INTENTIONAL COMMUNITIES MANUAL

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2001

From the Australian National Intentional Communities Conferences & South East Australia Communities Gatherings

About This Manual

We hope this manual will be of use to those interested in joining, establishing or developing an intentional community.

The idea for this manual came from the 2nd National Intentional Communities Conference held at Dharmananda in September 1998. The process of its creation was most recently taken on by the South East Australian Intentional Communities Gathering at Commonground in January 2001. It is a collection of articles and handouts, many of which were not written for this specific purpose but which we hope will prove useful. It is intended that a more comprehensive and structured edition be built on this for future publication, designed as a "How To" manual for those establishing intentional communities.

All articles were donated free of charge and with the understanding that this manual will be distributed and copied liberally and without profit. Any financial donations will be put towards the costs of production and further promotion of intentional communities and should be payable to:

"Fruit Salad"
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Acknowledgments

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Beginners Guide To Intentional Community

By Simon Clough

Simon has lived on intentional communities for over 20 years. He coordinated the second National Intentional Communities Conference at Dharmananda, his home. Simon also initiated and co led 'Heart, Head and Hands', a 10 day training in the art of community in 1999.

This article is intended as a first step in helping people who are interested in Intentional Community find out more information with a view to joining an existing community or creating their own community. It is a work in progress and I would be grateful for any feedback. This article is also an introduction to the planned Manual for Intentional Communities. It deals with the social aspects of this topic as there is already a great deal of material about the physical and planning/design issues available. I have not dealt with the important topics of Eco-villages and Co-housing, as I am not familiar with these types of intentional community. As there are similarities between these types of intentional communities these notes may be helpful.

It seems sensible to define the subject before I proceed.

Intentional Communities usually do not have such a high level of sharing as communes with members often having their own households, though sometimes households maybe an extended family. Community decision making is generally restricted to 'public areas' of members' lives. Because of the smaller degree of intimacy intentional communities can have many members. There is a continuum within Intentional Communities some having a high level of sharing including shared meals, work and facilities while others are restricted to maybe a workday a month.

In NSW Intentional Communities are sometimes referred to as Multiple Occupancies or MOs. This has come about because the State Environmental Planning Policy (SEPP) 15 that was introduced to allow or legalise communities was called the Multiple Occupancy of Rural Land. SEPP 15 has now changed the name of MO's to Rural Landsharing Communities.

Clarify your own needs and desires

The first step as with most things is determining exactly what you want in terms of community. There are some helpful processes that you can use to clarify your thinking and emotions in the book **Insight and Action** by T. Green, P. Woodrow and F. Peavey Published by New Society Publishes. Co-counselling processes are very effective in helping to clarify goals and directions. You should also bear in mind that as in all relationships, there is no such thing as the perfect community. An interesting test for your intention to join or establish a community is to reflect on whether you are reacting to a situation or responding to a deeper need. Chances are if you're reacting to a situation intentional community may not be a wise choice.

Why join or establish an Intentional Community?

There are almost an infinite variety of reasons why people are interested in Intentional Community. For many it is social factors such as the degree of support they experience, the feeling of belonging, the sharing of tasks, tools and equipment. A common spiritual bond is another strong form of 'community glue'. Others are concerned about self-sufficiency, protecting the natural environment and living close to the land. Here are some comments made by people living on Intentional Community about their way of life.

"It is tremendously fulfilling to participate in the ongoing adventure of living in a community which aspires to ecological sustainability providing a stable innovative way of life, offering many solutions to health, social, environmental and housing problems"

"MO offers families the best option for a fulfilling life with a good standard of living"

"We see ourselves as an extended family which means there is a great deal of love and support for each other."

"It's a joy to not have to lock my home and unlock my car when I go out"

"Children, single parents and older people make a special contribution to our community and also receive many benefits, mainly in that they are never isolated or alienated here."

"Multiple Occupancy communities have a long record of creating and maintaining educational institutions such as pre-schools and primary schools."

How do you find existing Intentional Communities?

Many communities are hosts for Willing Workers On Organic Farms (WWOOF). You can join the **WOOF** organisation through Mt Murrindal Co-op Buchan Victoria 3885 phone fax 03 5155 0218 for a very reasonable fee and get a directory of hosts for Australia including communities. Visiting communities as a WOOFer can be very helpful in seeing how a community works and can help you decide if you and the community are suited.

Some Intentional Communities, generally at the less communal end of the spectrum, will have houses advertised for 'sale' in Real Estate Agents. It's worth noting that only Community and Strata Title will give you full legal title to the land. Generally you are buying a share in a company which entitles you to occupy a house.

You will find Intentional Communities advertising for members in magazines such as Grass Roots and Earth Garden (see address list at the end of this article). In areas where communities are popular such as NE New South Wales, SE New South Wales, in parts of Victoria and SW Western Australia you will find advertisements for shares in communities for sale in Neighbourhood Centres and Environment Centres.

How to visit an existing Intentional Community

In visiting a community it is important to remember a simple rule 'This is a home, don't do anything that you wouldn't do in someone else's home that you were visiting'. So you should ring up and make a time to visit explaining exactly why you want to visit and what you want from the experience. Don't be offended if people don't want you to visit, it's their home.

Each person will be looking for different things in a community; some things such as the environment will be obvious. Some of the revealing things you should ask about an Intentional Community are:
What is the procedure for accepting new members?
What are the arrangements for leaving the community?
How would you describe the social structure of the community?
What would you say was the main focus of the community?
What is the community's legal structure?
How much communal work is expected from members?
What are the unwritten rules of the community?
What is the process of decision making on the community?
How does the community deal with conflict?
Has the community and its buildings received local government approval?
What is the age distribution of people living on the community?

It's probably an excellent idea not to fire off all these questions at once!

As previously mentioned WWOOFing is a great way to check out communities and it gives you time to ask your questions and see the reality behind the answers.
In looking at an existing community don't be lulled into believing that you will be able to change the community to be more the way you want. Yes the community will change over time but not necessarily in the way you want

How do you find people interested in Intentional Community?

If you are interested in starting an Intentional Community you will need to find people who have a similar interest or desire. Because Intentional Communities are often founded on a common idea or passion it can be helpful to explore the social, sporting, community, spiritual networks that you are a part of to find interested people. It is easy to become disillusioned in this process as many people will express interest but it is more in the fantasy realm.

The periodicals I have already mentioned can be helpful in finding people interested in starting a community. Don't forget the 'brazen' approach of simply putting up ads where you think you'll find like minded, people or calling a meeting of interested people.

Starting an Intentional Community group

Ideally your group will have someone with group and mediation skills. Unfortunately like most things in community building this is another area where learning by doing is very important. Glen Ochre has some excellent material on organising meetings, consensus decision making and community glue Glen's material is to be included in a forthcoming manual. **In the Tiger's Mouth** by Katrina Shields (available from the author at 2 Terania St The Channon 2480) is very helpful in helping to guide you to effective and harmonious meetings. If you have difficulty with meetings it can be worth getting and outside facilitator to show you how to run effective meetings. There's always a tendency to hope that the problems will go away. I have never found hope to be successful in this context.

Consensus decision making is an issue that often comes up when a group is first forming. Consensus can seem to take longer and can seem painful at times, but what other way can you value and take into account each person's needs and opinions. By consensus I mean 'working consensus' that is a decision is reached that everyone 'can live with', rather than a decision that everybody agrees 100% on all aspects of the decision. Consensus in this context is not necessarily slow; a decision that takes time is often one that people can stick with rather than having to revisit.

Developing a vision

Intentional communities need a vision to launch themselves; it may be affordable housing or high levels of communal sharing. In a sense the vision is not all that relevant, it's more the fact that it is jointly held by those attempting to establish the community. Vision needs to be translated into words and this is often very difficult it can be helpful to have weekends away for discussion bonding and developing the vision. The process of vision formulation should ensure each person feels that they have contributed to the collective vision to be a full part of the emerging community.

Legal Structure

There is no legal formula for legal structures for Intentional Community. Some of the legal structures used include: Incorporated Association, Company, Co-operative, Partnership, Community Title, Tenants in Common and Strata Title. You should get legal advice as to the implications of the different legal structures. This is however difficult as most lawyers are not familiar with intentional communities or the affects of these different legal structures. Some issues to look at in the legal structure are how does the structure place individual rights as against the rights of the community? This will often tell you how co-operative is the community. How does the structure allow members to leave the community and with what? Which activities are encouraged or discouraged? Dogs, cats, drugs and land use are issues that seem to cause great conflict.

Tenants in Common has created a number of legal battles that have ended in court, so it's probably to be avoided.

Community title and strata title are the only legal structures that give members legal title over their portion of the land and therefore owners are able to get mortgage rather

than personal finance. This is a great advantage, but both systems are expensive to establish.

If you are looking at joining an existing community you should have a careful look at its legal documents and get a lawyer to explain them to you.

Good Reading for Future Communards

Grass Roots Editors Megg Miller and Mary Horsfall Published by Grass Roots Publishing Box 117 Seymour 3661 (available at most newsagents) see 'Grassifieds' towards the back of the magazine for information on land and shares.

Earth Garden Editor Alan T Gray Published by Alan T. & Judith K. Gray RMB 427, Trentham Victoria 3458 fax e-mail earthmag@kyneton.net.au (also available from most newsagents) see Land Lines at the back for information on 'people buying, selling, seeking or sharing houses and land'
Nimbin News

Communes in Rural Australia The Movement since 1970 – Margaret Munro-Clark 1986 Hale & Iremonger.

Low Cost Rural Resettlement – Scott Williams (Ed) 1983 Australian Rural Adjustment Unit UNE Armidale.

Shared Visions Shared Lives Communal Living Around the Globe – Bill Metcalfe 1996 Findhorn Press Scotland.

From Utopian Dreaming to Communal Reality – Bill Metcalfe 199? UNSW Press

Creating Harmony Conflict Resolution in Community - Hildur Jackson (Ed) 1998 Gaia Trust Denmark.

Eco-villages & Sustainable Communities Models for 21st Century Living 1996 Findhorn Press Scotland.

Communities Magazine - 138 Twin Oaks Rd. Louisa VA 23093 USA

Planning and Designing an Intentional Community

By Peter Cock

Why Plan: Some Lessons from our recent history

Even with careful planning it is inevitable that the establishment phase of any social group, especially for those that are innovative, is characterised by a period of high tension, uncertainty and psycho/social trauma, with a high membership turnover and community death rate. Getting established is hard enough.

Collective strength comes through clarity of shared purpose, sustained through an organisational structure which is explicit while having supportive mechanisms to ensure its sustainability. That is, it is backed up by social pressure for individuals to participate and to carry out their agreed tasks, with clear lines of responsibility and areas of authority. It is a choice to join, or to leave, but within that there needs to be real community boundaries that limit the scope of diversity.

Unlike corporate structures, intentional communities lack organisational strength. This is evidenced in many communities by the collective work days being poorly planned, organised and attended. Gradually voluntary labour is replaced with paid labour, or else the work does not get done. As a result what has evolved is the view that shared decision-making, ownership and accountability do not work.

Meetings are given little meaning, care or organisation. There is an increasing propensity to not make collective decisions or to opt out and leave it to the few and/or to make, but not to implement them. There is pressure to move from consensus decision-making to majority or elite rule or no rule at all, to move away from a commitment to care for the whole. Short term expedients dominate consideration of long term objectives and future consequences. It becomes easier to make decisions that give something to the individual but harder to do likewise for the collective. Only a few have the capacity to see community interests as part of their own. The pressure from those seeking autonomy from community bonds drives out those seeking to affirm commitment to the group.

As a consequence less is owned and done collectively, more private. People stop sharing with each other, while nominally expressing belief in cooperation. How much energy a group puts into socialisation of members is a key indicator of its capacity to sustain a shared vision. Little effort indicates that there is insufficient will to work with contradictions and paradoxes of community life. Instead pressure is exerted to legitimise and to then institutionalise the destruction of collective purpose and organisation. At a more survival level little effective effort has been done, to use the group as the key context from which to develop a sustainable economic base.

The security of the organisation is a requisite for the evolution of constructive informal community dynamics. The naive vision of the simple life and self-sufficiency has been suppressive of the capacity to develop and affirm the complex interdependencies that retribalisation involves. Community identity and sustainability needs cultural features and customs, rituals and symbols, which are taken for granted. The rejection of corporate bureaucracy by many alternative seekers has often led to the constant challenge to the development of clarity of form and function as a first step towards the development of these cultural features. It takes a long time to rediscover and to evolve appropriate shared realms of the sacred that can nourish the community and sustain it during crisis.

