SELF IN PRACTICE IN AN ECOLOGICAL COMMUNITY: CONNECTING PERSONAL, SOCIAL, AND ECOLOGICAL WORLDS AT THE ECOVILLAGE AT ITHACA

by

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Abstract

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Adviser: Dr. Setha Low.

The purpose of this research was to investigate the manner in which living in an ecologically and socially oriented community provides opportunities for redefining the self-world relationship. It was proposed that residents' motivations for becoming involved in the project to construct the EcoVillage at Ithaca (EVI) were the desire to establish a sense of connectedness between personal, social, and ecological aspects of their experience. The goals identified were recognized as being in broad alignment with the tenets of a new environmental paradigm (NEP). This paradigm has arisen as a challenge to the dominant social paradigm (DSP) that is viewed as being responsible for increasing levels of social and ecological degradation.

The research set out to investigate how the practices that are developing at the EcoVillage offer the potential for developing a sense of self that is in alignment with the NEP. EVI is viewed as part of an emerging movement that is driven by the need to reduce the sense of dissonance that individuals experience when their sense of who they are is not represented by the behaviors that they are forced by the dominant culture to adopt. Self in this context is conceived as a process rather than as an entity. Fundamental

to this investigation is consideration of the nature of the self-world relationship as revealed from diverse literature sources. Social and cultural practices, beliefs, ideals and attitudes towards the individual and the environment are viewed as key in shaping the individual's understanding and experience of selfhood. The research explores the relevance of EVI as a space in which to manifest a more ecologically and socially oriented relationship with the world.

Analysis of the research data suggests that at the local level, members of EVI are developing relationships with the world that promotes the good of the community and the ecological environment over purely self-interested behavior. The EcoVillage represents a unique learning experience for its residents, and a location in which to continue to work on developing the kind of responsible and connected sense of self that residents believe offers the potential for a sustainable future.

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Table of contents

Section II: The findings: Balancing individual needs with the needs of the

community and the needs of the ecological environment

Appendices

List of Tables

CHAPTER 1.

1.0.   Introduction.

The purpose of the research undertaken for this dissertation was to explore how

membership in an ecological community provides new opportunities to experience self-

world relations. The research took place at the EcoVillage at Ithaca (EVI) during 2003,

and built upon three years of previous contact with this community. This chapter begins

by placing EVI in relation to contemporary and historical factors that bear upon its

origins and development. Following this, the previous research findings out of which the

present project developed are briefly outlined.

The EcoVillage movement is a worldwide phenomenon that has arisen in

response to the effects of the modern lifestyle on both the social and ecological

environments. This movement is of particular interest and potential relevance in the

United States, the country with by far the highest per capita consumption of resources.

Although the movement is little over twelve years old the Ecovillage Network of the

Americas website lists 67 ecovillages in America, with an additional 15 in Canada

(Ecovillage Network of the Americas, 2004). Planning for the EcoVillage at Ithaca began

in 1991 as a group of individuals and families began meeting to plan a demonstration

community that would challenge the existing social mode and offer a new model for

sustainable development.

In 1995 construction of the first of five planned ecovillages began on the 176-acre

site the group had purchased on the outskirts of Ithaca. This consists of 15 duplexes,

constructed on the cohousing model (McCamant & Durrett, 1988). The buildings are

clustered around a pedestrian area, with a recreational pond, office and workshop space,

and a commons house for get-togethers, celebrations, and optional communal meals that

are usually held two or three times a week. It is the marriage of environmental concern and community building that marks the uniqueness of the ecovillage movement and distinguishes it from other intentional communities, both historical and contemporary.

Intentional community building has a long tradition in America that stretches all the way back to the early days of the pioneer settlers. Over this period interest in forming intentional communities has risen and fallen, often in response to the major issues and challenges of the day. Whether on religious, political or social grounds, all community builders believed that social change could best be achieved through the construction and demonstration of a single ideal model that could be duplicated throughout the country. Observing that individual dissent, gradualist reform, and revolution had proven ineffectual in creating change, citizens and reformers were drawn to a mode of protest that was novel, non-violent and total in scope (Hayden, 1976).

While earlier community groups responded to many of the same issues that contemporary intentional communities attempt to overcome, other issues have only arisen within the past twenty or thirty years. Such factors as globalization of trade, accelerated environmental degradation, the explosive rise of information technology, and the changes that have resulted from these developments, have radically altered our perception of space and place. At the same time, some have pointed to an increasing breakdown of community principles, as the requirements of living in contemporary society discourage participation at the local level (Bellah et al, 1985; Yankelovich, 1981). This has resulted in feelings of isolation and disconnectedness, and further withdrawal from traditional forms of political and social participation (Putnam, 2000).

For some individuals, the answer to the current situation lies in the creation of a radical alternative that synthesizes social, environmental, personal and spiritual concerns

through the creation of intentional community. It is the fusion of these elements that forms the core of the ecovillage ideology, and provides a focus for those who see conventional social patterns as unacceptable. The social and physical arrangement of the EcoVillage at Ithaca forms a response to this perception of the current social mode and is intended to facilitate a sense of reconnection with various dimensions of the life experience.

The question of who joins intentional communities and why, leads us to a consideration of the prevailing political, religious, and social environment of the time period in which it is asked. The first American community builders began with religious ideals of a purified, spiritual society based on Biblical ideals in a new land that was seen as a gift from God. The second major critique of the established social order was political and economic, in the wake of the Industrial Revolution, and sought the creation of small socialist communities as a refuge from the factory system. A third wave of community building, in the 1960's and 1970's, was predominantly psychosocial in nature, a reaction against what was perceived as the alienation of the individual and the fragmentation of society (Kanter, 1972). Many or these communes also incorporated political and religious ideologies together with a newly emerging awareness of the destruction of the environment. The concern around which the contemporary ecovillage philosophy revolves builds upon the insights of the 1970s counterculture movement. Proponents of this viewpoint point to the destructiveness of the individualistic, capitalist, consumer lifestyle on both the social and ecological environments.

The culture of individualism that has come to dominate Western, and especially American life, is viewed by many as inherently threatening to both community and the environment. Putnam (2000) catalogs the decline in association that typifies American

social life in the late twentieth century. He points out that most individuals either belong to no groups or associations at all, or are merely nominal members at best. The real problem, according to Nisbet (1962), may not be the loss of the old associative patterns of community, as much as the failure of the present system to produce new contexts of association that can provide functional and psychological significance. The result has been an increasing sense of isolation and separation.

The contemporary lifestyle has become, for many, a struggle to maintain financial solvency that de-emphasizes other aspects of the life experience. Yankelovich (1981) has charted the rising number of individuals who have responded to this perception by seeking to elevate what he refers to as the "sacred/expressive" aspects of their lives over the purely "instrumental." This evolves into an ethic of commitment that shifts the focus away from self, in terms of self-denial or self-fulfillment, towards a connectedness and engagement with the world.

One of the two major forms of expression of this new ethic is a desire for deeper personal relationships that springs from the realization that the pursuit of purely individual goals leads to superficial and transitory relations. The second form of expression of the new ethic of commitment that Yankelovich identifies is the goal of striking a better balance between the instrumental, or means-to-an-end, aspects of life and the more sacred/expressive mode. Often this involves sacrificing career opportunity for a closer relationship with land, plants, and nature in general. The new social ethic that Yankelovich describes is a means of binding the community together rather than allowing it to continue disintegrating under the demands of competing interests. The search for self-fulfillment then becomes a journey outwards as well as inwards, and self-realization

takes place within the context of the co-created and shared meanings of a new psychoculture.

The move back to rural areas and small town living, in recent decades, by disenchanted urban professionals and their families has been noted (Coffin and Lipsey, 1981; Bellah et al, 1985). It is a movement that builds upon the kind of self-reliance that grew out of the Great Depression, finding renewed vigor through the counterculture years and up to the present as increasing numbers of people seek a satisfying lifestyle and a sustainable future (Jacob, 1997).

The ecovillage movement may thus be located as part of this emerging trend towards a re-prioritization of life's demands in ways that question the direction in which American culture is developing. This involves considering quality of life against pursuing financial gain as a primary goal. In addition to personal and social considerations, questions regarding quality of life also raise concerns for some individuals over the quality of the environment that forms the ground for their experience of life. The movement towards creating ecovillage communities is part of a much larger and more diverse intentional community movement that includes not only cohousing, but communities based upon alternative lifestyles, religious ideals, and isolationist motives. The Intentional Communities Directory (2000) lists over 650 intentional communities in the US, which represents only those that chose to be listed. These communities all came together to develop community living, and many of them also include varying degrees of ecological and social concern. The ecovillage movement is unique in making explicit the connection between the ways in which people live, relate, and affect the ecological environment.

In response to a growing awareness of the destructive effects of human activity on the environment a movement has grown up that call for a shift towards a more ecologically sustainable lifestyle. According to Ralph Metzner (1993) Western culture is currently in transition from a modern industrial worldview to an ecological worldview, a change that mirrors the postmodern transformation of the social and natural sciences, philosophy and religion. Recognition that industrial production is actually consumption of finite natural resources (Rees, 1997), and that this activity produces waste products that threaten the stability of the biosphere on which the human population depends, leads concerned individuals to the belief that moving towards a sustainable lifestyle is of paramount importance.

While some individuals have reacted from a personal sense of dissatisfaction with the status quo as represented by contemporary consumer society, others have been moved by the implications on social and environmental levels to seek change. In this way, the intersection of personal concerns for establishing viable community and living environmentally, and more global concerns for the future of our society and the global environment, find expression in the creation of an environmentally oriented community like the EcoVillage at Ithaca. In investigating the intersection of personal considerations and social and environmental concerns that result in involvement in contemporary community building projects such as EVI, both a critique of the existing social mode and a proposed solution to the problems as identified begins to emerge.

This research is premised on the understanding that through creating and inhabiting a physical form that is intended to give expression to the concept of sustainability residents of the EcoVillage at Ithaca and other ecologically and socially oriented communities are creating a practice that challenges the conventional

understanding of the relationship of the self to the social and ecological worlds. The research was designed to build upon earlier investigation conducted at EVI, which revealed that the primary motivation for residents' involvement in the EcoVillage project was a desire to connect or reconnect with various aspects of their personal, social and ecological worlds. Thus, it was hypothesized that residents' movement towards redefining the ways in which they experience connection to the multiple aspects of their environment would lead to an experience of selfhood that moves beyond conventional definitions.

The research aimed to explore the extent to which ecocommunitarian philosophy and practice promotes a sense of self that is significantly different from the self that has developed under the dominant social paradigm. Questions concerning the nature of the differences between these two paradigms, and the relationship of ecological communities to the dominant mode were important aspects of the theoretical background to the study. The EcoVillage at Ithaca, as a local venue, is investigated as a relatively radical expression of an emergent, widespread and more global philosophical challenge to the current social paradigm.

The research focused on the ways in which living in an eco-community offers an opportunity for a different experience of the world to emerge. In addition, the goal was to delineate the characteristics of this version of self-world relations, working from a perspective that views self more as a process rather than as an entity. Lastly, the goal of the dissertation was to construct a theoretical framework for a self that builds from an environmental psychology perspective, and to explore the ways in which it may be manifested through examination of the development of the EcoVillage at Ithaca.

1.1.   Previous research and findings: The Five Forms of Connectedness

Research conducted at EVI in 2000 revealed that residents were attracted to the

EcoVillage project by the need or desire to connect or reconnect with various aspects of

the life experience. Eighteen semi-structured interviews were conducted. Residents

created a narrative response to an initial prompt that was along the lines of "Tell me how

you got here. What factors and influences were important in making the decision to settle

at EVI?" Residents expressed different senses of what was lacking in their lives that they

were hopeful that the EVI would supply. From the data, five forms of connectedness

were identified as potentially significant aspects of living in an ecovillage community

(Kirby, 2003). These are listed in table 1.

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1. Connection with the wild landscape (spiritual/affective connection with the natural world)

2. Connection with community

3. Connection with a cultivated landscape of benign human activity (*use* of nature)

4. Sense of personal integration (reconnection of separated components of experience)

5. Connection through time/intergenerational sustainability

Table 1.

Brief examples that demonstrate each of the five forms of connectedness listed

above are given below in order to convey the kind of individual descriptions that

prompted this analysis.

> 1....as a young girl I just used to wander outside all the time, climb trees, pick berries, go down to the river, you know, just have all these wonderful places to go, and so I just wanted that kind of sense of connection with the land, for other people and particularly for my kids.

2. And I wanted, I wanted a community of friendship. And I wanted to know my people in the community. And, it just made the right sense.

3. I strongly believe that we're far too materialistic in this society. And that the lack of connection to the environment leads us to do things which destroy it, because we don't understand, the consequences of what we are doing.

4. We got active in a local organization there. It was never about our life, it was about this local organization. So I had work, a local organization, and still I had my life over here, which didn't work for me or my family.

5. So, I can look forward to a very vital loving accepted old age where I can do as much as I can do, so I'll be flexing my resources instead of letting them be dormant. The energy of children, of people of all ages is revitalizing.

Connectedness may be defined as resulting from a sense of meaningful association that may be expressed by any combination of physical, cognitive, affective, psychological, or spiritual bonds. It implies a two way relationship with some aspect of the lived world, a mutuality rather than a one way connection. Connectedness in this definition involves the act of communing with some aspect of the world, and as such it becomes a defining characteristic of community. According to Curtin (1999), sense of community for indigenous cultures can extend beyond the boundaries of the human community, shading into the natural world of flora and fauna, and the ancestral and spirit worlds. As the research findings will demonstrate, there is evidence that residents of the EcoVillage at Ithaca tend to conceive of the need to re-establish a sense of connection across social and ecological dimensions in a manner that echoes non-Western views.

Writing about sustainable community development Chris Maser (1997) identifies ten essential elements that comprise a "nonlinear process of systems thinking through which the social significance of nonmaterial wealth, qualitative values, and the heritage of both cultural diversity and identity can be accounted for in social decision making" (p.14). These are dependent upon four human relationships that are in broad alignment

with the 5 forms of connectedness that have been identified. Maser (1997) labels these as intrapersonal, interpersonal, between people and the environment, and between people of the present and the future. Maser's description is the closest formulation that a search of the literature has revealed to the currently proposed model.

The 5 forms of connectedness make explicit residents' search for consonance between their behaviors and their sense of self. They arise from residents' prior experience of the world and are developed through the process of living at the EcoVillage at Ithaca and striving to develop a sustainable lifestyle. The 5 forms of connectedness represent the aggregate of residents striving towards establishing connection, with individual residents focusing on establishing particular forms of connection that hold special significance for them.

Space inhibits a full account of the prior research methodology and analysis that led to the development of this model. What follows is a brief examination of each of the forms of connectedness that residents variously aspire to achieve. The aim of this section is to provide the socially and historically relevant background that made the lack of each of them a sufficient motivation, and the attainment of each a significant goal, for residents to aspire towards. The ecovillage movement, as part of an emergent environmental awareness, draws its impetus from a variety of historical, spiritual, social, cultural, and philosophical sources that are woven together to create a worldview that offers a significant challenge to the present industrial/consumer model. Taken together, the five ways in which residents seek to reconnect with their world answer the "why" of the ecovillage movement, and in so doing, provide a pointed critique of the current social mode.

1.2.   Connection to wild landscape

The first of the five forms of connectedness, a connection with the wild landscape was seen to underscore a sense of belonging and communion with all life, in its widest and most spiritual sense for residents of the EcoVillage at Ithaca. It is a connection that fosters an awareness of one's place in the chain of being, and may become a unifying factor on a spiritual level at the EcoVillage in the absence of a uniform religious creed. It is made explicit by the contrast between the physical compactness of the village and the expansiveness of the land on which EVI sits. There is a virtually unbroken line from the tree-clad horizon to resident's back doors, an effect that brings the natural world into more immediate experience on a daily basis. Research revealed that a sense of connection with the wild landscape provides an often commented upon source of inspiration and satisfaction for EcoVillage residents.

Support for the inspirational nature of this form of connectedness comes from many sources. With the rise of environmentalism from the 1960s onwards the notion developed that a fundamentally important sense of connection with the natural world had been lost through the development of industrial production. Anthropological studies of remaining indigenous peoples, historical accounts, and the philosophies of Eastern cultures, all provided evidence to support a revived view of nature as a source of religious inspiration and intrinsic value. These viewpoints have found their way into common understanding among the environmentally aware population and help to promote a reverential attitude towards the natural world.

The commune movement of the 1960's and 1970's was the precursor movement to the present ecovillage and cohousing movement. While there were many urban communes, the majority involved fleeing what was perceived as the decaying and

decadent life of the city for a rural retreat. While there was a great deal of variation in the way that communes were set up and operated, in general communards sought connection with nature, as both the source of sustenance through cultivation of the land, and as a source of inspiration (Kanter, 1972). Primary texts that stimulated an appreciation of the inspirational nature of the natural world were culled from Native American traditions, Taoism, and Transcendentalist's writings such as Thoreau's "Walden" (1986) first published in 1854. The Transcendentalists believed that God was to be located in one's self and in nature. Immersion in the wild and natural world was held to be key to experiencing union with the divine and was essential to the inspiration of these and other writers of their time (Ekirch, 1973). For indigenous peoples worldwide nature has formed a focus for religious expression. While Native American peoples displayed a wide diversity of cultural styles and adaptations to their environments, in general they espoused a very similar metaphysic of nature that displayed a reverence for the myriad forms of nature and the natural forces that they experienced (Callicott, 1989).

Concurrent with the rise of an appreciation of Native American metaphysical systems, interest in Eastern systems of thought such as Buddhism, Zen, and Taoism, gained popularity. All of these professed the value of immediate experience, especially with reference to the natural world. Taoism draws its inspiration from an appreciation of nature in its most raw and untransformed state (Callicott, 1989). Its adherents are enjoined to follow nature, and to appreciate nature's rhythms and cycles. In like manner to Native American traditions, Taoism encourages a redefinition of human's role with respect to nature, and points the way to a radically different relationship in which the boundaries between the human internal and the natural external world are more fluid and interpenetrating.

The development of the science of ecology has been another significant force in encouraging a sense of awe and respect for natural processes. The introduction of the Gaia concept in 1979 by James Lovelock, which proposed that the earth is one self-regulating super-organism, struck a chord with people around the world and led to its widespread acceptance, despite much debate in academic and scientific circles. The theory expressed an emergent sentiment and sensitivity towards the natural world and the place of humans within it. At the core of this phenomenon is a conceptualization of the power and the unity of nature as a sustaining force. The first pictures of the Earth taken from space in the late 1960s provided another defining moment in the changing perception of the planet.

As the effects of industrial production continue to be assessed more accurately, a counter movement has emerged, drawing its inspiration from the sources cited above. An affective sense of connection with the natural world as a source of spiritual guidance and inspiration has developed. Nature has come to be experienced as a spiritual force (Fredrickson and Anderson, 1999). For those seeking alternatives to the industrial/consumer paradigm, nature serves as revered teacher, repository of wisdom, spiritual home, and source of ethical inspiration. As an account of the dissertation research will demonstrate, residents of the EcoVillage at Ithaca recognize the intrinsic value of nature as an inspirational force in their lives. To varying degrees, their ideal is to seek the means of reinforcing their sense of connectedness through establishing a lifestyle that incorporates insights from natural processes, acknowledges nature's inspirational impact upon their lives, and seeks to protect the natural world from further degradation.

1.3.   Connection to Community

A second form of connectedness is a connection with the EcoVillage settlement that creates a sense of community and supportive association with fellow humans. This leads to a sense of belonging, and cooperative communion in realizing a common goal. This connection is further underscored at the EcoVillage at Ithaca by the contrast between the compact settlement and the expansiveness of the land on which the EcoVillage sits. The physical limit of the buildings forms a kind of psychic boundary for the community that defines the human world from the world of nature.

Humans receive their sense of identity and security through belonging to a community. Individuals in traditional and indigenous communities relied on each other for both physical and psychological support. Today however, in the context of the nation state whose population may number in the hundreds of millions, community primarily acts as a mediator between the individual and the wider economic and political world. Community fulfills the role of a functionally significant and psychologically meaningful group association, and is of prime importance for the individual's wellbeing (Nisbet, 1962).

The fate of community under industrial capitalism (Bellah, 1991; Bender, 1978; Nisbet, 1962; Warren, 1972) presents a clear parallel to the environmental degradation that has taken place over a similar time period. Critics argue that the advance of the industrial/capitalist system is represented by a movement from progressively more local venues to increasingly larger scales, globalization being its ultimate expression. Under this system both the natural environment, and the communities that form the venues for production, have been treated as externalities that do not enter the balance sheet. The

consequent loss of control at the local level has served to undermine both the health of the community and the health of the environment (Milbraith & Downes, 1994).

The rise of individualism can be tied to the exploitation of the country's resources (Bellah, 1991). The kind of agrarian vision favored by Thomas Jefferson and John Taylor, the transcendentalists Emerson, Thoreau and others, and the religious and secular communitarians like Owen, Fourier, and others, favored the creation of small rural communities in which individuals could create meaningful lives for themselves. Such visions endorsed an ethic of stewardship, and the cultivation of a relationship of the community to the place in which it flourished. These considerations were largely sidelined as the population, not content with subsistence agriculture nor gradual development, set about a rapid conquest of the vast resources that the continent contained (Ekirch, 1973). This expansion was largely driven by the dynamic pressure of industrialism that found ready use for timber, coal, and minerals. Under these conditions individualism was privileged over commitment to community and place.

Today, the economic model that is based upon the notion of unending growth is beginning to be challenged. It is part of the hypothesis of this research that new communities, such as the EcoVillage at Ithaca, are being formed in response to the idea that economic and industrial growth cannot be sustained indefinitely, and that the social patterns that arise from pursuing continued growth are inimical to a meaningful and sustainable lifestyle. Accordingly, association through living in a close community is being promoted as a necessary condition for a fulfilling life.

For many Americans, small town values have become more appealing in the face of the relentless commodification of their lives that continues to undermine their ability to relate to each other (Freie, 1998; Yankelovich, 1981). The dynamic of balancing

individualism with concern for community, and developing a suitable guiding ethic is a

central task for residents at the EcoVillage at Ithaca. Research revealed that the

motivation among EVI residents for this endeavor was largely the perceived lack of a

sense of connection to the communities that comprised their previous living situations.

