonomous spaces, can be successfully established in our current North American context with a minimal compromising of values. Intentional communities in less gentrified rural areas and those near centres of activism, be it a large city or a university, are the best locations to maximize autonomy. Rural areas provide more affordability and more autonomy in terms of agriculture, building methods and production. Universities and larger urban centres can provide the people power needed for intentional community growth and success, either through on-site residency or outside volunteer support, and provides greater opportunity for the community to stay connected to broader social movements.

(2) What are the factors that effect intentional communities commitment to social and environmental issues and participation in broader social and environmental movements? Are the factors that effect participation fixed, such as rural localities or demographic factors, or can connections be established and built towards sustained and engaged actions and movement participation?

In contrary to the popular perception of intentional communities being retreatist, rural utopian enclaves, most intentional communities are located in cities. These communities are embedded in modern urban life and involved in their local communities. This is not to say that utopianism, escapism or survivalist elements do not exist within the broad spectrum of the intentional community movement, but those communities are the minority. Understandably, urban locations are more desirable to most, as this is where most of the jobs, educational institutions and entertainment are located. Over half of the Earth's population now lives in cities and this trend is expected to continue into the

coming decades.[128] The difficulty with the urban is increasing gentrification resulting in

rising property values coupled with developers controlling any vacant land. This is

increasingly making it difficult to create intentional communities in urban environs, at

least communities that are accessible to all income brackets. David Harvey argues that

cities are now the central means of production, allowing capital accumulation for the rich

through rent and property-value speculation.[129] As such, we could increasingly see

gentrified cohousing projects catered towards elite creative class types, while those with

lesser incomes will be priced out of the market. Strategies to resolve these issues need to

be pursued. Lefebvre argues for a 'renewed right to the city' — urban people collectively

organizing and fighting for their right to exist and thrive within their city. As Lefebvre

states: "The right to the city cannot be conceived of as a simple visiting right or as a

return to traditional cities. It can only be formulated as a transformed and renewed right

to urban life."[130] Activists need to organize to challenge gentrification and

redevelopment, organize to use government owned land to establish affordable

intentional communities and other public benefit projects, and work towards government

establishing financing and grants to develop affordable housing. In the future, intentional

communities should become the standard for affordable housing and vice versa.

In relation to urbanism, Jane Jacobs argues that high density (approximately 100-

200 residential units per acre) with mid-rise developments is required for communities to

be vibrant, with less dense communities equated with stagnation, homogeneity and

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[128] United Nations. "World Urbanization Prospects, the 2011 Revision." United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs – Population Division. 7 Oct 2013. Web. <http://esa.un.org/unpd/wup/index.htm>.

[129] David Harvey. Rebel Cities: From the Right to the City to the Urban Revolution. London, UK: Verso, 2012.

[130] Henri Lefebvre. "Right to the city." Writings on the City. Eds. and Trans. Elenore Kofman and Elizabeth Lebas. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing (1996): 147-159. Originally published in 1968 as Le Droit à la ville [French].

boredom. [131] Similarly with intentional communities there is a critical level of density needed to maximize the benefits of communal life. This includes having a critical mass of resident members who can participate in community life, be it through chores, serving on committees, or participation in social activities. It means the ability to collectively reduce costs, and in doing so, allowing for the creation of some affordable housing units or an affordability fund for low-income residents. The collective purchasing power it affords also means more amenities within the community. Having more people also allows for collective ventures to take place which can generate income for resident members or the community. To me, all of these benefits take precedence over the claims of cohousing experts who assert a smaller population is better for the cultivation of community.

