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SUSTAINABLE LIVING AND
COMMUNITY BUILDING IN
ECOVILLAGE AT ITHACA:
THE CHALLENGES OF
INCORPORATING SOCIAL
JUSTICE CONCERNS INTO THE
PRACTICES OF AN ECOLOGICAL
COHOUSING COMMUNITY

Tendai Chitewere and Dorceta E. Taylor

ABSTRACT

Purpose – Ecological cohousing communities, or ecovillages, are emerging as contemporary housing models that attempt to recreate a sense of community and encourage an environmentally sustainable lifestyle. This chapter analyzes a rural ecovillage (Ecovillage at Ithaca – EVI) to find out how the community conceptualizes and practices sustainability. The chapter also examines whether and how the community incorporates issues of equity and social justice into its activities.

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Design/methodology/approach – The chapter uses a multi-method approach. It is a case study; however, participant observation was conducted at the site. In addition, interviews with residents were conducted and archival materials from the community's newsletters as well as city government documents were also used.

Findings – As practiced at EVI, the green lifestyle emphasizes comfortable living that is both esthetically appealing and good for the environment. In making the decision to focus on building a community for the middle class, residents have limited their engagement with social justice issues and have struggled with incorporating minorities and the poor into their community.

Originality/value – This is one of the first papers to analyze the ecovillages from an environmental justice perspective. It shows where there are overlaps between the ecovillage and environmental justice movements. The chapter also fits into a growing body of scholarship that examines the concept of sustainability from a social justice perspective also.

INTRODUCTION

Indigenous peoples in the America, Asia, and Africa have constructed settlements with closely built clusters of housing, communal buildings, and shared space for centuries. In the Middle East, the ancient Turkish city of Çatal Hüyük was constructed around 7500 B.C. with homes joined together, common buildings, terraced roof for communal activities, and shared open space (Mellaart, 1967). This model of community design grew scarce in post-industrial countries as most people dwell in detached single family homes, apartment buildings, etc. In the United States, the growth in suburbia in the 1960s and 1970s meant that middle class families moved even further away from each other in single family homes on separate parcels of land (Fishman, 1987; Jackson, 1985). By the 1990s, sprawl begun to engulf exurban spaces. This trend has alarmed many. Consequently, over the past four decades, growing numbers of people have rejected this way of living and have returned to developing settlements with homes joined together, communal buildings, and common open space.

The environmental crisis, made evident and urgent through images and reports of melting glaciers, rising oceans, and extreme weather patterns

around the world, has motivated them to re-evaluate the way they live and how they relate to their environment. One example that exemplifies this re-evaluation is the development of ecovillages. In these communities, residents attempt to blend living close to nature with modern conveniences and community. These new developments emphasize a green lifestyle that balances comfort and sustainability (Chitewere, 2006). Thus far, ecovillages have been organized and developed primarily in the United States (Meltzer, 2000; Kirby, 2003; Schafer, 2000). A recent study of cohousing residents and found that 80 percent had a college degree, and 60 percent were employed. As a result, some are taking a close look at their own lives. Social observers and scholars are increasingly interested in which ecovillages incorporate equity and social justice into their development and day to day operations.

Equity and social justice are two of the central concerns of the environmental justice movement. The environmental justice movement emerged around same time as the environmental justice movement, there are stark differences. In the environmental justice movement, environmental justice activists tend to focus on environmental hazards in neighborhoods of color live, closing or regulating hazardous sites in these communities. In the environmental justice movement, environmental justice advocates focus on existing houses, neighborhood revitalization, and increased access to open space. In the environmental justice movement, activists have not advocated for the urban fringes or in the countryside. In the environmental justice movement, an enhanced quality of life or a green lifestyle. In the environmental justice movement, ecovillages and environmental justice communities are confronting environmental justice on the ground; both movements are seeking a more equitable way of life for people in the United States.

Although there is a plethora of ecovillages, analyses of the movement are still in its infancy. To this end, the experiences of residents of an ecovillage in Upstate New York are being turned into concerns into their activities. This study may shed light on the ways A

The chapter uses a multi-method approach, participant observation was used, interviews with residents were conducted, and information from the community's newsletters as well as other sources was also used.

In this chapter, the green lifestyle emphasizes ecologically appealing and good for the environment, and focuses on building a community for all, united their engagement with social justice, and incorporates minorities and the

of the first papers to analyze the environmental justice perspective. It shows where ecovillages and environmental justice fit into a growing body of scholarship on sustainability from a social justice

CONCLUSION

Asia, and Africa have constructed communities of housing, communal buildings, and in the Middle East, the ancient Turkish city of Mardin, 7500 B.C. with homes joined together, communal activities, and shared open space. Community design grew scarce in post-World War II in detached single family homes, and in the United States, the growth in suburbia in the middle class families moved even further away from the city. In the 1990s, sprawl begun to engulf many. Consequently, over the past few decades, people have rejected this way of living and have formed settlements with homes joined together, and open space. Climate change is evident and urgent through images and videos of melting glaciers, and extreme weather patterns

around the world, has motivated some Americans to re-examine the way they live and how they relate to the environment. One movement that exemplifies this re-evaluation is the ecological cohousing community movement (ecovillage). In these communities activists try to create neighborhoods that attempt to blend living close to nature with an enhanced sense of community. These new developments are advocating the adoption of a green lifestyle that balances comfortable living with positive environmental change (Chitewere, 2006). Thus far cohousing and ecovillage projects have been organized and developed primarily by white and middle class activists (Meltzer, 2000; Kirby, 2003; Schaub, 2000). Meltzer (2000) conducted a study of cohousing residents and found that 95 percent of them were white, 80 percent had a college degree, and 50 percent had a graduate degree. As a result, some are taking a closer look at diversity in these settlements. Social observers and scholars are also starting to examine the extent to which ecovillages incorporate equity and social justice concerns into their development and day to day operations.

Equity and social justice are two of the core organizing principles of the environmental justice movement. Although the cohousing/ecovillage movement emerged around same time as the contemporary environmental justice movement, there are stark differences between the two. By and large, environmental justice activists tend to focus on the persistence of environmental hazards in neighborhoods that are poor and often where people of color live, closing or regulating noxious facilities, and remediating hazardous sites in these communities. When it comes to community vitality, environmental justice advocates focus on affordable housing, retrofitting existing houses, neighborhood revitalization, the reduction of sprawl, and increased access to open space (Taylor, 2000). Environmental justice activists have not advocated for the construction of new green villages in the urban fringes or in the countryside as a mechanism for experiencing an enhanced quality of life or a green lifestyle. The two perspectives – ecovillages and environmental justice – provide examples of how different communities are confronting environmental problems. There is common ground; both movements are seeking ways of creating a more sustainable way of life for people in the United States as well as in other countries.

Although there is a plethora of scholarly writing on green living and ecovillages, analyses of the movement from a social justice perspective is still in its infancy. To this end, this chapter examines the extent to which residents of an ecovillage in Upstate New York incorporated social justice concerns into their activities. This is important because such an exploration may shed light on the ways Americans think about and respond to

environmental crises. More specifically, it can help us understand the tensions inherent in creating idyllic green villages, the conceptualization of sustainability that underpin such developments, and the consumption of the green commodities that make such communities possible. It can also shed some light on the nature of the activism in green enclaves and the extent to which equity and social justice are incorporated into them.

METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

The study of EcoVillage at Ithaca (EVI) focuses on the experience of residents as they developed the settlement. Through this case study, we examine the challenges of developing a sustainable community that is responsive to the needs and desires of its members as well as those of the world around them. This chapter analyzes data collected from residents in the first and second neighborhoods as well as former participants in the planning and design stages, neighbors, and former residents. The ethnographic fieldwork was carried out over 15 months in 2001 and 2002; the data come from extensive participant observation and archival research. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 50 households from the first two neighborhoods. Six former participants of the project were also interviewed; two residents provided access to archival materials on the project. A content analysis of EVI's newsletters published between 1999 and 2007 was also conducted. Archival data from Ithaca's Town Planning Board meetings were also used.

ECOVILLAGES

Architects, Kathryn McCamant and Charles Durrett, are credited with bringing the Danish concept of *boffællesskabs* or "living communities" to life in the United States during the 1980s. They coined the term "cohousing" to describe the practice of clustering 4–30 houses around a shared common house. In general, residents (families who own the shares of their home, as opposed to families who rent from a shareholder) in cohousing participate in the creation, governance, and daily maintenance of the neighborhood. Residents typically own the inside of their home, whereas the external components such as the roof, siding, and yard are owned cooperatively by all shareholders. Although monthly maintenance fees are charged for each home, individual households control their own financial resources.

A key component of cohousing is the separation of living spaces away from the houses to allow for shared spaces and encourage greater interaction. These shared spaces are designed around pedestrian-oriented activities and are the common spaces. It is therefore important to note (Durrett, 1994).

Cohousing communities reflect the idea that people should come together to build the neighborhood. Cohousing in California and Pioneer Valley are urban, whereas others such as those in the Pacific Northwest are rural. Most cohousing communities are in urban areas. However, they are implicitly focused on resource conservation, alternative energy, and low consumption. Ecovillages are a subset of cohousing that is explicit about their attempt to integrate sustainability into their everyday activities (Global Ecovillage Network, 2009).

The Global Ecovillage Network (GEN) is a worldwide network of ecovillages. Of those, 49 (11 percent) are in the United States. Of those ecovillages, 49 percent of those ecovillages are located in the United States. Table 1 shows the domestic and international ecovillages (Global Ecovillage Network, 2009). Ecovillages strongly with being located outside of urban areas where residents feel physically and emotionally safe. For many ecovillage residents, the phrase "eco" in ecovillage means. The addition of "eco" to define the "village" portion of

Green Lifestyle

EVI is an innovative and growing community in Upstate New York. Designed around a shared mission includes an attempt to reduce environmental impact. Communities such as EVI are not unique in the United States and ecological debates in the United States. Sustainable living, EVI and other ecovillages are deeply embedded in a culture of sustainability. It is often identified as one of the leading

ly, it can help us understand the ten villages, the conceptualization of components, and the consumption of the communities possible. It can also shed light on green enclaves and the extent to which they are incorporated into them.

METHODS

EVI focuses on the experience of residents. Through this case study, we explore a sustainable community that is valued by its members as well as those of the surrounding area. We analyze data collected from residents in the community, as well as former participants in the project, and former residents. The ethnographic approach includes 15 months in 2001 and 2002; the data were collected through observation and archival research. We worked with 50 households from the community. Participants of the project were also interviewed. We have access to archival materials on the community, including newsletters published between 1999 and 2002, and from Ithaca's Town Planning Board.

RESULTS

Charles Durrett, are credited with the term "cohousing" or "living communities" to describe these communities. They coined the term "cohousing" to describe 30 houses around a shared common area. Residents who own the shares of their home, as a shareholder in cohousing participate in the maintenance of the neighborhood. Residents live in their home, whereas the external spaces and yard are owned cooperatively. Maintenance fees are charged for the use of the common areas to control their own financial resources.

A key component of cohousing is that vehicles are purposefully located away from the houses to allow children to play safely around the homes and encourage greater interaction between neighbors. Consequently, homes are designed around pedestrian-only walkways with windows facing into the common spaces. It is therefore easy to see who is home (McCamant & Durrett, 1994).