1.4.   Connection to a landscape of benign human activity

A third form of connectedness for EcoVillage residents arises through the organic

farm and associated environmentally-oriented activities. This creates a sense of

partnership with the living landscape through the promotion of benign human activity,

and brings the landscape and the community together. The potential for dynamic

interaction with the land as the source of physical sustenance and the community as the

source of emotional sustenance emerges. Residents have the opportunity to ensure both

through cooperation. This connection has the potential to unite the human world and the

world of nature through the shared activity of respectful stewardship and cultivation of

the land. Such activities include organic farming, recycling, composting, voluntary

simplicity, and other modes of working towards reducing human impact on the

environment.

According to many in the environmental movement, the results of the revolution

in agriculture in America, socially, economically, and environmentally, as in many parts

of the world, have been, at best, mixed, and at worst, disastrous. The touted successes of

the "green revolution" have, according to authors such as Curtin (1999), Dove and

Kammen (1997), Redclift (1987), and others, relied upon selective accounting, and a

substitution of human and animal labor input by concentrated petroleum based energy

inputs. Critics point out that there has been a wholesale failure to problematize the long

term sustainability of this form of agricultural production by its proponents. Consequently, there has been a lack of follow-up studies to determine the overall effect of "green revolution" techniques on social, ecological, and human physiological systems.

It is in response to this situation that organic farming and horticulture has emerged to offer a sustainable alternative. Organic food production is one method of promoting benign human activity that reflects an attitude of stewardship and concern for sustainability. Another way is to adopt a lifestyle that follows the principles of voluntary simplicity (Elgin, 1981). According to Elgin, voluntary simplicity involves living in a manner that is more authentic and alive, balancing the satisfaction of our physical needs with a deepening of our understanding and appreciation of what it means to be alive. Voluntary simplicity represents another facet of a counter-movement that identifies itself in opposition to the industrial/consumer paradigm.

Further impetus towards adopting environmentally benign practices emerges from a mounting body of evidence on the detrimental effects of chemicals that are released into the environment on both the environment and the human body (De Graaf, Wann, & Naylor, 2001). Whatever is put into the body tends to end up in the environment, and whatever is put into the environment tends to end up in the body. Thus, harm to the environment is harm to the body, and vice versa. Insights such as this call for a holistic approach towards human interaction with the ecological environment.

The two forms of connectedness, connection to the wild landscape and connection to a landscape of benign human activity, form a complementary whole that establishes an approach to the natural world as both a source of spiritual inspiration and a source of physical sustenance. The former represents an intrinsic value for nature, while the latter demonstrates a utilitarian relationship. From observations made at the EcoVillage at

Ithaca, these two forms of connectedness, taken together, work to promote an attitude of reverence and respect for the natural world that evolves into a concern for conservation of wild and natural spaces and the promotion of benign human productive activities. In this respect the EcoVillage movement represents a radical and practical expression of values that are also finding acceptance within the wider culture.

1.5. Personal integration

A fourth form of connectedness that was expressed by some residents of the EcoVillage is intrapersonal in nature. The recognition that modern life fragments and compartmentalizes the various components of the lived experience; work, socializing, family, organizational activity, hobbies, et cetera, leads to a desire to reconnect at least some of these in meaningful ways. Involvement in EcoVillage life tends to bring together family, social ties, interests and activities, and in some cases work, in a way that brings a sense of personal psychic satisfaction to residents that is often lacking under the dominant social paradigm.

Those who seek an alternative to the conventional industrial/consumer paradigm point out that work has become the principal focus of most people's lives (Burch, 2000). This is especially true in America, with Americans now leading the world in number of hours worked. While most Europeans enjoy between 20 - 25 days a year holiday, Americans make do with around 10 days of leave, often not even taking all of these (De Graaf, Wann, & Naylor, 2001). Add to this the fact that in most families both parents work full time, and work becomes the dominant feature of most Americans' lives. For many individuals the pressures of managing the rest of their lives around work proves too much. Rates of depression in the U.S. have steadily risen, now standing at ten times the

rate in 1945. It may be worth noting, in the same context, that 1957 was the year that Americans declared themselves to be happiest, a peak that was not exceeded for the remainder of the 20th Century (De Graaf, Wann, & Naylor, 2001).

It is against this social backdrop that many Americans have opted for simpler and less stressful lives, leaving their high paying city jobs to pursue more vocational and expressive options in rural and small town environments (Bellah 1985, Yankelovich, 1981). Evidence from a poll conducted in 1995 reveals that 86% of those who had made such a change were more content with their lives, despite earning less (De Graaf, Wann, & Naylor, 2001).

Adopting the practice of voluntary simplicity, according to Elgin (1981) can lead to freeing up of time that would otherwise be spent earning money to pay for things that may turn out not to be necessities after all. Satisfying some of these needs becomes a family or socially oriented undertaking, as individual learn to fix things or make things, and network with others pursuing a similar path. At the same time, individuals aim to act in ways that express the kind of values that they hold in relation to their personal, social, and ecological worlds. The result may then be a sense of integration, as the various aspects of their personal experience are brought closer together. Followers of this path aim to discover the means to express their spiritual and affective values through the work that they do and the attitude that they take towards their material and interpersonal worlds.

The values expressed above are consonant with the goals expressed by residents of the EcoVillage at Ithaca. This is one more aspect of ecovillage development that is broadly in line with social changes that have emerged from the counterculture movement of the 1960s and 70s. The experience of intrapersonal connectedness for members of EVI

is thus seen by residents as fundamental to their holistic approach to realizing the

EcoVillage's overall mission.

1.6.   Intergenerational connection.

At the EcoVillage at Ithaca, connectedness through the generations, from children

to old people, is an important factor in establishing a temporal connection that implies a

commitment to sustainability and dedication to continuity through time. The value of all

age groups is acknowledged and their unique contributions to the common welfare of the

community are asserted. Research revealed opportunities for aging residents to find

outlets for their accumulated skills and abilities, while children are able to profit from

their wisdom, patience and attention.

Continuation through time defines the essential characteristic of the sustainability

movement. It applies to both the health of the human population, and the health of the

biosphere. Anthropological accounts have revealed that in many indigenous communities

there is an intimate connection between humans and the natural world that is expressed

through an understanding of the link between themselves, their elders, their immediate

ancestors, and a line that stretches back to mythical characters and deeds that tie them to

the places that they inhabit. All remain in some way present, creating a living bond

between humans and the natural world that invokes responsibilities and obligations from

the living towards the maintenance of the web of life that they experience. Dramatic

events such as droughts and famines are often ascribed to failure to attend to the delicate

balance that maintains their existence, and inattention to the reciprocity that honors the

flow of resources through the system (Curtin, 1999).

Modern attitudes towards the aged differ markedly from those of traditional and indigenous cultures, where the elders are revered and valued for their contributions. In America, the old, three-generation bourgeois home that characterized the Victorian era, and provided compassionate care for the elderly, has given way to retirement communities and homes for the aged (Hayden, 1986). It is against this backdrop that residents of the EcoVillage at Ithaca were moved to establish a sense of connection through the generations as part of an overall strategy for a sustainable lifestyle. Factors of ecological and social sustainability that reflect on intergenerational sustainability and the future have been explored in previous sections dealing with the five forms of connectedness, and will not be repeated here. The essential element for this form of connectedness is the movement towards integrating the lives of young and old alike in the creation of a social form that promotes sustainability along a temporal axis.

1.7. Conclusion.

The EcoVillage movement has drawn on the ideas cited above that have been emerging over the last forty to fifty years in order to develop its social and environmental critique of the industrial/consumer paradigm. Residents of EVI made frequent reference to these ideas as being important in their decisions to become involved in the EcoVillage project. The five forms of connectedness that were described constitute an aggregate of residents' search for the means to make connection with aspects of the world that they felt separated from by their previous lives.

The five forms of connectedness suggest what is required to create the kind of social system that is supportive of healthy human growth, while simultaneously acknowledging the natural environment as the ultimate source of existence. Thus, these

five forms of connectedness may identify the essential dimensions of a life lived

according to the principles of sustainability. Following from the five ways in which

research revealed that residents were seeking connection, it may be proposed that the

measure of a sustainable lifestyle is the degree to which individuals in an ecological

community:

- ☐ Experience and acknowledge a sense of awe and deep respect for the creative power of nature.
- ☐ Experience a sense of belonging to a close and supportive community.
- ☐ Support only benign human activity.
- ☐ Experience a sense of personal integration of goals and various components of life.
- ☐ Support and participate in intergenerational association and consider the long-term implications of all decisions and activities.

Experiencing a sense of connectedness across the five dimensions outlined above

implies an identity that is based upon a set of mediating relationships within a world of

purposeful living. It suggests that, through living in an ecologically oriented community

such as the EcoVillage at Ithaca, residents will experience a sense of self that is

qualitatively different from that of a more conventional lifestyle. It may be proposed that

through the experience of connectedness residents undergo an extension of the self into

the surrounding social and ecological environments. It is from this starting point that

research was conducted in 2003 that sought to delineate the processes by which residents

were engaged in the process of formulating a reconstituted sense of self.

Chapter 2 provides a theoretical background to the study. The concept of the self is

examined from several theoretical perspectives and disciplines, such as anthropology,

cultural, social, and ecological psychology, cultural geography, ecofeminism, and deep

ecology. These perspectives are utilized to propose a process model of selfhood as an

emergent property of the interaction between the individual and the environment.

Chapter 3 lays out the methodology for the research and describes the research design and methods that were used to gather the data. Following this, in Chapter 4 the site of the research is described in detail. An account of the organizational structures that comprise the EcoVillage at Ithaca is also provided, to aid in understanding the material that follows.

Chapters 5, 6, and 7 describe the principal findings, providing examples from the research data to ground the claims that are made. The findings were conceived in terms of groups of processes that together constitute the principal development of the EcoVillage. The first examines residents' movement along the public/private continuum. As individuals and families, residents strive to position themselves in relation to the community, adjusting to new demands and possibilities. Chapter 6 explores three interrelated concepts; communion, consensus, and legislation. Communion refers to residents' movement towards establishing affective connections that permit them to engage in the consensus process successfully. The consensus process provides a bridge to legislation, by which residents establish a body of decisions that reinforce newly emerging norms. Chapter 7 explores the three visions or ideals that motivate residents' involvement at the EcoVillage. These are personal growth, community involvement, and ecological sustainability. While the latter two were explicit goals in the formation of the EcoVillage, personal growth emerged for some as an unexpected factor in the realization of the EcoVillage vision.

These chapters are followed by Chapters 8 and 9, which provide in-depth case-studies of specific topics that were current during research. These demonstrate the processes that were described in the preceding chapters. The first topic is the proposed sale of a one acre lot in order to be able to repay the existing loans for the initial purchase

of the land. The second is the topic of nude bathing at the EcoVillage pond. This topic explored how to balance the desire of some residents to swim naked with the mission of the EcoVillage that other residents feel will be compromised by a reputation for nudity. The final chapter, Chapter 10, summarizes the findings, paying specific attention to the concept of selfhood as this has been revealed in the preceding chapters. Insight from the literature is combined with the findings to develop the theory of self outlined in Chapter 2, and propose the emergence of an ecological self in response to the perceived unsustainability of the present industrial/consumer paradigm.

CHAPTER 2.

2.0   Literature and theory: Introduction

The first task to accomplish in this chapter is to establish a core definition for self

that will provide a framework around which a more succinct definition may emerge

through examination of relevant literature. The principal stumbling block is that social

science theory is filled with conflated definitions of the terms self, identity, person, and

individual. These terms are sometimes used interchangeably, or have alternative

meanings in different branches or sub-fields of particular disciplines. Social science

dictionaries and glossaries are of little comfort in arriving at concrete definitions, often

defining one in terms of another. Thus, "self may be defined in terms of "personal

identity," and "identity" in terms of "sense of self." Similar confusion exists with regard

to accompanying terms such as experience, awareness, and consciousness.

Foregoing a detailed account of the complexities that surround the definitions of

words that describe the human self-reflective capacity and exploration of the

constructionist perspective that interrogates the relationship between signifier and

signified, the decision to use the terms "sense of self" and "selfhood" in this dissertation

rests on a traditional philosophical definition. According to the dominant theory of self in

the Western tradition, "each of us is an incorporeal self or mind; all of our psychological

states are states of this self; and each of us has absolutely certain, though private,

knowledge of it" (Thalberg, 1984, p532).

Harré (1983) follows this definition in distinguishing two aspects of identity. The

"person" emerges as a social definition, a public being with the potential for meaningful

action, while the "self" is conceived as a private, phenomenological experience, the

center of one's own existence. Person and self are construed as analytic distinctions, with

neither capable of existing in isolation from the other. From this perspective, identity requires both social and phenomenological components and emerges from the process in which experience of the self and the expression of one's social being come together. However, models other than Harré's, which conceives of identity as comprised of self and person, point towards defining self and identity as the twin aspects of the person instead. Still others, such as William James, tend to subsume the individual's social identity under the term self, through invocation of the terms "social selves."

Use of the term "sense of self" in this research is intended to indicate a person's experience of being in the world and possessing a unique mind. In line with an ecological approach this research strives to avoid the kind of reductionism that seeks to isolate and reify aspects of a unified experience, in favor of a holistic or systems-based approach to apprehending the experience of "selfhood." Selfhood is understood as the awareness of being an active and reflective agent in the world.

As previously noted, the terms self, identity, person, and individual tend to lack specific and exclusive definitions within the social sciences. Thus, while the preferred terms will be "sense of self" and "selfhood," references to closely related terms such as personhood and identity, as these are used within the literature reviewed will be taken to be coterminous with sense of self and selfhood unless otherwise specified.

The aim of this literature review is to explore the situational variables that offer different opportunities for experiencing self. Cultural, social, cognitive, and linguistic influences contribute to determining how sense of self develops and finds expression. The research proposes to develop the notion that is receiving increasing attention in contemporary self theorizing, that self may best be conceptualized as a process rather

than as a relatively stable entity. This shift from thinking of self as a "thing" to viewing it as a process is hindered by linguistic habits that encourage objectification of the self.

The research for this dissertation, in accord with an ecological and systems-based approach, is premised upon comprehending self and world as two facets of the same phenomenon. While this view emerges from a predominantly psychological approach to considering self-world relations, it is recognized that culture plays a fundamental role in mediating the relationship between self and world. Being brought up in a particular culture leads its members to adopt the broad definition of selfhood that is presented from birth. From this cultural perspective, understanding selfhood becomes an integral part of understanding the surrounding world. An individual's self is a representation of the culturally mediated relationships that have been created with the surrounding world. In this sense, self is an emergent property of the practices that express the individual's ideals, values, attitudes, beliefs, et cetera. Thus, self is an expression of a relationship, not only with the social world as social psychologists have observed, but with the full range of experience of the world; physically, psychosocially, ecologically, and imaginatively.

According to this view, the ability to conceive of any other configuration for selfhood becomes severely limited by the definition of selfhood through which an individual comes to experience the world. One cannot jump from one experiential understanding of the world to another in order to perceive the world from a different cultural perspective. Our best efforts remain imaginative leaps rather than actual experiences of alternative self-world relations (Laing, 1967). As this literature review will demonstrate, research and other accounts reveal that differently configured self-world relationships exist, and can even be measured to a certain extent. However, the

fundamental ontological burden of a situated sense of self remains an insuperable obstacle to experiencing another's experience of the world.

Crucially though, our perceptions of our relationship with the world can, and do, change over time. This chapter is concerned with exploring the nature of selfhood as a process rather than conceiving of it as an enduring entity. Self is conceived as being fixed only to the extent to which its relationship with its environment is fixed. The experience of self as either consonant or dissonant with its surroundings motivates movement towards change of either or both as the individual searches for ways to establish accord between sense of self and the behaviors that environmental circumstances demand.

The concept of dissonance that is being used here develops from Aronson's development of Festinger's original conception in 1957 of cognitive dissonance (Aronson, 1997). Festinger demonstrated that an individual, presented with cognitions that are psychologically inconsistent, experiences dissonance, which they strive to reduce. Aronson modified this idea by suggesting that dissonance occurs when an individual performs a behavior that is inconsistent with his or her sense of self. Most people strive to maintain a sense of self that is consistent and positive. Dissonance theory has developed to become centrally concerned with how individuals deal with threats to their self-concept. From a phenomenological perspective the need to be able to 'look oneself in the mirror' and be comfortable with the reflection that one sees is the key element that aligns the sense of self with the actions that give the self expression. This is true whether the actions taken are pro-environmental or not, but becomes especially relevant in this area as individuals resolve to change their behavior rather than accepting the status quo.

The following sections elaborate upon and develop the ideas sketched above. In investigating the psychological and cultural factors that affect the nature of the self-world relationship the literature review will prepare the ground for examining the manner in which the EcoVillage at Ithaca provides a location for the emergence of a different configuration of the relationship between self and world.

The chapter is divided into six sections, followed by a summary conclusion. The first section introduces the concept of the "consumer landscape," a conceptualization of our daily experience that highlights the extent to which modern life has shaped Western notions of selfhood to accord with the principles of consumerism. Following this, sections explore conventional views of selfhood in Western thought and understanding, self in ecological psychology, environmental psychology, and cultural geography. The following sections look at social and cultural constructions of self, as well as examining modern conceptualizations of self that emerge from ecofeminism and deep ecology. The final section provides a synthesis of this material, and suggests a conceptualization of self that is in accord with the principles of ecological psychology. Analysis of the data gathered at EVI will then be oriented towards examining how the EcoVillage presents opportunities for developing and reconfiguring relationships with the social and ecological worlds that its residents inhabit.

2.1. The Consumer Landscape

In order to fully identify the kind of space that the EcoVillage at Ithaca is creating it is necessary to differentiate this from the status quo that is represented by the social order that surrounds it. The industrial/consumer system that forms the basis of American society has, through three hundred years of linear progress, transformed the country from

that maintained by its original inhabitants into what can be described as a *consumer landscape*. The vast continent of America, as an "empty space," upon which to inscribe a new set of cultural practices provided a perfect setting in which to realize the full implications of the individualist philosophy that was implied by the industrial/capitalist revolution that developed in Europe from the 1700's onwards. The consumer landscape is a concept that is both cultural in the manner in which a specific set of values are ascribed to the physical world, and physical in that these values have been given concrete form in the division and construction of the landscape that we inhabit.

The phrase *consumer landscape* is composed of two terms that together are intended to describe a specific perception of our physical environment. Taking the second term first, the word *landscape*, arose in 17th century Dutch and English art, as a term to describe a vista over an expanse of countryside. Landscape art brought about an aesthetic appreciation of the natural world that had previously formed the "ground' against which the human "figure" stood in relief (Encarta, 1999). The definition of the term landscape has widened since then, to become associated with any kind of encompassing vista, whether actual or psychological, in such phrases as, *urban landscape, political landscape* or *landscape of fear.*

The term *consumer* defines an identity for the individual that is based upon the notion of acquisition. It refers to individuals who seek to obtain commodities or services, and ascribes a relative social identity to the individual based upon their ability to amass goods and utilize services. Consumerism tends towards identifying everything as a potential commodity, including the natural world. It is a worldview that implies an inherent separation between self and the material of the world. For members of consumer cultures, the landscape that they inhabit is a direct result of the working out of the

consumer philosophy on the material of their daily lives. Everything that is perceived is so thoroughly influenced and formed by the principle of consumerism as to render "natural" much that is taken for granted about the way the world appears.

The position adopted in this research asserts that immersion in the consumer landscape shapes everyday life in subtle yet powerful ways. As consumers' psychic energy is bound up, and attention focused on consumer objects, ability to experience the world, process information, and pursue goals is channeled in ways that exclude other possibilities. According to Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton (1981), focusing attention primarily upon the activity of physical consumption has definable consequences. It tends to lead to less attention being paid to the cultivation of the self, less emphasis on relationships with others, and less concern with the broader issues that govern our lives. Their analysis of the role of objects in everyday life reveals that having one's attention overly-focused on material possessions affects what an individual can do. It is in this manner that objects have a determining effect on the development of the self. Absorption in the consumer landscape occupies attention and causes investment of physical and psychic energies in objects.

For members of consumer-oriented cultures consumerism stands as a powerful metaphor for a mode of inhabiting the world. It identifies a world-premise by which attentions and desires are directed towards a particular system of thought and behavior. According to Schweder and Bourne (1986), "*the metaphors by which people live and the world views to which they subscribe mediate the relationship between what one thinks about and how one thinks*" (p. 189, their italics). Consumerism thus becomes a powerful force for alienating individuals from the holistic and ecological grounds of their lives, and promoting a sense of self that is dependent upon particular patterns of consumption.

According to Smith (1952, in Schweder and Bourne, 1986), "The tangible evidences of financial success have come to symbolize … the whole expectancy of ego satisfaction" (pp. 398). The present social mode robs individuals of the power to provide anything for themselves except money, and denies them the pleasure of handling anything that they have produced themselves and in which they may take pride (Berry, 1986). Instead, the expectation is that needs and wants will be satisfied through purchase.

According to Wapner, Kaplan, and Cohen (1973), "The social normative character of the environment … tends to set limits to the malleability of that environment for any individual engaged in action" (273). Thus, it becomes difficult to explore the environment for new possibilities or solutions, even though the environment contains such potential. For socially and historically situated individuals transactions with the environment are to a large extent shaped by participation in a particular social and cultural milieu. The culturally constructed self that is responsible for the co-construction of the consumer landscape thus comes to assume an identity that accords with the structure of the world as posited (Wapner, Kaplan, & Cohen, 1973). In ongoing feedback between the structure of the environment and the construal of selfhood within that environment, both the physical world and sense of self are successively and reciprocally transformed. It is this process that has resulted in a self that is narrowly construed as a consumer within a consumer landscape that is constructed to fulfill our consumption needs.