Cohousing has become the darling of the intentional community movement, dominating the imaginations of many experts — this despite the fact that other forms of intentional communities, particular housing cooperatives and collective homes, house the vast majority of people living in intentional communities. The irony is that while North American cohousing experts' purport low-density cohousing, many cohousing developments in Denmark, the birthplace of cohousing, exist in mid-rise developments. People now-a-days primarily form community around special interests, be it hobbies, politics, religion or recreational activities. An intentional community is no different. Teenagers will seek community with other teens, participating in activities such as group bike rides or music jams. Young adults, adults and seniors will gravitate to the activities

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[131] Jane Jacobs. The Death and Life of Great American Cities. New York, NY: Random House, 1961. Chapter 11;
David R. Hill. "Jane Jacobs' Ideas on Big, Diverse Cities: A Review and Commentary." Journal of the American Planning Association, 54.3 (1988): 302-314.

and interests that they have the ability to participate in and are interested in. Having larger communities allows for the cultivation of communities within community and ultimately enriches the experiences of all residents. This is not to say that our geographic community with our fellow residents is not also important, but that it will take place regardless through shared chores, communal dining and meetings — cohousing does this well and other intentional communities should adopt ideas from cohousing, such as a communal dining hall and communal meals in order to encourage community amongst all residents. This community however will not be the primary community of interest for most people. Residents will be most interested in those activities that they have a passion for and that give them purpose and will pursue as such, especially in urban environs where there is cornucopia of possible groups and activities to participate in. In one sense, intentional communities are creating socially conscious microcosms of the larger society. Allowing for different forms of low-cost and free activities, whether or not the activities directly relate to environmental or social justice participation, creates spaces where similarly minded individuals are socializing and creating community, thus the community as a whole is better able to act politically.

We need to adapt and merge principles of cohousing and ecovillages into the intentional communities that are more numerous and are able to house the most people — housing cooperatives and collective homes. We need to turn more housing cooperatives into 'living co-ops' — housing cooperatives with a commitment to the cultivation of community, environmental sustainability and social justice. We can do so by incorporating the communitarian and sustainability principles of cohousing and ecovillages, while reconnecting to broader social and labour movements. The housing

cooperative movement is overwhelmingly more widespread and organized than other forms of intentional communities and its roots can be traced to the progressive activism of Fabian socialists, the labour movement, student movement and the social gospel movements of mainline protestant religions. It is not a stretch that these ties can be strengthened or reconnected where they need to be and expanded into similarly minded communities, such as more progressive branches of Islam. Participation in social movements is essential, not just for creating a safer, cleaner and more just world, but for intentional communities to succeed and thrive. Partnerships with the aforementioned actors provide mutual benefits. For intentional communities, such partners can provide invaluable expertise, mentorship, funding and other resources. Intentional communities can provide socially and environmentally conscious housing to the membership of the aforementioned organizations and movements. In our neo-liberal reality, too many lead stressful and isolated lives, ultimately weakening social movements and the challenges they present to corporate and government abuses of power. Intentional communities can provide the people power and spatial supports towards causes of mutual concern, such as local peace/anti-war coalitions. Communities with smaller populations, instead of supporting every possible progressive social movement, can have their members choose one or two causes or organizations to support. Collective houses can similarly benefit from building these connections, however because of the limited populations of collective houses, this can be best achieved through establishing collective house networks like they have in Boston and Vancouver, or through individual residents participating in social movements.

Space and access to space is critical for any social movement to thrive, focusing on their mission instead of the struggle for resources. Having free and low-cost space that can be provided for meetings, events, offices and storage can help environmental and social justice movements and organizations more effectively organize. Having a presence within the community makes it easier for residents to get involved — it also creates a sort of 'activist hub' for the wider community as well, attracting more people to get involved in the activities taking place within the intentional community. In addition to social movements, initiatives that change our daily actions can be organized within intentional communities. Many of these initiatives can support participation in alternative gift or bartering economies. Communal meals, be they pay-what-you-can or potluck, provide an alternative to eating out at commercial venues. Free stores can help keep unwanted items from going to the landfill. An on-site borrow centre or item library (tools, toys, etc.) can help reduce the collective consumption of the community by loaning infrequently used items such as tools, sporting equipment, boardgames, etc. Initiatives can be launched within the community to help people divest from fossil fuels and arms manufacturers.