Cohousing communities reflect the culture and desires of the families who come together to build the neighborhood. Some such as the Berkeley Cohousing in California and Pioneer Valley in Greenfield, Massachusetts, are urban, whereas others such as Dancing Rabbit Ecovillage in Missouri are rural. Most cohousing communities do not have an explicit ecological focus. However, they are implicitly organized on ecological principles of resource conservation, alternative energy use, recycling, and organic food consumption. Ecovillages are a subset of cohousing communities that are explicit about their attempt to incorporate environmental sustainability into their everyday activities (Global Ecovillage Network, 2009; Intentional Communities, 2009).

The Global Ecovillage Network (2009) identifies 445 ecovillages worldwide. Of those, 49 (11 percent) are urban. One hundred and two or 22.9 percent of those ecovillages are located in the United States. The American ecovillages follow the global pattern – only 16.8 percent (17) are urban. Table 1 shows the domestic and international distribution of these communities (Global Ecovillage Network, 2009). Many ecovillage identify strongly with being located outside the city. They are located in places where residents feel physically and psychologically connected to nature. For many ecovillage residents, the proximity to nature is one aspect of what the "eco" in ecovillage means. The adoption of the cohousing model helps them to define the "village" portion of the concept.

Green Lifestyle and Consumerism

EVI is an innovative and growing ecological cohousing community in Upstate New York. Designed and built in the 1990s, the community's mission includes an attempt to redesign the human habitat. But communities such as EVI are not occurring in isolation of the larger political and ecological debates in the United States. Despite having a goal of sustainable living, EVI and other ecovillages find this challenging because they are deeply embedded in a culture of consumption. Over-consumption is often identified as one of the leading causes of the environmental crisis

Table 1. Ecovillage Developments in the U.S. and Other Countries.

American Ecovillages		International Ecovillages			
State	Number of ecovillages	Country	Number of ecovillages	Country	Number of ecovillages
Arkansas	1	Argentina	5	Liberia	1
Arizona	8	Australia	31	Lithuania	2
California	11	Austria	4	Malaysia	1
Colorado	5	Bangladesh	1	Mexico	13
Connecticut	1	Belgium	2	Morocco	1
Florida	1	Belize	2	Nepal	1
Georgia	2	Bolivia	1	The Netherlands	3
Hawaii	2	Brazil	8	New Zealand	10
Idaho	1	Bulgaria	1	Nicaragua	1
Iowa	1	Canada	27	Northern Ireland	2
Kentucky	1	Columbia	13	Norway	5
Massachusetts	5	Costa Rica	13	Peru	3
Maryland	2	Croatia	1	Poland	2
Michigan	4	Cyprus	1	Portugal	3
Minnesota	1	Denmark	8	Romania	5
Missouri	4	Ecuador	4	Russia	10
Montana	2	Egypt	1	Scotland	4
New Hampshire	1	El Salvador	1	Senegal	4
New Mexico	4	England	11	Slovakian	2
New York	3	Estonia	1	Slovenia	1
North Carolina	3	Ethiopia	1	South Africa	8
Ohio	3	Finland	8	Spain	16
Oklahoma	1	France	6	Sri Lanka	2
Oregon	7	Germany	22	Sweden	2
Pennsylvania	1	Ghana	1	Switzerland	6
South Carolina	1	Greece	2	Thailand	5
Tennessee	7	Guatemala	1	Turkey	6
Texas	4	Haiti	1	Uruguay	2
Virginia	5	Hungary	5	Venezuela	4
Washington	7	Iceland	2	Wales	2
Wisconsin	2	India	4	Zimbabwe	1
Other	1	Ireland	2		
		Israel	3		
Total	102	Italy	15	Total	343
		Kenya	4		
		Latvia	1		
		Lebanon	1		

Source: Compiled from Global Ecovillage Network (2009).

(Smith, 1998; Guha, 2000; Guha, 2002) broadly defined as living a way of life that has a low impact on the environment in a way that a lifestyle can be driven by an impulse to do good for the planet. In effect, those who find themselves reducing consumption with the consumption of green products. *Magazine* and *Plenty* proclaim that green commodities marketed as "green," are good for the environment and creating a distinction between resources for future generations. In effect, green consumer magazines, these lifestyles challenge consumerism (Smith, 1998). In effect, the distinction between educating the public about green marketing tool for the businesses and green consumerism.

Irvine (1989) describes green consumerism as "individual consumer preference to purchase green products." Green consumerism is a movement that green has become a straightforward response to environmental degradation. Green consumerism whose attitudes and values center on green products. Although Campbell (1999) states that it is not easy to easily "adopt a new lifestyle" through ethnographic field observations at the time of the study, to make dramatic changes in the lifestyle of the families studied moved out of a spacious house into a compact house at EVI where they lived in their new home.

Consumption can be seen as a social phenomenon (Veblen, 1931; Bourdieu, 1984). This is because it offers an opportunity to consume and to enhance the environment at the same time. A green consumer can see how green consumption is increasing and arises: to what extent does green consumption become a concern for environmental equity?

When being green is defined as a lifestyle, it is a convenient way to view the

in the U.S. and Other Countries.

International Ecovillages		
Number of ecovillages	Country	Number of ecovillages
5	Liberia	1
31	Lithuania	2
4	Malaysia	1
1	Mexico	13
2	Morocco	1
2	Nepal	1
1	The Netherlands	3
8	New Zealand	10
1	Nicaragua	1
27	Northern Ireland	2
13	Norway	5
13	Peru	3
1	Poland	2
1	Portugal	3
8	Romania	5
4	Russia	10
1	Scotland	4
1	Senegal	4
11	Slovakian	2
1	Slovenia	1
1	South Africa	8
8	Spain	16
6	Sri Lanka	2
22	Sweden	2
1	Switzerland	6
2	Thailand	5
1	Turkey	6
1	Uruguay	2
5	Venezuela	4
2	Wales	2
4	Zimbabwe	1
2		
3		
15	Total	343
4		
1		
1		

rk (2009).

(Smith, 1998; Guha, 2000; Guha, 2006; O'Connor, 1994). Green lifestyle is broadly defined as living a way of life that seeks to reduce one's negative impact on the environment in a proactive manner. Unfortunately, this lifestyle can be driven by an impulse to consume commodities marketed as good for the planet. In effect, those attempting to adopt a green lifestyle can find themselves reducing consumption in some areas only to replace them with the consumption of green products. Popular magazines such as *E-Magazine* and *Plenty* proclaim that "it's easy being green." By purchasing commodities marketed as "green," consumers feel they are improving the environment and creating a distinct green identity aimed at protecting resources for future generations. If one believes the marketing pitch of the green consumer magazines, these lofty goals are achieved through personal consumerism (Smith, 1998). In effect the green magazines occupy the border between educating the public about environmental choices and being a marketing tool for the businesses that profit from the growing interest in green consumerism.

Irvine (1989) describes green consumerism as the adoption of an "individual consumer preference to promote less environmentally-damaging products." Green consumerism is growing, in part, because consuming green has become a straightforward, convenient, and easy way to respond to environmental degradation. Green lifestyles are practiced by consumers whose attitudes and values center around the environment and who are predominantly middle class and thus can afford the choice of greener products. Although Campbell (1995) argues that consumers are not able to easily "adopt a new lifestyle" by altering their consumption patterns, ethnographic field observations at EVI indicates some residents were able to make dramatic changes in the way they lived. For example one of the families studied moved out of a sprawling home set apart from neighbors into a compact house at EVI where neighbors could look into every window of their new home.

Consumption can be seen as a signifier of identity, status, and lifestyle (Veblen, 1931; Bourdieu, 1984). The green lifestyle is attractive to many because it offers an opportunity to live comfortably while seeking to protect the environment at the same time. Although the green products are aimed at enhancing environmental conservation, in places such as ecovillages, one can see how green consumption is integrated with green living. The question arises: to what extent does green consumption and green living carry with it a concern for environmental equity and social justice?

When being green is defined as consuming green, one is provided a simple and convenient way to view the environmental crisis and its possible

solutions. That is, if the current crisis is fueled by the over-consumption of limited resources such as oil, then the consumption of more ecologically friendly alternatives will postpone any negative environmental consequence. Thus, the solutions to environmental problems are framed in a personal consumerist paradigm – buy alternative products to reduce your impact on the environment. This problem identification and prescription stands in contrast to the efforts of environmental justice activists who try to hold corporations and government agencies responsible for their outputs, environmental degradation, flawed policies, and negative impacts on communities.

Bringing these two perspectives together can be daunting. This is the case because environmental justice is focused on ameliorating threatening conditions in poor neighborhoods, while ecovillages are enhancing the lifestyles of the more privileged living in relatively pristine spaces and consuming the latest new green products. Yet, both perspectives are aimed at creating the same outcome – a sustainable way to live in harmony with each other and nature. There could be more overlap in the activities of both groups by expanding the awareness of environmental justice issues among ecovillagers, conducting critical analyses of green lifestyles, and creating more opportunities for environmental justice communities explore green living alternatives and become more sustainable.

The Quest for New Models of Living

Disasters such as Hurricane Katrina have left little doubt in the public's mind that significant changes in the way people live will be necessary in the coming years. The location and design of our neighborhoods as well as the way we live together as a community will have to be altered if we are to find solutions to the root causes of environmental and social injustice. Pellow and Brulle (2005) point out that there is a need to expand environmental justice discourses to make them more relevant to those who are living outside of nonwhite or poor communities. The environmental justice movement has demonstrated the value of using community as a mechanism for change. Environmental justice groups advocate for a sustainable lifestyle that brings people together to work on addressing social injustice and actively advocate for healthy communities by demanding that those who harm communities be held accountable. The environmental justice movement has been engaged in these efforts for a long time. Yet, because class is an important factor in how one perceives and experiences the

environment, it is important that how middle and upper class communities take justice actions or fail to include environmental solutions to environmental problems.

The number of environmental justice communities increased significantly during the 1980s and 1990s (Taylor, 2005). The ecological cohousing community in Berkeley, California, was one of the first communities that articulated a very clear vision of environmental and social ills. As a result, the community focused on creating utopian villages that emphasized sustainable living. The emergence of these forms of communities indirectly reflects a struggle in the United States over race, class, and place. They highlight the need to move to pristine or idyllic spaces away from toxic environments.

Despite the heightened awareness of environmental hazards that exist in communities of color, the need for reform for activists attracted to ecovillages to practice sustainable lifestyles. As with other preservationists like Ralph Waldo Emerson, who fled the cities and took up residence in rural areas (forthcoming), more often than not ecovillages in suburban, exurban and rural green spaces are the antithesis of the city and set apart from the city. In many, they are also set apart from the city.

Ecovillages have emerged in response to the dislocation and environmental degradation. Environmental justice and environmental justice are responses to the need for community building in addressing environmental justice. They tend to stress the consumption of local products and wind turbines as a means of financing sustainable living. Ecovillages also strive to create a "community" by encouraging the sharing of resources and skills to acquire unnecessary commodities like cars and machines. Many ecovillages are community-based and share a similar vision of the village. Environmental justice activists typically work with people of diverse backgrounds to work with people of diverse backgrounds.

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Models of Living

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environment, it is important that environmental justice scholars examine how middle and upper class communities either engage in environmental justice actions or fail to include environmental justice in their efforts to find solutions to environmental problems.