Throughout the history of the development of the consumer landscape islands of difference have surfaced to proclaim an alternate reality. Visionary communities based upon an ethic of sharing and mutual benefit have arisen in defiance of individualism, exploitation, and consumerism. Most of these utopian communities have enjoyed

relatively brief success and notoriety, before inundation by the tidal wave of consumerism (Hayden, 1976). Another example of the rejection of dominant values of materialism is the counterculture movement that briefly flourished in the 60s and 70s. During this time thousands of communes sprang up proclaiming an alternative set of values (Kanter, 1972). Today, the ecovillage movement is the latest manifestation of the alternative ethic of voluntary simplicity, supportive community, and attention to the impact of human activity upon the supporting environment. Viewed in this way the EcoVillage at Ithaca represents an effort, on its 176-acres, to develop an alternative to the consumer landscape. Through the spatial arrangement of its built form, and the daily practices of its residents, an attempt is being made to create an alternative reality that privileges a sense of connectedness to core elements of human experience over consumer-based modes of being.

To describe this phenomenon in the terms of ecological psychology, *consumer landscape* expresses the manner in which the environment constructed by the dominant social paradigm provides a limited opportunity structure that is based upon economic rather than ecological criteria. As adults, sense of self in American culture tends to be defined by the individual's ability to penetrate and negotiate the consumer landscape that she or he inhabits. To use Gibson's (1977) term, the consumer landscape offers a specific set of *affordances*, such that ecological concern is diminished through a flood of messages that encourage the individual to identify themselves as a consumer. Economic transactions are promoted as the principal means of interacting with the environment. In this way, the consumer landscape, as an opportunity structure and an extended behavior setting (Barker & Associates, 1978), is limited for each individual by the amount of money that can be spent and the amount and type of goods that can be acquired. More

importantly, sense of self is profoundly influenced through immersion in the consumer landscape. Self may come to be defined predominantly through 'financial status,' and relative success in acquiring goods that represent the 'fruits' of ones' efforts.

Marx identified the alienation of the individual from the product of his or her own labor as constituting a defining reality of life in a capitalist economy. The consumer landscape, through its physical manifestation, promotes the alienation of the individual from the natural world through privileging consumerism as the principal means of self-identification. The processes of industrial capitalism in America may be characterized as having resulted in the imposition of a consumer landscape over the original landscape. The result is that, for rich and poor alike, self has tended to become abstracted from the natural world that ultimately provides the ground for existence.

The consumer landscape is a concept that is both cultural in the manner in which a specific set of values are ascribed to the physical world, and material in that these values have been given concrete form in the division and construction of the landscape that people inhabit. The cultural and the physical aspects of the consumer landscape together reinforce a specific relationship with the world. The cultural consumer landscape relies upon a set of practices and routines that reinforce the goals of a materialist culture. Physically, the consumer landscape is constructed over the natural world, erasing its features, and distracting attention from nature to consumer-oriented pursuits. Nature may even be redefined, reconstructed as an object of consumer attention, and experienced through consumer-culture moderated patterns of activity. Thus, the consumer landscape directs attention to specific ways of knowing and experiencing the world and comprehending selfhood. According to this view, individuals' conceptions of selfhood

are both culturally created, and grounded in an experience of a world that has been structured in a manner that validates a restricted sensitivity to a wider ecological reality.

While this section has focused upon the manner in which the physical environment reflects specific values with relation to self, the following section examines the ways in which Western social institutions have contributed to shaping selfhood.

2.2. Conventional Views of the Individualized Self

The individual's self-concept continues to evolve across the lifespan, and is developed in a cultural context that co-defines the role, duties, moral obligations, and boundaries of self in relation to other individuals and the environment in which the individual develops. The child is committed to a world that is socially interpreted and evaluated from birth. Development proceeds from the biological to the social and symbolic. A social imperative to engage through initiating and responding to dialogue leads to an implicit 'I,' a self-consciousness that leads to self-awareness and an identity based upon differentiation and physical separation. Through childhood play and the process of symbolization a concept of self arises that is culturally proscribed through social interaction (Harre & Lamb, 1984).

Outside of the immediate caregiver and family contexts, the three principal public arenas through which the Western sense of self is defined are the legal, capitalist and educational systems. Religious traditions form an additional means of self-perception that is also of significance to the degree that the individual is exposed to, and chooses to invest in religious beliefs and experience. Foregoing a historical analysis of the rise of the individualist mode in these systems, the manner in which each privileges the rights, values, and priorities of the individual can be briefly identified.

John Meyer (1986) identifies the effects of the institutions that govern and regulate individuals' lives, concluding that the self is, in fact, a highly institutionally constructed entity. This self has two aspects. Firstly, it is the locus of "sovereign and responsible motives and perceptions, the ultimate subject and object of rationalized society" (p. 199). Secondly, the individual self carries the legitimized resume of the institutionalized life course through time as a mediator of identity. This consists of a carefully sequenced age-grading system that proceeds from birth and child-rearing to retirement and death. According to Meyer (1986) this sequence is formulated both in terms of the collective good of society, and in such a manner as to make sense of the individual life as an orderly and organized project. Notions of social equality, rights, justice and individual welfare are upheld, while the private or subjective aspects of individuals with personal motivations and aspirations are also advanced. These two aspects of individualism comprise the central dialectic of Western attitudes towards self and society.

In the West in general, and in America in particular, the self, from a legal standpoint, is envisioned as a free agent, autonomous and self-directing, and the subject of inalienable rights and privileges. A moral and ethical code, institutionally maintained, and predicated on the rights of the individual, serves as a powerful determinant of the individual and unencumbered self. The promotion of individual rights serves to deny the public good, conceiving of the individual as prior to society or community, in a Lockean sense, and casting society as merely a collection of self-interested, atomistic individuals (Bellah, 1985). From an individualistic standpoint every person is conceived as a particular incarnation of the abstract category of 'humanity,' with an inherent and inviolate value (Schweder and Bourne, 1986). The 'self' becomes an object of concern,

free to undertake projects of personal expression and believing that he or she lives within a special and protected region. Following from this, society comes to be viewed as mere consensual association.

> It, thus, seems hardly surprising that despite much evidence to the contrary, our culture continues to promote the fiction that within the person one can find a stable core of "character." Nor is it surprising that this abstract individual "man-as-voluntary-agent" is protected by deeply enshrined moral and legal principles prescribing privacy and proscribing unwanted invasions of person, property, and other extensions of the self (p. 192).

The educational system further compounds the legal and capitalist conceptualization of the self. It can be characterized as a system that encourages individual effort through an age-graded structure of comparative evaluations that sorts its subjects in preparation for a working life (Meyer, 1986). Success or failure in this system is judged on an individual basis, and plays a part in defining the sense of self that emerges in adulthood. This conception of the educational system is consonant with the ideas of Bourdieu (1986), who sees it as responsible for reproducing the social structure. It provides academic credentials that create a "certificate of cultural competence which confers on its holder a conventional, constant, legally guaranteed value with respect to power" (248). Thus, for Bourdieu, schools are sites of valorization and legitimization of the cultural capital of the middle and upper classes, which is rewarded and reified. The sense of self that emerges from such a process of enculturation embodies a habitus that accepts individualism and self-interest as core values.

The emphasis on the individual appears to have come at the expense of the community that once acted as a mediating structure, helping to make sense of life, and informing actions in the face of a wider and impersonal social context. Without a sense of community the bonds between the individual and society are broken, and the restraining influence of local affiliations and mores is missing (Bellah, 1985). Coupled with an

educational system that rewards individual effort, and a capitalist system that does likewise, individuals and corporations have largely been freed from responsibility and moral culpability with regard to the communities in which their activities take place. In Western society individual freedom and rights are enshrined as universal values that have tended to result in a sense of self that is divorced from the grounding context of community and the implied responsibilities to people and place. Thus, the sense of self that is constructed under the dominant social paradigm has largely become disconnected from the larger social and environmental contexts in which we live. A progressive narrowing of the conception and outlook of selfhood is implied.

The recognition that as a culture we are becoming progressively more divorced from both the natural world and each other has roots that spread back over 150 years. De Tocqueville feared for the future of our sense of community. This theme has been echoed many times since then, with increasing vigor as the last century came to a close (Sampson, 1999). In a parallel development, early observations of the disastrous environmental consequences of clear-felling of forests, agricultural expansion, and human productive activities, were made by George Perkins Marsh (1965) in 1864 and later by John Muir (Fox, 1981), and Aldo Leopold (1949). Beginning in the 1960's, and sparked by the publication of "Silent Spring" by Rachel Carson (1962), an ever-growing wave of concern over the implications of human productive activities on the natural world has led to the environment becoming an important topic on the political agenda, nationally and internationally.

From the brief observations presented in this section, a paradox begins to emerge. On the one hand American society privileges the values of individualism and consumption over more public, social, or community oriented values. These values have

been shown to be enshrined in the legal, capitalist, and educational systems. At the same time, there is a groundswell of concern for an alternative set of values that privilege communal and ecological protection in the face of the sweep of commerce and industry. While some are content to allow market forces and rational choice to determine the fate of communities and the environment, others experience a sense of responsibility and obligation to protecting their social and ecological communities.

. . As previously revealed, disavowing the ideals of the industrial/consumer system, many individuals have turned their backs on traditional careers to pursue more vocational and expressive lives (Bellah, 1985;Yankelovich, 1981). Some have come together to create intentional communities that express a new set of values, and establish a new set of relationships with other people and the environment in which they are located. Ecovillage communities are a recent example of this trend, uniting concern for community with concern for the ecological environment. In so doing, individuals begin to move beyond a self-conception that is defined by purely individual interests and goals, and consumer habits.

As a nascent social movement, the changes to the social structure that the ecovillage movement presents represent what Bellah (1985) refers to as a shift in the mores, the "habits of the heart" of its members. These include the consciousness, culture, and daily practices that are being promoted. While the political power to create structural change remains largely in the hands of those in positions of power, focusing on the new mores that the ecovillage movement expresses will help to shed light on the shift of public opinion. It will also help to reveal the outlines of a new social vision that incorporates community and ecological concern as indivisible elements of an integrated life experience.

The first section of this literature review demonstrated the ways in which self and physical environment have been co-constructed to privilege consumption over other forms of experiencing selfhood. This section has looked at the ways in which the legal, capitalist, and educational systems reinforce consumer principles through the development of an individualism that tends to see the world as material for the self. The principal aim has been to underline the extent to which the sense of self that is inherited from the culture that one is born into determines one's view of the surrounding world and orients the individual to life as an orderly and regulated project. That is to say that although an individual's view of personhood, and the entailments of their individualism, may appear "natural," they are in fact highly culturally specified. The following sections continue the process of examining the foundations of the traditional Western self from different perspectives, in preparation for developing a model that can account for the rise of an ecological and social conscience.

2.3. Ecological Psychology and Self

A post-positivist critique of psychology views it as having emerged and developed in the West under a set of social conditions that were produced by the industrial/capitalist system. This paradigmatic system took a utilitarian and positivist view of the natural world and methods of understanding and harnessing it. A similar rationale was applied to the human mind by psychology in emulation of the physical sciences. Psychology adopted an approach to the study of its subjects that fitted with the dominant view of humans as atomized and independent individuals, lacking ecological context in either a social or ecological sense. Thus, critics assert that through much of its history,

psychology has been part of a worldview that emphasizes individualism over other forms of being in the world.

According to Rose (1998), the growth of psychology has been connected with transformations in forms of selfhood. Conceptions of what selves are and how they should be understood and acted towards have been shaped according to an individualistic psychological ideology. Thus, the history of psychology is intimately connected with the history of industrial capitalism, a factor which aligns it with the legal and educational systems as previously identified. This has resulted in notions of freedom, choice and autonomy assuming a subjective form. For individuals engaged in a Western lifestyle, notions of what it means to be an individual have been culturally created, largely through the machinations of psychological thought as this has fed into governmental and institutional systems (Rose, 1998). Thus transactions with the environment proceed from specific historical and socio-cultural definitions of an individual and normalized self.

A great deal of the development of psychology has taken place under two assumptions that have had far-reaching consequences. The first is the acceptance of a traditional Cartesian view that sees mind and matter as two separate realms. According to this approach, the mind is separate from the body, and by extension, separate from the environment. Thus the physical world and the psychological domain cannot be analyzed in the same terms. In addition, elaborate theories are needed to explain how the 'world out there' is represented internally. Incorporating a Cartesian perspective, the self emerged as a wholly intra-subjective phenomenon in psychology that accounts for the individual conscious awareness of the person.

The second assumption that has guided much psychological theory in the past is that the individual can be understood apart from the context of the surrounding

environment. The laboratory-oriented experimental method assumed that context was irrelevant to outcomes, with a consequent failure to recognize that "demand characteristics" and "situated identities" were equally relevant to the subjects' behavior (Gecas, 1982). Social and environmental psychologies have demonstrated the malleability of perception, behavior, belief systems, and self-concepts under variable conditions. Cultural and social psychologies have revealed the degree to which self is socially constructed and mediated. In psychology, constructionist theories have begun to challenge the conventional, individualistic notion of the self. Constructionist theories of self are concerned with 'the processes by which people come to describe, explain, or otherwise account for the world (including themselves) in which they live' (Gergen, 1985). Rather than being treated as a psychological entity, self is construed as being co-created by individuals, cultures and societies at a particular place and time. Self is developed in and through relationships with others.

Lewis, (2003) poses a question from a constructionist perspective in asking what we can say about "the self," and whether or not it is central to experience. Her answer is that the question depends upon how the concepts of "self" and "experience" are made meaningful semiotically within a particular culture.

> It could then be reformulated as a question of what experiences a concept of self allows that would be impossible otherwise, or what selves a concept of experience allows. These formulations seem odd when assessed from within an individualist-objectivist paradigm since 'experiences' and 'selves' are taken to have a reality beyond what can be said or communicated about them. The reader is referred back to Wittgenstein's point that meanings are normatively constrained--'experience' and 'self' no less than any other concepts (p. 225).

Constructionist views of self thus offer a rebuttal to traditional realist arguments. They suggest that the individualistic and atomistic view of the self is a local construction rather than representing a universal entity. In addition, a constructionist perspective

encourages the development of a relational view of selfhood, emerging from local conditions and worldviews. However, this still leaves open the question of what the nature of self is, and whether there is an underlying psychological unity that is open to discovery and description. Mischel (2004) appraising the state of personality psychology describes the abandonment of the original assumptions that motivated early research, which held that there would be a stable core of characteristics or traits that could be winnowed out by systematically excluding situational variables. Empirical data contradicted this assumption and revealed the importance of situational variables in affecting individual's behaviors and reactions. Understanding the individual, according to Mischel (2004) is a matter of understanding the contexts within which they operate, and being able to identify the meanings that they ascribe to situations.

The strong version of constructivist theories of self views self as ephemeral, and wholly dependent upon the social and cultural conditions through which it becomes manifested (Holland, 1997). This view can be contrasted with the essentialist or universalist position, which holds that there is a core to the self that is independent of all external circumstances. Self, from this perspective, is the locus of relatively stable traits, characteristics, personality, dispositions, et cetera, depending upon the particular social scientific field that is attempting to identify this core. While few researchers adopt the extreme positions at either end of this continuum, the debate revolves around the relative weight that is given to intrapsychic versus cultural factors in defining and shaping the self.

The field of ecological psychology, however, offers fresh insight into the nature of the sense of self through making the distinction between perceptual and conceptual modes of interaction with the world. Perception, as largely unmediated interaction with

the world, always precedes conception, which refers to cognitive elaborations upon perception. Thus, concepts are secondary, and follow from experience of the world through perception, action, and engagement. If being and acting in the world precede conceptualizations of being and acting in the world, then self is placed differently. From this perspective, ecological psychology poses a challenge to the notion of culture as an essential mediating factor between self and world. Without denying the affect of culture on the defining of the self, ecological psychology suggests a sequence which begins with direct perception of being-in-the-world, following which conceptualizations elaborate upon this state. It is at this point that culture becomes a factor in determining the parameters of selfhood.

The field of ecological psychology takes individual and environment as mutually interdependent, and extends the psychological domain to properties of the environment in ways that render its features meaningful. The transactionalist perspective demonstrates the interaction between organism and environment that alter both in an ongoing mutual feedback loop. Such an approach calls into question the Cartesian dualism that separates mind from matter, and individual from environment, suggesting the need to consider both organism and environment as the primary unit of analysis. An evolutionary approach to psychological phenomena reveals that organisms always develop in direct response to their environment, such that perception is always directly relevant to important features of that environment. While traditional representational psychological theories lead to indirect and unsatisfactorily non-parsimonious ways of knowing the environment, evolutionary perspectives invoke direct and largely unmediated sensing of environmental features in ways that are meaningful for the organism.

Much ecological psychology is concerned with behavioral aspects of organism-environment interaction and sense perception that generally have not been applied to higher order phenomena such as sense of self. For example, Gibson's (1977) notion of *affordances* explains how organisms are able to negotiate their environment through direct perception, adjusting behavior to the opportunities and obstacles that are present. One aim of this research is to examine how such concepts may be applied to the nature of self-awareness and contribute to the meaning that people ascribe to their lives. It may be useful in this regard to investigate these questions utilizing a phenomenological approach.

It is interesting to note that behaviorism, ecological psychology and phenomenology share a common origin in their assertion that knowledge is ultimately grounded in immediate experience (Heft, 2001). A brief and broad definition of phenomenology is that it is,

> ...an account of space, time and the world as we "live" them. It tries to give a direct description of our experience as it is, without taking account of its psychological origin and the causal explanations which the scientist, the historian, or the sociologist may be able to provide. (Merleau-Ponty, 1962, p.vii)

The individual self experiences the world from a unique perspective, moment-to-moment, without reference to historical or sociological perspectives. This is not to say that self is not affected by such factors. However, the individual self, grounded in daily context responds to the situations that are presented by the surrounding environment, a process which may involve changing some aspects of the environment. Through this interaction both self and environment are engaged in a process of co-determination.

Such a self is a locus of perception and action, and proceeds from an embodied perspective. William James tackled the problem of specifying the nature of selfhood by identifying two facets of the empirical self, the "material selves," which include the body,

clothes, and belongings, and the "social selves," which are manifested through the relations that we form with others. The relevance of this analysis is revealed by his observation that any assault on these properties of the self is perceived as a violation of our personhood. To delineate the dimensions of this sense of personhood James' introspective analysis of the self recognized 'I' and 'me' as constitutive parts. The 'me' refers to instances and recollections of one's activity and presence, and as such is a loose and unorganized collection of self-identifying instances. The 'I' is the experienced unity of these instances in the present moment, which James described as "the hook from which the chain of past selves dangles" (Heft, 2001. p. 136).

In attempting to identify the very center of our being, however, James concurred with Hume's earlier analysis, being unable to locate a self among the flow of sensations and ideas. Hume concluded that the "self" was a belief, a habit of mind that accounted for the continuity of our experience. James, however, declared that the self emerged from the gross and subtle movements of our bodies. He proposed that this flow of information leads to two aspects of experience: intra-specific and extra-specific, the former identifying an internal self, and the latter the flow of features resulting from our movement through our environment (Heft, 2001). Thus, for James, self and perception co-occur as a result of our corporeality, in a manner that undermines the validity of the Cartesian duality of mind and body.

James' concept of the empirical self was further developed by J.J. Gibson, whose phenomenological investigations revealed that the self is perceived simultaneously with the environment. Concluding that perception is immediate and unmediated, and that persistent features in the field of view are constant indications of our bodily presence, he demonstrated that outwardly-directed awareness (exteroception) is always accompanied

by inwardly-directed awareness (interoception) (Heft, 2001). Thus self is always specified in the field of view. Neisser (1991) identified this perception as the 'ecological self,' a *per*ceptual ground from which *con*ceptual views of the self develop. Both Gibson and James recognized that the centrality of physical activity in specifying the self leads to the standard distinction between subjective and objective perception being rendered obsolete. Rather than separate metaphysical domains, the subjective and the objective are defined in ecological psychology as poles of attention, and the traditional subjective-objective dichotomy breaks down. Whether we perceive an aspect of the environment or our self at any particular moment depends upon what we choose to focus on. Selective awareness is a directed action of the body that leads to knowing as an activity of a natural being, rather than the operation of a disembodied, subjective soul as in the Cartesian view.

Further evidence that contradicts the Cartesian view comes from recent research in cognitive psychology that indicates that our conceptualizations of the world are fundamentally dependent upon embodiment. Lakoff and Johnson (1999), introduce the concept of embodied realism as an alternative to metaphysical realism that is responsible for the unbridgeable ontological rift between the objective world "out there," and the "inner" world of subjectivity. They begin by asserting "that the very properties of concepts are created as a result of the way the brain and body are structured and the way they function in interpersonal relations and in the physical world" (pp. 37). Concepts are developed and utilized through primary metaphors that are shown to originate with sensorimotor experience of the world. This gives rise to consistent experientially grounded mappings, as in "more is up," "important is big," and "understanding is grasping." Without such metaphors abstract thought becomes virtually impossible,

demonstrating that embodiment provides the fundamental source of our understanding of the world.

Lakoff and Johnson (1999) conclude from their research that our culture has inherited a significantly false philosophical view of what a self is. They assert that there can be no objective world, independent of mind or brain, and that there can be no universal reason. Thus we can have no purely objective knowledge of the world. Neither are humans separated from animals by the ability to use universal reason. Finally, totally free-will is an illusion, as are notions of objective and rational morality.

The underlying subject of this dissertation is the nature of the self-world relationship, and the search for a means of comprehending self that, rather than being defined through a Cartesian, atomistic, individualistic perspective, is in accord with an emerging systems-based and ecological worldview. The definition of self has been a consistent philosophical problem and has resulted in widely divergent conceptualizations and usage. Writers have sought to deal with the paradox of defining self as both subject of action and activity and object of self-reflection. William James referred to the "I" or "self of selves" to explain the apparent ability to consider one's own self as an object. More recent constructionist accounts of selfhood have focused upon its emergence in practice rather than as an objective entity. Harré (1987) suggests that self is a supposition or theory that is constructed through analogy with the embodied and socially embedded person as a publicly identifiable being. Once objectified, self permits a greater level of reflexive cognition. According to Lewis (2003), the "self of selves," through enhancing reflexive and reflective abilities, becomes the locus of accountability and encourages interpersonal responsibility.