The community only has the power to deal with difficult issues if members accept accountability to an interdependence with the group. In particular, to constructively confront issues personal and interpersonal change. Examples are the dominant patriarchal psychology, our definition of security through material ownership and only personal responsibility for behaviour and denial of being dependent and accountable to a particular group of people.

How often when communities fall apart or explode it is put down to inter-personal conflict! This helps to let others in the group `off the hook'. Conflict is often left to individual resolution or avoidance. This is destructive of community because if time and space does not heal, members will leave or seek vengeance when involved with other issues. Vital is developing appropriate community mechanisms to clarify symptom from cause, person from issue. What is needed is the shared will and knowledge to make decisions about when and how to facilitate the creative use of conflict.

Ultimately the privatisation of responsibility is reflected through the subdivision of land into separate allotments and uses, if not legally then in practice. This makes it possible for each to avoid confronting their failures, difficulties and the pain of past, unresolved traumas.

A major cause of this propensity is that Australian society is so polarised between our experience of the private and the public. We have been socialised to live essentially private lives within impersonal worlds. We are devoid of the experience of intimate sharing beyond family whether it be of our feelings, friends, flesh or things. The power of this socialisation has been denied and attempts to overcome it severely limited by an understandable desire to hang on to what we know and the security it brings. Retribalisation from our present cultural base will involve struggle, pain, letting go and reaching out. In our culture we don't know what a 21st century tribalisation means and we therefore have so much to learn from other cultures that have a long experience of village/tribal living.

Over the last twenty years the order of priorities in alternative communities has slowly

shifted so that environmental concerns have become secondary to desires for individual autonomy and material pursuits. Although participants have a low per capita consumption of resources, there is the tendency towards greater privatisation of consumption. This means a gradual increase in their demand for resources, which has been reflected in a number of ways. Creeping materialism results from the tendency for

duplication of facilities, largely due to psycho/social reasons rather than to practical considerations. The sharing of consumer durables and equipment becomes limited to items that cannot be afforded in any other way. Sharing is often seen as a necessity rather than a virtue, the alternative to doing without rather than as connected to a shared environmental ethic. Without a strong group value system to the contrary, sharing declines as incomes rise.

There is a propensity to replace the hard physical effort of slashing weeds with using chemicals or letting them go wild. Native vegetation is becoming more entwined with exotics of one sort or another, both productive and non-productive. The allegiance to the shared vision and to the land becomes subsidiary to the development of often unspoken personal allegiances. Unstated agreements evolve that mean if you allow me to do such and such, then I will agree to you doing this. The loser is often the community's shared vision of the land.

Most of our planet's citizens still live in villages. Much can be learnt from the longevity of religious communities. Whether their extremes of collective accountability and communal organisation are necessary is another matter. A transcendental community commitment of a spiritual, environmental and/or political nature is necessary for sustainability. There is a need for a number of dynamic balances between the community's inner and outer life, consensus and dissent, self-sufficiency and community interdependence, between personal desires and community interests.

To survive and live fully, a community needs to believe in the social necessity of conflict while recognising that it has to be used creatively to generate new possibilities. If the community is so organised that it lacks room for change or the stimulus of uncertainty then boredom is the inevitable result. Community requires some sacrifice of individual autonomy to achieve the benefits of participation. It means bonds, obligations and mutual interdependence and is fundamentally incompatible with individualism. Australian society has opted for the `freedom' of individualism and, as a result, has denied itself community. Authoritarian regimes whether of the State or of some religious orders have tended to opt for the other extreme of collective power. Finding a dynamic balance between personal autonomy and community commitment is essential to an understanding of the present struggle within intentional communities and also within our culture. Contrary to common views, the kibbutz breeds powerful persons!

In order to be sustainable, the community must have objectives and structure which nourish individual commitment to the group and the community to the individuals development. Such commitment has to be carefully nourished through clear objectives, physical layout, legal ownership, morality, rules, technology, financial dues; delineation of what is shared and what is not. These solutions to the issues of community life need to be explicit and well thought through beforehand, as well as part of the ongoing grappling of the community. Most important is the commitment to self realisation through community commitment and the development of personal uniqueness in the context of the collective; the self nested in the selves of others. This involves a consciousness of a commitment to the group as larger than the individual, and a willingness of the group to act when the individual steps over the community's boundaries.

Unless the above issues and measures are an explicit part of the ongoing life of a community's form and dynamics, then it will be vulnerable to internal pressures to

privatise down to the individual/family unit, and externally to be only accountable to outside authorities and experts. The struggle to create the middle ground between these two extremes is the pressing issue facing the redevelopment of intentional community in the 21st century. When successful, community living that is inclusive is challenging, exciting, developmental of both ones person as well as our ability to care for all the earths life.

In defining success need to consider what path we are on. Is it a path to inclusion or exclusion, private or public, consumption or conservation, ideology and convenience. How far can a group travel from the mainstream and survive? If it travels too little, then it has no identity, and if too far it most likely will be overwhelmed by external threats. Likewise it will be overwhelmed if there is too big or too little a gap between dreams and what is possible.

Vital to long term living with the land is developing a spiritual connection akin to our ancestors. The struggle is to empower the community while facilitating personal creativity and environmental sensitivity. It takes a long time to begin to listen and hear nature's voice and draw healing, teaching and support from the land. The development of deep connections with the land is exciting and is a balance to connections with human community.

Designing a sustainable community and preparing for participation

(the following is a section redrafted from Goldstone P and Cock P. (1984) Sustainable community settlement society Ministry of housing melbourne)

What is needed are core structures by which a community can provide a social environment to foster a system of values common to the members of the community.
Essential to a sense of *community purpose* will be the aims and values of the membership.

A cohesive community is unlikely to emerge if its members do not subscribe to a system of common values. While values must be shared, their structure should recognise the need for diversity in the community.

Diversification of skills and the development of social competence to share and care for oneself end each other are considered necessary adjuncts to community purpose.

Community gluing mechanisms support a sense of purpose. Religious communities have a common focus and often a strict ideology. A secular community does not have these mechanisms so others will have to be developed.

As an example, techniques for conflict prevention and resolution are necessary and can involve the formation of working parties around the protagonists in any dispute; meetings should be chaired by a neutral figure with some authority.

Areas of community responsibility must be clear: for example, individual self determination within one's own dwelling. Social expectations need developing to encourage bringing problems out into the open.

The process can be assisted by electing a conflict resolver whose function is to bring differing parties together and to work out solutions; if necessary, the dispute can be brought to a meeting for resolution.

Who could participate, and how? How to gather like-minded individuals together?

Preparation for Participation

The question is: what must be known or learnt prior to living in the actual situation?

The overall objective of an apprenticeship is to promote participants' identification with the planned or existing structure of the community and to provide an opportunity to work through some of the issues of membership prior to commitment.

Community Structures and Processes

This would include:

- development of appropriate social skills involving each individual experiencing group processes. The structure would include weekends away together to explore group process and structure, and the individual's response to it.
- working with decision-making models, e.g. voting, fiat, delegated authority, decision by non-decision, and consensus.
- balancing the need to make decisions (i.e. task achievement and group maintenance).

New members could be expected to live in a transitional situation in the community for three months to 2 years before being able to join or build.

Membership

The Need for a Wide Age Range. While specifying an age range would be unrealistic communities should be aware of the value of diversity. It is logical that a community will be better balanced if a range of ages is represented in it. For older people, provided that they have some sympathy with the community's objects, a sustainable community could offer a much richer environment and a useful role to play in it.

A community would benefit from trades skills being represented in the group and from reduced need for some trades; for example, in the case of plumbing and wiring where dwellings were designed on autonomous principles.

Community Size

What is too big or too small? The larger the group, the more space for conflict and risk taking without the pain of mistakes being sustained as failure. It is also apparent that a

larger group provides wider opportunities for social diversity. Ceiling numbers need to be related to site capacity.

Community centre

A sustainable community needs somewhere that is a shared space to meet and interact. At least one multi-purpose building is suggested; its functions could include meeting space, child care, library, laundry, recreation space, and occasional community dining.

Such a structure could also be used for transitional accommodation. The shell of a community centre should commence simultaneously with the start of house construction, unless there are existing facilities adaptable for a community centre.

Evaluation of progress

Review of progress should be at least annually. After 2-3 years, is an appropriate time for a comprehensive evaluation.

Environmental planning and Building

In the development of a sustainable community, it is therefore necessary to consider what ground rules need to be established as a matter of principle. Particularly important is land use planning and the participants' relationships with their environment (the criteria of minimal environmental impact and maximum community sustainability).

McHarg, in his book *Design with Nature* recommends the use of a series sieve maps to identify natural values and development constraints. Overlaying one map on another clearly indicates the problems and opportunities of a site; development planning can then proceed. This technique is recommended for developing site information.

The two stage process outlined below is considered basic for community environmental planning.

An Environmental Study is the first step. This will involve an analysis of the site, its soils, slope, water drainage, flora and fauna and micro climate.

This could then be followed by a *Development Plan* to cover the following areas:

- occupancy constraints, e.g. density/population ceilings and protection for flora and fauna
- location of housing, services, fencing and community facilities
- cleared land and its usefulness for agriculture/reforestation
- forest management - reforestation plans, timber uses, forest access and weed control
- landscaping plans for micro climate control - shade, wind, fire protection, visual barriers
- fire prevention and treatment strategies.

Both aspects need to involve learning about the nature of the site, it attributes and opportunities for development.

Two other matters are of significant concern in relation to environmental protection. These are protection for flora and fauna and changes to the development plan over time.

In relation to flora and fauna how will you protect native plant and animal life? If you are considering prohibitions on dogs and cats or no connection to the grid then do it now as a ground rule as you probably won't be able to do it latter.

Significant changes to the Development Plan could be proposed as the community evolves over time. Where these changes may have long term environmental and social consequences, it should be necessary for co-operative approval to be gained; followed by submission to the local Council. An example of significant change would be the proposed relocation of a hamlet site.

Built Environment

A number of issues require consideration in the context of the built environment. These are:

- type of layout
- dwelling occupancy levels
- staging of development commencement
- use of renewable energy resources
- sharing and responsibility.

What type of layout?

There appear to be at least three layout alternatives: a single village, an individual unit with surrounding land (example, one house per 4 hectares), or a multi-hamlet development.

A single village structure for the development is attractive in some ways, particularly in the area of containing servicing problems and costs. It also means that there is a single fire protection problem. However, there are some negative aspects to a single village model, including our suburban cultural heritage of private detached dwellings, which does little to foster community interaction and co-operation.

The second alternative, the individual unit with surrounding land, also has problems; in particular the visual and access impacts of having built development spread throughout the site. This model can be expensive in relation to servicing and does little to assist interaction and sharing. In addition, dispersed housing aggravates the problem of fire protection.

A multi-hamlet development model appears preferable for several reasons. It does not have the negative aspects of the other models previously mentioned. Several hamlets, each able to support up to six houses, can be more easily sited than a single village which has a much greater environmental impact. A multi-hamlet development tends to

rationalize service provision and fire protection; it can assist in focussing development in the least sensitive areas while providing a balance between the need for privacy and for community.

If the latter is adopted then it is essential that each hamlet be involved in adapting the Co-operative Society's organisational practices in order to facilitate hamlet development and management. The level of interaction must be sufficient to enable effective management of hamlet facilities such as laundry, workshop, barn access ways, fencing and services and activities such as animal husbandry, fire protection and waste disposal.

Diversity of dwelling type

*A*t least one dwelling site in each hamlet could be designated as communal space; i.e. with a common kitchen for singles, aged, single parents, childless couples and teenagers, rather than repetition of the nuclear family house.

Materials

The building process should take advantage of community self help, on-site and recycled materials, in order to:

- cut costs
- promote site attachment
- minimise environmental impact.

Examples of on-site materials include earth, stone and timber.

The building program should be responsive to both passive and active energy systems; houses should be autonomous as far as possible.

It is vital that certain elements be shared by all hamlets. Other than houses, gardens and facilities specific to an individual hamlet, the rest of the land must be managed by the whole community.

Staging and Transitional Accommodation

Staging of buildings should be preferred and encouraged. Transitional accommodation, for example tents, buses and sheds should be legitimated, subject to their eventual removal or conversion to more appropriate long term uses. At least two hamlets (each with two units) should commence simultaneously, to form a core around which the rest of the community can develop.

Alternatively, a rudimentary structure can provide adequate shelter while it evolves gradually into the final built form. This presupposes suitable treatment of household waste in both phases of the housing process

What form of dwelling?

Whatever takes the fancy of the individual household, subject to approval of plans by the community and the building satisfying the criteria of structural sufficiency, weather exclusion and adequate sanitation.

Desirable design features include passive energy principles, renewable power sources, staging, a high level of spatial flexibility and maximised opportunities for the use of on-site materials.