The number of environmental justice organizations increased dramatically during the 1980s and 1990s (Taylor, 2000, 1999). Around the same time the ecological cohousing communities emerged as a new form of intentional community that articulated a very different model for confronting environmental and social ills. As a response to the perceived threat to the environment and the anomie evident in urban living, many ecovillagers focused on creating utopian villages that could be models for sustainable living. The emergence of these forms of environmentally focused communities indirectly reflects a struggle in the United States that revolves around race, class, and place. They highlight the ability of some groups to create and move to pristine or idyllic spaces, whereas others remain trapped in toxic environments.

Despite the heightened awareness of the disproportionate environmental hazards that exist in communities of color, these are not usually the sites for reform for activists attracted to the ecovillage movement who want to practice sustainable lifestyles. As was the case with early nineteenth century preservationists like Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau who fled the cities and took up residence in bucolic hamlets (Taylor, 2009, forthcoming), more often than not, developers of ecovillages create them in suburban, exurban and rural green enclaves. Ecovillages are framed as the antithesis of the city and set apart from them. Despite the rural location of many, they are also set apart from impoverished rural communities too.

Ecovillages have emerged in response to real and perceived social dislocation and environmental degradation. Although both ecovillages and environmental justice are responses that emphasize the central role of community building in addressing environmental problems, ecovillages tend to stress the consumption of green commodities such as solar panels and wind turbines as a means of facilitating desired environmental change. Ecovillages also strive to create a "sense of community" among residents by encouraging the sharing of resources. This reduces individual resident's need to acquire unnecessary commodities such as their own personal washing machines. Many ecovillages are comprised of like-minded individuals who share a similar vision of the village and the future. In contrast, environmental justice activists typically work in various neighborhoods and communities that they do not build from scratch. Quite often they have to work with people of diverse backgrounds and perspectives and the act of

bringing such people together to work for common causes is an important element of community building. It is not typical for them to select out and work only with those committed to their views and visions.

Ethnographic fieldwork at EVI revealed that some residents wanted to develop a community that took equity and environmental justice issues into consideration. However, all desired to build a community in which they were financially secure and that reflected their cultural norms. As it turned out, concerns over equity and social justice were often lost at EVI because of the tremendous focus on developing the settlement. Much energy and time was expended on identifying products to purchase to build and run homes, common buildings, the sauna, bus shelter, walkways, etc. In the decision to buy products, little attention is paid to issues such as who actually makes the products. What are the working conditions in the factories? What wages are workers paid? How do factories dispose of their wastes and where are such wastes disposed? What are the demographic characteristics of the workforce? And, what kinds of occupational health issues do workers face? The focus on buying locally is heavily focused on food – and even then – during long, cold winters, this goal is not easily met.

For a long time, the discourse around nature was framed narrowly. It was a discourse that did not make the connection between race, class, and environmental inequalities explicit. It was also a discourse that tended to exclude or limit discussion of the human condition as part of the formulation (Escobar, 1996; Shiva, 1993; Guha, 2006; Taylor, 2000). It is not surprising, therefore, that some environmental activists still do not understand how their actions and decisions fit into larger social, political, and economic contexts. Therefore, the trend toward creating green communities in response to environmental problems and promoting them as models of sustainable living has to be assessed in broader terms. This is the case because ecovillages run the risk of providing a desirable lifestyle primarily for those who can afford it. Moreover, the abandonment of the cities by movement adherents could contribute to the decades-long process of white flight. This could contribute to the decline of urban neighborhoods already faced with shrinking tax bases (Gregory, 1998; Self, 2003).

That is, as ecovillages are being constructed in the United States, we need to ask, who is included and who is excluded? An even more pressing question arises: can we develop a sustainable society if only some racial groups and social classes can afford the cost of sustainable living? Moreover, how can sustainable living be framed and practiced to allow all people in a given society to participate if they so desire? As the number of ecovillages increase we have to evaluate whether they contribute to sprawl? Do they siphon off

city resources and services? And, do they contribute to the cities they are close to?

ECOVILLAGE

EVI was formed in early 1991 after a group of families walked across the United States to draw attention to the unsustainable ways of living. Joan Bokaer, the “Global Walk for People,” an artist, teachers, college students, and others, and pants walked through various cities to raise attention to meetings in churches and people’s homes to discuss the state of the environment. New York City was along the way (Walker, 2005). Walker, who was interviewed he said the walk was a challenge for him. One recurrent theme emerged: people were told on numerous occasions that they needed neighbors. Walkers came away with the need to create a sense of community. The neighborhoods were planned and built. The Global Walk, Joan Bokaer and Liz Walker were for the EVI project. They planned to have the walkers had traversed Europe and Asia. The walk wanted to participate in the ecological movement a way of building a grassroots movement. Bokaer observed all over the country. About 1991 meeting in 1991 (Walker, 2005; Walker, 2005).

EVI is a cohousing community located on former farmland two miles outside of the city. The property was acquired for \$380,000. The land was on the land in 2003. EVI falls under a trust that pays taxes to that entity (Walker, 2005; Board, 2001a). This cohousing community plan includes the creation of a green neighborhood one cohousing neighborhood. Two groups, the First Group (FRoG) and Second Neighborhood Group, and the development of a third neighborhood. Experience (TREE) – is underway. The long-term vision of t

for common causes is an important not typical for them to select out and their views and visions.

realed that some residents wanted to and environmental justice issues into o build a community in which they ed their cultural norms. As it turned stice were often lost at EVI because of he settlement. Much energy and time to purchase to build and run homes, lter, walkways, etc. In the decision to o issues such as who actually makes nditions in the factories? What wages ispose of their wastes and where are demographic characteristics of the tional health issues do workers face? / focused on food – and even then – not easily met.

ound nature was framed narrowly. the connection between race, class, t. It was also a discourse that tended e human condition as part of the 93; Guha, 2006; Taylor, 2000). It is environmental activists still do not isions fit into larger social, political, the trend toward creating green ental problems and promoting them be assessed in broader terms. This is isk of providing a desirable lifestyle Moreover, the abandonment of the ontribute to the decades-long process o the decline of urban neighborhoods (Gregory, 1998; Self, 2003).

structed in the United States, we need ided? An even more pressing question ociety if only some racial groups and sustainable living? Moreover, how racticed to allow all people in a given As the number of ecovillages increase ribute to sprawl? Do they siphon off

city resources and services? And, do they contribute to the tax bases of the cities they are close to?

ECOVILLAGE AT ITHACA

EVI was formed in early 1991 after a group of about 150 friends and families walked across the United States with the mission of bringing attention to the unsustainable ways in which Americans lived. Led by Joan Bokaer, the “Global Walk for Peace” was a grassroots event involving artists, teachers, college students, and professionals. As the group of participants walked through various cities, they held workshops and spontaneous meetings in churches and people’s homes in 200 communities to discuss the state of the environment. New walkers joined the group as others left along the way (Walker, 2005). When one person who participated in the walk was interviewed he said the walk was a very transformative experience for him. One recurrent theme emerged during the walk – participants were told on numerous occasions that people felt disconnected from their neighbors. Walkers came away with the feeling that there was a tremendous need to create a sense of community by redesigning the way homes and neighborhoods were planned and built. As a result, the two leaders of the Global Walk, Joan Bokaer and Liz Walker, formed the first interest group for the EVI project. They planned to begin building the community once the walkers had traversed Europe and Asia. Several of the members from the walk wanted to participate in the ecovillage project. They saw the project as a way of building a grassroots movement that could solve the problems they observed all over the country. About 100 adults attended the first visioning meeting in 1991 (Walker, 2005; EVI, 2009).

EVI is a cohousing community development situated on 176 acres of former farmland two miles outside of the city of Ithaca, New York. The property was acquired for \$380,000 in 1992 – residents paid off the mortgage on the land in 2003. EVI falls under the jurisdiction of the City of Ithaca and pays taxes to that entity (Walker, 2005, 2004a; Town of Ithaca Planning Board, 2001a). This cohousing community is unique because the project’s plan includes the creation of a green village that incorporates more than one cohousing neighborhood. Two neighborhoods – First Neighborhood Group (FRoG) and Second Neighborhood Group (SoNG) – are complete, and the development of a third – the Third Residential Ecovillage Experience (TREE) – is underway. The TREE is expected to be completed in 2011. The long-term vision of the project is to construct a total of five

cohousing neighborhoods with a maximum of 150 units that will constitute a village of about 500 full-time and temporary residents. Ninety percent of the land will be left as open space (EVI, 2009; TREE, 2008; Town of Ithaca Planning Board, 2001c).

In 2004 EVI sold the city of Ithaca an acre of their land on which to construct a water tower. Although EVI residents were reluctant to do this, the move benefited EVI in that residents got the city to pave their access road. It also allowed them have a reliable source of water for emergency purposes without having to pay for the cost of constructing their own water tower. During the application for permits to build SoNG town, Planning Board members raised concerns about the lack of water for emergency purposes at EVI so the construction of the tower resolved a problem the subdivision would have had to deal with at some point (Walker, 2004b; Town of Ithaca Planning Board, 2001b). The following year when a 35-acre parcel that abuts EVI came on the market, EVI residents contributed more than half the \$66,000 needed to acquire the property. EVI residents were familiar with the property as they had obtained an easement in earlier years that allowed them to use the trails on the property. In addition to the approximately 15 homes that will be built on the parcel by another entity, EVI residents hope to build a park on the property (Bokaer-Smith, 2005).

EVI is governed by several interrelated but separate entities. It is a nonprofit corporation that is charged with the mission of being an educational institution on sustainable living. A board of directors advises the nonprofit. Under the aegis of the nonprofit – EVI, Inc. – the first group of residents created the EcoVillage Cooperative Cooperation an independent entity sometimes referred to as the First Resident Group. Residents of the FROG hired a cohousing architect and design team to construct all the homes in the neighborhood. The Ecovillage Cooperative Cooperation bought land from EVI, Inc. The neighborhood was completed in 1996 and is a semi-private cooperative owned collectively by residents (Walker, 2005; Chitewere, 2006).

The SoNG was constructed five years later with residents hiring their own architect and builder. The residents of the SoNG leased the land that their homes are built on from EVI, Inc. The two neighborhoods created a third entity called the Village Association that functions to coordinate the resources shared between the two neighborhoods such as the roads, sauna, and the pond. As the subdivision evolves, new legal entities have been created to support the growing needs of the community.

Neighborhood Design,

As is typical of cohousing development, homes that encircle a pedestrian path are set away from the homes. The one- to two-story homes range from 950 to 1,650 square feet (Town of Ithaca Planning Board, 2001c). They are designed to provide a continuous view from the kitchen, dining area, into the outside garden. Although the Planning Board indicate that the homes in the FROG range from 600 to 1,500 square feet and that the homes in the FROG tend to be larger than those in the SoNG, the designs such as strawbale insulation and smaller homes from 650 to 1,450 square feet (EVI, 2009).

A common house in each neighborhood provides a kitchen, dining space, laundry facilities, and a few offices for residents who work from home. It provides resources that an individual could not provide on a basis, but benefit from if shared; thus, it is a sustainable community.