Equity issues also need to be addressed within all forms of intentional communities. Anti-discrimination and safe space policies should be adopted. Resident members should be educated on matters relating to these issues. In order to help prevent discrimination from occurring, new members should undergo anti-oppression training. Such measures may be challenged by privileged individuals, however those committed to equity and social justice should not back down from having these measures adopted.

Critical to all of this is community dialogue and education. Members should have regular dialogue with each other and the entire community. Communication with each other is how all of this can start. We all come from different places and we are social constructs of those times, places and experiences. While intentional communities typically attract those with progressive political views, it may be more difficult for some to see the power of collectivism or the need for equity policies. Facilitated community dialogue and ongoing education by trainers who work with progressive movements (e.g. organized labour, social justice movements, etc.) can better ensure success in these matters. Some communities have mentioned the difficulty of moving beyond dialogue. Stronger commitments, better organizational structures, bringing in outside assistance (perhaps from another intentional community), developing strategic action plans and starting with a couple of focused efforts can all help overcome this challenge.

As Forest and Wilhelmus showed, a few key residents and individuals are responsible for much of the social change, innovation and commitment to environmental and social justice.[132] Finding a handful of 'social innovators' and committed activists who can take the lead on issues is necessary for these changes to occur — if your community cannot find anyone to come forward, consider stepping up yourself or reaching out to the wider community for assistance. With higher density communities, it will become easier to find willing people to take on leadership roles within the community. In summation, dialogue, commitment and connections are critical to the commitment of an intentional community to social and environmental justice.

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[132] Peter M. Forster and Marijke Wilhelmus. "The Role of Individuals in Community Change Within the Findhorn Intentional Community." Contemporary Justice Review: Issues in Criminal, Social, and Restorative Justice, 8.4 (2005): 367-379.

(3) How can intentional communities successfully thrive long-term in the time and spatial context of late capitalism? Numerous questions in the research survey focus on the various aspects of their success, including financial stability, community relations and organizational structure. The knowledge gained through the survey and this report will enable myself and others to prevent and better enable us to deal with any challenges to the survival of an intentional community — its physical space, its social community, or wavering in its commitment to social and environmental issues.

Some in academia still view intentional communities as marked by historical failure.[133] A 1972 study looking at 91 American communes found only 12% survived more than 25 years.[134] Similar results were found with American low-income housing cooperatives.[135] Further, many communities fail to meet their established purpose or goals, often resulting in conflict or disbandment.[136] Similarly, in my previous research I documented seven historic groups that have attempted to start an intentional community in the Greater Toronto Area — three failed and disbanded, three have yet to succeed, and only one has successfully established a location for itself.[137] Since then, four other groups attempting to form communities were started, with one already disbanded (Manifest Space), two yet to succeed (The Permaculture Project GTA 10 Transition Homes, Project Rejuvenation), and one group that is openly living in an industrial zoned warehouse (The Bartley Project). While I concur that high failure rates exist for groups attempting to form an intentional community, I refute the narrative failure of low survival rates of built intentional communities. First, some intentional communities, such as

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[133] Barry Shenker. Intentional Communities: Ideology and Alienation in Communal Societies. Boston, MA: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1986.

[134] Kanter, Rosabeth Moss. Commitment and Community: Communes and Utopias in Sociological Perspective. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1972.

[135] Silver, Hilary. "State, market, and community: Housing co-operatives in theoretical perspective." Netherlands Journal of Housing and the Built Environment, 6.3 (1991): 185-203.

[136] Shenker.