From an ecological perspective, self arises from situatedness in, and direct perception of, a world that does not recognize the traditional and constructed dichotomies of subject-object, mind-body, matter-spirit. Echoing the emphasis of the ecological sciences on systems, energy transactions, and holistic understanding, ecological psychology points the way to liberating the concept of self from the constrictions of traditional Western conceptions that stem from a Cartesian worldview. Modern cognitive science and constructionist theories provide further support for a radically different conceptualization of the nature of selfhood. However, much still needs to be done to arrive at a precise definition of what constitutes the self, what processes contribute to the unfolding of self, and the relationship between the perceptual and unmediated self of ecological psychology, traditional essentialist notions of the self, and recent constructivist versions of selfhood.

Before considering this further it is necessary to consider alternative views of selfhood as revealed by environmental psychology, cultural geography and anthropological research. The following sections explore the relationship of self to place, and to the social and ecological environments through which self finds expression.

2.4. Self in Environmental Psychology and Geography

The concept of place occupies a central position in both environmental psychology and geographical theories, and is an important construction in relation to exploring the nature of self. This section briefly examines the principal theories that have arisen in these disciplines as a result of considering the role of places in the lives of people. Relationship to place spans several zones, from intimate places such as the home or particular spots, to larger areas such as villages, valleys, and national borders.

The notion of "home" identifies a relationship between self and place, suggesting that the home becomes an extension of bodily existence (Lang, 1985; Cooper, 1974). This theme has been developed by Relph (1985), who outlines a phenomenology of place, through exploring the ways in which places are revealed in experiential terms. Places exist as fusions of human and natural order. A dialectic between *existential-insidedness* and *existential outsidedness* emerges that defines the extent to which individuals experience an unconscious merging with, or separation from, place. Place is thus defined exclusively in relation to person. Through varying degrees of insidedness versus outsidedness place assumes a different identity to different individuals. Another way of stating this is that we experience a sense of connectedness to specific places with which we identify. Cognitive and affective ties to places form our core identity and sense of self. Such places range from those that are extremely localized and important to the individual, to regions and nations that are central to the identity of populations (Tuan, 1982).

According to the theory of place identity (Proshansky, 1978), standard theoretical approaches to self and identity fall short by failing to consider the role of objects and places in the identity definition of the individual. Cultural, social, interpersonal and group processes alone are not enough to account for identity development. Of equal importance are the individual's relationships with the physical settings that define and structure everyday life. Supporting evidence comes from the impact of such disruptive factors as forced relocation and frequent change of residence on individuals and communities. Considered in this way, place identity is a sub-structure of self identity (Proshansky et al, 1983). Changes made to a physical environment to which an individual feels connected,

such as through the effects of war (Povrzanovic, 1997) or neighborhood redevelopment can have a profound psychological impact.

Place attachment is a related concept that has been investigated in both environmental psychology and cultural anthropology. Broadly defined place attachment refers to cognitive and emotional linkage of an individual to a particular setting or environment (Altman and Low, 1992), and implies a transformation of the experience of a space or piece of land through shared symbolism into something that is culturally meaningful. Place is socially constructed in a variety of ways. It may be defined through genealogical relationship, economic exchange or work, loss or destruction of a valued place, cosmological correspondence of or pilgrimage to a place, and through narratives, songs, poems and naming (Low, 1994).

An example of the importance of place attachment in other cultures is provided by Schwarz's (1997) description of the Navajos' attitudes towards the place of their birth. Burial of the umbilical cord forms an anchor, a spiritual and historic link, to a particular place.

> I know the spot where I first hit the earth. In spirit, you know, in my mind and down deep in my heart, I am from Big Mountain and I will probably die thinking that way. [Walters, in Osawa 1988]" (p. 47).

Separation from place in Navajo culture generates a sense of insecurity. This attitude may be compared with that of America, where mobility is the norm and the dream of property ownership is one reward of successful participation in the capitalist system. Attachment to place in this system is contingent upon the dwelling providing an adequate representation of the individual's social standing and may be exchanged for something larger as the individual becomes more affluent. This particular attitude to the

physical world, in which it is viewed as material for the self, will be developed further in the concluding section of this chapter.

The important factor to note is that the role of the physical environment in defining selfhood, as revealed by research in environmental psychology, attests to an extra-corporeal dimension of self beyond the social realm (Altman & Low, 1992; Belk, 1992, Brown & Perkins, 1992). Attachment to place represents a real and affective connection with a particular location that serves as a reference point for self-presentation. It is the qualitative nature of such self-identification that opens up the possibility of a measurable difference between person-environment connections in an ecologically oriented community versus those under the dominant social paradigm.

2.5.   Social and Cultural Constructions of Self

While place is an important dimension of experience and sense of self, it is also recognized that attitudes and responses to place are culturally and socially mediated. Anthropological research has been particularly effective at revealing the existence of conceptualizations of selfhood that are markedly different from the Western self. Principal differences revolve around relationship of the self to the social and ecological environment.

Anthropological literature contains many accounts of peoples whose worldview is strikingly different from the conventional Western account. A primary distinction that highlights this difference is between societies in which individuals are held to be either *independent,* as in the West, or *interdependent,* as is common in non-Western societies (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). This axis has also been identified as *egocentric* versus *sociocentric* (Schweder & Bourne, 1986), and *allocentric* versus *idiocentric* (Triandis,

Leung, Villareal, & Clack, 1985). The latter terms apply to a personal rather than cultural level of analysis, and is one attempt to add a level of complexity to what has tended to be an over-generalized, over-dichotomized view of Western versus other views of the self (Kusserow, 1999). This distinction reflects the degree to which members of a particular culture accept the prescribed values of those around them. Idiocentrics in a collectivist culture, for example, will find it stifling, whereas allocentrics in an individualistic culture will tend to join together in various ways.

At the cultural level, the main difference between cultures in which individuals are held to be either independent or interdependent lies in personal beliefs about the relationship between self and others, and the degree to which they view themselves as separate or connected to others. Self in the independent or egocentric view refers to an individual's internal repertoire of thoughts, feelings and actions. Others are important principally as sources of affirmation of the inner core of the individual self. The interdependent or sociocentric self is founded on a belief in the fundamental connectedness of human beings to each other. The focus is not on the 'inner self,' but the relationships between self and others. Several consequences flow from an interdependent experience of selfhood. On a cognitive level it leads to a heightened sensitivity towards information about significant others, as well as an increased recognition of similarity to others. On an emotional level the experience of interdependence leads to an increase in other focused emotions, such as empathy, shame, and feelings of communion. On a motivational level the interdependent individual is inclined to actions that enhance relatedness or connection to others, such as the ability to maintain harmony in social contexts (Markus and Kitayama, 1991).

The sociocentric self, as identified by Schweder and Bourne (1986) springs from a holistic conception of the world. In the systems-based approach, units are altered by the relations of which they are a part. Thus, individuals in a sociocentric culture subordinate their interests to those of the group, and do not conceive of the inviolate person free of social responsibility. In contrast, for the egocentric individual society is conceived as having been created to serve the interests of an idealized, abstract individual, living within a society yet free of it.

Beyond the question of the degree to which individuals define themselves in relation to their social milieu, in many indigenous societies individuals perceive themselves as linked to their environments, their ancestors, and their cosmologies in direct and communicable ways. Callicott (1989), in his survey of Indian myths reveals a sense of community that includes not only the social, but also the natural world. Such conditions impose responsibilities and expectations upon the individual as well as defining them within a complex web of social and ecological interactions.

An example of this is provided by the Kantu' of Borneo (Dove & Kammen, 1997). The success or failure of their harvest is interpreted through a moral pact between themselves and the spirit world. Crop failure results from individual dishonoring of the proscriptions laid down by the spirits, especially in regard to such matters as incest, adultery and illegitimate births. According to research conducted by these authors, one crop failure was ascribed to a rumored case of father-daughter incest in another Kantu' community over 100 kilometers away. Thus, acts of the individual self may be seen to possess communal, ecological, and cosmic significance, giving every member of a Kantu' community a moral obligation to uphold the values of that community.

Likewise, in the case of For the Kantu', the behavior of the individual is held to

be accountable for outcomes that are directly related to the survival and well being of the

entire group. Self-interested behavior that runs counter to the interests and stability of the

group, such as incest and adultery, is discouraged by the cultivation of a sense of personal

relationship to the wider ecology and cosmology of the group. In this way, a sense of self

evolves that promotes the aims and purposes of the group on multiple levels. The

intimate nature of the relationship between humans and the natural world upon which

they depend for food and shelter is codified in many cultures in rituals that call for

atonement or acknowledgment of this dependence (Callicott 1989). In addition, as an

expression of a deeper relationship with the natural world, various indigenous peoples

trace their familial lineage to particular totem animals to which they turn for protection

and towards which they make regular ritual offerings. Through a particular relationship

with identifiable elements of their total ecological world families form an affective

identification that implies certain responsibilities as well as conveying prescribed

reciprocal benefits. The concept of reciprocation, between the human community and the

ecological community emphasizes the intimate linkage between humans and their

environment. For the Dayak of Borneo, their beliefs regarding exchange relations

between themselves and their environment forms a moral ecology (Dove & Kammen,

1997). Whatever passes from one to the other must be reciprocated. The currency for this

exchange is symbolic and expressive of their recognition of the intimacy and dependency

of their relationship. Responsibility for maintaining reciprocal balance with their

ecological environment is a matter for every individual within the community. In this

way, potential disruption and resistance to the established patterns and cultural

conventions of the group will tend to be minimized by the linkage between individual actions and the fortunes of the group.

This brief examination of the relationships of other cultures with their ecological environment is intended to demonstrate that in general, across the diversity of non-Western cultures, there is a view of nature as an extension of society. The strict boundary between the world of humans and the world of nature that we take for granted in the West is more fluid. A widespread understanding of the cyclical nature of existence, as opposed to the linear thinking that predominates in First World societies, has formed the basis for a moral ecology that promotes stewardship rather than exploitation. Within this system, the individual self is defined as situated, relational, and co-defined. Identity tends to be based upon a set of relationships that penetrate into the multiple social, ecological, and cosmological worlds.

An example of a complex social system that has evolved in a densely inhabited region in a manner that has permitted its population to maintain a balanced and productive relationship with the natural world is the caste system in India. From a Western viewpoint the caste system often seems unjust, repressive and as outdated as the feudal system of Europe. It is unacceptable in a society that believes in the individual right to be unencumbered by a social system that would stifle initiative and restrict social mobility. However, an ecological reading of the caste system reveals an intricate system of checks and balances that serves to maintain the delicate balance between a growing human population and a finite resource base. Gadgil and Guha (1992) found that complex restrictions on which castes can access which resources served to regulate use of common resources and avoid depletion. Certain castes are only allowed to hunt using prescribed methods, and are restricted to specific animals, which controls their access to different

habitats. Use of plant materials by individual castes is similarly restricted by location, duration and seasonality. Some castes eat no meat, while others eat no fish. Thus, the caste system, though it is experienced as repressive by those at the bottom of the social ladder, serves to minimize conflict over access to resources in areas of high population density and maintain sustainability (Gadgil & Guha, 1992). This is achieved through a specification of selfhood that proceeds from an acceptance of one's position within the social system that is prescribed by karmic forces, and a set of responsibilities and roles that devolve from such a positioning.

In summary, there are many variations in cultural styles. While seeking to avoid an over-dichotomized view of the difference between Western and non-Western cultures, it may be stated that in general, non-Western cultures promote a view of self that is much less individualistic, and more interdependent and grounded in a complex web of social and ecological relations. Rather than being defined through issues of rights and privileges, such interdependent selves are bound in a defining series of moral duties and obligations. Selfhood, from these non-Western perspectives, is conceived as specifying a set of relationships with the world, formulated as a pact that guarantees mutual benefit. The following section presents contemporary, Western versions of selfhood that reflect a similar ecological and systems-based sensibility.

2.6. Self in Deep Ecology and Ecofeminism

Deep ecologists claim that the experience of the 'ecological self' is vital in changing individual and collective relationships with the natural world, and behaving in an environmentally responsible manner. Deep ecology is fundamentally psychological in approach, being primarily concerned, not with developing axioms, theories or moral

values, but with developing from a primarily phenomenological starting point (Bragg, 1996). Most importantly the philosophy of deep ecology involves a completely different notion of selfhood. Rejecting the conventional anthropocentric view of the 'human-in-nature' deep ecology encourages a relational, total-field image (Naess, 1973). The ecological self is expansive and transpersonal in nature, rather than individualistic, eventually encompassing all life-forms, and the Earth itself. Identification and association with the natural world on a deeply emotional as well as experiential and cognitive level constitutes an extension of the self-concept. Such an experience leads to spontaneous ecological behavior. The thesis that emerges from this is that if individuals extended their identification outward, finally encompassing all life-forms, there would be no need for environmental ethics, altruism or self-sacrifice. This point has been eloquently expressed by Wendell Berry (1986), who states that we have lost the understanding that,

> Our land passes in and out of our bodies just as our bodies pass in and out of our land; that as we and our land are part of one another, so all who are living as neighbors here, human, plant, and animal, are part of one another, and so cannot possibly flourish alone; that, therefore, our culture must be our response to our place, our culture and our place are images of each other, and inseparable from each other, and so neither can be better than the other (p. 22).

Berry's observations echo the worldview presented by many cultures, and makes a strong call for a systems-based and more egalitarian view of humans' place in the world. Callicott (1989), building from insights in quantum physics about the relational nature of the world likewise maintains that self and nature can only be defined in terms of one another. Making a case for a non-anthropocentrically based ethic, he asserts that nature may be defined as the self fully extended and diffused. Thus nature is valuable to the extent that self is intrinsically valuable. Through this principle of 'axiological

complementarity' if it is rational for me to act in my own interest, and nature and I are one, then it is rational for me to act in the best interests of nature.

While Callicott's argument is constructed as a rational argument for the protection of nature others are actively seeking ways in which to promote the direct experience of the unity of nature and self. The construction of self, from a deep ecology perspective, is a matter of conscious choice in the sense that we can select its boundaries in objective reality. Thus, our perception may move along a continuum from the intimately personal to the widest ecological experience (Macy, 1991). A variety of techniques are advanced for enhancing the ecological self. These include experientially based spiritual disciplines such as Zen Buddhism, wilderness experience, immersion in mythology, ecopsychology, voluntary simplicity, environmental activism, and indigenous practices such as shamanism (Bragg, 1996).

While eco-feminism is in broad agreement with deep ecology with respect to the need to transform our personal relationships with the ecological world, there are areas of substantive difference on the cause of the present ecological crisis, and the appropriate response. Eco-feminism is widely held to be based upon the recognition that there are important correlations between the oppression of women and the oppression of nature, and that it is important to understand the nature of these connections. Furthermore, the solution to both forms of oppression lie in including the complementary perspective. Thus ecofeminism differs from deep ecology in attributing the current ecological crisis to male, patriarchal, and oppressive attitudes towards the world in general. Perhaps the most pertinent aspect of the eco-feminist perspective to this research lies in the understanding that a feminist morality tends to conceive of personhood as relational rather than autonomous (Curtin, 1999). This view echoes many non-Western attitudes

towards self-world relations, as identified in the previous section. According to

Plumwood (1991),

> Thus it is unnecessary to adopt any of the stratagems of deep ecology – the
> indistinguishable self, the expanded self, or the transpersonal self – in order to
> provide an alternative to anthropocentrism or human self-interest. This can better
> be done through the relational account of the self, which clearly recognizes the
> distinctness of nature but also our relationship and continuity with it. On this
> relational account, respect for the other results neither from the containment of the
> self nor from a transcendence of self, but is an *expression* of self in relationship,
> not egoistic self as merged with the other but self as embedded in a network of
> essential relationships with distinct others (p. 20).

In relation to the environment feminist philosophy argues that there are ways of

experiencing, categorizing, and valuing the world that are innately feminine. Such a

worldview is based upon the domains of interconnectedness and affectual rationality

(Rose, 1986, in Curtin, 1999), stressing a holistic understanding and a harmonious

relationship with nature. A feminist standpoint leads to an organization of the world that

springs from a reevaluation of those practices that a sexist society marginalizes in favor

of the systemic and institutional violence that constitutes a hierarchical framework that

oppresses both women and nature (Curtin, 1999).

Both deep ecology and ecofeminism are primarily Western movements, and neither

is exempt from criticism, especially when considered from a cultural perspective.

Ramachandra Guha (1989) charges, for example, that deep ecology invokes a simplistic

notion of the East as a repository of exemplary spiritual attitudes to nature. This view

reflects a flip-side that promotes the East as backward and requiring Western style

interventions and development. Likewise, deep ecology's focus on wilderness

preservation, when applied to cultures that retain close association with the land through

hunting and gathering has had disastrous consequences. Thus, deep ecology may be seen

as a localized response to ecological concerns that through an attempt to make universalist claims threatens to become another form of colonialism. A similar critique that rests on the imposition of inappropriate universalist notions of justice and women's rights has been leveled at ecofeminism by Vandana Shiva (1994). The liberal individualism of first world women is a local response that may do more harm than good when transported to other cultural settings.

The relevance of deep ecology and ecofeminism for this research lies in their emergence as local responses that seek to establish the philosophical grounds for a reevaluation of the relationship between the human and ecological worlds. Both deep ecology and ecofeminism stress the development of a relationship with the natural world that is based upon a simultaneous recognition of our separation from, and connection to nature, and by extension, to our social world. In either case a sense of self is required that is qualitatively different from the conventional Western individualistic self. The final section of this chapter brings together the insights gained from the preceding sections, and utilizes these to construct a model of self that may be applicable to developments that are taking place at the EcoVillage at Ithaca.

2.7. Conclusion

The aim of this literature review has been to formulate an understanding of selfhood that draws from insights of James' radical empiricism and ecological psychology. Accordingly, this research moves beyond the Cartesian principle that is implicit in much traditional psychology, which portrays a mind that awakens to find itself immersed in a sensory world that it then strives to make sense of. Contradicting conventional representational accounts of perception, ecological psychology

convincingly argues that organisms always develop in direct response to their environments, and demonstrates the need for conceiving of organism and environment as co-evolving through continual transaction. The argument is made that although much ecological psychology has been concerned with analysis at the behavioral level, it is equally applicable to the self-concept. Thus, this research is premised upon the principle that self and world are two facets of the same phenomenon. Each is part of an ongoing process of reciprocal transactions in which they shape and are shaped by the other. Self may be defined as both product and producer of the interaction between the individual and the environment. It is emergent, fluid, and defined through practice. This definition goes some way to proposing a definition of self that is consonant with the tenets of ecological and environmental psychology.

Introducing an ecological psychology perspective to the question of how self is constituted presents a potential development with regard to defining the self along a continuum from an essentialist core self to a constructivist reflected self. Ecological psychology promotes being-in-the-world as a primary perceptual experience of existence, from which conceptual, cognitively elaborated understandings of self-world relations are built. The ecological psychology perspective introduces a potential means of framing the processes that contribute to the emergence of selfhood on a conceptual level, without providing a definitive response to the essentialist versus constructivist debate.

The description laid out above deals with the relationship between self and world. If we accept that the nature of self and its relationship to the environment is, to a certain extent, mediated by culture, then culture defines the parameters by which each individual comes to experience selfhood according to commonly held needs. Individuals take on the values and goals of the culture as their own through the culture's promotion of a

particular worldview. The result is that expression of selfhood in a culture will tend to take place through culturally sanctioned practices that construct world and self simultaneously.

The individualistic Western self may be readily differentiated from the alternative models that have been presented. However, approaches such as place identity and place attachment, as well as socially oriented theories of self, reveal that the individualistic sense of self has fluid boundaries that expand into the surrounding social and physical environment. The fundamental difference between the independent, individualistic self and the interdependent self lies less in the relative degree of expansion or narrowing of the self-concept, though this is important, than in the positioning of self in relation to otherness. Expanded self in an individualistic culture places self at the center of a nested set of relationships to possessions, children, career, family, relatives, et cetera. Underlying the independent self is a belief in an innate separateness of persons. The expansion of this self towards other persons serves largely to verify and affirm the inner core of the individual self. In contrast, self in other cultures is construed as part of a web, interconnected with various aspects of the lived experience. It is a dispersed, rather than a centralized conception of selfhood. Whereas individualist expanded self implies an accretion, a drawing towards the self as a locus of control and power, interconnected extended self implies specific roles and responsibilities to the maintenance of the web of which self is a part.

The two terms *expanded* and *extended* are used here to deliberately define the manner in which self experiences connection with the world. *Expanded* refers to an individualistic mode in which the external world is used as material for the self, whereas *extended* refers to a mode in which selfhood is experienced as a sense of contiguity with

the world. This leads to two principle ways of conceptualizing selfhood; *individualist expanded self* and *interconnected extended self.*

These two modes are not interpreted as being mutually exclusive. Rather they represent poles of a continuum of human experience of self. It would be unreasonable, for instance to maintain that all experiences of the individualistic extended self are self-absorbed and self-promoting. Likewise, it would be unreasonable to assert that members of cultures that promote the interconnected extended self never experience conflicts over self versus community interest. Thus, the individual expanded self and the interconnected extended self exist as ends of a continuum of experience of self. Different cultures align themselves at various points on this continuum, promoting a sense of self that serves the aims and purposes of that particular culture.

The consumer landscape that we inhabit is a result of the evolution of individualism as a transformative force. In response, ecovillage communities have emerged as one of the most radical expressions of a new environmental paradigm that seeks to restore an awareness of our dependence upon the environment, and promote an ethic of sustainability. The sense of self that develops through this process is consonant with an ethic of stewardship. The emergence of a redefined sense of self becomes a response to the increasingly visible non-sustainability of the present industrial-capitalist system. Deep ecology and ecofeminist principles have emerged as responses to the need for an alternative conceptualization of self-world relations.

Members of ecological communities recognize the importance of adopting an attitude of personal responsibility for the consequences of their actions and lifestyles on the social and natural ecology of the world. The intention is that coming together in a community-in-place becomes a powerful way of actualizing a moral ecology, as well as

demonstrating an alternative and sustainable lifestyle. The question that arises from this review of the literature is what the effects may be on sense of self of participation in the development of an integrated, socially and ecologically sustainable community., Participation may provide an opportunity for new versions of selfhood to be developed.