Residents of EVI work hard to create a sustainable community that they value highly. The following are EVI as follows:

The houses were amiably drawn together with a central grass. The gracious space in the center of the neighborhood but curving pathways, play areas and d

The sense of community is a primary reason for staying at EVI. A 2006 survey of 58 EVI residents indicated that the sense of community was the most important to them. Eighty-five percent of the respondents living was a very/quite important reason for staying. The development attracts people who make a decision to settle in EVI. The majority of EVI were environmental and health conscious and they moved to live there because they were fulfilling a way of life that would support their or environmentally concerned in

Neighborhood Design, Community, and Consumption

imum of 150 units that will constitute temporary residents. Ninety percent of EVI, 2009; TREE, 2008; Town of Ithaca

aca an acre of their land on which to EVI residents were reluctant to do this, residents got the city to pave their access reliable source of water for emergency or the cost of constructing their own on for permits to build SoNG town. concerns about the lack of water for the construction of the tower resolved have had to deal with at some point lanning Board, 2001b). The following abuts EVI came on the market, EVI alf the \$66,000 needed to acquire the r with the property as they had obtained allowed them to use the trails on the nately 15 homes that will be built on the its hope to build a park on the property

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Ecovillage Cooperative Cooperation hborhood was completed in 1996 and is ollectively by residents (Walker, 2005;

years later with residents hiring their lents of the SoNG leased the land that Inc. The two neighborhoods created a iation that functions to coordinate the ighborhoods such as the roads, sauna, evolves, new legal entities have been ls of the community.

As is typical of cohousing developments, both FRoG and SoNG have homes that encircle a pedestrian-only walkway and the cars are located away from the homes. The one- to five-bedroom homes in the FRoG range from 950 to 1,650 square feet (Walker, 2005; Town of Ithaca Planning Board, 2001c). They are designed to be open, giving the residents a continuous view from the kitchen, through the dining and living room, and into the outside garden. Although the minutes of Ithaca's town planning board indicate that the homes in the SoNG were intended to range in size from 600 to 1,500 square feet and designed to be more affordable than those in the FRoG (Town of Ithaca Planning Board, 2001c), the SoNG homes tend to be larger than those in the FRoG and include more innovative green designs such as strawbale insulation. Homes in the TREE will range in size from 650 to 1,450 square feet (EVI, 2009; TREE, 2008).

A common house in each neighborhood contains a large community kitchen, dining space, laundry facilities, a guestroom, a children's playroom, and a few offices for residents who work from home. The common house provides resources that an individual household may not use on a regular basis, but benefit from if shared; this design is key to support the creation of a sustainable community.

Residents of EVI work hard to create a unique place and a sense of community that they value highly. Christine Somerfeldt (2002) describes EVI as follows:

The houses were amiably drawn together like a bunch of kids looking at a cool bug in the grass. The gracious space in the center was filled not with driveways, roads and lawns, but curving pathways, play areas and dense, vibrant gardens.

The sense of community is a powerful reason why people want to live at EVI. A 2006 survey of 58 EVI residents found that 83 percent of the respondents indicated that the sense of community was very or quite important to them. Eighty-five percent also indicated that sustainable living was a very/quite important reason for living at EVI (Jacob, 2007). The development attracts people from all over the United States who make a decision to settle in EVI. Kirby (2003) found that many residents of EVI were environmental and social activists before moving to EVI and they moved to live there because EVI "held out the promise of a fulfilling a way of life that would serve to confirm self-identity as a socially or environmentally concerned individual..." Jacob (2007) also found

that 62 percent of the respondents in his survey indicated that they had demonstrated against corporate and government policies in the past and 38 percent indicated that they committed acts of civil disobedience opposing such policies in the past. Hence, moving to an intentional community such as EVI allowed residents to reconcile their identity with their convictions and behaviors.

EVI's model has demonstrated how creating a sense of community can overcome the challenge of getting people to practice and support sustainability efforts. EVI has capitalized on residents' willingness to support community goals, share, and support each other in the effort to achieve the larger goal of sustainable living. However, the cooperative approach has some implications we should be aware of. Living cooperatively allowed families to collaborate on purchasing greener technology that would otherwise be too expensive for one family to afford on their own. But this was an important part of what residents considered sustainability to be. When asked what made the community ecologically sustainable, one interviewee responded by listing consumables the family owned or used such as a hybrid cars, organic food, and sustainably harvested bamboo flooring. However, Jacob (2007) found that residents engaged in a number of sustainable practices. Ninety-two percent of the respondents in his survey reported using fluorescent light bulbs, 91 percent purchased local foods and 88 percent purchased organic foods often or always. When asked to indicate the things that were very or quite important to them, 87 percent of the respondents said reducing personal energy consumption, 71 percent thought growing one's own food, and 59 percent thought that living communally was very or quite important.

Not surprisingly, residents of EVI are interested in knowing whether they consume fewer resources than others in the region. To this end, in 1999 Jay Jacobson reported that his analysis of water consumption indicated that EVI residents consumed about 20 percent of the amount of water used by the average northeastern household. He also reported that EVI residents consumed only about 39 percent of the electricity and 49 percent of the natural gas consumed by the average northeastern household. EVI's director, Liz Walker, also reported in 2007 that the 160 residents of the community used 40 percent fewer resources than "a comparable group of Americans" (Jacobson, 1999; Walker, 2007, 2005).

Living a green lifestyle has the effect of creating an expansion of the green identity. It is no longer enough to say one is green by joining an environmental organization, donating to one, or participate in environmental activities. To be considered green now-a-days, one has to consume green

products. Green consumption has environmental identity. Many residents feel "something" about the environment and consuming green commodities has been one way of

The consumption of green commodities by EVI residents defined their green lifestyle. One resident pointed out that she felt privileged to live a green lifestyle because she could not do so in her community. Still, some were more concerned that more environmentally harmful practices at EVI but was rejected, one resident was concerned about the choices she made. She hastened to change by substituting one commodity for another to meet sustainability goals. However, this was not evident in the way some of the residents lived. Rather than using public transportation, one resident drove gas mileage of their hybrid cars. Another resident located EVI two miles outside of town to avoid a driving commute into town.

Generally speaking, EVI residents are embedded in a green culture of community. Ecovillages as places where they live, work, and consumption, and work towards the goal of sustainability (2002; Walker, 2000). As Irma Rodon reported of the philosophy of trying to live with a sense of community" (Walker, 2007). A resident of Buffalo who moved to live in the Second First Residence Group. What I wanted were goals and visions that they had at the time (Walker, 2001b). Although residents are not in society and moved to EVI as a way of life (2008), they consume green commodities as a critique of that practice.

Aff

From the outset, making the home a green challenge. The cost of housing in E

his survey indicated that they had government policies in the past and acted acts of civil disobedience opposing living to an intentional community such as their identity with their convictions

By creating a sense of community can people to practice and support sustainability on residents' willingness to support each other in the effort to achieve the goal. However, the cooperative approach was aware of. Living cooperatively allowed using greener technology that would enable family to afford on their own. But this study finds sustainability to be a community ecologically sustainable, one that combines the family owned or used, and sustainably harvested bamboo. It found that residents engaged in a number of practices. 91 percent of the respondents in his survey had purchased local foods and 91 percent or always. When asked to indicate how important to them, 87 percent of the respondents thought green consumption, 71 percent thought that living communally

are interested in knowing whether they live in the region. To this end, in 1999 Jay's study of water consumption indicated that 20 percent of the amount of water used in a household. He also reported that EVI uses 20 percent of the electricity and 49 percent of the energy of a northeastern household. EVI's study in 2007 that the 160 residents of the village use more resources than "a comparable group of residents" (Walker, 2007, 2005).

Instead of creating an expansion of the green economy, one is green by joining an environmental community, or participate in environmental activities. In other words, one has to consume green

products. Green consumption has become a public signifier of status and environmental identity. Many residents of ecovillages struggle to "do something" about the environmental crisis and the consumption of green commodities has been one way of responding.

The consumption of green commodities was an important way in which residents defined their green lifestyle. This led one resident of the SoNG to point out that she felt privileged to be able to identify herself as living a green lifestyle because she could afford to buy a home in a "green" community. Still, some were more ambivalent about the lifestyle. Noting that more environmentally harmful practices could have been adopted at EVI but was rejected, one resident commented that she felt better about the choices she made. She hastened to add that she was aware that substituting one commodity for another was still not enough to reach sustainability goals. However, the commodity substitution mindset was evident in the way some of the residents articulated the choices they made. Rather than using public transportation, they emphasized the improved gas mileage of their hybrid cars. Similarly, rather than being critical of locating EVI two miles outside the city, residents celebrated the short driving commute into town.

Generally speaking, EVI residents do not see themselves as being embedded in a green culture of consumption. To the contrary, they see ecovillages as places where they can live intentionally, reduce their consumption, and work towards their goal of sustainable living (Somerfeldt, 2002; Walker, 2000). As Irma Rodriguez sees it, "I like EcoVillage because of the philosophy of trying to live without consuming so much and also the sense of community" (Walker, 2000). Bill Goodman, an attorney from Buffalo who moved to live in the SoNG, stated that he was attracted to EVI because he was "excited about joining the SoNG. I was impressed with the First Residence Group. What I wanted to do was very sympathetic with the goals and visions that they had at EcoVillage" (Town of Ithaca Planning Board, 2001b). Although residents are critical of the general consumerism in society and moved to EVI as a way of rejecting that culture (see Fischetti, 2008), they consume green commodities with ease and offered little or no critique of that practice.

Affordability

From the outset, making the homes at EVI affordable has been a major challenge. The cost of housing in EVI is higher than that of the nearby city

Table 2. A Comparison of the Demographic Characteristics of EVI: The City, County, State, and the United States.

Demographic Characteristics	2002		2000 Census			
	FRoG	SoNG	Ithaca	Tompkins county	New York state	United States
Population size	78	78	29,287	96,501	18,976,457	281,421,906
Children under 18 years (%)	37.2	39.7	9.2	19.0	24.7	25.7
Race						
White (%)	81	93	70.4	85.5	67.9	69.1
Black (%)	2	1.5	6.7	3.6	15.9	12.3
Hispanic (%)	4		6.3	3.1	15.1	12.5
Asian (%)	4	5.5	13.7	7.2	5.5	3.6
Native American (%)			0.4	0.3	0.4	0.9
Mixed race (%)	9		3.4	2.3	3.1	2.4
Other race (%)			2.0	1.1	7.1	5.6
Gender						
Male (%)	46	49	50.6	49.4	48.2	49.1
Female (%)	54	51	49.4	50.6	51.8	50.9
Home ownership						
Own (%)	93	95	26.0	53.7	53.0	66.2
Rent (%)	7	5	74.0	46.3	47.0	33.8
Median value of owner-occupied homes			\$96,200	\$101,600	\$148,700	\$119,000
Employment status						
Employed full time (%)	48	37	56.1	63.6	61.1	63.9
Employed part time (%)	18	26				
Retired (%)	20	5				
Other (%)	14	32				
Income						
Earning \$25,000–\$50,000 (%)	47	63				
Earning \$51,000–\$70,000 (%)	34	10				
Earning \$71,000–\$100,000 (%)	19	21				
Earning \$101,000 or more (%)		6				
Median family income			\$42,304	\$53,041	\$51,691	\$50,046
Families below the poverty level (%)			13.5	6.8	11.5	9.2

Source: *The EcoVillage at Ithaca Newsletter* (2002a), U. S. Bureau of the Census (2000).

and in the county in which it is located. Homes in the FRoG ranged in price from \$90,000 to \$170,000 (TechPractices, 2008; Walker, 2005). Despite efforts to make the homes in the SoNG affordable, homes in the development ranged in price from \$120,000 to \$300,000. Homes in the TREE will range from \$130,000 to \$200,000 (Walker, 2005; EVI, 2009;

TREE, 2008). As Table 2 shows, the median value of a home in Ithaca was \$96,200 and \$101,600 in the county. The median value of such a home was \$148,700 in the state and \$119,000 in the United States as a whole (U.S.