[137] Michael Kenny. Toronto Ecovillage Project. Toronto, ON: Regenesis, 2010. Report.

collective houses or Catholic Worker Homes, are by their nature designed not to be permanent – they exist for the time being that their residents need it to exist, living in rented, leased, donated or squatted homes. Second, when we only examine more precarious forms of intentional communities, of course the survival rates will be lower. These include intentional communities, such as communes, requiring a high level of closeness that makes bringing in new members to replacing aging members more difficult, or low-income affordable housing that is dependent on government supportive policies and financial aid. I suspect the long-term survival rate of built intentional communities will be proven much higher, likely in the 80-90% range. My third contention is contextual. What are we comparing survival rates with? What is a reasonable survival rate? The Government of Québec compared the survival rate of cooperatives, including housing coops, with businesses. Cooperatives had a survival rate of 44% after 10 years, more than double the survival rate of businesses.[138] In Canada's arctic territories, the 40 year survival rate of cooperatives is 77%.[139] Housing cooperatives that are actually built would likely have a higher survival rate than other forms of cooperatives, such as retail or manufacturing, as they have a high value fixed asset in the property and a steady stream of income via rent or maintenance fees. I would argue that we need new research that examines the survival rates of built cohousing, cooperative housing, ecovillages and student housing coops in our modern context to challenge notions of failure.

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[138] Ontario Cooperative Association. "Survival Rate of Co-operatives in Québec, 2008." Ontario Cooperative Association. 2008. Web. <http://ontariocoops.wordpress.com/reports/survival-rate-of-co-operatives-in-quebec-2008/>.

[139] Government of Canada – House of Commons - Special Committee on Co-operatives. Status of Co-operatives. Ottawa, ON: Publishing and Depository Services, Public Works and Government Services Canada, 2012.

Long-term survival of intentional communities is dependent on a number of factors. Many communities reported struggling to attract new members and "recruitment of the next generation." Many younger members of intentional communities eventually leave. To often intentional communities are formed by persons in the same age bracket, making it more difficult to attract younger members as time passes. Higher density communities and more amenities will help to attract and retain new members, especially young persons.

Financially, higher density will collectively bring down the costs allowing for increased affordability and more amenities. The community as a whole should also examine potential means of community income generation such as a travellers hostel, education centre, artisan manufacturing or other possible social enterprises. Additionally, intentional communities should increasingly examine ways to assist the self-employed through co-working spaces, including office, studio and workshop spaces. Those whose livelihoods have a stake in the success of the community will be more readily willing to offer up their money and time. Of great importance to the balance sheet of intentional communities is government support through legal recognition, establishment assistance, funding and financing. Sustained lobbying efforts will be necessary to (re-)establish programs for cooperative housing and other forms of intentional communities. Organizing all forms of intentional communities and presenting a united front can best allow us to achieve our desired goals. Mentorship and partnerships should be established with groups experienced in lobbying, including the labour movement, faith-based social justice organizations, and progressive social movements. Government has moved in the general direction of neo-liberalization, austerity, privatization and private delivery of

public services. Chouinard, in a study of housing cooperatives in Toronto, shows how

privatized and recommodified forms of regulation can negatively affect housing

cooperatives.[140] Neo-liberal attitudes have resulted in cuts to housing cooperative and

affordable housing programs that have resulted in a steep decline in the number of new

housing cooperatives.[141] Any advocacy towards funding housing will also require

challenging neo-liberal held views.

Maintaining social cohesion and community is important to the long-term survival

of any endeavor. With time, communities have been shown to become more stable.[142]

An individual having a sense of community requires four key elements: membership,

influence (on the larger community), integration and fulfillment of needs, and having a

shared emotional connection.[143] Membership means feeling invested as a member of the

community, reaching a level of acceptance and emotional safety, possessing a sense of

belonging and identification with the community, and having common symbols, rites,

rituals and social conventions.[144] Influence is the individual feeling that they matter,

have influence and are making a difference within the group.[145] Integration and

fulfillment of needs means positive reinforcement in order for the group to "maintain a

positive sense of togetherness."[146] A shared emotional connection is developed through