Wendell Berry (1986) holds that the ecological crisis is essentially a crisis of character. There can be no community wholeness without personal wholeness, and that community disintegrates as we become more removed from the essential processes of life. As soon as we think of the environment as something that *surrounds* us we have created a division that results in a mode of living in which even our homes themselves may become ecologically destructive forces. The use of the world is ultimately a personal matter, and the health of the world is the responsibility of a multitude of persons. Thus, the work of individuals in an ecological community springs from the development of an understanding of self that accepts the value of responsible involvement in relations at all levels. In order to develop this idea, the following chapter presents the methodology and methods that were utilized in order to investigate the kinds of changes that are taking place at the EcoVillage at Ithaca as residents negotiate their places within their social and ecological environment.

CHAPTER 3.

3.0. Methodology and Methods

This chapter begins by describing the methodology that was applied to the research

that was conducted, and the rationale behind the approaches that were adopted. The

following section describes the methods, and includes a description of the actual methods

used, and the quantity of data that was generated. Following this, a thorough description

of the EcoVillage at Ithaca is provided, beginning with a definition of what constitutes an

ecovillage. The site and its residents are described in detail, along with the history of the

development of the project, an account of the organizational structures that constitute the

EcoVillage, and a description of the modes of communication that are prominent features

of the EcoVillage experience.

3.1   Methodology

The research for this dissertation was conceived as primarily a qualitative project.

Previous research that relied on qualitative data analysis proved to be a reliable means of

investigating the relevant life experiences of EcoVillage residents. A quantitative

component was added to the research methods as a means of providing a measure of

residents' engagement with the community, using the level of visibility into the

individual homes from the pedestrian space as an indicator. However, the bulk of the data

collected and analyzed was qualitative in nature. This methodology was held to be the

most appropriate to the task of investigating the nature of selfhood as it is expressed at

the EcoVillage at Ithaca.

The adoption of a qualitative methodology was also encouraged by a review of

many studies of the factors that promote the development of pro-environmental behavior.

Studies that use a quantitative approach, examining the relationship between variables such as values, attitudes, beliefs, knowledge, feelings, ideals, understanding, social constraints, et cetera, as these affect behavior as the outcome, have tended to produce inconsistent and contradictory results. An assumption is made that by identifying which variable or combination of variables are responsible for the greatest effect on behavior pro-environmental programs or interventions can be initiated that take advantage of these findings. From the many studies that have been conducted, however, only the most general of conclusions can be drawn (See for example; McKenzie-Mohr et al, 1995; Oskamp, 1995).

One of the perceived drawbacks of a quantitative approach to investigating pro-environmental behavior is the adoption of a methodology that relies for its analysis on a dismemberment, proceeding from a reductionist approach to the complex of individual and social factors that determines human behavior. Persons and their situations tend to be analyzed in terms of a collection of attributes that must be quantified in order to rank them in order of importance. The approach adopted by the dissertation research assumes that the reification of these attributes as separable units of analysis runs contrary to the kind of ecological view that is an inherent aspect of the drive towards a fully developed environmental awareness. The approach used in this research is intended to avoid incongruity between the methodology employed and the subject area of the research. In other words, the research adopts an ecological approach that acknowledges the importance of the inter-relations between the parts that make up the whole. In order to research the processes that are taking place the focus is not on relatively static, linguistically-mediated concepts such as "beliefs" or "values," but on the interplay between such factors. Thus for example, a belief is less important for what it is than for

what it does through its relationship to the other factors that affect a given situation. This approach underscores a focus on self as a process, emerging through interaction with the world, rather than as an entity bounded by relatively fixed attributes.

The methodology utilized in this dissertation research was to adopt a phenomenological approach to develop an appreciation of selfhood as it is experienced in the convergence of the personal, social, and historical moment. The principal operative is the sense of self as the person experiences dissonance between habitual behaviors and the self that is not fully and adequately represented by such behaviors. According to this view such factors as information, attitudes, experiences, beliefs, motivation, and values, exist as a relational whole rather than divisible elements. Together they create a unified perception of self in relationship with the world. An inherent tendency to seek harmony in relation to the life-world, to accommodate self and environment to each other, leads the self to seek ways to reduce the dissonance that is experienced. As previously stated, the model of dissonance that is being adopted in this research follows Aronson's (1997) formulation in which dissonance results when behaviors are not judged to be in line with sense of self.

While phenomenologists have underscored the importance of attending to the *Lebenswelt* in understanding behavior, such considerations have often been absent from investigations of human-environment relations. Experiences as epiphenomena have often been credited with no causal role or explanatory value in accounting for individuals' relationships with their environment. In addition, large-scale phenomena such as pollution of the environment or depletion of resources have appeared to require conceptualizations and explanations that exclude individual experiences and behavior (Wapner, Kaplan, & Cohen, 1973). However, it is a central understanding of this research

that an analysis of the experience of self in relation to the environment is essential to the

purpose of demonstrating that sense of self is both malleable, and dependent upon the

way that the environment is constructed and construed.

A grounded approach to data gathering was adopted for this research project. Thus,

the intention was to ensure that the results were inductively derived from the study of the

phenomenon represented (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). That is to say that the findings were

discovered, developed, and provisionally verified through systematic data collection and

analysis of data pertaining to that phenomenon. Therefore, data collection, analysis, and

theory stood in reciprocal relationship to each other. Data gathering focused on the

participant's voices, with attention being paid to how they viewed their lives, made

meaning, and understood their world.

In addition to these methodologies, initial data gathering in August of 2000 was

aided by a process of adopting an intuitive approach to apprehending the 'whole'

experience of being at the EcoVillage This method of apprehending the essential nature

of a place has previously been suggested by Violich (1985) as a means of providing an

intuitive reading of the experiential differences in four Dalmatian towns.

The intuitive approach calls for suspension of intellectual processes in favor of

discovering one's authentic reaction to the phenomena under investigation. In the case of

EVI, this consisted of sitting on the patio outside the commons house one afternoon, as

residents went about their daily business. The compacted nature of the EcoVillage in

relation to the spreading land that surrounds it became a powerful experience that formed

a root metaphor for what the builders of the EcoVillage were aiming to achieve. The

importance of this is that it is one thing to become aware intellectually of this fact about

how the EcoVillage sits in relation to the landscape, yet something completely different

to experience this as a phenomenon. Sharing writing about this with residents produced feedback that affirmed that this captured an awareness that they experienced, but had never articulated. This points to the way in which our physical environment can have subtle yet powerful effects upon our experience of the world.

Early in the data gathering process the decision was made to rely more on observation and conversation than on interview, as had originally been planned. In addition, reliance was placed on monitoring email communication and searching archival documents. The function of these approaches was to remove the researcher as much as possible from the generation of the data, in the expectation of capturing more authentic, less prepared responses. This approach was prompted by two events early in the data gathering process in which the researcher engaged in conversation with residents. On both occasions, after inquiring specifically what the research was about, the researcher observed the residents struggling to compose a suitable response. Following this the researcher avoided such situations by remaining vague as to the precise nature of the research questions, a tactic which resulted in the researcher being jokingly accused of only pretending to do research.

The result is that much of the data reflects communication that took place directly between residents, with, in the vast majority of cases, no direct intervention by the researcher to shape or otherwise predetermine the responses. However, analysis and use of such data was substantially dependent upon being physically present at the EcoVillage and understanding the daily events, responses, and contexts in which the email communications took place. Conversations and discussions that developed face-to-face on a daily basis served to contextualize the emails. They are introduced into the relevant chapters as evidence of residents' thoughts, beliefs, expectations, feelings, et cetera, as

the researcher experienced events at the EcoVillage. The intention was to present residents' daily involvement in the joint undertaking of their lives together at the EcoVillage.

3.2.   Methods: Research periods

The data for this research project was gathered over a period of time between August, 2000 and August, 2003. Additional material in the form of email communication between residents continued to be gathered until November, 2003. The principal data gathering period was a five week block in June and July of 2003.Data gathering periods were as follows:

> August 31 – September 03, 2001
> February 21 – February 25, 2003
> March 21 – March 24, 2003
> April 18 – April 21, 2003
> May 02 – May 05, 2003
> June 09 – July 15, 2003

3.3.   Methods: Data collection

Data was gathered by multiple methods, as appropriate to the kind of information that was being sought. These methods are listed below.

1. Observation and participant observation: During all research visits to the EcoVillage the researcher stayed at a house in the first neighborhood. Occupying a room in the house involved a combination of paying rent when the single owner was there, and staying for free in return for cat-sitting duties when the owner was away, which was quite frequently the case during the summer of 2003. Staying in a house, especially for an extended period in the summer, offered a good sense of the experience of living at the EcoVillage on a day-to-day basis. Staying at the EcoVillage provided a constant potential for interaction

and observation with residents, in structured, semi-structured, and unstructured activities and encounters. Field notes were made at times purely as a result of observation, without participation. Examples of this are spontaneously witnessed encounters between residents, and observed behaviors in communal areas and at gatherings. Instances of intentional observation include observing the preparation of the communal meals on various occasions, observing behavior during meetings, and observing behavior in the pedestrian space during the day. Examples of participant observation include taking part in the preparation of communal meals, being part of the "dish crew" washing up after meals, looking out for children swimming at the pond, and generally taking part in formal and informal community activities on a day-to-day basis.

2. Conversations and interviews: Field notes recorded the many conversations that took place with residents during visits to the EcoVillage. Conversations were preferred to interviews in general as a means of capturing residents in the moment of living at the EcoVillage, as they went about their daily routines. Lacking the formality of a scheduled interview and the self-consciousness that comes from being recorded, conversations tended to capture a less rehearsed, more spontaneous, and exploratory quality. Some of these conversations were developed as formal interviews that explored specific topics with specific individuals at a later opportunity.

3. Data on commons house meals: During an extended stay at the EcoVillage sign-up sheets for the shared meals were photocopied. Extensive data from past meal tallies were also collated to provide basic quantitative information about attendance at the communal meals that will help to explore this aspect of participation.

4. Visibility into homes: Observations made over successive visits highlighted the ease with which residents can see into each other's houses from the pedestrian space due to a

general lack or non-use of curtains and blinds. An attempt to quantify this was carried

out. Visibility into residents' homes was rated on a scale of 0 to 5. Perfect unobstructed

visibility was rated 5. Light net curtains or unclosed blinds were rated 4. Plants, objects,

and/or light net curtains that broke up the line of vision were rated 3. Heavy net curtains,

half closed blinds, or other ways of mostly blocking visibility were rated 2. Curtains

drawn or blinds closed at night were rated 1. No visibility night or day was rated 0.

Measurements were taken over the course of five evenings, as it was observed that there

was variation on different occasions.

5. Meetings: Several opportunities arose to attend meetings of different kinds that were

called to conduct official EcoVillage business. These were observed as part of the overall

strategy to shed light on the processes that take place at the EcoVillage.

6. Email communications: Email communication forms a significant means of

transmitting ideas, information, attitudes, values, and conducting discussion on topical

issues at the EcoVillage. An initial request to be added to the email list, presented on the

researcher's behalf by Liz Walker, was blocked by a couple of residents who had

concerns about a researcher and non-resident having access. However, once the

researcher was staying there as a full resident during the summer of 2003, access to the

email list was automatic, and he was added to all the EcoVillage email lists. These are

described in greater detail below. Daily monitoring of the up to 40 emails that were

posted to the various lists provided a great deal of interesting and pertinent data as

residents expressed their opinions to each other, sometimes in a heated manner, about the

topical issues of that period.

7. Archival material: The EVI office, located in the office wing of the Common House,

contains files and folders that hold documents dating back to the early days of the

EcoVillage project. These were examined, and relevant documents were copied and filed under the following headings: EVCC minutes, Missions and Goals, Legal etc, Sweat Equity, Consensus, Guidelines, Surveys, History, Articles, Maps, Miscellaneous.

8. Community Table: Information on various aspects of participation, at meetings, CH meals, email communication, combined with visibility into the houses and other observations, were combined into a table that generated potentially quantifiable data on the level of communication between the residents, and their involvement in various aspects of community life.

9. Quantity of data: The following represent the approximate number of pages and extent of data that constitute the material for the analysis of this research.

     a. Emails: 200.
     b. Field Notes and interviews: 180 pages (single spaced).
     c. Archival Material: 250 pages.
     d. Meal Tallies: 12 months approx.
     e. Visibility study: 5 sets.
     f. Photographs

3.4. Analysis of data

The material gathered from research at the EcoVillage at Ithaca was in two formats. Field notes, some committee meetings, interviews, most meal tallies, and the photographs were all put into digital format. The remainder, mostly consisting of archival materials that had been photocopied, was sorted into ring-binders under a number of headings. The digital data, excluding the photographs, was content analyzed using ATLASti qualitative data analysis software.

Using ATLASti the material was read and open coded for content. This involved highlighting sections of the text and ascribing a descriptive label for future recognition. This process allows material that seems like it is relevant to be identified, and permits

comparisons between different parts of the data to be made. The emphasis during coding was to be able to both identify data that referred to specific topics, as well as data that reflected processes that were observed to be taking place. Examples of topics are; *water tower, lot sale, flip tax* and *nudity*. Examples of the processes are; *legislation, consensus, dissent,* and *community appreciation.*

While ATLASti has functions that permit analytical manipulation of the data, its primary use in the analysis of the research for this dissertation was to provide ready access to specific parts of the very large amounts of data that were gathered. This particular function proved extremely useful when writing up the findings, as the ability to search the data for specific codes that have been assigned, or words that appear in the text, saved a great deal of time in comparison with carrying out the same operation using marked-up versions of the hard-copy data.

The focus of the analysis was on the processes that were taking place at the EcoVillage. Some insight into what these might be had already been gained through participation and observation in the course of conducting the research. After the data gathering phase had been completed in early July, a period of about four weeks was spent in just coding the data and trying to work out what it might all mean. The search for underlying patterns and ways of understanding what was taking place at the EcoVillage was aided by large sheets of paper, on which events, processes, and other potentially important information was written and connected up in various ways. A slow process of reduction and refinement came to fruition eventually, when three large circles could be drawn, incorporating all of the remaining factors into three groups of inter-related processes. These captured the dynamics of the EcoVillage project as residents sought the means to balance their personal needs with the needs of the community and the needs of

the ecological environment. These three sets of processes will be presented in chapters 5, 6, and 7. Once the details of the workings of these processes had been fleshed out with data from both digital and hard-copy sources, two out of several topics that had been current during my research visits were chosen as case studies that would illustrate how these processes worked together on a daily basis. These are presented in chapters 8 and 9.

3.5. IRB and Ethics

The research for this study was carried out with the approval of the Internal Revue Board of CUNY. Following granting of approval for the initial study of the EcoVillage at Ithaca in Summer, 2000, subsequent research visits have been carried out utilizing the continuing revue process to keep the Internal Revue Board abreast of developments in research methods and scope. Appropriate practices have been adopted to maintain confidentiality and anonymity for residents who have acted in the capacity of informant for research purposes. This has, in practice, not been problematic at all to follow as the kind of information being sought has not been of a sensitive personal or interpersonal nature. However, it must be remarked that through being in the special position of being a researcher at the EcoVillage sensitive information regarding some residents was communicated to the researcher at times. Such information was always handled with discretion.

Over the period that the researcher has been conducting research at the EcoVillage at Ithaca a relationship has been built up with members of the community. The researcher has striven to develop an appropriate code of conduct with the community in regard to reporting on activities that have taken place during the periods of research. This has primarily involved a commitment by the researcher to, at minimum, circulate

writing about the EcoVillage to those members whose interview data are quoted in the paper, making it clear to them that they retain the right to have their remarks withdrawn from publication. Thus any paper or journal article that was accepted for publication was emailed to those members of the community whose words were quoted in order for them to comment upon its fair usage. In addition, several residents have always been interested to read what has been written about the EcoVillage, and have provided interesting and useful feedback.

With regard to the specific use of emails, prior to the researcher's extended visit in Summer, 2003, a discussion by the community regarding allowing a researcher access to the email lists took place. The result was that two residents expressed reluctance initially to having the researcher on the email list while not being physically present at the EcoVillage. However, once the researcher was in residence this objection was set aside. The researcher will, as a matter of continuing the established pattern, circulate the dissertation among interested residents, both as a means of soliciting feedback on the analysis, and to offer those whose words are quoted the opportunity of vetting their use. A bound copy of the dissertation will be presented to the community.

The following chapter provides a brief description of the philosophy behind the ecovillage movement, and a detailed description of the EcoVillage at Ithaca, both physically, historically, and organizationally.

CHAPTER 4.

4.0. The Study site: Introduction

The chapter begins with an exploration of the essential characteristics of an

EcoVillage, defining five distinct requirements. This is followed by a detailed description

of the research site, its physical layout, and its residents. The next section presents a

history of the principal events that have shaped the development of the EcoVillage at

Ithaca since the original residents group began meeting in 1991. Following this, an

account of the legal structures of the non-profit organizations that make up the

EcoVillage at Ithaca is provided. The chapter ends with a brief description of the

principal modes of communication that take place at the EcoVillage, organizing them

according to the relative degree of structuring that each exhibits.

4.1. The Ecovillage Movement

The ecovillage movement is an expression of a vision of a socially and

environmentally sustainable lifestyle. While some interpret this using scientific terms

such as carrying capacity, energy flow, and ecological systems, others express their

vision more in terms of social factors, spirituality, holism, relationship to nature, and

sense of place (Sirna, 2000). Ecovillages exist in many forms worldwide. They may be

urban, suburban, or rural, and are emerging in many different cultural settings, across all

continents. In general, ecovillage focus on being small scale, or village-like, creating an

environment that is simultaneously a place to live, work, trade, play, be born, and die.

Members of ecovillage aspire to create a lifestyle that embodies the principles of

sustainability within a set of constraints that include financial and other considerations

that limit their ability to achieve their goals.

Perhaps the most succinct definition of what an ecovillage could be is provided by Robert Gilman (1983). While ecovillages exist in many forms, according to local conditions, Gilman offers a summary of the principles that guide the ecovillage philosophy. The first of these may be defined as the **human-scale** of the settlement. Human-scale refers to a size in which people are able to know and be known by the others in the community, and where each member of the community feels he or she is able to influence the community's direction. The second commonality is that each ecovillage represents **a full-featured settlement.** This is one in which all the major functions of normal living - residence, food provision, manufacturing, leisure, social life, and commerce - are present and in balanced proportions, making the ecovillage a comprehensible microcosm of the whole of society. The third defining characteristic of an ecovillage is that it is a place in which human activities are **harmlessly integrated** into the natural world. One of the most important aspects of this principle is the ideal of equality between humans and other forms of life, so that humans do not attempt to dominate nature but rather find their place within it. Another important principle is the *cyclic* use of material resources, rather than the linear approach (dig it up, use it once, throw it away forever) that has characterized industrial society. This leads ecovillage to the use of renewable energy sources rather than fossil fuels; to the composting of organic wastes which are then returned to the land rather than sending these to a landfill, incinerator, or sewage treatment plant; to the recycling of as much waste as possible; and to the avoidance of toxic and harmful substances. The fourth principle of ecovillage life is that it is **supportive of healthy human development.** This recognizes that ecovillages are human communities, and without genuine human health at the core, these communities are unlikely to be successful. The fifth defining aspect of an ecovillage is

the notion of **sustainability**, that is, that it can be successfully continued into the indefinite future. Without this it would be easy, in the short-term, to create human-scale communities that *seemed* to be harmoniously integrated into nature and to be full-featured, but in fact were in some not-so-visible way living off the capital accumulated in other parts of the society, or were dependent on unsustainable activities elsewhere (Rees, 1997). In addition non-sustainability may be reflected in a failure to be inclusive of a major aspect of life (such as childhood or old age). The sustainability principle brings with it a profound commitment to fairness and non-exploitation, toward other parts of today's world, human and non-human, and toward all future life.

4.2. Study Site.

The EcoVillage at Ithaca is located approximately two miles from the town of Ithaca, in upstate New York (see Appendix I). It sits on 176 acres of gently sloping land that overlooks the town, and Cornell University. Before being purchased by EVI, the site had originally been zoned for standard suburban development. This would have entailed the construction of over two hundred houses on half-acre plots. Today however, the two rows of two-story duplexes, separated by a winding pedestrian ribbon, nestle close together on the hillside, amidst an open and largely uncultivated landscape. Future plans call for the construction of up to four additional ecovillages on the site. Construction of the second ecovillage is virtually complete as of November 2003. The original vision of constructing five ecovillages on the site would bring the population density up to the same level as the suburban development would have achieved. The significant difference is that the cluster of ecovillages will leave over 90% of the land open for recreation and cultivation.

Residents formed the EcoVillage Cohousing Cooperative (EVCC) in 1993, which purchased 33 acres, on which the EcoVillage was constructed, from the EcoVillage at Ithaca non-profit Corporation (EVI Inc.) that owns the 176-acre site. Ownership consists of holding shares in the Cohousing Cooperative. Concentrating the dwellings around a pedestrian space results in a footprint for the first neighborhood that covers three and a half acres.

The houses are constructed along environmentally friendly lines, with passive solar collection from fourteen foot high, triple glazed, south facing windows. The walls of the duplexes are super-insulated for minimum heat loss in the winter. Houses share hot water and heating facilities, which further increases efficiency. The roofs of the houses are angled for optimum exposure to the sun, in anticipation of the installation of solar panels at some future date.

The construction of the EcoVillage according to cohousing principles (McCamant & Durrett, 1988) clusters the houses together around a common pedestrian space, and provides a commons house with shared facilities. The facilities include a large kitchen and dining area, community sitting room, patio, shared washers and dryers, children's play room, a suite of offices, a room for teenagers, exercise room, lockers, and a guest room for visitors. Laundry facilities are located in the commons house rather than in individual homes for two reasons. First, having a few commercial machines rather than 30 domestic machines, and having these in the same location, offers considerable savings in the long term, and is a reckoned to be a more ecologically sound decision. Second, this arrangement is intended to offer increased opportunities for residents to interact on a daily basis.