A stated goal of the SoNG was to provide affordable housing. To this end, EVI worked with a developer who was planned to use tax credits to fund the development. However, after months of planning and negotiations fell apart and the initiative was not funded. EVI then moved into SoNG to make it more affordable. The development units, one-bedrooms and studios, were priced as affordable homes with “sweat equity.” However, many of those attracted to live in the development have left homeownership as a distant goal.

EVI was able to obtain a \$112,000 loan from the Home Loan Bank of New York in order to purchase six homes. Each of the chosen homes was priced at \$20,000. The goal was to make the homes affordable (Walker, 2002). With the goal in mind, the range from \$78,000 to \$120,000. The homes were selected from among 24 homes in the county. They should (1) have income of 80 percent of the median for Tompkins County – the lending goal for households be no higher than 50 percent of the median between 51 and 65 percent of the median income of the county, (2) 80 percent of the median income of the county and fees at EVI, (3) have prior involvement with EVI if they could not otherwise live at EVI, (4) depending on their household characteristics, (5) they could not be given low priority if they have a mortgage, (6) be given low priority if they have a mortgage. Nonetheless, one EVI newsletter reported that affordable housing at EcoVillage had been achieved.

Affordability, diversity and a focus on community are more explicit goal for the TREE. As

We aspire to live simply, reducing costs and making non-toxic choices. We hope to cultivate a community of non-material assets. We envision having a community while enjoying our homes and each other. We respect the needs, abilities, backgrounds, and finances

Demographic Characteristics of EVI:
Ithaca, Tompkins County, New York State, and the United States.

2000 Census			
Ithaca	Tompkins county	New York state	United States
29,287	96,501	18,976,457	281,421,906
9.2	19.0	24.7	25.7
70.4	85.5	67.9	69.1
6.7	3.6	15.9	12.3
6.3	3.1	15.1	12.5
13.7	7.2	5.5	3.6
0.4	0.3	0.4	0.9
3.4	2.3	3.1	2.4
2.0	1.1	7.1	5.6
50.6	49.4	48.2	49.1
49.4	50.6	51.8	50.9
26.0	53.7	53.0	66.2
74.0	46.3	47.0	33.8
\$96,200	\$101,600	\$148,700	\$119,000
56.1	63.6	61.1	63.9
\$42,304	\$53,041	\$51,691	\$50,046
13.5	6.8	11.5	9.2

(2002a), U. S. Bureau of the Census (2000).

located. Homes in the FRoG ranged from \$200,000 to \$300,000 (TechPractices, 2008; Walker, 2005). In the SoNG affordable, homes in the \$120,000 to \$200,000 (Walker, 2005; EVI, 2009;

TREE, 2008). As Table 2 shows, the median value of an owner-occupied home in Ithaca was \$96,200 and \$101,600 in Tompkins County. The median value of such a home was \$148,700 in the state of New York and \$119,000 in the United States as a whole (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2000).

A stated goal of the SoNG was to be more affordable than the FRoG. To this end, EVI worked with a local affordable housing agency that planned to use tax credits to fund the building of homes in the subdivision. However, after months of planning and negotiations, the collaboration fell apart and the initiative was not funded. EVI also included design elements into SoNG to make it more affordable such as simple floor plans, stacked units, one-bedrooms and studios, and allowing residents to build their homes with "sweat equity." However, as Walker (2000) acknowledges, "For many of those attracted to living at EcoVillage, even these measures have left homeownership as a distant dream."

EVI was able to obtain a \$112,000 affordable housing grant from the Home Loan Bank of New York in 2002 to subsidize the construction of six homes. Each of the chosen homes received a grant of between \$17,000 and \$20,000. The goal was to make 20 percent of the homes in the SoNG affordable (Walker, 2002). With the subsidy the home prices were expected to range from \$78,000 to \$120,000. The families chosen to inhabit the subsidized homes were selected from among 24 applicants using the following criteria. They should (1) have income of 80 percent or less of the median income for Tompkins County – the lending institution required that three of the households be no higher than 50 percent below the median income, two be between 51 and 65 percent of the median income and one be between 66 and 80 percent of the median income of the county, (2) be able to afford mortgage and fees at EVI, (3) have prior involvement with EVI, (4) be given priority if they could not otherwise live at EVI without the subsidy, (5) be given priority depending on their household characteristics – size, age, ethnicity, and (6) be given low priority if they have low incomes and high assets. The FRoG kept 10 percent of its units affordable by building several smaller units. Nonetheless, one EVI newsletter admits that "the dream of offering affordable housing at EcoVillage has been an illusive one" (Walker, 2002).

Affordability, diversity and a focus on non-material things has become a more explicit goal for the TREE. As the neighborhood's website proclaims,

We aspire to live simply, reducing costs while making ecologically responsible and non-toxic choices. We hope to cultivate a sense of enoughness that allows us to focus on non-material assets. We envision having time for the work that matters to each of us while enjoying our homes and each other. We will work to include people with diverse needs, abilities, backgrounds, and finances. (TREE, 2008)

It remains to be seen whether EVI will be able to create a more racially and economically diverse neighborhood at the TREE than it has done in the FRoG and the SoNG. The challenge EVI faced in their quest to build affordable housing is not unique to this ecovillage. As Riddell (2004) writes, ecovillages “are, for their inhabitants, safe, pleasant and interesting places in which to live – but they do not come cheap. In other words new urbanist settlements are not likely to provide any ‘affordable housing’ for low-income households, although moving in the direction of such a household balance is an objective.”

Focus on the Middle Class

The location of EVI increased the cost of land and the overall project, thereby, preventing many of the participants in the Global Walk or other modest- or low-income families from being able to afford it. Thus, the debate over the type of community EVI would become split the group into two camps – those who saw the project as an alternative model of housing for well-to-do families who would otherwise build sprawling homes on large lots in rural or semi-rural areas and those who envisioned a new model housing that took equity and environmental justice concerns into consideration. The view that prevailed was one that eventually made the community unaffordable to some of the activists who had a strong social justice orientation. Consequently, many of those pushing for the social justice perspective angrily withdrew from the project as it made the decision to appeal to middle class households (Walker, 2005). The director of EVI contemplates the outcome of the decision when she states that “I wonder if we have created a beautiful haven that will eventually be affordable only to upper middle class and wealthy people” (Walker, 2005).

Despite the decision to move away from addressing social justice issues at EVI, some residents still think about them. One resident expressed her disappointment in the lack of racial and class diversity in the community during an interview.

The neighborhood is not diverse enough; there are virtually no minorities here, except people’s adopted children. You have to be pretty well off to move in and everybody here would agree that they would like it to be more diverse, and they would like to be more equitable but nothing ever happens to make it possible for anybody to live here – a handicapped person or a poor person or you know, let alone a welfare mother.

Other residents agree with EVI’s approach. They argue that by creating a comfortable community that appealed to the middle class was in and of itself a worthy social and ecological achievement. As EVI’s director saw it,

the decision to limit the attention paid to social justice issues was a necessary one. According to her, “we made a community for middle-class Americans” (Walker, 2005). She did this because they believed that middle-class homes and multiple gas-guzzling cars were an opportunity for such people to resist the opportunity to abandon comfortable living. Middle-class people achieved by being able to purchase a house in a middle-class community. So, while some scholars argue that the middle class is “the unit of resistance to capitalism” (Fischetti, 2008), this conclusion requires further examining whether the consumption of middle-class people is an emergent form of a new green culture or simply the more generalized culture of consumption. Some are embracing and others are rejecting.

The Demographic

Ecovillages tend to be homogenous communities of educated families (Kirby, 2003; SoNG, 2005). SoNG stated a goal of increasing diversity in its community with this. In 2002 EVI conducted a demographic survey. SoNG and found that 81 percent of the residents of SoNG and so were 93 percent of those in the SoNG. This indicates that EVI had a higher percentage of middle class than is residing in Ithaca, the county of Ithaca, New York, United States as a whole (Table 2). The survey found that 21 percent of the population of Ithaca and 12 percent comprised 67.9 percent of the New York State population. In particular, the survey found that 12 percent represented in the subdivision. All of the residents of New York and 12 percent they comprised two percent of the population of the SoNG. The same goes for Hispanics, who made up 4 percent of the population in the SoNG. In 2000, Hispanics made up 12 percent of the population of the SoNG.

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 al and class diversity in the community

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 e pretty well off to move in and everybody here
 e more diverse, and they would like to be more
 make it possible for anybody to live here – a
 r you know, let alone a welfare mother.

s approach. They argue that by creating
 ealed to the middle class was in and of
 al achievement. As EVI's director saw it,

the decision to limit the attention paid to social justice issues was a difficult one. According to her, "we made a key decision. We were aiming to reach middle-class Americans" (Walker, 2005). EVI's planners and early residents did this because they believed that it was the wealthy – with their enormous homes and multiple gas-guzzling cars – who were most responsible for overconsumption and environmental degradation. Thus, EVI provided an opportunity for such people to reduce their consumption without having to abandon comfortable living. Hence, for some a green lifestyle was achieved by being able to purchase one's way into an intentional ecological community. So, while some scholars argue that an ecovillage such as EVI is "the unit of resistance to capitalism and the ills of consumer culture" (Fischetti, 2008), this conclusion may be overstating the case. It is worth examining whether the consumption of green commodities in ecovillages is an emergent form of a new green culture of consumption that might replace the more generalized culture of consumption that environmental activists and others are rejecting.

The Demographics Characteristics of EVI

Ecovillages tend to be homogenous – consisting of middle class, college-educated families (Kirby, 2003; Schaub, 2000; Meltzer, 2000). Despite have a stated goal of increasing diversity in the subdivision, EVI has struggled with this. In 2002 EVI conducted a demographic analysis of the FRoG and SoNG and found that 81 percent of the residents in the former were white and so were 93 percent of those in the latter neighborhood. The 2000 Census indicates that EVI had a higher percentage of whites living in the subdivision than is residing in Ithaca, the county, the state of New York, and the United States as a whole (Table 2). In 2000, whites comprised 70.4 percent of the population of Ithaca and 85.5 percent of Tompkins County. They comprised 67.9 percent of the New York's population and 69.1 percent of the nation's population. In particular, blacks and Hispanics are under-represented in the subdivision. Although blacks constitute 15.9 percent of the residents of New York and 12.3 percent of the population nationwide, they comprised two percent of the population of the FRoG and 1.5 percent of the SoNG. The same goes for Hispanics. Although Hispanics constituted 4 percent of the population in the FRoG, there were none in the SoNG. In 2000, Hispanics made up 12.5 percent of U.S. population and 15.1 percent of the population of the state.

EVI is a community that attracts families with children. The percentage of children in the FRoG (37.2) and SoNG (39.2) exceeds that found in the county, state, and the U.S. by far. Only 19 percent of the population of Tompkins County is under the age 18. In comparison, 24.7 percent of New York's population and 25.7 percent of the population of the United States is under the age of 18.

EVI is a community organized around home ownership. Consequently, the rate of home ownership is much higher in the subdivision than in any of the other units to which it is being compared. Although 93 percent of the FRoG and 95 percent of the SoNG residents owned their homes, only 26 percent of the residents of Ithaca were home owners (it should be noted that Ithaca is a college town with many students who rent). However, only 53.7 percent of the families in Tompkins County and 53 percent of New York's families own their homes. In the United States 66.2 percent of families own their home.