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[140] V. Chouinard. "The Uneven Development of Capitalist States: 2. The Struggle for Cooperative Housing." Environment and Planning A, 22.11 (1990): 1441-1454.
[141] Iain DeJong. "Devolution Hits Housing in Canada." Shelterforce: The Journal of Affordable Housing and Community Building, 113. Montclair, NJ: National Housing Institute, Sept/Oct 2000. Web. <http://www.shelterforce.com/online/issues/113/dejong.html>.
[142] Graham Meltzer. Sustainable Community: Learning from the Cohousing Model. Victoria, BC: Trafford Publishing, 2005.
[143] D.W. McMillan & D.M. Chavis. "Sense of Community: A Definition and Theory."   Journal of Community Psychology, 14 (1986): 9-16.
[144] Ibid. 9-11.
[145] Ibid. 9-12.
[146] Ibid. 9-13.

frequent and quality contact, developing a shared history, sharing the experience of important events, emotional investment, and a spiritual or ideological bond.[147]

Communities of practice are voluntary purpose-driven communities that are able to provide relevance, excitement and value to members.[148] There are many resources available on cultivating successful communities of practice that can be accessed and provided to the community. Developing community starts when someone becomes a member. Orientations are critical to build the foundation for mutual understanding, comprehension of any regulations and buy-in. New members are able to understand the importance of why certain regulations or procedures are in place, why social and environmental justice is critical to the success of intentional communities and what benefits they gain because of both. Ongoing education on topics such as conflict resolution is also important to maintain mutual understanding and peaceful coexistence. Cultivating a deep understanding amongst residents of the importance of intentional communities is crucial for the longevity of the movement — this requires knowledge of our history, comprehension of all the issues surrounding the cultivation of community, and understanding of why intentional communities have regulations in place and are decidedly political. Residents need to understand from the start of residency that it is a small price to pay by agreeing to abide by the regulations in place and participating in the community, as far greater privileges are gained as a result is living in an intentional community. Recognizing the need for anti-oppression training, for instance, or the importance of the community taking part in social and environmental justice, is critical to

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[147] Ibid. 13-14.
[148] Etienne Wenger, Richard McDermott and William M. Snyder. "Seven Principles for Cultivating Communities of Practice." Harvard Business School Working Knowledge, March 25 2002. Web. <http://hbswk.hbs.edu/archive/2855.html>.

the long-term success of intentional communities. Without political participation, intentional communities could lose any gained supports. Without anti-oppression training, our communities may not exist as safe spaces for more marginalized residents and others will repeat patterns and attitudes that foster oppression. The social decline of many housing cooperatives is often due to the visionaries who built the complex aging or leaving with time and being replaced with people who have not been bought into or been educated in the concept. Because housing regulations make it difficult to evict someone, the emphasis should be placed on educating potential residents during a trial pre-residential phase and on the selection of the appropriate residents for each type of intentional community. People who have proven experience or an expressed desire towards activism, community involvement and leadership are ideal candidates, though mitigating circumstances should be considered (e.g. single working parent). The intentional community spectrum is broad and can be adapted to the needs of different communities, such as Camphill communities for those with developmental disabilities or Abbeyfield for seniors that require a caregiver.

In order to maintain connection amongst the community, a variety of shared activities should be organized within the community and spaces provided with the community where impromptu or planned activities can occur. While individuals will congregate more towards activities of interest or similar age ranges, community-wide events such as a weekly communal supper need to be regularly held. Ritualizing routine events should become standard practice and is needed to ensure a high level of ongoing participation — ritualizing also helps affirm the collective identity of community

members.[149] Events such as weekly communal supper or annual celebrations such as a summer BBQ or holiday party, should become events that no one in the community wants to miss. Meetings should also become ritualized and routine to ensure that almost everyone who can attend does so. This can be achieved by creating safe spaces that encourage dialogue, invite different levels of participation, create value for the participants and allow opportunities for socialization.[150] The organization structure of the intentional community should be structured to maximize consensus-based methods, but not to the hindrance of the decision-making ability of the governing board. All members should be trained in consensus-based governance methods and a trained facilitator should guide all meetings.