Services and Appropriate Technology

Appropriate technology is based on development of small-scale techniques with minimal environmental impact, suitable for community use. Appropriate technology is affordable and is preferably maintainable within the community.

Domestic water supply should be gained from roof collecting, agriculture and garden requirements can be met by use of site catchments.

A house of 100 square metres can be driven by a modest solar unit provided that the household is prepared to accept its limitations; this unit provides sufficient energy for lighting, a small television and a car-style high fidelity sound system. Autonomy via solar power is complimented by domestic water supplied from the roof. These two items alone can save large expenditure otherwise necessary to connect to reticulated services.

An especially relevant target for appropriate technology is the area of domestic waste disposal, due to present costs and environmental impacts. The composting toilet is one response but to date it is little recognised by health authorities in Australia.

The development plan should show all vehicular access with a view to minimal roading, taking account of site topography and natural features. Gravel roads are desirable from cost and aesthetic considerations and would be within the capacity of community maintenance.

Land totally under forest is unsuitable as it would be unacceptable to be clearing existing forest. Two options exists:Either marginal farm land; or Prime agricultural land that is appropriate for conversion from mono-cropping to a more labour and crop intensive and varied production.

More particularly, marginal agricultural/conservation land, i.e. land on the edge of State Forests or National Parks would be appropriate particularly to act as a ‘buffer’ between traditional agriculturalists and land zoned for conservation values.

Managing Community development

In the early days of high dedication and honeymoon trust it is easy to discount the need for planning and agreements about what and how things will be done and how much

help we all need. As the community culture evolves this begins to reduce the need for formal organisation.

Outside Facilitators/Consultants during the initial Phase

The Group, to appoint a group facilitator whose responsibility is to see that:

Agreements are understood and carried out.This means checking that during the formation stage:

- the plan of development is understood and agreed to by all participants;
- the group understands what it is agreeing to and the implications this raises;
- that these agreements are applied in practice and to work with the when there is difficulty in their implementation;
- to see that objectives are worked out and shared by the whole group
- act as a resource person for community development and conflict resolution.

Facilitating task achievement and community maintenance

The importance of consensus

Much has been written and discussed in the alternative scene about the importance of consensus because of its role in maintaining group cohesion. An issue is how to look after the group cohesion while at the same time getting things done. While the model rules of community settlement under the Co-operation Act are appropriate as insurance against the inability to make a decision and resolve inevitable conflicts, from the point of view of group maintenance, consensus has to be pursued as the vital part of a decision making process that cares for all of the group while also struggling to make a decision. As a minimum consensus over major decisions defined by either the intensity of feeling and values connected with it and/or its long term consequences for the land and the community, e.g. over-excavation, buildings and membership.

All decisions are deemed to be important unless it is agreed that they are not. Consensus doesn't have to mean that all agree although that is preferable, but that at least everyone is prepared to allow the decision to go through, for whatever reason, as each has the power of veto. The key question to focus on is what is the best decision for the Co-operative, hamlet, individual?

What to do when consensus cannot be reached?

(1) Provide time and space for reconsideration of positions and reactions. Bring the issue to another meeting. Before the next meeting informal attempts can be made to work out different viewpoints. It is the directors' responsibility to see that this happens.
(2) It the conflict cannot be resolved at the next meeting, form an issue working party consisting of people reflecting the range of view points.
(3) If the working party cannot come up with an agreed solution then consensus reverts to the directors.
(4) if the directors cannot agree then the proposed action lapses and cannot be raised for 6 months, at which time 75% majority of members present at a general meeting is

necessary to make a decision. If the directors do agree their decision can be challenged by a general meeting pursuant to the registered rules.

Preparation for Meetings

Meetings are when the group as a whole has an opportunity to be together. It is important that they are a community 'building' experience. It is therefore vital that they are prepared for and managed effectively.

This involves the appointment of a chairperson and a deputy. The chairperson is in that role for at least 3 consecutive meetings and then replaced by the deputy. These two meet with the Secretary (who is appointed for 1 year) one week prior to any meeting to consider the agenda, check on what actions were to be done and reports made and to examine pointers and strategies for dealing with known difficulties.

Management of the Meeting

The role of the chairperson is to care for the meeting by the following:

- specify and stick to a set time frame, i.e. start 8 pm and finish 10.30 pm.
- Require a consensus to continue beyond that time;
- set a pre-arranged time for completion of all business if not all is dealt with, e.g. the morning after;
- before entering a debate to hand over to their deputy;
- follow pre-arranged agenda and meeting procedure;
- allow time for the range of opinions to be expressed before attempting to state the feeling of the meeting;
- work toward equalisation of participation, i.e. ask for the opinion of those who haven't spoken;
- ask the meeting to examine the impact on individual/sub-groups and the community as a whole, of any proposed decision;
- allow space for informal interaction (e.g. coffee break, warm up at the beginning).

Directors/committee of managment

Directors may meet independently but only have the power to resolve issues considered of a routine nature or of more lasting significance. These decisions have to be explicitly agreed to by a general meeting; similarly with any committee which needs to be set up to look after specific areas, such as finance, ecology or membership.

The power of any person or sub-group has to be explicit, while being accountable to and limited by the whole group. The necessity to focus authority is in part a reflection that all the group doesn't share an equal sense of responsibility for the group's development or for the achievement of a particular task. Thus it is important to work at developing a sense of responsibility and awareness throughout the group, while at the same time looking after the needs of the individual. This is done by working at clarifying opinions, testing differences and agreements and encouraging wide ranging participation.

Occurrence of Meetings/Gatherings.

It is important that the community comes together regularly, more often in the beginning, General community meetings should be held twice monthly. These can be either business meetings or social gatherings which all members are encouraged to attend. Business meetings may be called to consider one or any number of issues; they may be concerned to simply share feelings, with decision as a secondary concern; about one issue or be centred on the range of issues.

Shared Work Expectations

In order to protect group morale and to care for those who do the most (the high energy people in the community), certain minimum expectations are required of each member or adult resident. (It is important that children are also involved in community development and thus share in the work.) These minimums are to be enforced by the option of a charge if they don't do it and the social expectation that all residents be there. Tasks are to be done as much as possible collectively (as joint tasks at the same time) especially work that nobody else wants to do but most recognise needs doing, such as cleaning, maintenance, cooking, etc. Once these minimums have been defined, it is up to each person to decide upon their priorities of contribution and areas of interest. Diversity of input of quantity and quality beyond the minimum is to be accepted as part of the toleration of diversity. What minimum is defined is for the community to work out in the context of its circumstances and needs.

What constitutes group work is also up to the group to define. The issue then becomes how much time is expected! In order to engender a feeling of being part of the community and to establish the necessary infrastructure the transitional expectations will be a minimum of 8 hours per fortnight towards Co-operative tasks, and if part of a hamlet 8 hours per fortnight towards the hamlet tasks. If the individual cannot perform on work days, another time has to be negotiated and agreed to by the relevant body. A record of member's work contributions must be kept.

If the individual cannot resolve this after a case has been prepared presented and agreed to by the community, then he/she has the option of paying an hourly rate (average award hourly rate) to the group affected, for an agreed time span. These funds could be used to pay those whose work input exceeds the minimum. If the person wants exemption from both then this has to be agreed to by consensus of the membership and the outside consultant (building a home is insufficient reason for non-performance of Co-operative tasks). The due period is to be specified. If the person refuses then to pay, the amount is debited against their share holding. Such refusal is grounds for forfeiting shares. This expectation can be varied with the agreement of the community.

Conflict Prevention and Resolution

Conflict prevention

The first priority is prevention of destructive conflict.

Shared Values

Prevention is basically achieved by the group sharing common values and objectives. These need to be of sufficient generality to allow for diversity with sufficient clarity of implementation to provide a common reference point to evaluate individual and sub-group actions. Thus the test of the group objectives needs to include the following:

- Individual and sub-group behaviour has to be consistent with the aims and practices of the group as a whole. There are limits to self-reliance which have to be within the context of the community's sustainability;
- Personal change is part of what being in a group involves. This includes looking within as well as without and a willingness to risk the possibility of change - this is a necessary shared objective.
- Individual and sub-group action is evaluated in terms of its impacts on the physical environment.

In short, a commitment to accountability to the community, to oneself and to the natural environment are necessary objectives for all groups. Other objectives need to be evaluated to see they don't clash with the above.

A Clear and Effective Organisational Structure

Common values and objectives only have significant meaning when there is a clear organisational structure which is explicit while having supportive mechanisms to ensure its sustainability. It must be reinforced by social pressure for individuals to participate and to carry out agreed tasks with clear lines of responsibility and areas of authority.

Everyone being responsible means no one is. Thus:

- individual responsibilities need to be clear and treated in a context of support to ensure agreed tasks are done sufficiently well and responded to on completion by a meeting - appreciation goes a long way.
- explicit areas where the community does or doesn't have responsibility; for example, boundaries between private, hamlet and overall rights and responsibilities; and further, it is up to the individuals within their own dwellings what they do.

Most of this structure is laid down and goes a long way to clarifying where the individual stands, what is expected and how to interact to achieve common objectives. The process of clarifying and coming to agreement is ongoing and inevitably involves conflict, much of which is constructive through providing energy, new ideas, innovation and its testing.

Conflict resolution

To help ensure creative conflict resolution and to separate the conflict from its mode of resolution, agreed paths to conflict resolution have to be worked out before the need arises. Part of the problem with conflict becoming destructive is that differences over responses to a community issue get confused with responses to personalities - responses which can become generalised and polarised throughout the group. To deal with these likelihood's the following approaches are recommended:

The first step is clarification of what the conflict is about and the degree of feeling attached to it.

Meetings will tend to be a focal point of conflict and thus the role of the chairperson, with the aid of the membership, is vital. Sometimes it will be necessary for the chairperson to stop the meeting trying to reach agreement and examine what it happening.

If the differences cannot be worked out because of conflict over how to tackle an issue then defer the matter to the following meeting. If solutions have not been worked out during this period and the following meeting, then an issue working party is to be formed. This is to consist of the chief protagonists in any debate and chaired by a neutral but authoritative figure who may be a non-member.

Suggested size is 3 to 5 members. If a resolution is worked out to mutual satisfaction, it can be brought back to a meeting for a decision. It would be expected that if the key view points have been represented in the working party then the meeting would be expected to accept their solution. Interconnected with such differences will be interpersonal clashes.

Interpersonal conflict and resolution.

There will be significant variations in responses along a like-dislike continuum. Strong reactions either way have a variety of explanations. However, they are changeable and many of them cannot be easily explained and are unknown to the participants. For example, we often dislike someone of a particular behaviour because of our parents and/or because the other reminds us of parts of ourselves we don't wish to acknowledge or deal with.

In the long term it doesn't pay to avoid conflicts if the community and the person is to be cared for. Sustainable relationships depend on work and a willingness to take the risk of attempting to clarify what is happening within a person and between them and others. Time and space is part of such understanding and healing.

Two levels of responses are necessary:
individual self exploration - rather than search for an external explanation, look within first. Working on your side of the conflict may require self-reflection with the aid of a skilled person - then consider the other's point, preferably with that person.

Community responses – working towards the creation of interaction and an atmosphere that is conductive to bringing such conflict out into the open without embroiling the whole community. Particularly important is the chairperson and the creation of a specific position of community conciliator (or social secretary). The person to fill this position would be elected for a 1 year term, like other major roles (e.g. treasurer or secretary). The community conciliator's job is to bring warring parties together, to clarify their differences, examine their bases and to help them work out solutions. When appropriate, they bring conflicts to a meeting for resolution. If necessary prior to unresolved differences being brought to a meeting, the community conciliator has the authority to bring in an outside agent to work with the individuals involved. If there are any costs, these are to be met 50/50 by the community and the individuals involved.

Breaking Agreements and Community Responses

The issues are when and how to act, not whether. What can be done, what needs to be done when an individual or sub-group breaks agreements with the community? Key is to work at developing responses/mechanisms that 'fit the crime'. There are two risks – one that the community response is overly severe, e.g. expulsion for non-attendance at a workday, and secondly and more likely is the response to avoid – (the head in the sand approach) and hope that someone else or thing will fix it, such as time or patience. A community that is unwilling and unable to deal effectively with those who break the rules is undermining its foundation of 'why/what we are together'. Once this is recognised the next difficult issue is devising appropriate sanctions. It is the less obvious, initially not so significant, rule-breaking that requires careful thought.

Steps towards constructive responses.

Confront the act via a Responsible Authority

The community to appoint on a rotating basis, a community advocate. His or her responsibility is to report on the gaps between policy and practice to a general meeting and to help see what can be done.

Delegate the social secretary, conflict conciliator or an appropriate director to speak to the person or sub-group involved. If this is insufficient, bring to the notice of the community the nature of the violation and the issues involved for discussion, with a right of reply by those involved.