The pedestrian space that runs between the houses has grassy areas, and gravel paths that lead to the individual front doors. It has play areas for children, and picnic tables and chairs for use during the warmer weather. The absence of cars makes it a safe space for children to play, and a pleasant environment in which to share time with neighbors. Cars are parked in covered and open parking areas adjacent to the EcoVillage (See Appendix III), and goods are either carried to the individual homes, or wheeled on one of several carts that are for that purpose.

The first EcoVillage is comprised of thirty households, totaling just under100 people. Of these, there are approximately 65 adults and 35 children. Occupants range from single person households to younger and older families, and some retired people. There are one parent and two parent families, as well as single retired persons and retired couples. A wide range of occupations, such as horticulture, clerical work, social work, teaching, software design, holistic practitioners, and writers are represented. Approximately one third of the working adults in the first neighborhood work partly or solely from the EcoVillage, either from home, or from one of the 8 offices that are incorporated into the commons house.

Residents are required to spend a few hours a week taking part in one of several work teams that carry out maintenance work and take care of essential chores in order to keep the EcoVillage running smoothly. Apart from the cook team and the dish team, there are teams that deal with maintenance of the buildings, roads, land, compost bins, and other essential tasks. Being part of a small team offers another opportunity for social interaction, although finding time to fit the work into residents' busy schedules tends to be problematic.

The physical layout of the EcoVillage encourages contact with other residents. The level of community involvement that each resident engages in is an individual decision. The communal meals that are held two to three times a week are optional, and may either be eaten in the commons house with others, or taken home to eat. A sign-up sheet lets the volunteers who come together to prepare the meal know how many to cook for. The shared meals are intended as social occasions in which residents get to spend time with other adults in an informal setting. Sometimes semi-organized or impromptu events follow the meals, and adults and children stay around to entertain each other.

The manner in which the houses are drawn together effectively clusters the community in the midst of an open landscape. This use of space creates a living metaphor for the ecovillage philosophy. The compactness of the dwelling space amid the openness of the natural environment serves to turn the attention back toward the village itself. The houses look inward to the central pedestrian ribbon that connects them, a safe space that encourages chance encounters between residents. At the same time, the houses also look outwards, away from the community, to the open land that surrounds them. The view is of gently rolling hillsides and a distant forested landscape. The spatial layout of the EcoVillage on the land gives rise to a sense of the place of the community in the wider natural setting, and helps to reinforce an understanding of the responsibility of the community towards the natural environment. The absence of traffic and paved roads in the village brings nature right to the residents' doors.

Thus, through the spatial arrangement of the EcoVillage on the land a fundamental dichotomy is expressed between the human community and the natural environment. EcoVillage residents experience the physical and interpersonal closeness of the community as this is framed by the expansiveness of the land that surrounds them.

Inhabiting a village that is nestled within, and bounded by, an expansive natural landscape offers the potential for the simultaneous reinforcement of community and environmental ideals at the EcoVillage at Ithaca.

The relationship with the land is also furthered by the practice of organic farming at the EcoVillage. Two residents operate an organic farm on the land, using the Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) model, in which subscribers, EcoVillage residents as well as other local residents, share the crop risk with the growers. The organic farm now covers approximately 11 acres of land. The CSA offers residents experience of cooperative involvement with benign land use, in a way that has the potential to strengthen both the community and the natural environment.

4.3. Demographic make-up of the EcoVillage at Ithaca

This section provides basic demographic data for residents at the EcoVillage. The information is based on data gathered during summer of 2003, during the extended research period. This was a time of considerable upheaval at the EcoVillage at Ithaca. Construction of the second neighborhood was well under way and over half of the thirty houses were inhabited. Some people had moved to the first neighborhood while they were constructing their houses in the second neighborhood. Some were selling their first neighborhood houses to move into the second neighborhood where they were building homes that had been able to incorporate more ecologically-benign features as a result of a more open approach by local planning authorities to a second ecovillage.

During the summer of 2003 nearly one third of the houses in the first neighborhood were in a state of transition. Thus, it is not possible to give hard figures on the demographic make-up. The percentages that follow provide an approximate guide to

the make-up of the first neighborhood. Data for the second neighborhood have been included to the extent that they are known. In the first neighborhood, during June and July of 2003 there were roughly 60 adults. Of these, 20% were retired, 30% were middle-aged families with teenage or older children, 50% were parents of younger families. There were approximately 31 children.

The overall EcoVillage population is predominantly white. In the first neighborhood there are three adults of Asian descent who have white partners, with several mixed race children, in addition to three adopted mixed-race children. In addition, during the summer of 2003 there was a Nepali family with two children staying for several months at the EcoVillage, one of whom was the adopted son of a resident who died two years ago and who had run an NGO dedicated to educating Nepali street children. Despite a commitment to racial diversity EVI has not appealed in any significant way to black, Hispanic or Asian people. In the second neighborhood the adults are all white, and there is one adopted black child. In both neighborhoods there are gay and lesbian singles and couples (8%). It is one of these couples that adopted a black child.

The religious background of first neighborhood residents features a mixture of practicing and non-practicing Protestant, Catholic and Jewish adults, with others either following or coming from Quaker, Buddhist, Zen, and other Eastern as well as Native American traditions. Religion is a predominantly personal affair at the EcoVillage. Two examples of religious-inspired gatherings are one resident who was interested in exploring Jewish traditions with others of similar faith at the EcoVillage, and another resident who hosted meditation sessions. While some residents are keen to encourage ritual expressions of EcoVillage unity on a daily basis, others are totally opposed to such displays. Some residents follow beliefs that may be identified as New Age, while others

disdain such practices or disavow religion in any form as a distraction from more pressing social issues. Overall, there is no discernible majority or pattern in religious beliefs at the EcoVillage at Ithaca.

The EcoVillage population is overwhelmingly college-educated, with over 95% having a Bachelors degree or vocational equivalent, and at least 23% having a Masters, PhD or comparable qualification. Aside from the 20% of residents who are retired, occupations represented in the first neighborhood fall mainly into two categories, helping professions and computer software/clerical type jobs. Helping professions include therapist/social worker/nurse/doctor (18%) and teachers/lecturers (26%). There are several computer programmers and software developers (15%). In addition there are three scientists (5%), and two environmental writers (3%). Some income is generated through child-minding and cleaning jobs within the community, either for cash or barter. There are three mothers who stay home to look after their children. The second neighborhood reflects a similar mix with the addition of architects, systems analysts and similar professions. One of the problems with specifying occupations is that some residents, having moved to the region in order to live at the EcoVillage, piece their income together from a combination of teaching, consulting and free lance work while they wait for the right job in their profession to come up. Two residents in the first neighborhood, although retired, still do part time consulting or teaching, and roughly one-third carry out their work either partly or wholly at the EcoVillage.

Income levels within the first neighborhood vary widely. By one resident's estimate during an interview in 2000, roughly one third of them were relatively well-off, one third of them had sufficient to make ends meet, and one third were struggling to stay afloat financially. The researcher's impression in 2003 was that with the turnover that had

taken place in the intervening years this mix may have shifted to the point that fewer

households appeared to be struggling to stay afloat, being absorbed into the category of

having sufficient to make ends meet. However, this impression is only backed by

observation and conversation. Several of the more well-off current and former residents,

according to one EcoVillage document, have made generous donations, or forgiven loans

totaling over $155,000 to EVI over the years to help ease the debt burden that the project

was facing.

The rapid growth of the ecovillage movement over the last twelve years poses

interesting questions regarding the manner in which the particular mix of residents at EVI

affects the processes that the research was designed to capture and the theory that is

proposed. Initial research revealed that the group responsible for realizing the EcoVillage

at Ithaca could broadly be divided into two sets. The first was composed of activists and

others with overt counterculture values, and the second comprised those who had lived

more mainstream lives, albeit with some degree of social awareness. For the second

group, the EVI project was something of a serendipitous event that promised to answer

questions posed by personal circumstances such as divorce or having children grow up

and leave home. Thus, the original group was a particularly disparate collection of

individuals who were responding to a new concept that presented the opportunity for a

domestically-based form of protest (Kirby 2004) as well as the development of

meaningful association through community.

Since then, the growth of ecovillage in a wide range of situations, espousing

varying combinations of ecological and social concern, combined with the establishment

of EVI in its particular situation, has led to the potential for would-be residents to be

much more selective in their choice of ecovillage. Conversations with visitors to the

EcoVillage, as well as with one unhappy resident who was looking to move to an ecovillage that suited his personal requirements for a more ecological orientation, suggested the somewhat paradoxical situation of ecovillage now offering a degree of consumer choice.

Potential residents who visit EVI now can see what the community is like and make some judgment of whether or not it fits their requirements. The community that exists at EVI is a result of the pioneering efforts of the original diverse group and the work that they have put into realizing their vision. However, significant differences in values and ideals continue to motivate residents as they steer the EcoVillage towards the future, providing material to challenge the consensus process, as subsequent chapters will demonstrate.

Despite certain commonalities of purpose, research has recorded instances in which residents have made sweeping assumptions about what EcoVillage values are, based upon the lingering association with countercultural values and the fact that the EcoVillage does present a critique of the modern industrial/consumer paradigm. One example that was related to the researcher by two residents on separate occasions, took place just after 9/11. Around that time the Earth flag was flying above the commons house. It had been put up by one resident who had won it and thought it would be a good thing to fly, representing the EcoVillage's commitment to global concerns and all peoples. Some residents thought that this was disrespectful and unpatriotic and that the American flag should be flying at such a time. What ensued was, according to one resident, the second biggest email exchange that she had ever seen. The Earth flag was removed amid a heated debate over the extent to which residents could tolerate each

other's differences. An incident such as this demonstrates the need for caution in making assumptions about what the EcoVillage as a reductive category stands for.

4.4. History

The following account is based largely on a document titled "EcoVillage at Ithaca: The First 11 Years," written by Liz Walker, director of EVI, and dated November 25, 2002. A second source, also by Liz Walker, is dated 5/27/94, and is a memorandum to HCB on behalf of the steering committee of EVI. Additional sources are cited as used.

The idea to build an ecovillage was conceived in 1991 by Joan Bokaer, during an environmental walk across the U.S called "Global Walk for a Livable World." The vision involved creating a site on which both a meaningful sense of community and a pro-environmental lifestyle could be combined. The idea was to adopt the cohousing model that had been introduced to this country by McCamant and Durrett (1988). In June of that year a week-long envisioning retreat was held, led by Joan Bokaer, and Liz Walker, who is currently director of EcoVillage at Ithaca (EVI). The retreat was held under the aegis of the Center for Religion, Ethics, and Social Policy (CRESP), which is a non-profit organization that is affiliated with Cornell University. Members of the group camped on the land, explored, discussed among themselves and with experts from various fields, and began forging a vision of the community that was to be built there.

In September of that year the decision to purchase the land on West Hill was taken, although the deal was not finally closed until June of 1992. Financing of the $400,000 purchase price was primarily through private loans. EVI had received non-profit status from the IRS, held its first annual meeting and elected a board of directors in January 1992.

The next task was to assemble a residents group. The first meeting, in March 1992, attracted around 50 interested people. By July this had coalesced into a core group of 13 households. A year later this had become 22 committed households out of a possible 30 households that would constitute the first neighborhood. At the same time four land use planning forums were held, which resulted in a set of guidelines for development and an envisioning plan. Decisions were made about placement of neighborhoods, agriculture, water, and a village center.

In the summer of 1993, two future residents, John and Jen Bokaer-Smith leased three acres of land to set up a community supported agriculture (CSA) organic farm. The following year Jerry and Claudia Weisburd were engaged as the design-build team for the first neighborhood. A series of intensive design forums involving the architects, residents, and planners, took place to come up with an acceptable design concept (see Appendix II). Final site plan approval for the first neighborhood was granted after eleven months of meetings with the town planning board in the summer of 1995. In the winter of the same year, special land use district (SLUD) zoning was approved for the EcoVillage site, clearing the way for construction to begin with a Labor Day ground-breaking ceremony, attended by 200 people.

The first families moved into the newly constructed first neighborhood in October 1996. At the same time, a potential financial crisis, caused by an unhappy lender, was resolved through a partnership that bought out the lender, avoiding foreclosure. Further disaster struck in November when a fire, probably caused by a spark from a malfunctioning engine that was pumping insulation into the cavity walls, burned eight homes and the common house to the ground. The damage was covered by the insurance policy, and the homes were rebuilt. But this delay contributed to the first neighborhood

being completed a year behind schedule. At the same time, EVI was one of 50 groups

that were recognized by HUD with an award for their "Building Innovation for

Homeownership Program."

The commons house for the first neighborhood was opened for the first time in

August 1997, in time for a "Fruits of Our Labor Celebration," and dedication of

conservation easement on part of the land. Concurrently, a second neighborhood group

began to meet to plan the construction of the next ecovillage on the site. In addition,

resident Elan Shapiro was hired as a part-time educational consultant to further develop

the EcoVillage's educational mission that had already been developing over the previous

couple of years. Previous work by Cornell and Ithaca College students, as well as

conference sponsorship and the generation of considerable media interest, was further

developed through two forums on envisioning education at EcoVillage, three sustainable

living workshops, living lightly support circles, and planning for an ecovillage education

center. In 1999, along with sister community, Sirius, EVI started a new organization

"Living Routes EcoVillage Educational Consortium," and EVI hosted a "Summer

Sustainability Program." In a further development of the agricultural side of the

EcoVillage, four acres of land was leased to start up an organic berry farm.

The second neighborhood group experienced a major blow in 1999 as many of the

original families dropped out when it appeared that the planned affordable housing

collaboration with Mutual Housing Associates would not come to fruition. Only three

families remained in the second neighborhood group for some time. Eventually more

families came forward, and the new group decided to build in two phases, with fourteen

houses in the first stage. On Labor Day weekend of 2001, EVI celebrated its tenth

birthday with a public gathering on the land with food, speeches, and music. At the same event, a ground-breaking ceremony was held for the second neighborhood.

In 2002, phase one of the second neighborhood was completed, and phase two got underway. The second neighborhood includes a variety of building techniques and features that were prohibited by zoning and planning restrictions in the first neighborhood. These include straw bale construction, and fixtures such as composting toilets, in addition to items that were prohibited by cost, such as photovoltaic cells.

Continuing educational activities in 2002 resulted in a $333,000 grant from the National Science Foundation to EVI and Ithaca College to develop curriculum on the "science of sustainability." Most of this money, however, goes to the college. Additional educational and outreach activities continue to play an integral part in the vision of the EcoVillage at Ithaca.

In 2003, with the continued construction of the second neighborhood, the size of the population at the EVI has virtually doubled. This has led to a degree of change and instability that has had an unsettling effect on residents of the first neighborhood. 3 residents of the first neighborhood have built homes in the second neighborhood, and have either moved or will move into these, selling or renting out their first neighborhood property. In addition, 3 future residents of the second neighborhood either rented houses or rooms in the first neighborhood while the planning and construction process was under way. The vacuum left by the exodus of these members to the second neighborhood, compounded by 2 absentee landlords of first neighborhood properties, has led to feelings of insecurity and worry about the future of the first neighborhood. At one point, one third of the houses in the first neighborhood were in a state of transition. A principal fear was that the reduced population would place an extra burden on remaining committed

community members, who feel that their lives are already too busy. The emergence of these concerns came at the same time as the influx of new faces to the expanded community, and the added strain that these placed on common resources, such as use of the commons house and other shared infrastructure. A great deal of time and creative effort was needed to craft agreements and establish norms that fit the vision of the expanded community.

At the same time as these worries were being faced by the community it was also a time of excitement as the vision of the EcoVillage took a giant leap forward. These changes made this moment in the unfolding history of the EcoVillage at Ithaca an interesting, challenging, and important time to be studying this community.

4.5. Structure: EVI, a nest of organizations.

EVI is constituted of a number of interrelated organizations that have been set up to satisfy varying requirements and functions. The following account of these organizations is based upon "EcoVillage at Ithaca: The First 11 Years," by Liz Walker (2002).

EcoVillage/CRESP is the organization that is in charge of initiating and coordinating the entire project.

EVI Inc. is a non-profit corporation that was created to purchase the land, as CRESP was prevented by its articles from assuming a mortgage. EVI Inc. is responsible for all the land-based activities such as farming and habitat restoration.

To build the first neighborhood, another entity was created, the EcoVillage Cohousing Community (EVCC). This was created to shelter EVI/CRESP and EVI Inc. from the risks associated with housing development. In addition, the new neighborhood could not be exposed to the land debt.

The community supported agriculture project was started as a small business, West Haven Farm, leasing land from EVI Inc.

The second neighborhood also required to be initiated as a separate organization, EcoVillage SONG Cooperative, Inc., in order to avoid exposing the first neighborhood to the risks of financing another major building project.

Finally, once these two neighborhoods were built, and sharing infrastructure and land, another non-profit corporation was formed to handle these issues, the EcoVillage at Ithaca Village Association (VA).

Ownership of homes at the EcoVillage at Ithaca follows the principles of co-operative housing. Residents own shares in the EcoVillage at Ithaca cohousing cooperative (EVCC), with a value proportional to the size of their dwelling. Capital shares of the lessor are allocated to the leasehold number of a particular residence. Share ownership also includes access to the Commons House, and the land. Regular maintenance fees are assessed to cover common maintenance and repairs.

Residents are free to sell their houses at any time, and must submit their intention in writing to the Board of Directors. The expectation, so far informally regulated, has been that residents will introduce potential new residents to the community to give both a chance to assess their mutual "fit." The introduction of a "flip tax," assessed as a proportion of the difference between the original purchase price and the sale price of the house was set at 20%. This was felt to be fair in light of the fact that there were no seller or agent fees involved with selling EcoVillage homes. It is only recently that homes began to sell for substantially more than the original building cost.

4.6.   Community Decision-making, Interaction and Participation:

The form of decision-making that has been adopted at EVI is the consensus model. The consensus model that was adopted at the EcoVillage, which was introduced by the founders and based upon their experience in previous groups and organizations, builds on a combination of the Quaker model and the model that was used in the antinuclear movement in California in the 1970s. The Quaker model assumes that individuals hold a similar spiritual reference point in common, while the antinuclear version assumed that people have the good of the group in common. A fuller description of the role of consensus in the development of the EcoVillage will be postponed until Chapter 6, where its relationship to other processes will be described.

The ways in which residents communicate with each other at the EcoVillage may be defined according to the degree of structure that each mode exhibits. These may be either, structured, semi-structured, or unstructured. A brief definition of the principal channels of communication is as follows.

1.   Meetings and groups (structured). These occasions follow a format that includes a specified time and place, and usually includes an agenda. Thus, residents gather to discuss specific topics in a structured manner. There are individual meetings for each of the two neighborhoods, VA meetings for both neighborhoods, EVI board meetings, as well as various committee and sub-committee meetings that take place. In addition a variety of meetings may be arranged for varying purposes, from exploring relationships within the community, to re-visioning the mission of the EcoVillage.

2.   Email (semi structured). The village email list serves as a forum for communication of ideas, opinions, news, requests, and the dissemination if information. There are several email lists to which residents may post their email, depending upon the nature of the

communication and the intended audience. The lists vary in the degree to which they are considered public or more private, and residents choose to send an email to a particular list dependent upon the extent to which they wish their message to be publicized. On an average day there may be anything from 20-40 emails posted around the community. Village email lists include:

I. <All>: A list that includes residents of both neighborhoods, ex residents, and some friends of the EcoVillage. This is the most public of all the lists, and one which some residents hesitate to use for any kind of contentious community business.

II. <Frog>: A list for first neighborhood residents only. It is used to discuss ideas and topics, state opinions, ask favors, borrow and lend, solicit advice, et cetera.

III. <Song>: A list for second neighborhood residents only. The purpose is the same as the Frog list, but for the second neighborhood.

IV. <Announce>: A list reserved for community announcements such as upcoming meetings, and minutes of previous meetings. No discussion takes place through this list.

V. <Political>: A list for non-community related business that is used to disseminate political and other ideas, share articles, et cetera.

3.   Communal meals, work teams (semi structured). These events bring people together for a specific purpose, but with no formal agenda, other than to eat or carry out a task together.

4.   Day to day interaction (unstructured). Regular daily activities at the EcoVillage tend to result in residents crossing paths with considerable frequency. These chance encounters provide an opportunity to catch up and to discuss community business in an unstructured way.

4.7.   Relations between EVI and the world

The relationship between EVI and the world can be described according to two sets of factors. One is the educational and demonstration orientation of the project that seeks to make an impact on the surrounding culture. The other comprises the day-to-day interactions that residents experience with the world beyond the physical boundaries of the EcoVillage. The educational activities of EVI were briefly described in section 4.4. In addition to college-based educational initiatives, the EcoVillage receives many visitors and journalists from around the world. It also maintains an updated website on which a regular newsletter and list of upcoming events are posted.

The educational and demonstrative efforts of EVI highlight a commitment to social change that defines a sense of connection to the surrounding culture rather than expressing a desire to retreat from society. Conversations and observations confirm that this is a value held by most of the residents, although only a few are actively involved in the more formal educational and promotional activities of EVI. Many residents express their connection to the surrounding culture in more personal ways, including work, outside interests, political activities, and family ties.

The relatively large number of residents employed in the helping professions was an early observation by the researcher of the manner in which residents are engaged with the surrounding culture. Several residents are also involved in NGOs, and charitable works. An awareness of the effects of social injustice runs through residents' accounts of their activities, and also finds expression in a level of political engagement with the wider culture. Political discussion groups between residents act as a means of exploring events that are taking place worldwide. A great deal of political inquiry was observed to occur on email as residents swap information about candidates and their relative positions.

Various residents are involved in forms of activism that connect them with the surrounding culture, locally and nationally.

During research it was observed that several groups whose members were drawn from the surrounding area met at the EcoVillage. The commons house presents a good venue for a relatively large group of people to meet without the need to hire a space. Examples include a square-dancing group and a parent-teacher organization, both of which contained EcoVillage residents. The CSA run organic farm also draws its membership from the surrounding area. During the summer months members arrive weekly to pick up their produce.