Instead of becoming more diverse EVI seem to be trending in the opposite direction. The SoNG that was intended to attract more a more diverse pool of residents has fewer minorities living in it than the FRoG. The village still has very few renters. In fact, there are fewer renters in 2009 than there were in 2002. In 2009 EVI has 165 residents; 155 of the residents live in homes they own, whereas the remaining 10 are renters. That is renters constitute only 6.1 percent of the community (EVI, 2009).

The Potential to Contribute to Sprawl

The siting of the development was contentious. EVI's planning group considered several locations including an old gun factory in the heart of Ithaca and property located about 10 miles away from the city before settling on the current site (Walker, 2005). There was an irreconcilable ideological split that surfaced during the debate over where EVI should be sited. Two groups – the urbanists and the ruralists – emerged. Some of the early participants (the urbanists) in the project believed that the “eco” in ecovillage was best modeled by being physically located in the city where goods and services would be easily accessible and where residents could rely on public transportation, biking or walking. On the contrary, others (the ruralists) believed that it was more appropriate that a village centered on environmental themes and practices be situated in the countryside.

Some EVI planners and local area residents were concerned that the project would contribute to sprawl (Chitewere, 2006). This was ironic since

sprawl was one of the environmental combat. This is a legitimate concern. development 30 families or about Although the actual homes did not the neighborhoods, the reality is that (EVI is also part owner of an acre in these calculations). This means of about one person per 2.2 acres. When the second neighborhood was acquired – the density increased. Assuming that roughly the same rate completion of the third neighborhood per 0.73 acres. If the current rate all five neighborhoods are completed. That will mean a density of one projected that the subdivision could is unlikely – to reach this target, either the number of units or the the last two neighborhoods developed 500 people the density would be

If each group wanting to develop this large amount of land, then pressure being placed on farm land could also skyrocket. Walker (2005) purchased their property. The price roughly four times its market value the land was actually worth to a amounts of land to build ecovillages land values would also be unsustainable

Reliance

Reliance on the car is an issue that an entirely residential community residents are forced to commute to. After years of trying, EVI eventually so that it stopped by the subdivision development. This being the use of cars and are interested in

families with children. The percentage of single-family homes (39.2) exceeds that found in the county (19 percent) of the population of New York. In comparison, 24.7 percent of New York's population of the United States is

and home ownership. Consequently, the percentage of home ownership in the subdivision is higher than in any of the other subdivisions compared. Although 93 percent of the residents owned their homes, only 10 percent were home owners (it should be noted that 10 percent are students who rent). However, in Seneca County and 53 percent of the population in the United States 66.2 percent of

the population seem to be trending in the opposite direction to attract more a more diverse pool of residents than the FROG. The village still has more renters in 2009 than there were in 2005; 155 of the residents live in homes owned by renters. That is renters constitute 10 percent of the population (I, 2009).

Contribution to Sprawl

Contentious. EVI's planning group was located in an old gun factory in the heart of Ithaca, 1.5 miles away from the city before the subdivision (2005). There was an irreconcilable debate over where EVI should be located. The ruralists – emerged. Some of the residents of the project believed that the “eco” in ecovillage was physically located in the city where it was accessible and where residents could walk. On the contrary, others believed that it was appropriate that a village centered in the countryside. The residents were concerned that the subdivision would sprawl (Lawrence, 2006). This was ironic since

sprawl was one of the environmental ills ecovillages were intended to combat. This is a legitimate concern since during the first phase of development 30 families or about 80 people lived on 176 acres of land. Although the actual homes did not occupy more than four acres in any of the neighborhoods, the reality is that the residents controlled all 176 acres (EVI is also part owner of an additional 35 acres that will not be used in these calculations). This means that EVI had a population density of about one person per 2.2 acres for the first phase of the development. When the second neighborhood was completed – 12 years after the property was acquired – the density increased to about one person per 1.1 acres. Assuming that roughly the same number of people occupy the homes, upon completion of the third neighborhood the density will be about one person per 0.73 acres. If the current rate of occupancy of the units hold, then when all five neighborhoods are completed EVI will have roughly 400 residents. That will mean a density of one person per 0.44 acres. Although EVI has projected that the subdivision could reach 500 people upon completion this is unlikely – to reach this target, EVI would have to dramatically increase either the number of units or the number of people inhabiting the units in the last two neighborhoods developed. However, if the village does get to 500 people the density would be about one person per 0.35 acres.

If each group wanting to develop alternative communities seek or acquire this large amount of land, then the result could be sprawl and significant pressure being placed on farm lands and undeveloped parcels. Land prices could also skyrocket. Walker (2005) describes how this happened when EVI purchased their property. The parcel they purchased was offered to them at roughly four times its market value. They eventually paid almost twice what the land was actually worth to acquire it. Not only is the desire for large amounts of land to build ecovillages unsustainable, the effect of increasing land values would also be unsustainable in the long run.

Reliance on Cars

Reliance on the car is an issue that residents have struggled with. Locating an entirely residential community outside of a city forces tradeoffs because residents are forced to commute by private vehicles to work, do errands, etc. After years of trying, EVI eventually got the city to adjust the bus route, so that it stopped by the subdivision. Still, the closest bus stop is a mile from the development. This being the case, EVI residents are concerned with the use of cars and are interested in reducing their reliance on it. To this end

they have been tracking the number of cars in the development and the use of those cars.

In 2002 EVI's newsletter reported that the FRoG had 30 households. Of those, 26 households had 39 cars. At the time SoNG had 27 households. Of those, 21 households owned 34 cars. A total of 156 people (78 in each development) lived in the community at the time (EVI Newsletter, 2002a). This means there were a total of 73 cars in the village. This amounts to roughly one car per 2.1 people.

A 2005 study of vehicle use at EVI found that the 90 adult residents studied had 73 cars. Approximately 160 people lived in the subdivision at the time. This translates to roughly one car per 2.2 people. Collectively residents took 550 trips in and around Ithaca each week; each car made approximately 1.1 trips per day. Together residents logged around 4,400 miles per week in their cars. On a typical day, 18 percent of the trips taken were for work-related purposes (Fishman et al., 2005). Hence the car is still an important part of the lives of EVI residents. So much so that Miles (2008) was moved to comment on the frequency with which cars pulled in and out of the EVI complex during the time he did field work there.

As a means of helping residents go car free or otherwise reduce their dependence on cars, EVI has developed a carshare program. They collaborated with the city of Ithaca on this. Despite being a community on the outskirts of town, EVI was the first to take advantage of Ithaca's carshare program. Ithaca Carshare got a \$177,000 grant to begin operating a carshare program in December 2006. EVI got the first cars from this program – ahead of poor inner-city residents and students. One of EVI's residents worked with the city on getting the program started (Carson, 2007). EVI introduced its carshare program in 2006 (two cars were operated for this purpose). As an anecdote reported by Sara Pines (2002) suggest, EVI also has informal car-sharing arrangements too wherein neighbors lend each other their cars.

Although jettisoning the car is a goal of some EVI residents, being located atop a steep hill two miles from town makes it difficult to achieve this goal. EVI resident, Ellie, noted that since the two cars in village's carshare program were usually checked out, she found it challenging to get around. To travel outside of EVI she had to walk a mile each way up and down the steep hill to the closest bus stop with her children (Walker, 2006).

The bus stop serving EVI is located on the edge of the subdivision's property, and EVI has erected a moveable, green 144-square-foot bus shelter there. Aware that the bus stop is quite a distance from FRoG, EVI residents have been campaigning for a bus stop inside the complex. If this occurs,

EVI plans to move its current shelter. However, during planning board h shelter, a board member – Eva Hof Varnek of EVI after it was revealed further into the complex if the bus would mainly serve the EcoVillage Mecklenburg?" Varnek replied, "a passengers who catch the bus at t (Town of Ithaca Planning Board, 2

This exchange provides an exampl EVI's focus and activism was still in on actions that benefit its resid opportunities to do projects that t In considering whether to move th had no alternative plan that would the benefits of a green bus shelter someone concerned about the ben had considered, the response did r service to those not living at EVI.

Green Living at EVI: Time

As practiced at EVI, the green life because residents are still construct also time consuming because of th green commodities. Time spent de and how to consume them has Residents often spend long hours share and how to share them, or v feel less "natural." Consequently address ecological issues occurri decision making, shared governa neighbors occupied much of resic residents have to commit to a mini work per week; there are two to five

Other researchers studying EVI (2008) commented on this in his ca confirms this. According to Jacob survey indicated that they attended

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l on the edge of the subdivision's le, green 144-square-foot bus shelter distance from FROG, EVI residents inside the complex. If this occurs,

EVI plans to move its current shelter to the location inside the subdivision. However, during planning board hearings to grant permission to build the shelter, a board member – Eva Hoffman – directed this question to Francis Varnek of EVI after it was revealed that EVI wanted to move the bus shelter further into the complex if the bus route was altered: “So it [the bus shelter] would mainly serve the EcoVillage residents rather than other people along Mecklenburg?” Varnek replied, “as far as I know, almost all if not all the passengers who catch the bus at that point are in fact from EcoVillage” (Town of Ithaca Planning Board, 2005).

This exchange provides an example of how – after 14 years of operation – EVI's focus and activism was still inward looking. The group focuses heavily on actions that benefit its residents and fail to consider or pass up opportunities to do projects that benefit those outside of the subdivision. In considering whether to move the bus shelter inside their complex, they had no alternative plan that would allow town residents to continue to enjoy the benefits of a green bus shelter and even after the issue was raised by someone concerned about the benefits reaching a broader group that EVI had considered, the response did not indicate a willingness to think about service to those not living at EVI.

Green Living at EVI: Time Consuming and Inwardly Focused

As practiced at EVI, the green lifestyle is time consuming. This is the case because residents are still constructing and developing the community. It is also time consuming because of the focus on the use and consumption of green commodities. Time spent deciding what green products to consume and how to consume them has been a major part of residents' lives. Residents often spend long hours at meetings deciding what resources to share and how to share them, or whether paving a dirt road would make it feel less “natural.” Consequently, residents had little time or energy to address ecological issues occurring outside the community. Consensus decision making, shared governance, chores, and random gathering with neighbors occupied much of residents time. To reside in the community, residents have to commit to a minimum of two to four hours of community work per week; there are two to five communal meals per week (EVI, 2009).

Other researchers studying EVI have found this to be case also. Miles (2008) commented on this in his case study and Jacob's (2007) research also confirms this. According to Jacobs, 66 percent of the respondents in his survey indicated that they attended neighborhood meetings at least once per

month and 58 percent attend at least one community meal per week. Furthermore, 69 percent of the respondents reported being very or quite involved in neighborhood work teams, 56 percent reported being quite or very much involved in neighborhood committee work and 53 percent quite/very much involved in neighborhood decision making. Thompson (2009) also made the observation that residents spent long hours in meetings as they planned the TREE. The net effect of this is that such intensive involvement by residents about the issues that affected their lives directly left little time to address environmental and social problems occurring elsewhere.

A content analysis of EVI newsletters shows the vast majority of the topics covered related to life inside the subdivision (Table 3). With the exception of coverage of visitors from other ecovillages, speakers, and technological exchanges (such as those with the Institute of Japanese Permaculture) very little related to the outside world is covered in the newsletters. The most frequently covered topics were issues related to green building design, features, and materials used. Site development and construction as well as several aspects of sustainability also received plentiful coverage. There was also ample coverage of commodities such as solar panels, wind turbines, fuel cells, cars, and appliances.