Financial and Legal Sanctions

These can begin with the charging of a fine with prior notice that if this is not effective then further specific steps will be taken. For example, the fine can be in the form of interest charged on debts to the co-operative or a charge for overstocking the land or for not doing the agreed workdays. If a member proves intractable, the right to occupy the land is withdrawn for a set period of time.

The final sanction is the forfeiture of shares. This is not to be done lightly; conditions for this action are set out in the registered rules. However, the community must be prepared to apply these rules when the need arises.

Outside Resources.

Before any irrevocable decisions are taken, outside conflict arbitrators are to be called in. These can be in the form of conflict resolvers, therapists, lawyers an ultimately the police; which of these will be called in, and in whatever combination, depends on the issue. The community should not utilise these external techniques which can still be used in an internal framework. If these measures fail, the third stage provides recourse to external agencies.

Conflict Prevention and Resolution				
STAGE 1 (INTERNAL)		**STAGE 2 (INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL)**		**STAGE 3 (EXTERNAL)**
STEP I **Definition of:** • Common values and objectives • Clear organisational structure • Agreement about responsibility • Agreement about sanctions • Supportive environment for: Individual Household Hamlet Community	STEP II • Identification of conflict – Personal based or issue based • Time-allowing time for issue to resolve itself • Reflection/re-consideration (potential for inaction) • Use of working groups	STEP III • Use external facilitators • Assisted by information exchange and expert opinion	STEP IV • Pay Fines • Pay Interest • Right to occupy withdrawn • Share forfeiture • Liaise with external agencies	STEP V • Registrar of Co-operatives • Municipal Council • Health Commission • Police
PREVENTIVE MEASURES	**RESOLUTION MEASURES**			

Legal Aspects of Intentional Communities

A Pan Communities Workshop, Sat 9th Sept 1999, Dharmananda, Terania Creek

By Graham Irvine (Nimbin Law)

I have been asked to speak with you today on various legal aspects of forming and maintaining intentional communities in Australia.

My own connection with IC's goes back to 1973 when I became one of the first shareholders in the oldest and largest of all IC's – the Turntable Falls Co-ordination Co-op at Nimbin.

Following that I was briefly a Dharmananda resident and later worked with the founders of Bodhi Farm community up here on the ridge above us.

After returning from overseas I joined one of the oldest IC's in NSW, 'Moondani", where I still live.

I have been quite active on the executive of the Pan Community Council for some years now and have been part of delegations and submissions to government Ministers leading to the re-instatement of the NSW State Environmental Planning Policy on Rural Landsharing Communities.

My legal background began at Melbourne University Law School but I never graduated and it was not until 1995 that I graduated with an Honours Law degree from Lismore's Southern Cross University where I submitted a thesis on Multiple Occupancy communities in Australia.

Since graduating I have worked for the Aboriginal Legal Service, the Northern Rivers Community Legal Centre and in private practice in Mullumbimby, Murwillumbah and on the Gold Coast and am presently running a practice at Nimbin.

Over this time I have had various IC clients and am currently acting for several communities.

However, before moving on to the substantive part of the topic I do want to stress that I do NOT hold myself out to be an expert on IC law which straddles several very complex and unclear areas of both common law and statute. In a session such as this I am unable to take your instructions in order to give any detailed advice and so you rely on what I say at your own risk and I can only stress the importance of obtaining legal advice from your own solicitor which is tailor-made to your own situation.

NSW is the only state to legislatively recognise IC's, which are called Rural Landsharing Communities in SEPP 15 under the Environmental Planning & Assessment Act 1979.

Some states such as Tasmania and South Australia deal with IC's on a local government level whilst others like Victoria and Queensland have drawn up legislation similar to NSW's Community Land Development Act 1989 and Western Aust. is apparently considering it's own legislation to cover IC's.

Whilst de facto IC's exist in every state I will confine my remarks to NSW as this is where IC law has developed furthest.

Why is a legal structure necessary?

The historical models for today's IC's tend to come from long-established tribal societies. But whereas these communities evolved over many generations, thus allowing them to progressively evolve principles and behavioural norms which enabled them to establish the rules of the community, today's IC's do not have the luxury of such extended time and so must impose rules from the start.

Some communards still adopt the position that love and goodwill will obviate the need for rules, which they see as antithetical to their self-styled anarchist stance. However the experience in this area, after 20 years of IC's, is that idealism does not usually survive the turnover of the initial members and leaving important matters of peoples' rights up to the vagaries of unwritten understandings is a recipe for disaster. Moreover there is no contradiction between an anarchist position and formal rules.

On the other hand an appropriate legal structure will regularise important communal issues such as allocation of areas for individual and communal living and working; protection of private and communal assets; rentals and sales of interests; decision-making and discipline on the community and the allocation of assets following death of members or dissolution of the community.

Types of IC Legal Structures

1. Strata Title

Although there is one example of this legislation being used for an IC in this area, the consensus among its members seems to be that they find the structure unduly restrictive and inconvenient. The Strata Titles Act was intended to apply to high-rise flats and not broad acre communities. However it is possible to structure an IC so that each member has an individual title over their house and curtilage, whilst contributing in cash or kind to the body corporate which is responsible for overall supervision and management of the IC.

2. Community Title

This law enables de facto subdivision of land into separate lots with their own title held amongst common property. The group which initially buys the land can thus retain control over common lands and internal roads than have that control pass to the local council.
But locally, councils have demanded from these communities much the same standards of development as those which are required of formal subdivisions which results in very substantial set-up costs, usually passed on to individual buyers of blocks. The upshot can be that block holders end up paying virtually freehold prices for their lots.
An advantage of CT is that it enables a very wide range of possible internal arrangements concerning e.g. communal facilities, rules re ideology, farming practices, conservation, pets, building standards etc.
Yet the ideology of this legislation, being largely developer-driven, militates against the development of a community ethos in that it promotes the interests of the individual lot holders at the expense of the community. Unless this is catered for in the internal regulation of the IC it can lead to the overtaking of the community by speculators whose interests lie in profit-taking rather than the establishment of a genuine community.

3. Company Structures

Companies are perhaps the most suitable structures for aspiring IC's because of their ease of set up, flexibility and limited liability of members for any debts of the company itself.
Unlike CT structures they can be set up for as little as about $1500.00, with an annual company returns of about $200.
Possible pitfalls include the danger that unless restraints are put in place governing share transfers and the price of shares and improvements, normal market forces may operate such that the IC has little control over who buys into the community with a consequent loss of communal identity and functions.

4. Co-operative Structures

In ideological terms co-ops are probably the most suitable vehicles for the formation of an IC. They are ideally democratic, self-help organistaions which exist to provide services to members rather than profits and thus lend themselves to the purpose of setting up an IC.
Under the 1993 NSW Co-operatives Act the powers and duties of co-ops are potentially wide and detailed and can allow for the operation of businesses, buying groups and other activities.
A particular advantage of the co-op structure is the comprehensive safety net provided by the Act which covers common problems which may arise, such as disputes between members and liabilities of the co-op.

5. Tenants-in-Common Structures

This structure enables a group of people to buy land but also obtain separate title, entitling them to a nominated proportion of shares. All tic's are entitled to use all of the land and to gain their proportion of any rents over it but they do not have any entitlement to possession of any particular part of the property, though they are empowered to lease parts of it up to 5 years (renewable).
The land can only be sold or mortgaged with the agreement of all tic's and any structures erected belong equally to all. The inherent danger here is that if such agreement cannot be arrived at, a court may order the sale or partition of the property. Although members can make internal agreements between themselves they cannot override the above restrictions relating to the land or fixtures themselves.

6. Joint Tenancy Structures

This structure is similar to Tenancy-in-Common except that on the death of one party their interest passes to the other/s. Generally this structure could not be recommended for aspiring IC's.

7. Trust Structures

Under this structure a person, group or company can hold the legal title over land for the benefit of others (the beneficiaries). Any change in the trustees requires a change to the Certificate of Title over the land held with consequent legal and registration costs.
A particular danger of this structure may be that unless the trustee/s are a part of the IC and living on the land they may be or become distant from the ideals and needs of those living there and this could cause legal problems as they have control over the trust property.
Recent changes to the law mean that many of the financial advantages of trusts relating to distribution of trust income and tax rates no longer favour trusts over companies and other legal structures.

8. Unit Trust Structures

In the past this form of structure has been used to overcome the prohibition against subdivision but the ways in which they have attempted to achieve this are of very dubious legality and may well not survive a challenge in the courts.
Under this structure the community's land is held in trust by a company from which shareholders hold leases over their blocks for periods of less than 5 years which are theoretically renewable. They are relatively expensive to set up and were never designed for use by IC's.

9. Incorporated Association Structures

It is possible for a group to set up an Association to hold land providing it does not engage in profit-making or trading. However it makes no provision for individuals to

sell their interests in the property unless members have some arrangement whereby they lend money to the Association on terms which satisfactorily cover their financial interests. Although such Associations are relatively simple and cheap to set up and grant limited liability for individuals, the capacity to sue and perpetual succession they were not intended for the purposes of IC's and may be disallowed by the state authorities for this purpose.

10. Extended Family Structures

Some years ago a case in NSW established that "family" did not have to constitute blood relations but can be made up of unrelated individuals provided that they all eat together and demonstrate other aspects of family life. Council planning instruments provide that a family home need not be just one structure but may consist of several detached but physically related buildings as long as the separate buildings do not have separate kitchens or bathrooms.
However such structures have not, to my knowledge, ever been tried for rural landsharing communities and confer no legal rights on family members, such that there is no easy way for individual members to recoup any money or "sweat equity" they may have contributed in the event of them wanting to leave.

In conclusion then, if forced to choose which of these structures is generally the most suitable for IC's, my experience suggests that companies are likely to best fit the bill where the number of intending communards is less than, say, 10. For larger groups the co-op structure is likely to be more suitable.

However my experience also suggests that, above all, the legal structure chosen is only as good as the people constituting it so that an internally cohesive group always has a better chance of making an IC work almost regardless of the IC's legal structure. In contrast no legal structure will protect your community from dispute and expense if the communards are not of like mind and interests. This suggests that it is best to gather the foundation group together first and find the land you want once you are confident in the ability of all members to work and live together, rather than the other way around. This process is facilitated by the common adoption of some ideological, political or spiritual principles by the foundation group which has the effect of keeping the group together and laying down universally agreed principles of living together.

Finally, let me say that despite all the potential pitfalls, I would recommend IC's as being the best way for like-minded people to live together in sustainable harmony with consequent benefits for the members and for the planet generally.

Group Process for Intentional Communities

By Glen Ochre, Group Process Specialist

Principles of Collaborative Decision Making

- "All of us is smarter than any of us".
- The more significant the decision, the more people should be involved in its making.
- All of those affected by a decision should be part of making that decision.
- Some decisions should be trusted to small groups or individuals.
- Involvement builds commitment.
- Responsibility:
  builds trust
  builds more responsibility and confidence, plus develops and recognises skills
  builds wisdom and empowerment
  builds teamwork.
- An organisation with trusted, trusting, responsible, skilled, wise people is the most effective.
- Within a culture of assertiveness and acceptance, people can make mistakes, face them and learn.
- We all have a responsibility to own our part in difficulties and participate in seeking collaborative solutions.
- We all have a right to be affirmed for our good contributions.

The Principles of Collectivism

- **EMPOWERMENT** - commitment to the empowerment of collective members, the collective as a whole and those with whom the collective works.
- **Non-hierarchal** structures.
- Independent **SELF-MANAGEMENT** - collective control of "output".
- **COOPERATION**, not competition, in the development of ideas, making decisions, and carrying out of tasks.
- "**THE PERSONAL IS POLITICAL**" - an acknowledgment of the importance of the relationships involved.
- "**THE PROCESS IS POLITICAL**" - and just as important as the achievements of the collective.
- **CONSENSUS** decision making.
- **EQUALITY** of access to information, power and responsibility.
- Structures which are set by the collective. **Flexibility** of structures - when they don't work, they can be changed!
- Honest **ASSERTIVE** expression of *views*, *needs*, and *feelings*, while owning one's own and respecting other's.
- Active **REFLECTIVE** *listening* to one another.
- The **sharing** of skills and skill development.
- The **"Caring Confrontation" of CONFLICT**. The use of agreed upon *processes* for dealing with conflict.
- **Non-judgemental respect** for each person regardless of their age, gender, ethnicity or current level of skill and ability.
- **Growth and change** in collective processes and activities, based on collective *reflection* and *evaluation.*
- **Non-violence.**
- A **consciousness** of the place of our collective endeavour in the broader social, economic, political and environmental context and a **commitment** to the principles of collectivism within these broader contexts.