A connection that EcoVillage residents hold as being particularly important is with family members. During initial research in 2000, several of those interviewed revealed that they had moved to the region to be nearer family. Family connections were often mentioned during conversations as reasons for trips, and in connection with being away from the EcoVillage for any period of time. Concern with aging, and experience with aging relatives has led to some discussions suggesting that the third neighborhood should include some form of assisted living, or units suitable for older inhabitants. Two residents have experienced age as a factor in having to leave the EVI. For one it was a case of a resident requiring care that could not be provided at the EcoVillage, and for the other it was a case of having to move to be with elderly parents. The EcoVillage's professed commitment to sustainability has been tested by these kind of events, providing a focus for some residents to envisage solutions that can be incorporated into construction of the next neighborhood. This is one example that demonstrates the provisional and evolving nature of the EcoVillage at Ithaca as residents work towards creating solutions to the problems they see in the surrounding culture.

Although all ecovillage share some basic precepts, they are being developed in a wide range of localities and situations. Thus, while it is not possible to broadly characterize the manner in which all ecovillage view their relationship with their surrounding culture, the EcoVillage at Ithaca can be described as maintaining close and interdependent ties with the world around it. While there is considerable difference among residents in degrees of motivation and commitment to particular causes and goals, overall EVI expresses a concern to foster social change that requires a high degree of interaction with the surrounding culture ideologically, politically, and imaginatively. On a personal level, residents maintain their connections beyond the EcoVillage while experiencing the possibilities for increased social interaction that are offered within the EcoVillage.

There is considerable communication between residents at the EVI across all the dimensions outlined in the previous section as well as between residents and the surrounding culture as presented in this section. The work of developing a set of normative values and behaviors within the community requires considerable exchange between residents. The following three chapters explore the essential processes that were observed to take place in pursuit of establishing equitable and sustainable social and ecological relationships at the EcoVillage at Ithaca.

CHAPTER 5.

5.0.　Processes: the balancing of individual needs, the needs of the community, and the

needs of the ecological environment

From a historical perspective, an early document produced by the group, dated

9/12/91, reflected the intention to "create a living example of a way of life that is

ecologically and socially sustainable." A broad statement of purpose stressed three

principal goals. These were to create a coherent community, an attitude of stewardship

towards the ecological environment, and ideal conditions for the wellbeing and growth of

its residents. The balancing of the respective needs of these three principle forces has

comprised the major work of the residents of the EcoVillage.

The major area of development at the EcoVillage at Ithaca has been the balancing

of individual needs with the needs of the community, and the needs of the ecological

environment. These three areas cover the spectrum of concerns that are held to be

important in the development of a sustainable lifestyle. Residents work daily on

integrating these three, sometimes competing, aspects of their life-world into a set of

practices that both answers their personal needs, and offers an acceptable alternative to

the dominant social paradigm. Thus, the decisions that are made, and the norms that

develop, are affected both by factors that are internal to the EcoVillage community, and

by external social factors that arise from the situation of the EVI in American culture.

From a detailed examination of the data that was gathered, which was focused

towards identifying the processes that are responsible for the manner in which the

EcoVillage is developing, certain patterns began to emerge. It was recognized that the

movement towards redefining social and ecological relationships can be broadly divided

into three inter-related areas of investigation. These three sets of processes are defined as:

1. the public/private continuum

2. communion, consensus and legislation

3. ideals, principles, and vision

These areas are not independently functioning realms, but represent an attempt by the researcher to tease apart the interdependent processes at the EcoVillage in order to reveal the personal, social, and ecological drivers that are responsible for the movement towards realization of the vision. A brief description of each of these three areas follows as a means of providing some context, prior to a full exploration of each area in the following three chapters.

The public/private continuum is a categorization that is useful for investigating the manner in which residents invest spatial elements of the EcoVillage site with particular potentialities, dependent upon the precise reading of its spaces. The manner in which residents negotiate the public/private continuum in their daily lives is linked to the ways in which they consider their individual needs against the needs of the community. Defining the extent to which a particular space represents a public or private venue for behavior becomes intertwined with considerations about individual expectations in the face of potentially countermanding community demands. This adjustment of self to the environment is complicated at the EcoVillage by a multiplicity of social spaces that depend upon a certain degree of consensus for their definition. The public/private continuum is explored in section 5.1, in which residents can be seen in the process of actively negotiating, and sometimes struggling with, how to establish appropriate relationships between self and family, and community.

The second set of processes that were defined have been identified as communion, consensus and legislation. These are three intertwined processes that are fundamental to the successful development of the EcoVillage. The first of these, communion, highlights the existence of the community as an affective element in residents' lives, and describes the sense of connection that residents seek to create for each other. While the term *communion* tends to suggest religious overtones, the use of the term in this research builds upon at least two of its several other dictionary definitions;

> 4. interchange or sharing of thoughts or emotions; intimate communication: *communion with nature.* 5. the act of sharing, or holding in common; participation (Websters, 1996).

It is through the development of open communication, trust, and an attitude of reciprocity, that residents can work towards balancing their needs with those of the community. Communion reflects the stock of commonly held experience that is embodied in the other members of the community, and which defines the community as an affective force in residents' lives. The development of a sense of communion involves a process of exchange between residents that is often not smooth, automatic, or as ideal as the term suggests. However, commitment to the process tends to create an overall sense of progress in the face of the inevitable ups and downs that are involved in creating close community. Communion is twinned with a process termed legislation, the establishment of guidelines and norms that is realized through the process of achieving consensus on the many issues that have faced the community since its inception. The processes of communion, consensus, and legislation will be discussed in section 5.2.

Ideals, principles and vision captures residents' intentions as these affect the development of the community. In seeking to balance the needs of the individual against the needs of the community residents include not only the human population, but also the

wider ecological community that makes up the EcoVillage land. The needs of the ecological side of the EcoVillage find expression through a range of views held by the members of the community. Individual residents' ecological vision varies proportionately to two other factors, their vision for the community, and an ideal of personal growth. These three ideals, which call for reconstitution on all three levels, personal, communal, and ecological, are largely expectations that are brought to the project by residents and become the subject of negotiation and adaptation in the growth and development of EVI. These ideals, principles, and visions will be discussed at greater length in section 5.3.

5.1.   The public/private continuum: accommodating to the community

This chapter explores residents' negotiations around what are commonly understood as boundaries and boundary issues, referring to the limits by which the individual sets his or her relationships with others. However, for the purposes of this research, utilizing the notion of a continuum from the very public to the very private avoids the kind of edge-based, containment-oriented conceptualizations that attach to the concept of boundaries. This approach is in line with the intention of avoiding conceptualizations of self as an entity in favor of exploring selfhood as a process. Consequently, residents are viewed not as independent containers with adjustable edges, but as interdependent persons engaged in processes of mutual accommodation as they adapt to the roles and new definitions that arise in the course of their daily lives. The public/private continuum implies the potential for movement through engagement with the processes of developing the EcoVillage vision.

The spatial arrangement of the dwellings at the EcoVillage at Ithaca presents a unique set of physical conditions that require residents to make social adaptations in various ways. The principles of cohousing aim to provide clustered, pedestrian-accessed housing that facilitates community interaction. The provision of shared communal spaces challenges current norms around the public/private continuum. Thus, residents' balancing of their own needs against those of the community is closely linked to spatial considerations, as various locations become sites of participation or contestation in the expression of the vision and ideals of the EcoVillage movement. The public/private continuum is a descriptive space that accounts for the positioning of individuals, on their own or as members of couples and families, as they strive to establish equitable relationships between themselves and their social and ecological environments.

Residents interact in a variety of situations and spaces in which degrees of public-ness or private-ness change according to their construal of the situation. The emergence of new topics for decision making can reveal profound disagreement over appropriate definitions and behaviors once dialog gets under way between residents. These themes will be developed using examples from topics that were current during data gathering in the summer of 2003.

Western individualistic societies, in general, place a greater emphasis on physical privacy than do other cultures. In part this may be due to decades of rising standards of living that have allowed increasing numbers of nuclear families to own their homes. The American ideal of individual family home ownership took off after WWII. In 1943, 43% of Americans owned their own homes. By 1960 this had risen to 62%. Eighty five percent of these new houses had been built in new suburbs such as Levittown where white, middle-class and working-class Americans found new opportunities for privacy (Coontz, 1992).

For many Americans, the vision of the dream house came to dominate other expressions of hope for the good life, such as the model town or model neighborhood (Hayden, 1986). The growth in the construction of new homes on suburban lots underpinned a new level of economic activity that led to the transformation of the American landscape. Provision of public space and social services took second place to the development of private acreages, privately serviced through mass produced automobiles.

Privacy and self-reliance have become enshrined as American values. However, the sustainability of the social system that has resulted from these values has become

increasingly questioned by many. Other challengers point to the ecological consequences of present spatial practices in regard to housing development and land use. Residents of the EcoVillage at Ithaca have reacted on both counts. The concentration of the footprint of the dwellings that leaves large areas of land undisturbed and the pro-environmental construction methods used in the building are a response to the ecological consequences of standard housing practices. The adoption of the principles of cohousing that promote interaction between residents is also facilitated by the concentration of the dwellings around a pedestrian space. The major social consequence of the spatial arrangement of the EcoVillage settlement is its challenge to conventional notions of privacy.

The public/private continuum at the EcoVillage at Ithaca has two related dimensions. Firstly, it involves a spatial framework that ranks degrees of privacy from the very private interior spaces of the individual homes to the shared community spaces and the individual offices. At the same time the public/private continuum is expressed in interpersonal terms, as the private and community spaces provide the venues for consensually defined behaviors. There exists at the EcoVillage a gradient between public visibility and personal privacy that is significantly different from the dominant norm. It is a difference that arises as a function of the spatial arrangement of the dwellings. This layout gives rise to a subtly altered experience of the world on a day-to-day basis at the EcoVillage, and suggests an accommodation to the social conditions that arise from the physical structuring of the dwellings.

Conventional distinctions between what is public and what is private at the EcoVillage are somewhat blurred, if not radically altered. Residents' ownership of their home consists of holding shares in the EcoVillage Cohousing Cooperative (EVCC), their

share allocation depending upon the size of their home. In all other respects, ownership of EcoVillage homes has generally been accepted as paralleling conventional notions of home ownership. Individuals have sole right to occupy their dwelling however they choose, and the right to sell their homes whenever they choose. The front and back doors represent boundaries between a strictly private interior space and an exterior and more public space. The unique nature of the task of developing and adapting to the EcoVillage space is emphasized in the following consecutive items from the minutes of an EVCC meeting held on 04/08/97, which would seem to point out the obvious.

The carports are private and should be entered only with permission.

Backyards are private not public spaces.

While the above factors anchor the EcoVillage dwelling pattern in more conventional modes, the cohousing principles that guided the layout significantly alter community interaction and challenge conventionally accepted boundaries between the public and private domains. The construction of a commons house as a shared resource takes some of the conventional functions of the individual dwelling and places them in a more communal setting. The commons house at the EcoVillage at Ithaca incorporates a large kitchen, with bulk freezers, and large-scale cooking facilities. A dining area with tables and seating for large numbers provides the location for parties and for communal meals that are held two or three times a week. There is also an outdoor patio area with seating. Attached to the dining area is a large sitting room that may be used by residents anytime, and is also used for meetings of various kinds. The commons house also includes a large children's play room, a guest room, shower and toilet, a suite of offices, a

dedicated teenager's room, a small gym, an exercise/yoga room, and a communal laundry and drying facility. The commons house provides an extension of the individual home offering an opportunity for various activities to take place in a more communal environment.

The children's play room offers an extension of the individual home that allows children to play with other children, while care-givers get a chance to either leave their children with other parents, or socialize at the same time. The guest room may be used by resident's visitors if they do not have the space in their own home. The teenager's room provides a space for teenagers to gather and be teenagers with less risk of upsetting others in their own houses. The large sitting room offers a space for residents to host meetings that would be too cramped in their own homes, or just to meet informally as was observed on several occasions during the course of research.

In these and other ways, the commons house acts as an extension of the individual resident's home. Norms and guidelines for use of this space need to be worked out in the community, and have developed over the years. The extent to which residents conceive of the various functions of the commons house as representing extensions of their homes reveals aspects of the public/private continuum. Questions about such topics as acceptable behavior among the playing children, permissible behaviors in the teen room, dietary and food preparation practices in the kitchen, and care and maintenance of the communal spaces reflect individuals' private preferences and the need to accommodate these in the more communal setting of the commons house. In this sense it is both a private and a public setting at the same time. The commons house was designed to provide these specific functions and to act as an extension of the individual home. Thus, residents are encouraged to incorporate the commons house into their understanding of

their EcoVillage home, and the strict division between the public and the private becomes somewhat blurred.

A similar attitude to other parts of the EcoVillage space is evident. The pedestrian space that connects the houses provides opportunities for residents to encounter each other on a regular basis. Residents' front yards are generally very small, extending from five to fifteen feet from the houses. About 150 feet from the commons house there is a pond that is used by residents for swimming in the summer months (see Appendix III, IV). It is a widely shared resource that demands a high degree of mutual agreement among residents about its use, especially with regard to such issues as safety of children, potential contamination, and a general sense of etiquette. During the summer of 2003 there was considerable debate among residents on the question of safety, and the issue of whether to permit nudity at the pond. This latter topic, in particular, evoked the question of the relationship between public and private space at the EcoVillage, and will be discussed in depth in a separate chapter.

One of the first things that a visitor to the EcoVillage will notice when walking up and down the pedestrian space that runs between the houses is the relatively high degree of visibility into the individual homes. A general lack of curtains, combined with the proximity of the houses and the relatively large windows, provides an open view into each home. This degree of visibility goes both ways, and as a stranger in the pedestrian space during the day, it is easy to feel that there are many eyes watching. At night, however, the view goes one way as there is minimal exterior lighting in the pedestrian space, and it is especially easy to see from there into residents' homes. Conversations

with residents revealed a generally positive attitude to this degree of visibility, and it was generally held to be a factor that helped to promote the sense of community cohesiveness.

The internal layout of the houses tends to place the kitchen facing the pedestrian space. Thus, for many residents, especially those on the south side of the neighborhood, it is the kitchen area that is most visible from the pedestrian space. Many of the homes on the south side have sitting rooms that are sunk down two or three steps, which creates privacy in this area without the need for curtains. However, these sitting rooms have fourteen foot high windows that face out across the open fields and the pond, and a path that runs from between twenty and fifty feet from the windows. Many of these windows do not have curtains or blinds of any kind. The houses on the north side of the neighborhood tend to have both kitchen and living/dining room areas facing onto the pedestrian space. Large south-facing windows that capture solar energy in the winter provide a high degree of visibility into each family's living space in the absence of curtains or blinds.

In order to quantify and explore the topic of the two way visibility into and out of individual homes a six point scale was created to assess the degree of visibility into each individual home in the evening. It was felt that a six point scale was the optimum scale for capturing the variation that was initially observed. Each house was rated according to this scale on five evenings over the course of two weeks. The scale used the following criteria:

5. full visibility, no obstruction
4. light net curtain or unclosed blinds allowing general visibility
3. plants or other objects that partially obstruct visibility, and/or net curtains
2. mostly obstructed, heavy net curtains, blinds half closed, only slight view inside
1. curtains drawn or blinds closed, no visibility at night
0. no visibility day or night

From this scale it can be recognized that an individual score of 3 or above represents a relatively high degree of visibility into the home. Objects like plants that partially obscure the view seemed generally to not necessarily have been put there for that specific purpose, and were not counted if they were too small to interfere with visibility. However, they sometimes have the effect of breaking the otherwise clear line of sight into the house, in which case they were scored. Net curtains, by contrast are usually put there to alter the degree of visibility into the home. In combination with plants or other ornaments, net curtains provide slightly more of a barrier than net curtains on their own, which receive a score of 4.

At the time of this study one house in the neighborhood was unoccupied. Thus N=29. The average score for the 29 households was 3.41. Out of the 29 households, 17 never varied their window setting over the course of the five observations, or varied their window settings slightly (it is also possible that the rater's judgment varied enough in some in-between cases to bump a rating up or down on successive nights). The mean score for this group was 3.6. Only 12 residents' windows onto the pedestrian space were subject to considerable variation. Often this involved drawing of curtains that had been previously open, or the lowering or closing of blinds. During the day curtains and blinds are opened to permit light to enter, and may or may not be closed depending upon the events of the particular evening. The mean score for this group was lower, at 3.1, as would be expected. There were no houses that consistently scored a 0 during the day.

Over a quarter (27.6%) consistently scored 4 or higher for visibility into the home at night. Only 3 houses (10.3%) consistently scored 2 or less. Excluding these consistently high and low scoring homes, the mean for the remaining 18 homes was 3.18.

With reference to the scale that was used for this study, an overall mean score of 3.41 demonstrates a relatively high degree of visibility into the individual homes in the evening. Residents generally appeared to accept that other residents would be able to see clearly into their homes from the pedestrian space in the evening, as well as during the day. This result serves to quantify and confirm the observation that residents, for the most part, maintained a casual attitude towards visibility into their homes.

Different reasons were offered by residents for the variations that were observed. One reason that was suggested was to remove glare or excessive light at certain times of the day. A second reason for drawing curtains or blinds was to create a temporary physical and psychic break from the community. There are some days when residents just don't want to be so exposed to the rest of the community, a point that several residents will refer to in following quotations.

A third reason for changes in levels of visibility involved attempts to encourage "family time." There are many children in the community, which in many ways makes it an ideal place to live with children. However, the relatively close environment of the pedestrian space, where children tend to gather and play, means that there is an ever-present distraction that draws them outside. For parents who take spending quality time with their children as a family value, it becomes difficult to sustain when the children would rather be outside with their friends. Drawing curtains becomes one means of focusing children on being inside, facilitating such activities as mealtimes, homework, and bedtime.

The question of maintaining a sense of the family as a well defined unit, in the face of the opportunities presented by EcoVillage life, is one that all parents at the EcoVillage face. While all parents agree that the EcoVillage community is a good

environment to bring up children, it poses a different set of challenges to parents in terms

of negotiating the public/private continuum. An interview with one set of parents of two

pre-teen children highlighted the situations that they face.

> Researcher: So have you found it (living at the EcoVillage) has changed your relationship with your kids?
>
> S: I think that it does in terms of, well the Sherrod's said this to us originally, that finding where you draw the line between family time and community time may be difficult. And I think that is something that we haven't entirely sorted out. How to carve out certain periods of time that are going to be family time, so we don't spill out into the community. How do we make time to develop our identity as a family unit.
>
> K: Yeah, if we have decided that we are going to have a family evening together, but there are all these kids playing outside, and there's something happens, or you know, spontaneous things happen, it turns out to be a beautiful evening, people are going to go for a walk. Then we have to decide whether we are going to respect the decision we made to stay together as a family, that type of thing. But more often than not those turn out to be just richer possibilities.
>
> Researcher: Then there's things like schoolwork that they have to do..
>
> K: Yeah, Ben has to do homework. That's been hard, yeah. And if we go to a commons house meal, and the boys attend the school that we teach at, and so if we stay late it's because we are working in our classrooms and they join the after school program, then we join up and drive home, go to the meal, and they want to go outside and play afterwards. Then we come home and it's rush, rush, do your homework, get ready for bed. Then we don't have the family time. I guess we feel that they have had a nice evening, a nice opportunity that's good for them. We haven't spent an hour or two together reading or doing some family thing, but I think that has been a reorganization of our thinking.
>
> S: Right, and part of our family identity is participation in this community. And also the school community. I don't think they necessarily feel a loss of time with us. It's us...
>
> Researcher: Yeah, they could make that choice, hang around the house...
>
> S: But given the choice, we are nowhere near as much fun.

This interview excerpt highlights a common experience at the EcoVillage for

parents as they strive to maintain definition between the nuclear family and the

EcoVillage community. It is an issue that all parents face as the children explore the

possibilities that living in such a community offers for them. The children's sociability

and preference for spending time together tends to reduce their need or desire to spend

time in their own homes with their own parents.

This state of affairs also translates to mealtimes at the commons house, where children most often want to eat together rather than with their parents. Some families try to institute a policy of "we eat as a family, then you can play." But parents often give up on this, recognizing that for the children, eating together can be a rich experience, and for the parents themselves, eating and conversing with other adults is preferable. Some parents however are reluctant to leave their children to eat unsupervised for fear that they will not eat enough, or will not eat the right foods. Eating in the commons house may then challenge parents' values around nutrition. This kind of situation provides another example of residents' negotiations with their children around the notion of the family, and the promotion of particular family values in the context of the larger social group.

Many of the families at the EcoVillage do not have television, or limit viewing to specific programs or occasional videos. This restrictive attitude towards television viewing goes along with a set of values around child-rearing that is commonly expressed at the EcoVillage. These values include close family interaction and ties, healthy eating habits, providing informal educational opportunities alongside more formal education, and inculcating a set of ethical standards that revolve around cooperation and consideration rather than competition. However, even though these are commonly expressed values, individual parenting styles and interpretations of these child-rearing goals was observed to vary considerably.

> Researcher: Yeah, I guess when you are closer to people then parenting styles may be more of a source of conflict.
> D: Yeah, it is, it is. So, you know, we have had to figure out ways to work with it. Now, Angela's parents have a very different parenting style than we do, the people across the way do too. And, it causes problems as well as it's a rich experience. My kids are a little more, you know, I'm more firm with them, I'm more structured about what they can and can't do. We have more set times, they have more structure and we ask more of them. And that's been difficult. All those kind of headaches I didn't anticipate that we'd have to deal with, but I think, you know, if handled patiently and lovingly, and if I take care of my own needs about

that too, then in the long run it will be good for all of us. But some days I wish it weren't there because it's a pain in the neck. So, but, but, Angela is wonderfully creative because she's been allowed from the time she's been a little baby to hands on with just about everything, unless it would cause her bodily ill or somebody else, you know. So, she's very fun to play with. You see the good sides in the things that maybe, in my mind aren't as advantageous. So we struggle with that. Sometimes I think Jeez, what am I living in here, sort of like a slum where everybody is on top of everybody else. And that's when I know I need a little space....