Even coverage of EVI's sister ecovillage located in Yoff, Senegal is sparse. Collaborations between the two have included a delegation of EVI residents visiting EcoYoff and the cohosting of a 1996 EcoCity conference, consulting on the design of composting toilets and greywater recycling system, and a fundraising dinner to help Senegalese women that netted \$400. The one article appearing in the newsletters on EcoYoff was written by resident of that ecovillage (Thiaw, 2003); there were no articles on EcoYoff written by anyone from EVI.

The newsletters also indicate the extent to which EVI's residents work on equity and social justice issues. This is limited. Affordable housing, aging in place, and increased accessibility are the only social justice topics covered – and these are covered from the standpoint of how they affect life at EVI. The affordable housing discussion focus on attempts to build such units at EVI while the aging in place and accessibility articles focus on how to make the subdivision more user-friendly for the elderly as current EVI residents age in place.

This inward-focus of ecovillagers has been facilitated by how narrowly environment is defined (Dobson, 1992; Cronon, 1996; Taylor, 2000). Defining environment as wild, natural places in need of protection is rooted in nineteenth century Romantic conservation ideology (Cronon, 1996;

Table 3. Issues Covered in I

Topics Covered	Number of Articles Mentioning Topic
Green building design, features, materials	16
Student research projects, participation in EVI	11
Site development and construction	8
Media coverage of EVI	7
Home stays – hosting visitors	7
Organic farming – agriculture	7
Village design and visioning	7
Birth and death announcements, in memoriam	6
Community spirit	6
General finances, budget	6
Building world-wide ecovillage community	6
Environmental education	5
Financing homes, land	5
Carshare, carpooling	5
Community building – constructing community	4
Affordable or subsidized housing at EVI	4
Root cellar	4
Solar panel, power	4
Sustainability – general	4
Courses	4
Healthy living, lifestyle	4
Research grants	3
Birds	3
International ecovillage partnerships	3
Ecovillage life	3
Book, research published on EVI	3
Sustainability education	3
Kids page in EVI newsletter	3
Permaculture	3
Wind turbine	3
Ecological footprint	3

Sources: *The EcoVillage at Ithaca Newsletters* 2005b, 2006, 2007).

least one community meal per week. Residents reported being very or quite satisfied with food committee work and 53 percent with neighborhood decision making. Thompson reports that residents spent long hours in meetings and the effect of this is that such intensive meetings affected their lives directly on mental and social problems occurring

Table 3 shows the vast majority of the topics covered in the subdivision (Table 3). With the exception of other ecovillages, speakers, and those with the Institute of Japanese Studies, the outside world is covered in the newsletter. Covered topics were issues related to green building materials used. Site development and construction of sustainability also received plentiful coverage of commodities such as solar panels, and appliances.

Ecovillage located in Yoff, Senegal is sparse. The newsletter included a delegation of EVI residents to a 1996 EcoCity conference, consulting on a greywater recycling system, and on the use of women that netted \$400. The one article on EcoYoff was written by a resident of Yoff. There were no articles on EcoYoff written by

residents. The extent to which EVI's residents work on sustainability is limited. Affordable housing, aging in place, and the only social justice topics covered – affordable housing – are the only social justice topics covered – the only social justice topics covered – the only social justice topics covered – the only social justice topics covered – the only social justice topics covered –

has been facilitated by how narrowly the focus is. Affordable housing, aging in place, and the only social justice topics covered – the only social justice topics covered – the only social justice topics covered – the only social justice topics covered – the only social justice topics covered –

Table 3. Issues Covered in EVI's Newsletters, 1999–2007.

Topics Covered	Number of Articles Mentioning Topic	Topics Covered	Number of Articles Mentioning Topic
Green building design, features, materials	16	Building, construction grants	2
Student research projects, participation in EVI	11	New families	2
Site development and construction	8	Organizational development and structure	2
Media coverage of EVI	7	Health care and support	2
Home stays – hosting visitors	7	Communal land use	2
Organic farming – agriculture	7	Sustainable land use	2
Village design and visioning	7	Energy STAR appliances	2
Birth and death announcements, in memoriam	6	Biodiversity management at EVI	2
Community spirit	6	Gaia education	2
General finances, budget	6	Recognition, awards	2
Building world-wide ecovillage community	6	Land acquisition, preservation	2
Environmental education	5	Aging in place at EVI, accessibility	2
Financing homes, land	5	Energy use	2
Carshare, carpooling	5	Gardening	2
Community building – constructing community	4	Global warming	2
Affordable or subsidized housing at EVI	4	History	2
Root cellar	4	Mini-grants to residents	1
Solar panel, power	4	Community – mutual support of each other	1
Sustainability – general	4	Selecting new residents	1
Courses	4	Demographic analysis of EVI	1
Healthy living, lifestyle	4	Nature feature	1
Research grants	3	Care-free at EVI	1
Birds	3	Cost of cars	1
International ecovillage partnerships	3	Fuel cells	1
Ecovillage life	3	Education/visitor center	1
Book, research published on EVI	3	LEED certification	1
Sustainability education	3	Sustainable landscaping	1
Kids page in EVI newsletter	3	Work teams	1
Permaculture	3	Water tower	1
Wind turbine	3	Bike tour	1
Ecological footprint	3	Homeschooling	1

Sources: *The EcoVillage at Ithaca Newsletter* (1999, 2000, 2002b, 2003, 2003–2004, 2005a, 2005b, 2006, 2007).

Taylor, 2000, forthcoming) and has provided a framework in which residents place their collective energy. As a result there is a reduced focus on the urban condition or the plight of the poor.

EVI: THE RURALIST IMPULSE AND THE ROMANTIC INFLUENCE

Although many aspects of EVI appear to be influenced by Romanticism, the community has developed a unique model that draws deeply from the Romantic tradition, but also displays some fundamental differences with it. EVI's development also bears resemblance to transcendental collectives; other influences seem to be the countryside movement and notions of the picturesque.

Emerson was an early critic of the industrialization; he saw degrading Boston where he lived; consequently, he urged people to go and live in the countryside. He moved to *Bush*, his estate in Concord, Massachusetts (that was located about 20 miles west of Boston) in 1835. He considered Concord a refuge from "the compliances and imitations of city society." He also liked the "lukewarm milky dog-days of common village life" (quote copied from Richardson, 1995; see also Taylor, 2009). Thoreau, whose family had lived briefly in Boston, lived in Concord; he was an impressionable young man and a student at Harvard who quickly became a disciple of Emerson. Emerson and Thoreau were Romantics (those professing a love for wild, remote natural places) who also became leading figures in the transcendental movement (that preached closeness and respect for nature and wrote damning critiques of industrialism and environmental degradation). Other movement adherents moved to Concord or spent long periods of time there; Bronson Alcott (Louisa May Alcott's father) and Nathaniel Hawthorne and his wife Sophia Peabody were among those who moved there (Taylor, 2009, forthcoming). Margaret Fuller also spent long periods in Concord.

Andrew Jackson Downing grew up in Newburgh, New York. He was also a leading proponent of country life. He advocated rural living because he thought the rural lifestyle would combat what he saw as the "too great bustle and excitement of our commercial cities." By the 1840s he was designing and building lavish country estates for wealthy urbanites taking up his call to flee the city and experience genteel country living. He was also a gentleman farmer whose nursery business supplied plants to the East Coast gentry seeking to stock the farms on their estate with orchards and

beatify the mansions on the estate (Taylor, 2009). Frederick Law Olmsted (with Calvert Vaux), grew up in Hartford with introducing picturesque landscapes with their design of Central Park (Richardson, 2009).

EVI residents adopted a version of the love of nature, a respect for it, an indifference to industrialism. They showed a preference for the life favored by Emerson that called for living in a town or big city. They shunned the life practiced by Thoreau when he moved to Concord (Emerson's properties) or by John Muir (parts of the Sierra Mountains for several years) or a Scottish immigrant and Transcendentalist in Wisconsin and who was an admirer of Thoreau. He envelope the furthest in his quest to escape the city.

In choosing country living, EVI residents adopted a lifestyle *a la* the urban elites of the 19th century who had second homes in the countryside. The advocates were among those living in the countryside and co-founder of the Boone and Crockett Club (preservationist and park advocate) and the original Audubon Society (the Boone and Crockett Club) are among them. However, in the West, expansive acreage in the East or rural living was a lot of rural acreage for their communities on a small portion of it.

Like Thoreau they wanted to live in the countryside. Living is expressed most clearly in the lives of the EVI. It drives EVI and other ecovillages. As Thoreau wrote to Walden Pond, "I went to the woods to confront only the essential facts of life. I did not want to teach it had to teach" (Thoreau, 1971). The residents of EVI that's written earlier in the book and Muir the concepts of living simply. Thoreau went to Walden Pond and on his travels he led a spartan existence. Muir also led a wilderness travels (Muir lived as a hermit on his father-in-law estate and orchard).

provided a framework in which as a result there is a reduced focus on the poor.

THE IMPULSE AND CULTURAL INFLUENCE

to be influenced by Romanticism, the model that draws deeply from the some fundamental differences with it. balance to transcendental collectives; countryside movement and notions of the

industrialization; he saw degrading the urged people to go and live in the estate in Concord, Massachusetts (that town) in 1835. He considered Concord deteriorations of city society." He also liked "the simple village life" (quote copied from 1849). Thoreau, whose family had lived in Concord, he was an impressionable young man who quickly became a disciple of Emerson. He was among those professing a love for wild, natural leading figures in the transcendental movement and respect for nature and wrote about environmental degradation). Other people had spent long periods of time there; Thoreau and Nathaniel Hawthorne and others who moved there (Taylor, 2009, 2009) spent long periods in Concord.

in Newburgh, New York. He was also a proponent of rural living because he advocated rural living because of what he saw as the "too great distance from rural cities." By the 1840s he was criticizing estates for wealthy urbanites taking the genteel country living. He was also a business supplied plants to the East and was on their estate with orchards and

beatify the mansions on the estates with flowers (Downing, 1960[1841]; Taylor, 2009). Frederick Law Olmsted, co-designer of Central Park (along with Calvert Vaux), grew up in Hartford, Connecticut. The two are credited with introducing picturesque landscapes in America in the 1850s – beginning with their design of Central Park (Roper, 1973; Rybczynski, 1999; Taylor, 2009).

EVI residents adopted a version of Romanticism that was rooted in the love of nature, a respect for it, an impulse to protect it, and a critique of industrialism. They showed a preference for a gentler form of Romanticism favored by Emerson that called for living in the countryside with easy access to a town or big city. They shunned the more extreme form of Romanticism practiced by Thoreau when he moved to Walden Pond (on another of Emerson's properties) or by John Muir who lived in Yosemite and other parts of the Sierra Mountains for several years. Of the three, John Muir – a Scottish immigrant and Transcendentalist who grew up on a pioneer farm in Wisconsin and who was an admirer of Emerson and Thoreau – pushed the envelope the furthest in his quest to experience Romanticism (Taylor, 2009).

In choosing country living, EVI residents chose to live a comfortable lifestyle *a la* the urban elites of the nineteenth century who fled the city or who had second homes in the countryside. Several prominent environmental advocates were among those living this way. Theodore Roosevelt (president and co-founder of the Boone and Crockett Club), William Cullen Bryant (preservationist and park advocate), and George Bird Grinnell (founder of the original Audubon Society as well as the Boone and Crockett Club) are among them. However, instead of building sprawling mansions on expansive acreage in the East or ranches in the West, EVI residents acquired a lot of rural acreage for their community but built compact attached homes on a small portion of it.