Philosophy, Principles, Aims and Objectives

Every collaborative organisation's structures, process and service delivery needs to be firmly based on a clear foundation of agreed upon philosophy, principle, aims and objectives.
When developing such an organisational foundation we need to start with the broad base of our philosophical beliefs and build on this to more specific principles, clearly defined aims and measurable and achievable objectives.
These should be worked out with involvement from all team members and owned by the whole organisation.
There is often much confusion about all these terms. Different people mean different things by the various words. Following is a framework that I use which people seem to find simple, clear and easy to use.

Philosophy

This is the broad value system on which the organisation is based. How the world is for our service users, the disadvantages and oppression they experience and how we believe things ought to be. It is about the human rights to which we believe these particular people are entitled. It is about *why* we need such a service as ours - eg. a service for women experiencing domestic violence.

Principle

These spring from the philosophy and are the guiding statements which help us make wise decisions about process, policy and practice. They are not policy or rules, but the inspiration for the way we bring our service to life. They help us to keep on track. They should fit on one page and be clearly displayed - eg. "All women have the right to live in safety", "This service will be run by women for women".

Aims

An organisation needs only 2-3 aims. These are clear, specific and simple statements about what we aim to do. They are best started with the word "TO". It is often helpful to think of a service delivery aim, a community education or social change aim and a collaborative process aim. Something like:-
"To provide housing and support services to women leaving domestic violence."
"To educate the community about issues related to domestic violence."
"To operate within a collaborative framework which incorporates the wisdom of all team members."
Aims are still broad but becoming more specific. They, like the philosophy, and principles, remain the same over the long term.

Objectives

Each aim needs a "matching set" of objectives starting with the word "BY". These are achievable and measurable. They are the specifics of how we will meet the aims for this particular period. Therefore the objective may change after evaluation each year or 6

months. At the end of this time we need to be able to answer the question “did we achieve that objective?”.
So, in our previous example the first aim may have objectives such as:-

- by purchasing 2 houses by the end of July.
- by running two, six week groups over the next year for women who have moved on from our houses.
- etc.

Tasks

These are finer details about just how we would achieve our objectives. They are the *what*, *how*, *who* and *when* details and the steps involved in achieving each objective.
While some of these details may be worked out with the whole group most would be worked out by the person or people putting the objective into practice.

Major Issues to be Addressed in the Establishment and Maintenance of Communities

Philosophy and Aims

There's a lot more to it than just wanting to take care of the land or get out of the rat race.

Why do we want to live in community? What are our deeply held views of the world that lead us in this direction? What do we each personally need and hope for? What do we believe communities can achieve? What do we hope this one will do both internally and in its interface with the world? Do we need outward-focused aims as well as those associated with community?

Membership

Who do I want to share this dream with?

What type of people do we want to live in community with? How many couples; singles; gender balance? What about children, and the ratio of children to adults? And most importantly, how will these people be selected at the beginning, or how will they join and be integrated later and how will they leave? Does everyone need to be a full-time resident? How might people feel about "part-timers"?

Model and Structure

Organising our anarchy!

How closely do we want to live? "One roof, one table, one purse"? Separate living with communal eating? Cluster housing or some other living model? What is the most suitable legal entity? How will legal ownership be worked out (one title, separate titles)? How much communal life do we want, and how much separateness? What will be the financial arrangements? Where and how big will it be - city, country?

Decision Making

There's more to consensus than sitting in a circle and talking about it.

How will decisions be made? If it is to be by consensus, the group will need to learn together how to do it properly and how to facilitate a consensus process. It is much more complex than it sounds but works brilliantly when you know how! Meetings are a necessity - how often? when and where will these be held? what about child care? and how will they be run and facilitated? - badly run meetings are very stressful.

Power Sharing

We might all be born equal but some end up more equal than others.

Power differences need to be acknowledged and methods worked out to "equalise" them. This requires talking about difficult stuff like domination and the sharing of air space, "important" tasks and information.

Sharing Work and Managing Tasks

Will it "all get done somehow"?

How will the work and responsibility be allocated? Should people be responsible for coordinating different areas? Would rosters be useful? Will there be set workdays or clear expectations about the number of work hours expected? - or will it all get done somehow?

Communication and Conflict Management

If it's getting up your nose - talk about it; if you like it - talk about it.

If we can talk to each other assertively and with care about our feelings, listen to each other deeply and talk together collaboratively about the issues and conflicts that arise between us, WE CAN DO ANYTHING WE DREAM OF TOGETHER! However, this is not easy, and we need to learn together clear techniques and processes for doing it and to have an agreed upon process for conflict resolution. Clear expectations and agreements about how things are to be done are helpful in avoiding unnecessary conflict.

Reflection, Evaluation and Change

Life is an experiment.

And life in community is especially experimental! Communities need regular, structured time for reflection, evaluation and planning. Changes are needed as we learn and grow.

Community Maintenance and FUN

If it's not fun it's not worth doing!

There needs to be structured and unstructured time for getting to know and understand each other, time to deepen our bond together and to just enjoy the fun sides to sharing our lives together.

The Essentials of Organisational Collaboration

- Clarity of philosophy, aims and objectives; and ownerships of these
- A set or organisational principles that are agreed upon and owned with pride
- Clear channels for decision making and processes for appropriate involvement in decision making; and good meeting procedures to facilitate this
- Mechanisms to share responsibility in leadership in a manner which builds collaboration and maximises initiative and potential
- Clarity of roles, including a clear understanding of the role of the co-ordinator or manager in a collaborative team
- Empowering systems for accountability, support, challenge and learning
- Systems for incorporation and enculturation of people into the organisation
- Clear communication including getting along at a “one-to-one” and a team level - the ability to give and receive feedback, to negotiate and deal with different opinions and styles
- Good processes for dealing with conflict - using conflict creatively, resolving differences or grievances
- Built-in reflection, evaluation and planning time to keep ahead and avoid being “stuck” in reaction
- Collaboratively developed agreements and policies about how things will be done in the organisation

A Meetings "Map"

… Be Prepared!!

Before the meeting

- Have pre-assigned, prepared facilitators, minute taker and timekeeper. These are best rotated on a 1-3 monthly basis.
- Have a system for collecting agenda items - so all may participate in contributing issues to the agenda.
- Facilitator is responsible for agenda formation.
- Have a detailed agenda - so people can understand what the item is actually about Ð assign suggested time to items.
- Ensure agenda is available well before the meeting.
- Ensure that everyone knows the time and place.
- Choose a comfortable environment - prepare the space.
- Develop a group culture that values and respects these meetings and expects punctuality and good organisation.

Into the meetings

- Start on time.
- Have a simple centering activity - eg. a minute of silence with some nice music.
- Start with a "catch-up" where everyone briefly shares how they are.
- Look at the last minutes.
- Consider a segment for announcements only.
- Review agenda, or if necessary build agenda - make sure everyone accepts it.
- Prioritise items - if there are changes reassign times.
- Make agreements about times or any other arrangements as necessary.
- Work through each agenda item adjusting times along the way by agreement if needed.
- **Record** all decisions and important announcements. For decisions, have an **IMPLEMENTATION** recording system:- record **WHO** is to do **WHAT**, by **WHEN**.
- Leave time for a brief **evaluation** (eg. 10 minutes) of the meeting - what did we do well and not so well?
- Finish on time. (Consider a post-meeting treat!)

Heart Listening

…. Say only what is necessary!

Let us learn to listen deeply, not just with our ears, but with our hearts. We are searching for a special revelation about how the other/s feels and thinks about this issue - why they hold the views they do, how they put the picture together. For this time we need to suspend our own feelings and views knowing we can assert our right to have a turn to be heard. We do not need to agree with what is being said - we just need to listen with our hearts and seek to understand how is it for *them*.

The Basic Steps:

Attending

- "Preparing the heart" - mentally and emotionally preparing to temporarily put aside our issue, reminding ourselves of the principles of listening and ensuring that we do have the time and space to listen.
- Finding an appropriate time and non-distracting environment.
- Assuming a "posture of involvement" - letting the body reflect our willingness to HEAR.
- Eye contact.

Following:

- Openness of posture.
- Minimal encouragers to keep the other going.- "go on"; "I'm listening"; "emm" with occasional nods of the head.
- Infrequent questions and then only questions of clarification or open ended questions – "what happened then"; "how did you feel about that".
- Attentive silences.

Reflecting - showing that we have HEARD:

- Reflecting in our own words how the other seems to be feeling – "sounds like you feel really angry (upset, hurt, let down) about this".
- Summarising and paraphrasing**,** in our own words the content of what is being said, checking that we have heard it right – "So you're saying …", "for you it's…"
- Focusing on the most important points - making sure you have HEARD the major concerns and if necessary getting the other person to isolate them, while also acknowledging that all they have said is important – "there sure is a lot on your plate at the moment, what do you think is the most important for us to tackle".
- Reflecting meaning - tying feeling to content.

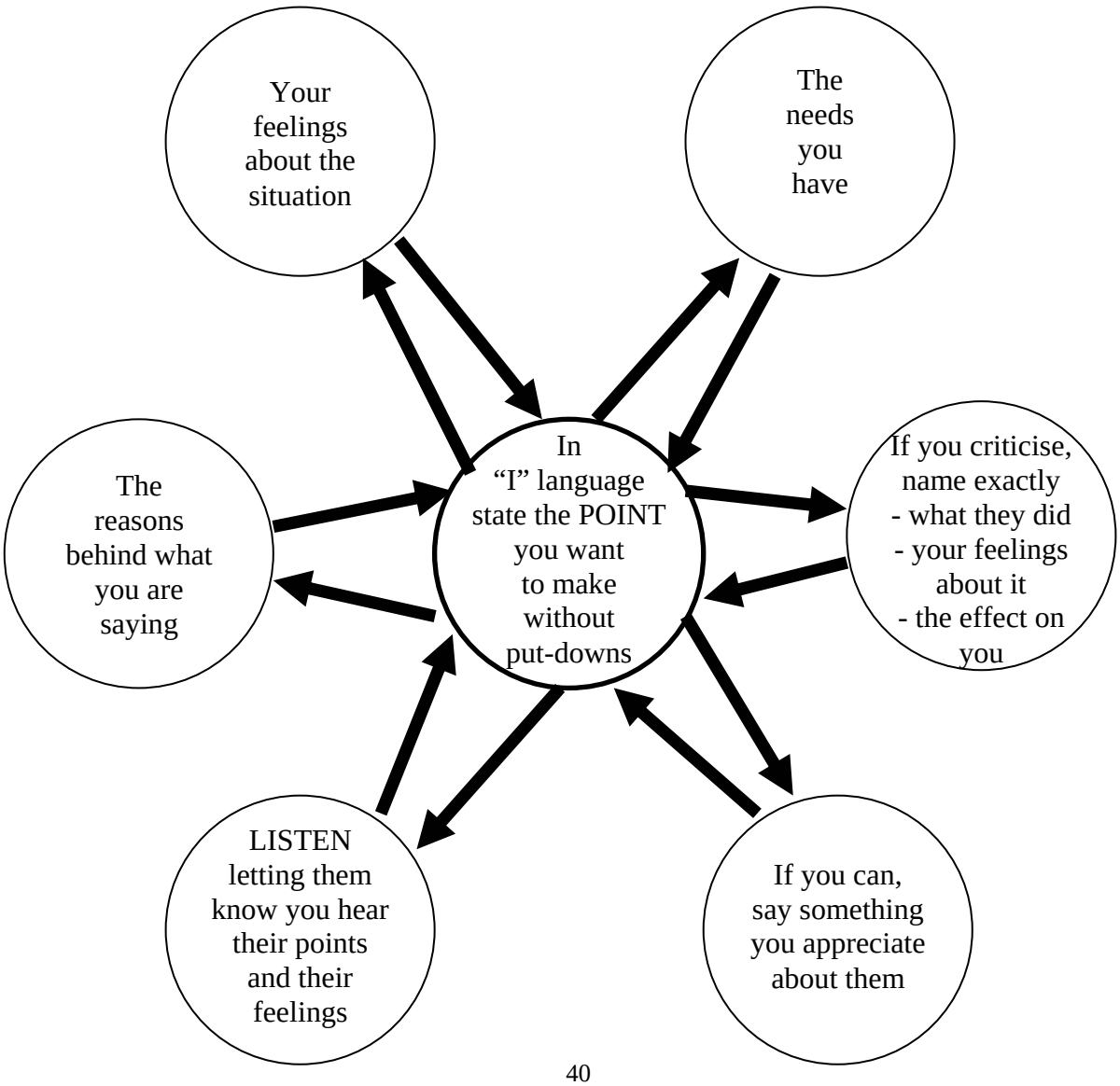
LISTEN UNTIL THE SPEAKER *FEELS* HEARD

Listening Stoppers

- Inability to temporarily put aside our own feelings.
- Arguing back with “logic” or denial.
- Judging and jumping to conclusions.
- “Brick walling” - putting up a wall between you and the speaker so that nothing gets through.
- Putting in one’s own story.
- Agreeing or disagreeing.
- Reassurance.
- Solving or jumping in with advice.