Intentional communities are an important social movement,[151] one that is growing and will help to shape the future of our society. It is important that they are understood and fully supported by government, citizens and progressive movements. The intentional community movement, more so than other social movements, has the ability to transform society into a more just and sustainable place as it directly relates to our everyday lives and the places we call home. This ability to affect both personal and societal changes is why activist and progressive social movement actors should vigorously support the intentional community movement. Change the home, change society.

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[149] Joseph C. Hermanowicz and Harriet P. Morgan. "Ritualizing the Routine: Collective Identity Affirmation." Sociological Forum, 14.2 (1999): 197-214.
[150] Wenger, McDermott and Snyder.
[151] Robert C. Schehr. Dynamic Utopia: Establishing Intentional Communities as a New Social Movement. Westport, CT: Bergin and Garvey, 1997.

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Survey

Informed Consent

Title of Study:
Intentional Communities in North America

Investigator:
Michael Kenny, MES Candidate, Faculty of Environmental Studies, York University

You are invited to participate in this research study because you are a resident or former resident of an intentional community. This process is open any interested individuals eighteen and over. This research is being conducted by Michael Kenny as part of his MES Major Paper. The final report will be disseminated by the Institute for Research and Innovation in Sustainability and the environmental organization Regenesis.

In order to decide whether you want to be a part of this research study, you should understand what is involved and any potential benefits and risks. This form provides you detailed information about the research being conducted. If you are interested in participating or would like more information, please contact Michael Kenny at ecomike@yorku.ca.

Why is this research being done? This research is being done to fill a void in existing scientific research relating to intentional communities and to provide a resource to those interested in starting an intentional communities in North America.

What is the purpose of this study? The goal of this study is to determine what conclusions can be made for the successful establishment of intentional communities in North America.

What are my responsibilities be if I take part in this study? If you decide to volunteer to take part in this study, you will be invited to complete a survey regarding your participation with your intentional community. The surveys will either be conducted via the website surveymonkey.com, with the responses only visible to myself.

What are the possible risks and discomforts of my participation? There are no physical risks involved in participating in this study. It is possible that you will become upset by the nature of the questions or topics being discussed. You may refuse to answer any question, and have the right to withdraw from the interview at any point in time.

What are the possible benefits for me? There may or may not be any direct benefits to you.

What if I do not want to take part in this research study? You are free to decline or withdraw your participation at any time during this research project.

What if I want to end my participation early? You may withdraw your participation at anytime during the course of this study.

What information will be made public? All content provided during interviews, unless otherwise agreed upon, could be subject to publication. Personal data, other than the name or pseudonym you provide, will be kept private. In the case of sensitive information, such as questions regarding interpersonal conflict, the name of all parties and the intentional community will be omitted. If there is any information that you completed on the survey that you would not want published, please email me your request at: ecomike@yorku.ca. All information will be kept indefinitely, in either electronic or paper format. All materials will be stored at the office of the principle investigator. The address and contact information for existing North American intentional communities will be published. Should you request, a copy of my major paper can be made available to you.

Will there be any costs related to my participation? There is no cost for you to participate.

Will I be paid or compensated for any costs for my participation in this study? You will not be paid or compensated in any way for your participation.

IF YOU HAVE ANY FURTHER QUESTIONS, PLEASE CONTACT:

Michael Kenny
York University
347 York Lanes
4700 Keele St.
Toronto, ON M3J 1P3
416-736-2100 ext. 31520
ecomike@yorku.ca

You may contact the Senior Manager & Policy Advisor for the Office of Research Ethics, 5th Floor, York Research Tower, York, 416-736-5914 or ore@yorku.ca for information about your rights as research participants. This research has been reviewed and approved by the Faculty of Environmental Studies Human Participants Research Committee on behalf of York University.

For ethical reasons, York University requires participants in research projects to be informed of the nature of the activities and their rights as participants, and sign a document to indicate that they are informed and participating willingly.