Like Thoreau they wanted to live deliberately. The notion of deliberate living is expressed most clearly in the concept of intentional living that drives EVI and other ecovillages. As Thoreau wrote as he planned to move to Walden Pond, "I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately, to confront only the essential facts of life, and see if I could not learn what it had to teach" (Thoreau, 1971). This theme is apparent in quotes from residents of EVI that's written earlier. EVI residents also take from Thoreau and Muir the concepts of living simply and self-sufficiency. When Thoreau went to Walden Pond and on his travels to the Mount Khatadin wilderness, he led a spartan existence. Muir also lived an austere lifestyle during his wilderness travels (Muir lived as a member of the West Coast elite on his father-in-law estate and orchard later in life in Martinez, California,

whereas Thoreau lived a genteel lifestyle at the Emerson's when not at Walden). The concept of living on the bare essentials appears repeatedly in Muir's writings (Wolfe, 1938; Taylor, 2009, forthcoming). EVI residents embrace the notion of self-sufficiency and simple living, but they do not necessarily aspire to live on the bare essentials. EVI residents also rejected the kind of rugged individualism espoused by the nineteenth century environmental activists named earlier. Many, such as Thoreau, Muir, Roosevelt, Grinnell, went to the woods alone and sought a solitary experience (Taylor, 2009, forthcoming). This is in direct opposition to the way EVI and other ecovillages function. A core organizing principle is communitarianism – capitalizing on collective efforts to foster strong communities.

In many ways, EVI resembled the short-lived transcendental intentional utopian farming communities established in the 1840s at Brook Farm and Fruitlands in Massachusetts. Transcendentalists were criticized for not having a practical agenda for executing the theoretical ideas and critiques of industry they wrote and lectured about. With the exception of their stand against slavery, they had a very limited social justice agenda also. In response to this, some transcendentalist began the aforementioned projects. Although Thoreau and Emerson were invited to join these collective efforts, they both declined. Hawthorne was a member of Brook Farm for a short time while Alcott was a co-founder of Fruitlands. These initiatives were characterized by communal housing, common buildings, sharing of resources, long hours farming, and crude living conditions overall. However, their goal was to create communities in which wealth was evenly distributed and in which workers had a decent quality of life (Taylor, 2009).

Conservation as articulated and practiced in the nineteenth century had limited social justice component – especially when it came to issues related to the urban poor. In addition to the transcendentalists, Muir was weak on social justice too, so was Olmsted and Grinnell, as well as Gifford Pinchot (first director of the U.S. Forest Service). Roosevelt is something of an anomaly – he lived in New York City and as someone who was quite involved in city and state politics – had to deal with urban poverty throughout his career (Taylor, 2009). The role issues related to the urban poor play on the agenda of EVI is reminiscent of role such issues played in nineteenth century conservation politics.

EVI's development evokes a feeling of the picturesque. Olmsted and Vaux designed picturesque landscapes that had broad stretches of gently rolling greensward (lawns), interrupted by a sparse arrangement of trees, and limpid reflecting ponds. This pastoral landscape was juxtaposed to a

more sublime one characterized by arrangement of trees and shrubs. P open fields, a calm pond, and trees 1958; Taylor, 2009). Although th elements of the picturesque are visi

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more sublime one characterized by rugged rock outcrops, ravines, and thick arrangement of trees and shrubs. Pictures of EVI show homes clustered in open fields, a calm pond, and trees framing the scenery (Olmsted & Vaux, 1958; Taylor, 2009). Although the manicured lawns are rejected, other elements of the picturesque are visible at EVI.

THE POTENTIAL TO INCORPORATE SOCIAL JUSTICE INTO EVI'S PRACTICES

Residents who move into ecovillages are not necessarily indifferent to environmental justice. In fact during field work at EVI residents revealed that they were concerned about that state of poor urban neighborhoods, the lack of viable economic opportunities for young adults, and the destruction of open space to make way for suburban sprawl. But these residents were also torn between working within already established neighborhoods to improve the living conditions of residents and leaving those spaces to create a new home outside the city. A resident of SoNG reconciled this dilemma by arguing that the community was at least a step in the right direction, and she was making significant changes in her life simply by living in the EVI community.

There are ways in which residents of EVI can broaden the scope of their activism to include more social justice work without detracting from their own mission. They have experience and expertise that is in demand. Many environmental justice organizations and low-income community institutions lack the expertise that many at EVI have; hence, there is ample room for collaboration on this front. For example, when the attempt to get a local agency to fund the building of affordable homes at EVI fell through, the partnership could have continued if EVI was able to shift focus. That is, EVI could have continued working with the agency or partnered with a low-income community to help get affordable green homes built elsewhere. Such a change in focus would have resulted in an overall increase in the number of affordable green homes constructed in the area – even if that increase did not occur at EVI.

On a broader scale, some environmental justice organizations such as We Stay Nos Quedamos in the Bronx have been retrofitting buildings in their community. Others such as Sustainable South Bronx have been working green buildings and community green space (Nos Quedamos, 2009; Sustainable South Bronx, 2009). There are ample opportunities for

ecovillages such as EVI to partner with groups such as these to further sustainability goals.

Another area of collaboration could come from the growing number of inner city neighborhoods that are developing community gardens. Food security has become a pressing concern for many inner city residents. Such residents see access to a secure food supply as a vital part of sustainability. The issue is urgent as some large cities such as Detroit have become virtual urban food deserts as supermarkets and other institutions have closed and moved to the suburbs. Residents of such areas have difficulty finding fresh food to purchase; hence, community gardens have become one way of responding to this problem (Zenk et al., 2005; Gottlieb & Fisher, 1996; Morland, Wing, Roux, & Poole, 2002; Smith & Hurst, 2007; Hargreaves, 2009). EVI's expertise in organic farming could be invaluable to urban communities facing such a crisis. EVI's West Haven Farm currently feeds about 1,000 people per week. Sixty percent of the produce from the 10-acre farm goes to EVI residents, 40 percent goes to the local farmers' market and a small amount goes to Greenstar – a local cooperative store (Walker, 2005). In the future, the farm could provide more of its produce to food banks and other institutions that serve the poor.

EVI faces a significant challenge in making housing in the subdivision affordable to a wider range of people. As mentioned earlier, the residents espouse a philosophy of developing a community based on homeownership. Although this creates a community with greater stability (and by extension residents with a long-term commitment to the goals and vision of the community), it also makes it difficult for those with limited income to participate. To lower the barriers to participation, EVI should examine other models of residency than are currently in place. For instance, could the number of rental units be increased without undermining the sense of community and the spirit of collaboration that is so vital to the functioning of the village?

EVI has been very strategic with its collaborations – EVI residents tend to benefit directly from them. Although this keeps the group focused on its core mission, residents should consider undertaking more activities where the direct benefits go to others and not necessarily to EVI residents.

CONCLUSION

There is little disputing that American lifestyles are consumer driven. We consume more than our share of the world's resources and show little

sign of slowing down (Schor, 1999). The United States is a country deeply entrenched in a consumer culture that is being bombarded with reasons to consume more. That being green has become a luxury is a sign of the times. But creating a sustainable lifestyle is not about not purchasing green commodities. Sustainable living is like Burt's Bees are owned by the same people who have contributed to environmental degradation. It is not more than celebrated uncritically as environmentally friendly or socially responsible (Athanasidou, 1999).

Mulder, Constanza, and Erickson (2000) argue that moving from a high consumer culture to a low one is a challenge that is compromising people's quality of life. The concept of sustainable living finds its niche in U.S. environmentalism. It offers a mechanism for negotiating the tension between the environment without needing to sacrifice the comfortable quality of life for well-being. The danger arises when green consumption is being paid to what makes the consumer feel good about consumption.

Ecovillages have demonstrated that a sense of community as a way to reduce consumption is possible. However, ecovillages do not have to be rural to achieve this end. Urban ecovillages are designed to be affordable. It is also possible. For example, the Los Angeles Eco-Village housing, diversity and sustainable living practice. Instead of occupying huge tracts of land, it is built around a two-block multi-ethnic neighborhood of 500 people – most of whom were already living there when it began in 1993. They plan to continue to grow housing (Arkin, 2005; Los Angeles Eco-Village, 2005). The Eco-Village also demonstrates that people can live and work cooperatively when different ideologies come together. While the Los Angeles Eco-Village uses diversity and inclusion to build community.

The ecovillage model is a good strategy for reducing consumption of empowering residents to make their own choices about reducing their consumption. But as the model has been operated, many ecovillages do little to address the needs of communities outside their borders.

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sign of slowing down (Schor, 1999; Guha, 2006; Erickson, 1987). As a country deeply entrenched in a capitalist mindset, we are accustomed to being bombarded with reasons to shop. Therefore, it is not surprising that being green has become a lucrative marketing niche (Smith, 1998). But creating a sustainable lifestyle is more complicated than simply purchasing green commodities. Some organic food or natural products like Burt's Bees are owned by the same large corporations that have contributed to environmental degradation; they should be scrutinized rather than celebrated uncritically as evidence that corporations are becoming socially responsible (Athanasidou, 1996; Pollan, 2004).

Mulder, Constanza, and Erickson (2005) argue that the transition from high consumer culture to a low one will be possible if it is achieved without compromising people's quality of life. It is here that green consumerism finds its niche in U.S. environmental struggles. Green consumerism offers a mechanism for negotiating environmental change and conserving the environment without needing to sacrifice "quality of life." Specifically, the danger arises when green consumerism focuses on maintaining a comfortable quality of life for wealthy households without any attention being paid to what makes the consumption possible and the effects of that consumption.

Ecovillages have demonstrated that there is interest in creating a sense of community as a way to reduce our negative environmental impact. However, ecovillages do not have to be tucked away in the woods to achieve this end. Urban ecovillages are demonstrating that sustainable urban living is also possible. For example, the Los Angeles Eco-Village makes affordable housing, diversity and sustainable urban living keep components of their practice. Instead of occupying hundreds of acres rural land, this ecovillage is built around a two-block multi-ethnic, working class neighborhood of about 500 people – most of whom were fearful of each other when the project began in 1993. They plan to convert 48 units to permanently affordable housing (Arkin, 2005; Los Angeles Eco-Village, 2009). The Los Angeles Eco-Village also demonstrates that it is possible to build community and work cooperatively when people of different backgrounds and ideologies come together. While EVI capitalizes on sameness, the Los Angeles Eco-Village uses diversity as strength.

The ecovillage model is a good starting point for demonstrating the value of empowering residents to make personal and communal commitments to reducing their consumption. But as they are currently conceptualized and operated, many ecovillages do little to address the pressing long term needs of communities outside their borders. The ecovillage effort must carefully

consider choices like where to locate to avoid some of the devastating problems created by sprawl. A more concerted effort should be made to broaden the scope of their ideological thinking and activism to include a wider array of concerns and people. Urban ecovillages are striving to do just this, by creating neighborhoods in existing communities, working with current homeowners and renters. As we consider the potential for environmental justice groups and ecovillagers to work together, the urban ecovillages have greater potential to develop that synergy.

Environmental activism in America should not be bifurcated along racial or class lines. In the future both the ecovillage and environmental justice movements should explore their commonalities and develop mutual partnerships. The challenge for environmental justice and ecovillage activists is to recognize their commonalities and harness the strengths of both perspectives to help address problems related to environmental and social sustainability. Together they can make greater progress than they do apart.

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