Assertive Messages

Complete, Clear and from the Heart



Giving Clear Assertive Criticism

"I" Messages

A critical "I" message is given when one speaks on one's own position, feelings, and needs, in relation to someone's specific behaviour, without attaching judgement to that behaviour or blame to the person.

Simple "formula" for giving critical "I" messages

When you ….. (their ***behaviour***) …..
"I" feel ….. (your ***feeling***) …..
because ….. (the ***effect on you***) …..
"I" need ….. (your ***need***) …..
For example:
"When you *put your papers on top of my work*
I felt *annoyed*
because *I had my work carefully arranged there.*
I need a *free space to complete it*"
(**NOT** "I need you to move, find another desk" etc.
This would be a "*you"* statement and may preclude a mutually satisfactory solution which you might develop together after you have heard the other person's need.)

Additions to the "formula"

You may also care to add acknowledgment of the other person's *position*, *feelings*, or *needs*. These can be inserted wherever seems most appropriate.

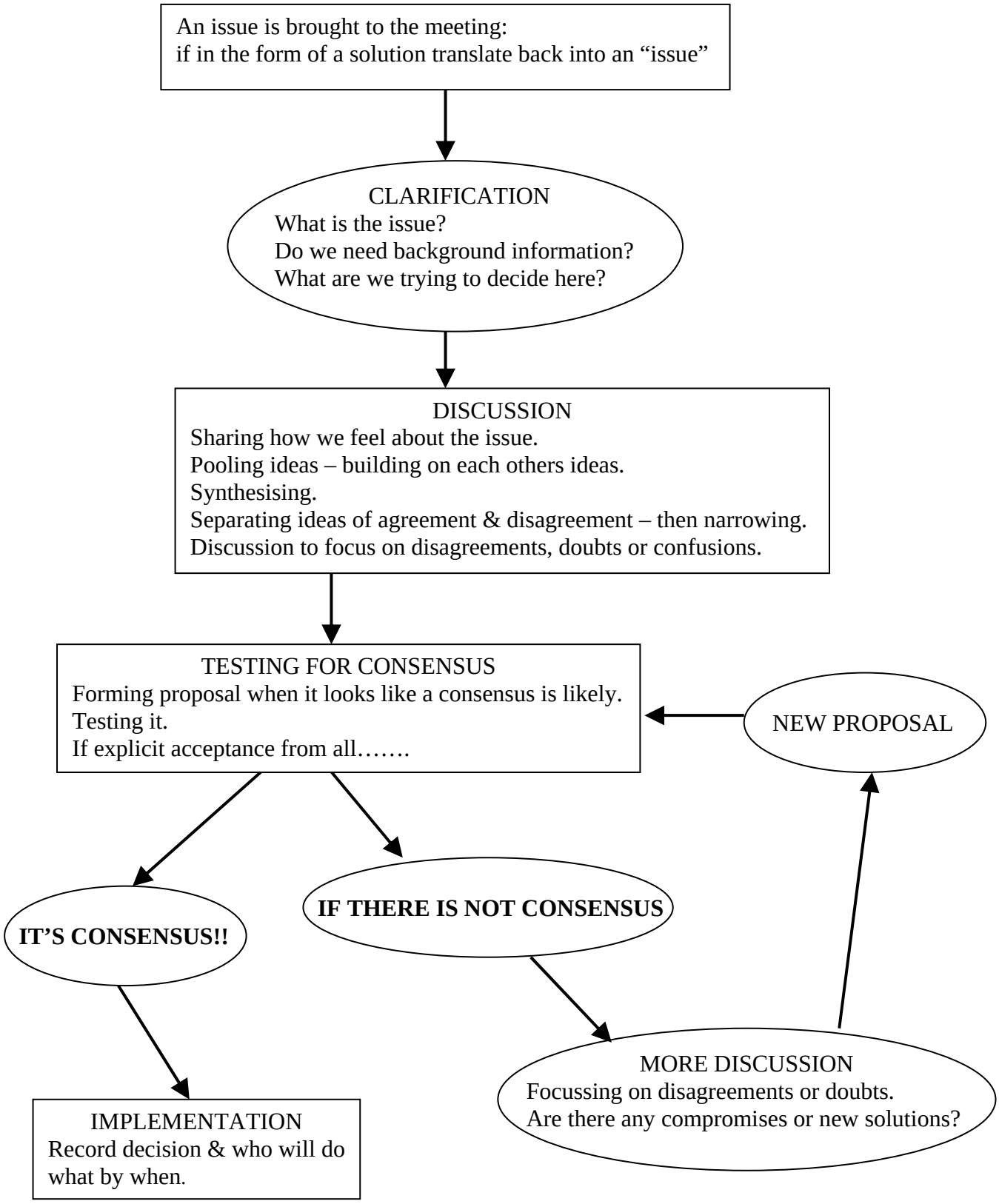
For example:
"I know we are short of space here and you often need to use this desk. It must be frustrating for you, but when you put papers on top of my work, I felt annoyed because….." etc.

Handling other's defensiveness (and most of us get defensive!)

Acknowledgment of their position, feelings or need is the best way to handle defensiveness.
If they respond to your assertion with, for example, "Well, I don't have a desk… nobody cares about part time workers…", you could respond by acknowledging what has been said and then reasserting yourself… "It must be frustrating for you not having a space of your own. It sounds as if you feel your needs are a bit neglected as a part time worker… however, I did feel… when you put your papers on top of my work…" etc.

Hear their defences, acknowledge them and reassert.

The Consensus Process



Negotiating through Differences

Negotiation aims for an agreement which:

- Leaves the relationship between the parties in better condition than before (or at least not damaged)
- Takes into account the legitimate interests of all parties
- Resolves conflicting interests fairly
- Is sustainable and realistic
- Takes into account the interests of relevant parties not able to be represented at the negotiation

The Principles of Negotiation:

- Avoid taking a stand - focus on concerns rather than positions
- Separate the people from the problem - seek out the issues and problems first, then look for mutually agreeable solutions. Avoid seeing people as "enemies".
- Focus on people's needs and interests - not simply on your position or desired outcome.
- All parties involved in the issue should be part of the negotiation.
- Speak from an "I" position. That is, speak about yourself, your needs, and your feelings. Give clear, complete, assertive messages. Don't make judgements about the other parties' interests or motives.
- LISTEN until you understand other people's perceptions, needs and feelings. Understanding is not necessarily agreeing.
- Creatively generate a range of possible options before settling on a solution. Look for mutual gain and examine possible solutions against objective criteria
- Deal with EMOTIONS - make them explicit and a legitimate part of the negotiation:
  - recognise your own feelings; ask yourself where these are coming from. Make your feelings explicit and share them appropriately
  - ask yourself how you would feel in their shoes
  - allow and encourage other's to express their feelings, listen to these feelings and acknowledge them
- Follow up negotiations to see if agreements are still working
- Build and affirm the relationships involved wherever possible
- Deal with issues as early as possible - little conflicts GROW into BIG conflicts!
- Think about what you will do if you are unable to negotiate an acceptable agreement

The Steps for Informal Conflict Resolution

- Getting agreement to negotiate.
- Getting agreement about the process (if possible) - if not, negotiating who will speak first.
- Listen **reflectively** to other's interests, needs and feelings without interruption or defence.
- Speak clearly from an **"I" position**, stating your interests, needs and feelings.
- Define problem in terms of needs.
- Together **generate possible solutions**; look for mutual acceptability and possibility of success.
- **Record and implement agreements** to ensure that it is clear what is to happen next and who is to do what by when.
- Arrange a **definite** time for a **follow-up**.
- Informally **evaluate** how the negotiation went. This can be done by simply expressing how you felt it went and asking the other party how they felt about it.
- **Affirm** the other party's positive negotiation behaviour

Essential Ingredients for Conflict Resolution

- A **safe** environment and **collaborative** process needs to be created.
- Each person needs to tell their story **honestly**.
- All **feelings** need to be expressed.
- Others need to **listen, hear**, and **reflect back** what they hear.
- People need to **own their own part** in the dispute and **apologise** as appropriate.
- Others need to **hear** that ownership and **forgive**.
- People need to **feel** they have been **forgiven**.
- An appropriate process of **healing** needs to follow.

Community Glue

Commonground is 95 acres of beautiful land. We're under one roof, one table, and one purse. We have four children who were born into the commune, and we raise them together and share them. (Lots of people ask if the children know who their parents are -- the answer is yes!) We are a very close-knit family, a little tribe. In the beginning, we put all our money in one bucket and went out and bought the land. At Commonground we don't own the land in the traditional way; we can't sell it or profit from it. That's important.

Making Our Own Community Glue

Community Glue is the 'stuff' that happens below the neck. It's very important yet much of it is intangible. I believe deeply that we need models for collaborative living, and opportunities for making our own community glue. We need to learn to share our resources differently.

By the word community, I do not mean that everyone has to be in a commune as we are at Commonground. I am referring to groups who live and work together in such a way that there is 'interdependence'. This is a key word for me; that at some level each of us relies on each other. 'Intentional' is another key word in my definition of community that we choose to be together. Community is the belonging that at some level we all long for. We had it once and, in part, we've still got it. It is as if we almost remember it, perhaps, from hundreds of years back. In a way, we're trying to go back to find those connections and that belonging and to find new and relevant ways to live it.

Ancestral Connections

There is a deep, ancestral connection between people. It is this connection on which I base my hope in our ability to make the people pathways needed to create the eco-villages, communities and new ways of living that we are designing and living now. But unfortunately hope is not enough. As in contraception, hope has never been a very good method! It is not enough that we are good people with good intentions. Neither is it enough that we have the practical infrastructures, although they are vital. We could have the perfect set-up in terms of co-housing, permaculture, the balance between privacy and communalism, gardens, aquaculture, waste recycling... All that is not enough. We might have the perfect set-up, but then there is us -- imperfect humans -- and I say that lovingly and supportively of myself and all of us.

We don't come into communal living pure; we bring with us this whole sack full of 'stuff'. We are socialised in the prevailing and dominant culture of this world towards private ownership. Since we settled and stopped belonging to the land and the land began to belong to us, we've undergone a profound shift. We had to own the land, guard it, improve it and, of course, we had to protect it. Instead of co-operations we moved into competition. We have to hand it on too, because if you've won this piece of land you have got to know who is going to get it after you die -- a very odd concept if you look at in from another point of view... imagine trying to 'own' a 450 year old tree. However, now we 'own' things, even our children -- you have got to know whose children are whose so that you can pass the land on. So there is ownership of women

and children and so on... we all know this story. Most of us are socialised in that competitive mode.
The way we were brought up didn't really prepare us for co-operation. We might, in our raised consciousness, have lots of good ideas about co-operation, but we do not exist solely above the neck. Below that neck, we learn to carry around messages that go against sharing and co-operation. We have become deeply disconnected from all this 'business' below the neck -- and I'm speaking particularly about feelings, never mind about sexuality.
We learn in the prevailing culture that feelings are a bit frightening and dangerous. So we move 'upstairs' into our heads and occupy the top floor. All the other things have to be repressed and get relegated to the unconscious.
But we weren't born this way. Out children aren't like this. They're very good at expressing their feelings. What happened? Firstly our parents were born in the same culture as we were. Damaging experiences also happen to us, some profound -- war, poverty, violence, and sexual abuse. Some are simple injuries that we all receive from growing in a world that doesn't honour and celebrate our feelings and our spirit 'below the neck'...
The child learns that feelings as well as many views and opinions are not acceptable. People won't like you if you have them, and you'll get rejected. When we're little babies we're utterly dependent and if adults don't love us and look after us, we die. I believe we all carry with us a deep fear of that rejection. It's a matter of life and death. That's why seemingly small things can cause so much difficulty; to the child within us they are tied to the fear of rejection. We learn that it is a good idea to keep the lid on these feelings and opinions.