Informed Consent Agreement
I am fully aware of the nature and extent of my participation in this project as stated above and the possible risks from if, I hereby agree to participate in this project. I further acknowledge that I have received a copy of this consent form and statement. By proceeding with this survey, I agree to participate in this research study, to have my survey responses recorded and to have my name or pseudonym disclosed in publication.

Do you agree to conditions laid out in the Survey Participant Information Sheet?
Yes

Page 1 of 10: Your Information
First Name:
Last Name or pseudonym:

Your email address:

What are your current role(s) within your intentional community (e.g. resident, board member, etc):

Are you a founding member?:
Yes / No

Are you a current or past board member?
Yes/No

Page 2 of 10: Your Intentional Community
Name of Intentional Community:

Country:
State/Province:

Group Founded (Year/Month):
Site purchased (Year/Month) [if applicable]:
Construction started (Year/Month) [if applicable]:
Occupancy (Year/Month):

How many months/years between the formation of the group and occupancy by residents?

Type of Intentional Community? Please check all that apply.
Abbeyfield House
Camphill Community
Catholic Worker House
Cohousing
Collective House
Commune (Income-Sharing)
Ecovillage
Housing Co-op
Housing Co-op, Student
Off-grid
Senior-focused
Sexuality/Gender-focused

Spiritual community
Other (please explain)

Which best describes your location?
Large Urban Center – Core/Downtown
Large Urban Center - Inner-suburban Suburbs
Medium sized-city (population of 100,000-500,000)
Small city (population of 20,000-99,999)
Town or Village
Rural

Distance from nearest city?
_____ km / m from _____

Which of these best describe your Intentional Community? Please elaborate if needed.
Leasing or renting existing building(s)
Purchased existing building(s)
Purchased existing building(s) and built new buildings
Purchased land and built new buildings
Leased land and built new buildings
Other (please describe):

How many residents currently reside in your intentional community?

How many buildings does your intentional community have?

If known, what is the approx. square footage (or square metres) of your building(s)?

If known, what is the approximate acres of your site?

What facilities and amenities do you currently have? Please check all that apply.
Art Studio(s)/Creative space/Gallery space
Bike repair shop
Café, Bar or Restaurant
Community Garden/Urban Agriculture
Computer lab(s)/Tech-space
Environmental/Sustainability Center
Event space/Performance space
Food coop
Free school (Freeskool)
Free store
Hostel/Bread & Breakfast/Inn
Meeting space(s)
Infoshop/Activist Center
Library/Borrowing Center
Office space(s)

Printshop/Printing press/Publishing
Store(s)
Theatre/Screening venue
Workshop (Woodworking, mechanical, etc.)
Other (please describe):

What sustainable technologies and practices does your community use?
Alternative Energy Generation – Geothermal
Alternative Energy Generation – Solar
Alternative Energy Generation – Wind
Composting Toilets
Greywater Harvesting
Passive Solar
Permaculture
Rainwater harvesting
Solar water heating
Other (please describe):

Does your Intentional Community have any organizations, businesses, cooperatives, or collectives located on site? Please describe.

Does your Intentional Community have more than one location? If so, please describe the other location(s).

Have you ever moved locations? If so, what were the reason(s)?

Does your community encourage or provide home schooling or alternative education? Please elaborate if needed.

Page 3 of 10: Site Selection and Purchase

How was your site found?

If known, approximately how many sites did your group look at before finding your current site?

Was the site for your Intentional Community provided at a discount or donated?

Was there opposition to locating at your current site, either by members or by the wider community?

Page 4 of 10: Affiliations and Commitment to Social and Environmental Justice

What was the original purpose(s) for the establishment of your community?

Has your commitment to these purposes grown, remained steady, or declined?

Has a commitment to social and environmental justice explicitly been made by your intentional community at its founding or at a later date? Please provide details.

If not, what are the reasons why?

If yes, has the commitment to social and environmental justice grown, remained steady, or declined? Please elaborate.

What specific actions, campaigns, or initiatives does your intentional community participate in that demonstrates your commitment to social and/or environmental justice?

What role does your Intentional Community play within the activist community in your city/town/region?