The Dance of the Unconscious

Unfortunately, going underground with our feeling self is also our trusting, open self; the self that has the ability to reach out and make beautiful connections. It doesn't go away, but it goes underground. So does a lot of our creative, playful and intuitive self -- and we stay upstairs in the lookout tower!
A lot of our true needs and desires also go underground. These are the deeper needs we have learned not to talk about because we fear they won't be met anyway. So the hidden agenda is born. People speak about hidden agendas as if they're maliciously held, and that people plot to have their hidden agendas met. OK, there might be some turkeys who do that, but I think that mostly it's the dance of the unconscious. And in terms of the way we live together, we have to understand more about that dance.
We recreate old patterns. Sometimes these can be very subtle. I don't mean that because your father was an alcoholic and your mother was an alcoholic that you will go and find another one as a partner. It can be much more tricky than that -- the unconscious is very smart so it finds more sneaky ways of doing things. A good example is the parent/child dynamic. This is very common in groups. People who have had experiences with dominating parents might gravitate to somebody in a community who is more powerful and project some of the parent stuff onto them, resenting it all the while of course. On the other hand, some people protect their injuries by becoming super tough and very much in the top floor. They become like super adults and make very good people to project your child stuff on. To protect themselves they get into that parent role, and so we have a really great little dance of the unconscious which happens between people in communities. This might sound very tacky and deep, but once

groups get the hand of working at this level wonderful things can happen, and I find that very exciting.

Power Dynamics

Power dynamics get talked about a lot in groups. Again we tend to think people are maliciously power hungry, whereas it is often this dance of the unconscious. Let us also not forget the tyranny of the powerless in all this, people who are less vocal and allow the apparently powerful to play out the centre stage roles, whilst they watch safely in the wings. All this, of course, can be an excuse: "Oh well, I had an unfortunate childhood...". We do have to confront unacceptable behaviour and deal with our own stuff. But an understanding of the dance of the unconscious can help. The greater we understand ourselves, the greater we can understand each other.

Glen Ochre's Recipe for Community Glue:

Clear Philosophy: What brings us together? Why do we want to do this? Our beliefs and principles.

Spiritual 'Connectedness': Often quoted as what keeps groups together -- this does not need to be a religion. For example, at Commonground we celebrate our connection to the Earth in very simple ways, but this is a spiritual connection. We never forget that we walk on the Mother.

Aims: What are we going to do together? A good ingredient for keeping groups together is to be of service, to maintain in some way a connection with the world. Our aims do need to be realistic.

Membership: Who are we going to share this vision with? How open is that membership going to be?

Structures and Processes: Legal structures, joining and leaving processes. Structures are often not liked by people attracted to community, but if we make them we can change them if they don't work. How are we going to organise ourselves in terms of work? Do we share our skills or do we say, "You're a terrific builder and I make great cakes, so you do the building and I'll make the cakes..."? Some gender awareness is probably a good idea!

Decision Making: I f you only make one decision by consensus, it should be how you're going to make decisions. There are lots of creative ways of using consensus decision making models. We need to know what sort of expectations we're going to have of each other and make decisions around them -- about money, time and raising children, for instance.

Policies and Agreements: How are we going to do things, what agreements do we need? However, agreements can be used by groups to protect themselves from conflict and from having to talk to each other.

Processes for Dealing with Conflict: It is essential to have a clear agreed-upon process for dealing with conflict and to learn the interpersonal tools to make this work.

We could try to have policies to cover every contingency, but it doesn't work. You're bound to have a situation that isn't covered by a contingency and you'll have to talk to each other.

Reflection and Evaluation: Every group needs to build in methods of reflection and evaluation to be more sustainable.

Connections and Relationship to the Outside World: It's very important that we have some connection to the world. Those of us who care for the planet and her people need ways to express this and to contribute to change.

Courage: We are going to have to have courage to work together and face the difficulties inherent in community.

Heart: You notice it's below the neck!

Change: If real change is going to take place, it has to happen in our own hearts first.

Self Love: Self love will lead us to a greater tolerance of other people, because we discover that they're like us.

Tolerance and Generosity: Essential ingredients and I mean the generosity that says, "OK, she's having a rough day today. She did speak to me a bit roughly, but I won't go and fall in a hole about it."

Self Acceptance: This will lead us to a greater degree of forgiveness -- an important part of the tacky bit that goes into our glue.

Persistence and Patience: We need to keep trying if things are not working out.

The Ability To Let Go: I don't mean to give in, I mean to let go sometimes when it's important.

Listening: We need to be able to listen to each other with our hearts, not just our ears. Hopefully this will also help us to speak from our hearts.

The Ability to Negotiate.

Love: The opposite to fear -- the love that comes when we hold back our fear and discover that we can connect with one another.

Safety and Trust: These come from all the other ingredients that are in here, and the way they gel.

Hope, Optimism and a Bit of Luck!

FUN: Because it's got to be fun, lots of parties and celebrations.

The Collective Energy of Goodness: The final ingredient for co-operation.

A Hitchhikers Map to the Unconscious in Groups

How many people really are there in this group? Many more than it appears!

We all bring with us our own internal "group", an *inner community of different selves*. Hal and Sidra Stone name these selves eloquently in their Voice Dialogue manual titled "Embracing Our Selves". Many of these parts of ourselves are locked in the unconscious. Banished there because they were deemed unacceptable by society and people close to us while growing up and have long since become unacceptable to us.
Jung called these our shadow selves. The feeling and parts of our personality that we have repressed, disowned and pushed down into that place where not even we are consciously aware of their existence most of the time.

This resonates with the confusion and feeling of being "torn in different directions" that we all feel from time to time. One the one hand I feel *X* but on the other hand … *Y* and then again …

We usually have fairly clear dominant players in our field of selves. They are the most acceptable parts of ourselves or the parts that have been most useful to help us cope with our damage. Favourites seem to be the "logical self" who sees everything in plain reason and fears the feeling selves lurking in the shadows. The "responsible self" who is always careful, sensible and takes responsibility for everything (and sometimes everyone!) The "nice" or "good" self is a popular front runner, always helpful and kind and avoids upsetting people at all cost. Sometimes self destructive or super critical selves are dominant. This is especially the case when people have been damaged from various forms of abuse.

These "selves" have a strong vested interest in holding down the shadow selves that have powerful feelings to the contrary. For example, imagine how awful it would be for the responsible self if the carefree "selfish" one broke out and started demanding "stuff everyone, what about me"! The "nice" self would be fearful of the angry one who wants to express feelings that are not nice. The "logical" one, of course, just can't stand any of the other selves feeling anything. Feelings are dangerous and just cloud the issue! All the dominant ones conspire to keep at bay (at any cost) the unacceptable voices from the unconscious. They run the show!

Under the surface, lurking around in the murky waters of the unconscious live the banished unacceptable selves. Classics to be found there are the angry selves, the wounded sensitive, needy, unloved, fearful children, and the "little" ones. We may find the selfish one and the teenager irresponsible one. Sometimes there are very self-destructive, self-loathing, super critics to be found in this underworld. Then there are the attention seeking ones who look for some reassurance that the little ones are lovable. Not that they believe it when they do get such reassurance from others!

All our selves play into or attempt to offset each other in an intricate dance. Imagine how elaborate and complex this dance can become in the group context, when we multiply all the selves of all the participants!

I believe that, fortunately, there is a "wise, self-loving" one at the centre of our inner community. A deep knowing self that is able to take into account all the inner selves, listen to and love them all and there by make wise decisions. A wise inner group facilitator! For me this is like an inner being has that collected, through some genetic memory, all the deep and multi-dimensional wisdom of our forbearers.

I am not speaking of some outer guide but a beautifully self-loving wise part of our selves. Hidden as it may become from time to time, this is the part of us that sees our goodness, believes in our potential, and deeply knows what is best for us. An analogy I often use is that of our "community bus". All our other selves are part of us and have important voices to be heard and taken into account, but the wise one must remain in the driver's seat. We can certainly go off on some less than wise side tracks when one of the others takes over!

The Facilitator

Firstly, to ourselves as group facilitators. We too bring with us our *inner community*. The idea that we leave all but our professional facilitator outside the room is pure myth.

However, I do believe our wise selves make great facilitators if we can train them well! The more self aware we become, the more we can name, know, love and wisely facilitate our inner group the better facilitators we will become. If one of our banished selves is activated while we are facilitating and, un-be-known to our conscious selves, gets into the drivers seat, poor facilitation is bound to be the result. Supposing the inner critic starts telling you that you are "not good enough", "you're doing a hopeless job facilitating", "you're going to stuff it up completely" and "who do you think you are anyway"! This may cause the superior judgemental parent to come in and over-compensate – "well I'm running this group". "These people are all… (judgement)… anyway." "It is their fault the groups not going well." We will then be likely to go into a parent, power over mode and unconsciously and unintentionally act accordingly. This scenario is especially likely to be activated if some participants are acting from their "little ones". Nothing brings out the parent in the facilitator like the child in the group and nothing brings out the child in participants like the facilitator being in parent. On the other hand the voice of the critical self may simply over power us and freeze us into inaction for fear that whatever we do it will be wrong.

If the facilitators little ones hop unseen into the drivers seat we are likely to seek to have their needs met through the group. Thus the facilitator will unconsciously try to get the group to make them feel good, lovable, important or even indispensable! It is dangerous for any of the facilitator's selves to unconsciously take over. We need to learn to remain conscious of who of us is feeling what and to ensure our wise self is looking after us. Our little ones may need to be reassured and reminded they are OK and will be attended to later. Our superior parent or attention seeker may need to be calmed down and reassured. As an adjunct to this wise self taking care of us we need to develop a wise facilitator who can make wise decisions for the group.

The Group

I am not about to suggest that we should attempt to be super facilitators capable of seeing all the *inner community of selves* of each participant! It would be dangerous to believe we could be so insightful. Our superior selves would have a field day!

However, it is very helpful firstly, to know they exist and to accept their appearance in the group in a non-judgemental manner. When appropriate (depending on what type of group it is) it can be useful to help people understand the presence of the *community of selves* and to the roles they play. This can be done quite gently and with some light heartedness. People do know at some level of the existence of these "other selves". They are often quite intrigued to have a framework to understand more deeply what they intuitively know. This can help the group members individually and the group collectively to open up to some extremely useful new insights.

In groups where these concepts are understood we can often create a safe enough atmosphere to explore who in our *community of selves* is feeling what feeling.

In groups working at a deeper level it is possible to help people explore the interplay between the numerous participants different selves. It can give us very growthful insights when we understand at a deep level why we react to particular people in particular ways. Is my fearful child being activated by your strong authoritative position on a subject? Has my inner critic been tapped and enlarged into a powerless hopeless inferior being because you have strongly disagreed with me or not accepted one of my ideas? And so it goes on. The possible dance combinations are almost endless.

If its not a group in which we as facilitators can introduce the *community of selves* concept it can still be useful to be open to these possibilities with the group. However we do need to be careful we don't step into analysing, judging or dismissing – "Oh she's obviously in her angry child …" Peoples feelings are still real and valid no matter what part of them is feeling it. Being open to the possible activation and interplay of the various *community of selves* within the group can help us ask more insightful questions, be empathic to people's less "adult" selves and their behaviour. It is a great gift we given when we hear deeply and validate the feelings being expressed by people's banished selves. This can be done without naming the different selves as such if this is not appropriate in that group.

With practice we can learn to help facilitate people to find all their voices and to accept the important messages that each of them carry.

Helping to give people simple frameworks to reclaim and trust their wise self loving self is essential to the process of healing the wounded ones, owning the less acceptable ones and being able to make wise decisions for our own well being.

I encourage you to explore, uncover, map and reclaim your own *inner community* and to do so with a healthy degree of play! For it is through knowing ourselves in this way that we will gain the skills and techniques to help other do the same. We are all of these selves: the beautiful and the unsavoury. As we travel this path, they are waiting for us to claim them. To love and accept them and bring them into the fold, to welcome them on the bus. There will be pain as we listen to what some of them have to say and feel about their buried feelings. But there are also the gorgeous ones to be heard: the clever ones, the funny ones and the incredibly wise one. Enjoy!

ENTRY AND EXITS

By Simon Clough

This article draws on a talk given at Heart Head and Hands – creating and maintaining intentional communities a workshop conducted at Dharmananda 30th September to 10th October 1999. It's not an academic article. It seeks to bring together experience and understanding gathered in 20 years of communal living principally at Dharmananda, an Intentional Community of nearly 30 years standing in Northern NSW. This brief article is an invitation to other communities to add their experience on these important issues so that we can create an Intentional Communities Handbook. You can contact me at Ross Road, The Channon 2480 simonclo@nor.com.au

Introduction

Often the only element that is common to Intentional Communities is a desire to create harmonious relationships - to minimise conflict. How people move into and out of an Intentional Community in this context is critical as many conflicts and sometimes court cases arise because of inadequate planning or ignorance about the issues of entry and exit.

A friend graphically pointed out the importance of these issues. Several male members of her community were keen to have one of their mates join the community with his family.

The community's process for membership was buying the house and share of an existing member after approval had been given by neighbours and the prospective member had been accepted by a majority of the members at a monthly community meeting. The would be member caused much concern to several members of the community because of what appeared to be violent attitudes to his wife and children and rumoures that he had guns. Nonetheless through the effective lobbying of his mates the prospective member was voted for by a majority of those at the meeting. Some of the members at the meeting argued for the new member on the basis that fate had brought him to them and who were they to refuse him.

Before this man and his family moved in he was arrested and charged with the serious assault of his wife. Many members of the community said that he should not be allowed to become a member, however a majority of members at a meeting agreed to his becoming a member. My friend was so appalled by this situation that she left the community.

This story highlights a number of important questions bearing on entry and exits:
What is the community's vision of itself?
Is a trial/integration period necessary?
How does a community make a decision?
Whose interests are to dominate, those of the community or those of the individual?
Do the entry requirements suit the community?

Importance of a Common Vision

Intentional Communities can be seen on an individual/community continuum from rural 'subdivision' where little is shared and individual concerns are paramount, to fully egalitarian communities where virtually everything including money, food and housing is shared and communal concerns are emphasised. In many senses it is not important where the community is on this spectrum, but it is important that the community as a whole knows where it stands. Communities which have established a clear identity for themselves often around a specific interest or spiritual understanding seem more likely to survive.

The aims and objectives of an Intentional Community should be embedded in the legal structure of a community, both as a guide to possible members, but also to assist the community should there be any court cases. The question of entry into and exit from a community is one that demands close examination from a legal perspective.

A written vision can be helpful as a guide and reminder as to the intention of the community. (There are many useful processes that can be used to explore peoples' communal visions; some are included at the end of the chapter). A word of warning however as Ed McKinley from Commonground has said "community can be an orgy for ideologues". So it is important to ground your collective vision in achievable reality. Of course no communal vision can remain the same, there needs to be provision for growth and development of that vision. (See the legal section for material on the various legal structures and their pros and cons).

Apart from determining the community's position on the individual/community continuum the vision should also deal with some of the difficult issues of communal life such as; pets, drugs, land use, resale and renting of houses, firearms, frequency of meetings, inheritance and the process of decision making. The vision should honestly and pragmatically reflect all members' views

Entry Requirements

Entry requirements are generally set having regard to the vision of the community in terms of their position on the individual/community continuum. Communities at the rural suburban end of the spectrum usually place greater emphasis on the members need to sell their house and land easily rather than on the impact on the community of a new member. It would make no sense for such a community to have strict entry requirements. However it does raise questions about a members power to choose to live with someone which for many is the point of Intentional Community

Communities with more of a communal focus often have more stringent requirements for membership. Some communities of this nature see their community as a life commitment to each other and the land. Such communities usually have a 6 to 12 month trial or integration period.

Integration Periods

Dharmananda community has a 12 months integration period with reviews every 3 months for each party to give feedback. This mechanism aims to limit the build up of resentment or friction and to create a common bond of understanding. It has been stated at our review meetings that we like to see the shadow side of our prospective members before they join. These entry requirements have been developed because our community is based on an extended family model.

Sponsors

Dharmananda has a sponsor system for prospective members. An experienced member of the community volunteers to guide the would-be member. This recognises that after nearly 30 years of communal living it is difficult for newcomers to easily slot into communal life. Finally a prospective community member must be accepted unanimously.

Entry has not always been so clearly defined on Dharmananda; clarity has largely emerged from experience. In some senses our community was a victim of the romantic myth of community for many years, that meant we tolerated behaviour from others that would have been totally unacceptable in a suburban home for example. After all we were a commune and into sharing! I still remember the meeting we decided that this place was actually our home as well as a community. This realisation simple as it may sound allowed us to set some boundaries to protect our lives individually and collectively.

Categories

One repercussion of our new understanding was the development of categories of people coming to our community. They were as follows:
Guest - a member's friend or family who could stay as long as they liked with no payment required.
Visitor – someone with no personal contact with members of the community who pays $10 per day.
Willing Workers On Organic Farms – members of the WWOOF organisation who work 20 hours a week for full board. Initially WWOOFers are given 3 days and then reviewed, they can then extend for a week at a time. WWOOFers stay in the bunkhouse and a community member is responsible for them.
Residents – generally rent an available house on the community with unanimous approval, they are expected to undertake the same responsibilities as members. Residents also have a sponsor and an informal review every 3 months.

While the categorisation of those coming to the community may seem bureaucratic, it has enabled us to give clear guidelines to those coming to the community about what is expected of them. It should also be remembered that they are categories for our convenience and we can change them at any time.

Money

There are numerous ways that communities deal with the issue of money and membership. Generally in new communities the cost of the community is divided by

the number of members. At the less communal end of the continuum it tends to be relatively straightforward, a member sells to a buyer who is accepted by the community (in whatever way) as a member. In communities with a higher level of sharing where there is no defined individual land there can be a variety of transactions. Dharmananda's system is to ask for a refundable loan, which is based on the original cost of the land increased for inflation. Another community I'm familiar with has a low membership price and members are not able to sell their home, as they become communal property

Partners

Many communities have an only one share per family policy; this causes difficulty should the adults separate, especially if the community is already at the Local Government maximum number. Others have a policy that both adults need to have membership. A very difficult issue around partners arises when a member takes on a partner and she/he doesn't fit with the rest of the community. Apart form dealing with this issues sensitively I'm not aware of any processes or policies for this problem.

Children

Dharmananda has a policy that if a child has lived on the community continuously for more than 5 years that child does not have to pay a membership fee. However he or she still has to go through the membership process. I'm not sure what provision if any, other communities make for their children. I'm aware that some communities are opposed to inheritance. Dharmananda's position is that members can leave their dwelling and membership loan to whom ever they choose, but this does not impose any liability on the community nor does it create membership rights.

Exits

Depending on the vision of the community members can leave a community with varying degrees of difficulty. A clearly defined exit route defined for prospective members that is written into community policy is advisable as a minimum requirement. It is important to provide for members who wish to leave. If members feel trapped they can have a very corrosive impact on the fabric of the community. The more co-operative a community it seems the more difficult it is to leave or at least leave with the money a member has spent on the community or their home, however this is often put into perspective when it is considered how much a member would be paying in rent in the 'outside world' for the time spent on the.

At Dharmananda a long-term loan of the membership amount is made to the community. The loan is repaid by the community when the member leaves and another member joins, thus protecting the community financially (we are in the process of changing this policy) A member may sell 'their' house to another member for a price that they agree upon. The intention is to make a priority of our community while trying to give an ex-member the possibility of a fresh start. A fresh start may not involve money but may be a symbol from the community of its appreciation of the ex member. It's important to remember to creatively deal with the emotional component as it can be very significant in community.

Expulsion of a Member

I'm sure most communities would go through a long process of discussion and mediation before such a dramatic step was taken. However a community should make provision for expulsion preferably by concusses, long before such provisions could be used. Dharmananda has provision for expulsion in its by laws, where a member can be expelled by a vote by all but two of the community members. The rationale for this provision is that at least two people will oppose expulsion of a member if it has come to a vote. There are many other possibilities for expulsion provisions e.g. a certain percentage of the community opposing the continuation of a person's membership.

Some Exercises for exploring community vision:

Often used is the 'brainstorm'. In this process people call out those elements of a communal vision that are important to them. A scribe takes note of all suggestions, its important that the brainstorm flows and that participants do not become critical of any ideas put forward. Stage two is to cluster those suggestions that have a high degree of commonality. This should give the group a manageable number of principles that can be discussed and developed into a 'vision'.

Every one is asked to take a few minutes to reflect silently on their vision of community. Each participant is then asked to write down on a large piece of paper what they believe is the most significant element in intentional community. The group forms into a circle with each person placing their piece of paper in front of them. Participants speak briefly about their essential element of community. This is recorded by a scribe. Participants move one place around the circle and speak about the next persons' essential element of community and what it means to them. This too is recorded. Ideally the exercise produces many elements of the communal vision while giving an opportunity to understand someone else's views.

Appendix

Towards Indicators of What Makes a "Shared Lifestyle" an "Intentional Community" (DRAFT)

A Preliminary Survey by Peter Hamilton

In random order.

1. Evidence and degree to which the community management body has a formal agreement in the aims and objectives specifically related to the intentionality or otherwise, of the community.

2. Degree of commitment to the formal aims and objectives of the community management body? (This to include of course the ability to change such aims and objectives through the agreed decision making process.)

3. Degree of social "bonding"? (1)

4. Degree of their being mutually held "values", "attitudes" and "beliefs"? (1 and 2)

5. Degree of acceptance of diversity within commonly held "values", attitudes and "beliefs"?

6. Degree of the property being felt as a socially "safe" environment?
   eg. # Children being able to roam anywhere on the property and be "safe".
   # Security of ones home (eg. being no need to lock doors on leaving or even the need to have doors at all!)

7. Degree of the community's right to apply sanctions?
   eg. # Interest to apply on overdue kitty.
   # in extreme situations -- expulsion from membership. (Compare this with for example a Community Title based community where no such right may exist.)

8. Degree of communal desire to be the "custodians" of the land eg. re environmental repair, reforestation, consultation with Aboriginal elders etc.?

9. Degree of intent/desire to have and to share communal facilities and activities eg. community meeting building, laundry, sauna, recreational/sports facilities, communal meals, common pantry, bulk food purchase, communal library, bush fire prevention measures, shared house building, community gardening and inter-community work days and the like?

10. Degree of rejection of domestic violence?

11. Degree of help in times of ill health?

12. Degree of support for home birthings and home burials?

13. Degree of expectation/desire to call the place “home” as a lifelong abode?

14. Level of support for members to be able to participate in group activities regardless of gender, race, age, etc.?

15. Level of right and opportunity for individual members to have a say in the future?

16. Degree of desired mutual child care?

17. Degree of support for the principle of freedom of speech?

18. Degree of commitment to contribute to ecological sustainability?

19. Degree of respect for human rights? (4)

20. Degree of respect for domestic privacy?

21. Degree of subscription to the principle “from each according to their ability, to each according to their need.”?

22. Degree of support for the disadvantaged on the community?

23. Degree of support and encouragement for “personal growth” in the context of the “community”? (1)

24. Degree and acceptance of intangible social indicators eg. Brotherly or sisterly love for group members etc (specify)!)

25. Level of acceptance of decision making by “consensus” (ie 100%) or by “absence of dissent”, rather than majority rule?

26. Level of community participation in decision making?

27. Degree of the group commitment to “listen” to an individuals point of view?

28. Degree of recognition and acceptance by the group of an individuals, creative skills, self reliance, scholarship, leadership skills, and the like?

29. Degree of sensitivity and acceptance of cultural differences within the group members?

30. Community attitude to domestic cats, dogs, chooks, guinea pigs, horses, firearms, explosives and the like being on the property?

31. Extent if at all, of the community wishing to see itself as an “extended-family”. (1)

32. Degree of desire to be an “intentional community”. (1)

33. Level of desire if at all, for a “given” or “surname” being included/used for newborns and/or adults?

34. Support for “Intentional Community” peak organisations such as Pan Community Council?

35. Other?

Preamble
There is no “right” or “wrong” degree to these “Indicators”. They are suggested as possible “indicators” in the self selection of the “intentionality” of the group.

The issues raised here have been found from experience can expect to arise as issues sooner or later where there is a commonly held aspiration to be an “intentional community.

This process should not however, be used in any way that stifles spontaneity. There are very good reasons for dealing with issues when they arise and not necessarily to “cross bridges before you come to them”. With this in mind the indicators listed here may be culled to meet the particular needs of the group.

Scaling
If it is desired to “scale” the group expression, this could be achieved by using an individual (anonymous) survey sheet to which is added a “Response Scale” after each question. For example:-

Little Lot
l____’____’____’____’____l

ie. place a mark on the line where “Little” indicates “no support”, and “Lot” being “strongly held support”.

If desired the above (random) list could be grouped into categories considered to be “more” important or “less” important. The “more” important categories could then be loaded with a multiplying factor and a total calculated to reveal the community’s position between the extremes of “intentionality”.

An option to the above (which requires that such a list be prepared and a copy supplied to each member) is to conduct it as a group venture in which the questions are numbered and read out one at a time, and each member notes the number and besides this lists their response from say 0 = Little to 10 or 100 = Lot. The (anonymous) sheets being then collated as above.

Notes
(1) However self defined.

This of course will require finding out what the individual “values”, “attitudes” and “beliefs” are in respect to some agreed list of issues.
This implies doing it and not sweeping it “under the carpet”.
Confer for example UN “Charter of Human Rights”, Community Aid Abroad “Charter for Basic Rights” etc.

Whatever you do with such a list, do have fun with it!

Feedback on how helpful or otherwise, you find this material and any suggestions for the inclusion of further “indicators” would be appreciated.

Yours, helping to build intentional communities.

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