Is your Intentional Community affiliated with any group(s) or part of any network(s)?

Does your Intentional Community subscribe any particular ideology or belief system? Please elaborate if needed.

Does your Intentional Community house or rent to any charitable, non-profit or activist organizations?
Yes No
If so, whom?

If you feel the commitment to social and environmental justice is lacking within your intentional community, what changes or actions would you recommend to increase the commitment to social and environmental justice?

Does your community produce its own food? If so, what % of food produced? Please elaborate.

Does your community encourage or subscribe to any particular dietary restrictions?
Please select all that apply.
Omnivorous (plans and animals)
Mostly Vegetarian
Vegetarian
Vegan
Organic
GMO-Free
Raw/Mostly-Raw
Local
Religious dietary restrictions (Kosher, Halal, etc.)
Other (please describe)

What is the current legal status of your Intentional Community? Please elaborate as needed.

Private Ownership
Shared Ownership
Member Co-operative
Worker Co-operative
Non-legal entity
501(c)(3) Non-profit Organization (U.S.)
Limited Liability Corporation (U.S.)
Non-profit Organization or CRA Recognized Charitable Organization (Canada)
Business
Community controlled Land Trust
Independent land trust (not controlled by the community)
Absentee Landlord/Squatted
Other (please describe):

Does your Intentional Community offer memberships? If so, what are the conditions of membership? Can non-residents be members? Please elaborate as needed.

How are decisions made and who is involved in the decision-making? Please elaborate as needed.

Do you believe that Intentional Communities should be completely autonomous or could benefit from being part of a larger regional or national network?

How was the land purchase financed? (e.g. Mortgage? Shared-ownership? Philanthropic donor?) Please elaborate as needed.

If a mortgage was provided, who provided the mortgage? (e.g. Name of Bank/Credit Union/Lender or government agency)

Which of the following best describes your intentional community?:
Entire site is rented or leased
Land is leased, buildings are owned
Land donated, now own the land
Use of the land donated, don't own the land or buildings
Use of the land donated, own the buildings
Site found and donor(s) purchased land outright
Site found and members purchased land outright
Site purchased and a lone individual held the mortgage
Site purchased and members individually held their own mortgages
Site purchased and mortgage held collectively

Other (please describe):

Are financial difficulties significant or reoccurring issues for the continued existence of your Intentional Community? Please describe.

Is your site property tax exempt? If so, please elaborate.

Page 7 of 10: Involvement

How many people were involved in the founding of your community?

If founding members, what were the motivations for the creation of your Intentional Community? If you joined the community later, what were your motivations for joining?

What membership involvement requirements or expectations does your Intentional Community have?

Page 8 of 10: Difficulties

What difficulties were encountered in founding your Intentional Community (finding space, financial difficulties, conflict, etc.)?

Besides financial, what difficulties have been experienced operating your Intentional Community (lack of volunteer support, interpersonal conflict, encounters with law enforcement, etc.)?

Has your Intentional Community ever experienced conflict with your neighbours, neighbourhood community or other organizations? If so, please describe.
Yes No
Please describe

Page 9 of 10: Benefits

What benefits do you feel your Intentional Community has created?

What role does your Intentional Community play within your neighbourhood, city or wider community? (community building, environmental, social justice, etc.)

What opportunities has your Intentional Community created?

Page 10 of 10: Demographics

Please rank, in percentages, the age range of the residents of your intentional community. Estimate if needed.
60+
45-59
30-44
18-29
0-17

Please rank, in percentages, the ethnicity of the residents of your intentional community
Estimate if needed.
Caucasian
African
East Asian
South Asian
Hispanic
Arab
Aboriginal/Native
Polynesian/Pacific Islander
Mixed
Other

Is your community openly accepting and welcoming of homosexual and queer individuals?
Yes/No

Is your community openly accepting and welcoming of those in polyamorous relationships?
Yes/No

What policies or actions does your community have to ensure inclusion and equity within your intentional community?