We have to work hard for family time, and for time to ourselves. Sometimes I wish there were no other kids out there, I would wake up and it would be just our family, just give us a weekend to be kind of, to be by ourselves. And, the richness is great, but I think that even for the kids it can be too stimulating. To say, you know, you can do this when there aren't other things available to you. Tonight is going to be family night, we are going to do whatever with the family. We struggled with that for a while and now they don't as much because they know that when they are doing what we are doing then they will enjoy that too. But that was more of a struggle initially. So, sometimes it feels like a circus. ...But, I always joke and say it beats loneliness and isolation. So, we're neither isolated nor lonely.

This excerpt gives some indication of the ways in which individual family values are often challenged by the increased permeability of the family as the children interact on a daily basis with children whose parents apply different standards. Children are exposed to things that they would not otherwise be exposed to living in a more conventional nuclear family setting. As one resident expressed it:

Joe had his first Popsicle and ice-cream cone that way, there were kids out on the front porch having something, and he asks what's that. And, so, you know, it's so close together, pretty much whatever you do right outside your house is public play.

Such considerations become even more critical as children move more freely between their home and the homes of their friends. Considerable informal exchange takes place between parents of families whose children visit each other's homes on the subject of what is and is not allowed. Children's behavior must also be attended to in the more public spaces, such as the commons house, where similar standards to those that would

apply in the child's home must be upheld. However, parents sometimes hold different ideas as to what kinds of behavior they will allow, as well as holding different expectations of how their own children will be dealt with in common settings.

The public/private continuum in terms of the nuclear family and child-rearing practices at the EcoVillage expresses the challenges that parents face in establishing and maintaining definition between the family and the community. The experience of being a family at the EcoVillage, as revealed by the preceding excerpts, is both demanding and enriching. Parents simultaneously relinquish control over certain aspects of their children's experience, while assuming responsibility for other residents' children in various ways. In order to achieve this there needs to be a high degree of communication between parents, and receptivity to different values and ideals. While there can be no specific set of norms and values with regard to child-rearing, there needs to be a relatively inclusive range of tolerances, the specifics of which are negotiated on an ongoing informal basis. In part this is facilitated by common ideals that underlie the EcoVillage philosophy. One couple referred to this factor in comparing the EcoVillage with their previous situation.

> T: And to be in a community where adults share core values is really, we feel very lucky to be in that situation. Our neighbors who were next door were really nice people, but had just bought their eight year old son one of those dirt bikes, like riding about the backyard. And our kids were saying, mom, he's contributing to global warming. I should go tell him to stop. And I said, "Why don't you not." Same kid, you know, his parents buy him a bb gun, and he goes off to the woods with dad, for the right of passage, you know.
> J: It's just not that kind of examined life, although they are very nice people.
> T: Very much steeped in the values of the dominant culture.

The environment of the EcoVillage offers children an opportunity to develop relationships with other adults. It is quite common to see young children sitting on the

knees of adults who are not their parents, or witness older children having serious

conversations with other adults. This is one more way in which the notion of the

conventional nuclear family as a well-defined entity is challenged at the EcoVillage. A

greater degree of intergenerational interaction provides a range of adults with different

skills and temperaments to mentor children, effectively creating a kind of extended

family experience. The consensus amongst parents is that it can be challenging at times,

but overall the rewards outweigh the extra effort that has to be put in to establishing a set

of workable limits for each family. These points are confirmed in the following quotation

from a recent arrival at the EcoVillage.

> Well, I just want to say we moved here about a year ago. This is really our
> anniversary, and we have felt extremely welcomed into the community, and I
> have two children. Both of the children have found lots of friends, but they have
> also found grownups to do things with. Peter runs with John B sometimes, and he
> goes to stamp club with Jo, and he goes next door and reads with Sheila, and Kim
> reads with Paula, and they both help in cooking. And we just feel really integrated
> into the community and it is just really wonderful

Returning to the notion of visibility, it is a factor that not only challenges the

boundaries between the family and the community, but equally affects individuals as they

define their own personal positioning with regard to the public/private continuum. The

house windows that face directly onto the pedestrian space require a response from new

residents as they arrive and begin to fit themselves in to EcoVillage life.

> Researcher: Do you find that easy to manage, the boundary between having your
> space and being in the community? Is that something you have to struggle with or
> is that easy?
> L: I have been here for four years, so you kind of figure it out. Initially it was
> really hard to have these windows that faced out on everything, and people could
> look right in on everything. But I think it sort of develops, like in Japan, everyone
> lived in paper-thin houses, at one point that was the thing, and you could hear
> everything that was going on. And you develop a not hearing, you know. So that,
> I think you develop that, a kind of understanding of a not trespassing on someone
> else's space, without having to have a big barricade that keeps you from doing

that. And you develop more of a tolerance, you know. And, we know each other better than just strangers on a block would, so you can allow a little more because you can trust a little more. And, you know, if you want to be private in your home you can, you shut the blinds, you lock the door, you put a sign up that says, do not disturb. And you take the phone off the hook and nobody can bother you. And, so you can, and I think part of that whole thing behind having a cohousing community that you live very close but you have your own private spaces, because the communes really didn't fly too well, because people really didn't have enough private space. But, you know, suburbia doesn't.. well it flies, but it is not really very healthy. But people definitely have enough private space, so this tries to incorporate the two. And, I don't know, it pretty much works for me.

In discussing the degree of visibility from the pedestrian space into the houses, it was pointed out that it is a two way visibility. Being more visible is a factor that residents appear to adapt to, finding that it has benefits, such as providing a sense of reassurance. An interview with a recently arrived couple, settling in to life at the EcoVillage provides additional insight into the process of adapting to the greater sense of visibility. Their house, on the north side of the village, has both kitchen and sitting room facing onto the pedestrian space. A glass door looks out from the kitchen beside fourteen feet high by eight feet wide windows that look out onto one of the narrower areas of the pedestrian space. Passers-by are only a few feet from their window.

K: I guess, I was concerned initially that I wouldn't feel the kind of privacy that I had previously enjoyed in having an acre of land in our two previous houses. One was more rural than the other. So, that concerned me a little bit. Will I have a place that I am retreating to, as my home. And actually, that expectation has not felt like a concern after moving in. We have quite a bit of privacy.
Researcher: That's interesting. One of the first things that I noticed when I came here was how public everything seemed when you walk up and down here. And you don't have curtains here. And yet, you are still saying that you feel it is private enough.
K.: I felt initially very conspicuous walking through the common space. You know, like here I am doing my laundry. But now it just feels like my space, or our collective space. I feel at home in it. I have just shed that that self consciousness, I suppose.
Researcher: do you find yourself looking in people's windows when you walk up there?

K: yes, well, sometimes, I guess I do. But, it depends upon, if you see that there are people, like there could be somebody walking by right now, and if they look over, well, I will give them a wave. That happens quite naturally. So the public and private space is, there is quite an open window to it. Especially until we get blinds. But I don't feel..., at the same time, people are going about their business, it's pretty private. People will acknowledge, they know that you are 6 ft. from the path in your house, but it doesn't really feel like that.

S: I feel more conspicuous when there are people taking a tour, people I don't recognize. They are coming through when we are sitting eating breakfast or something. It kind of feels weird. Like being in a cage.

K: There are so many visitors that it doesn't feel like a big deal. We know when people are here as friends and family or residents. You can sort of tell, as opposed to interns, or people who are here to study the place.

S: But in terms of being aware of other people, and seeing them through their windows or whatever, there's, I don't know, it's kind of nice to know that, oh, there's Joan cooking dinner or whatever. There's a community connection element to it. There's a lot of impromptu connection that wouldn't happen if we didn't all see each other through our windows and our doors, you know.

K: It's like, oh, Jan is home so I was going to call but I can see her so I will just pop over.

S: I saw Nola through the window so I stopped her to ask her about her friend who does house cleaning.

K: Which is interesting, because in our suburban neighborhood that we lived in it would have felt more like a kind of violation to be doing that, whereas here it's more kind of neighborly. I don't think that people are keeping tabs on each other.

The interview segment highlighted above clearly identifies significant differences between the residential experience of the EcoVillage compared to a regular suburban neighborhood. Despite the relative closeness of the EcoVillage experience, this resident shed a sense of self-consciousness in the public spaces, and expressed the development of a sense of privacy that was surprising, given the public-ness of the EcoVillage environment. With regard to seeing and being seen through neighbors windows this resident revealed the role of perceived intent and relationship to both seer and seen in evaluating the experience. A fundamental difference between his EcoVillage neighbors and previous suburban neighbors is revealed in commenting that it would have felt like a violation in the suburban neighborhood. At the EVI, however, it is experienced as "kind of neighborly." The previous interview demonstrates a progression experienced by a

family from a self-awareness and concern over privacy to a new experience of social interaction and interconnectedness that constitutes a distinct change of habitus.

A conversation with another resident amplified the sentiments expressed above, stating that some people explicitly have said that they like to be able to look out and see who is passing. Some people just do not want a high degree of privacy. There has also evolved a culture of not staring in people's windows and invading their privacy too much. People glance maybe as they pass, but often aren't really interested in what is going on in other people's houses. Visibility functions as an informal mode of connection. This resident also commented that this is part of an evolving culture of how people deal with each other. It is a little the same with regard to passing people in the pedestrian space. You can't stop and talk to everybody, otherwise you would never get where you are going, so ways of passing have to be worked out that are not rude or ignore the other person, but are just pleasant, and affirm their presence without taking too much time.

The experience of the researcher of living there while carrying out research provides additional support for the points made above. One morning, as I left the house I was staying in, I was spotted by a resident in their house on the other side of the pedestrian space, who raced out to invite me to accompany their party to lunch. It was an impromptu decision that emerged directly from the degree of visibility that exists between the interior of the houses and the pedestrian space that connects them. On other occasions I experienced connecting with residents while working in the kitchen, with a wave or a shout as they passed. The house that I was staying in had a jumble of potted plants and light net curtains in the window that broke visibility to a certain degree.

At night, when visibility was reduced to one way, from outside to inside, I experienced that I gave little thought to the consequences, and did not feel unduly

exposed. Most of the time in the evening I sat at the kitchen table, which was separated from the window by the kitchen cabinets and the island. I worked at my laptop, with my back to the window, unconcerned about anyone looking in. From this perspective, the pedestrian space is experienced as something of a private community space at night. There is no reason for anyone being there who is neither part of the community, nor a visitor. However, an interview with a recently arrived single resident revealed that she was intending to make some curtains at some point, as she felt a little exposed at night, a feeling that she did not have during the day.

The feeling of over exposure was also expressed by another couple who had fairly recently moved to the first neighborhood. In a conversation with their daughter, who did not live at the EcoVillage but had come down to paint the house before they moved in, she reported having felt very exposed in comparison to conventional living situations. She had reported to her parents that they will definitely need to bring curtains and blinds down with them. A year later, in conversation, one of the parents remarked that they found the experience of living at the EcoVillage too close, that there was not enough privacy, not enough space. They had decided to move, this time to a non-community setting, where they could "just live," without any of the hassle of dealing with 29 other close neighbors.

Another resident, one who had been part of the original group, explained her strategy for dealing with the public/private continuum to me one day. Gesturing me over to one of three easy chairs set out in front of her house, where she was pitting freshly picked cherries and reading the newspaper, she asked me how my research was going. When the topic turned to the question of privacy she pointed to the three chairs and told me it was easy. When she wanted to be with people she put the chairs out front, and

anyone with the time would stop by and chat for a while. If she wanted privacy she put the chairs out back of the house, and could sit there on her own. If her daughter was visiting and she didn't want anyone to enter the house she could lock the door. This resident was surprised that anyone could say that the EcoVillage was too crowded, commenting that she had 100% of the community that she wanted, and 100% of the privacy.

The practices outlined above are evolving from an interplay between the physical structure of the EcoVillage and the intention of residents to construct a different social system. This system that grows out of the interaction of these two variables enables a new set of social processes to emerge that have a corresponding bearing on psychological processes. Analysis of the data gathered during this research suggests that residents are developing a set of dispositions that are brought into existence by the structures that constitute their immediate experience as residents of the EcoVillage.

The degree of visibility that residents allow between the interior of their home and the pedestrian space is generally quite high. It reflects a conscious choice that demonstrates a degree of commitment and connection to the community. Less visibility does not necessarily mean less commitment and connection. It may indicate a particular individual or family need at a particular time to focus inwards, or a general individual or family strategy for maintaining family identity or cohesion. Considered overall, the degree of visibility into first neighborhood homes is considerably different from that experienced in settings beyond the EcoVillage.

Visibility may be conceived of as a metaphor for the sense of communion that exists among residents. It reflects a normative value of openness on an affective level that is fundamental to the project of creating a commonly held sense of community. Thus, the

acceptance by residents of an increased experience of seeing and being seen by each other begins to offer some indication of a shift in residents' sense of self.

As the individual and the family extend towards the community, and vice versa, a sense of interdependence is engendered that is responsible for redefining residents' sense of self. Children seemingly gravitate quite naturally to the new possibilities that are offered by the mutual extension that take place between family and community. Parents negotiate between individually held family values and emergent values in the community, learning in the process to engage in both arenas in new ways. From a parental perspective this involves moving from a position of relative autonomy to one of trusting more in a group process.

The physical layout of the EcoVillage has presented residents with novel social situations that have required, and continue to require, novel responses. The working out of new norms and guidelines for achieving harmony within the community is an ongoing process that finds expression in topics that emerge from time to time. During research in the summer of 2003 several such topics came to the fore. One of these, as already mentioned, was the topic of nudity at the pond. Another topic was the question of what kinds of internal alterations the community finds acceptable, and what the limits to such interior work are.

In the above topics, the issue of the public/private continuum emerged as significant. In each case the topic stresses a different aspect of public versus private considerations, although they commonly refer to the need to regulate individual behavior and establish normative community standards. The topic of what kind of internal alterations can be made to the houses was the subject of considerable, and at times

heated, debate. It called into question not only the relationship of the individual to the community, but the alignment of individual values with the overall vision of the community. The question of balancing the individual's needs with the needs of the community both inside and outside the house highlights the relationship between the public/private continuum and the goals and visions of the residents of the EcoVillage.

To briefly review, the situation vis-à-vis ownership of homes at EVI is that the residents own shares in the EcoVillage Co-op Cohousing Community (EVCC), the number of shares allocated being related to the size of their home. Thus, the EcoVillage is a co-operative as regards this aspect of its structure. In practical terms, residents assume "ownership" of their homes in a manner that parallels the conventional understanding of home ownership with its attendant rights and privileges in terms of habitation, and duties and obligations in terms of normative values. However, the issue of regulating interior alterations brought up some significant and previously unexplored differences.

There are two things that makes the situation of the EcoVillage at Ithaca different from other living situations, such as condominiums, co-operatives, or gated communities, in which similar competing demands may arise. One is the ecological mission of the EcoVillage which assumes that residents will seek to manifest ecologically-sensitive practices both inside and outside their homes. The other is the focus on consensus decision making as opposed to majority voting. Consensus is intended to create an inclusive setting in which the direction and development of the community remain fully negotiable. In other words, the process is the goal at EVI, whereas in other settings, the process is more likely to be a means to achieve a specified goal.

The fundamental position from which all discussion proceeds is captured in this quotation from the articles of EVCC:

> We are shareholders in EVCC, not direct owners of our houses. We are caretakers of our houses for EVCC today and for the future.

Implied in this definition of 'ownership' is a responsibility to the EcoVillage community, and to the future. It is a definition that challenges the commonly accepted standard of home ownership, broadening each resident's obligations and invoking a sense of connection between the individual dwelling and the community, and between the individual owner and the future. From conversations between residents it is generally acknowledged that this is their understanding of how home ownership functions at the EcoVillage, although there exists a range of interpretations between the letter and the spirit of the article cited above.

The topic of interior alterations was brought to a head at a time when a sub-committee had been appointed to work on revisiting and redefining the guidelines for such changes. This was taking place because it had been observed that some residents were following the guidelines and process that had been put in place and some were not. Thus, it was felt that there needed to be clarification of the subject. The incident that drew particular attention was when one resident installed air conditioning in a house without going through the established process. The specific siting of the external air conditioning units made a very public statement to which many residents reacted emotionally. For some it raised concerns over the vision of the EcoVillage, with the opinion that it made it very difficult to claim to be an ecovillage if residents installed energy-consuming additions such as air conditioners, dish-washers, and Jacuzzis. For other residents it was purely a matter of principle, that if there were guidelines and a clear process to go

through to get approval for internal changes, then all residents should go through the process as a courtesy to the community. These two opinions preview a process that will be explored more fully in chapter eight. The first argument is made on ecological grounds, while the second is a more community-oriented response that focuses primarily on the human relationships at the EcoVillage. A third view called into question the idea of residents performing work in their own homes for which they may not be fully qualified, and the resulting potential hazard to the rest of the community.

The committee that was reviewing and updating the interior change guidelines presented a draft version of its work at an EVCC meeting on June 22, 2003. Although the essence of the revamped guidelines provided for less prying into residents' internal alterations by the community than the original guidelines, the meeting became very heated. One resident was incensed that the community should presume to have any concern over what happened inside individual houses. For this resident the inside of the house represented private territory from the point of view of anyone else being able to control what alterations could be made, although anyone was free to look into the house from outside.

Other residents pointed out that due to the way that the heating and energy for the homes was organized and metered in clusters of roughly 6 units, changes made by one resident could negatively affect the rest of the cluster. This could result in the remainder of the cluster subsidizing one home's extra use of energy. Thus, there exists a rationale for at least having the rest of the community aware of the kinds of changes that other residents are making. That was one function of the community approval process, and was intended to ensure an equitable system of paying for energy costs.

Another function of the process for getting community approval for interior

changes was to reinforce the ecological vision of the EcoVillage. Air conditioning, dish-

washers and laundry machines were not installed in individual houses largely on the

grounds that they are ecologically unsound. According to the draft guidelines presented

on 06/22/03:

> Plumbing fixtures should honor the mission of EcoVillage. Shareholders should
> use low flow shower heads, low volume toilets, etc. - These changes can be
> reviewed by the Change Guidance Team for guidance but do not need
> approval....
> Appliances - All appliances should be at least Energy Star compliant. If they are
> not going to be, this must be reviewed with the Change Guidance Team. -
> Additions of clothes washers and dryers should be made with very careful
> consideration. Common house laundry is considered by many to be an important
> CoHousing Principle, as well as a more ecological choice. Before adding a
> laundry system, individuals are encouraged to work with others to improve the
> current laundry system to meet their needs. Before installing such a system, the
> change proposal must be brought to the Change Guidance Team for review and
> approval. ...
> Additions of a dishwasher should be carefully considered in regards to the
> ecological impact. Before installing such a system, the change proposal must be
> brought to the Change Guidance Team for review and approval.

Some residents had subsequently installed air conditioners in bedroom windows

in the summer time for both comfort and health reasons at the height of the summer heat.

Some of these had gone through the approval process, while others had not. No one had

ever been denied approval for their addition, and at the same time, no negative

consequences had resulted for those who chose not to go through the approval process.

A similar situation applied with regard to other energy-consuming equipment,

such as dish-washers. One resident who had gone through the process of getting approval

for the installation of a dishwasher had engaged the community in email communication

about what kind of dishwasher was the best to get, how much energy it would use, and

how long it would last. The discussion had ranged into whether having a dishwasher at all

was an ecologically sound thing to be doing, and whether it made it any less of an

EcoVillage to do so. The answer seemed to be that it did not compromise the vision,

although this resident was not sure on that score. They expressed the opinion that it was

an unfortunate fact that in order to participate in EVI it was also necessary to participate

in what they described as "the money making rat-race" of the wider society. As EVI is

not a cheap place to live they cannot afford to have one person stay at home and take part

in community more and wash up by hand.

What is significant about the events described with this resident is that they were

open to going through the approval process, and having what would normally constitute a

purely individual decision made in a community context. This couple took the matter

even further in engaging in email debate with the community about the pros and cons of

their course of action, and its potential to affect the vision of the EcoVillage. One of the

effects of this kind of discussion it to aid the community in working towards a normative

value. However, other residents, having opted not to go through the stipulated review

process for making changes, have clearly felt less open to discussing the kinds of internal

changes that they would like to make to their houses.

Consideration of the public/private continuum at the EcoVillage calls into

question conventions with regard to personal visibility in private spaces, and the

influence of the community in defining characteristics of the internal environment of the

house. The spatial arrangement at the EcoVillage provides increased opportunities for

residents to establish and maintain contact with each other by breaking down the strict

division between inside and outside of the home. Residents connect with the community

through looking out of their private space onto a more public pedestrian space. At the

same time, as residents have expressed in the quotes above, the pedestrian space becomes

part of an expanded sense of home, which they use to look into other homes to make informal and passing contact with other residents. Residents reveal the work they have done to adapt themselves to the conditions that the EcoVillage imposes, expressing some initial discomfort, but arriving at a fundamentally different appreciation of themselves and the extended space that they inhabit.

The EcoVillage at Ithaca exists as an ideological space that seeks to promote a radically different sense of connection with the social and ecological environment. The ideological component extends into the individual homes, challenging residents' sense of privacy and ownership in the conventional sense. Residents, old and new, arrive with the expectation that they will be living in a demonstration community, but not necessarily with the realization that they will also be actively developing and demonstrating the lifestyle that goes with it. This may prove problematic, as residents face the task of adapting to the demands of their new home, especially for those with children as they take advantage of the opportunities that the EcoVillage presents to them. Residents work towards defining a position for themselves on the public/private continuum that feels comfortable. In a part of an interview conducted in August, 2000 that was exploring the reasons that people have difficulty living in a community, one resident provided the following insight:

> Well, I think one piece of it is people say when you ask them, I just did this, and this is the answer I got, "Privacy. I'm a very private person and this just feels too close." I think that's just the surface of a much deeper issue. And, for me, it's what I call a boundary issue. ...So I think that what they call, what some people call privacy is a deeper issue of how they relate to their families and their other friends. Because you can choose your, that's the point about this community, you can choose how much social stuff you want and how much privacy. And there are some people who are living here who have backed off totally. They don't participate in most social activities, they live very private lives. And you wonder why they are here, and that's another whole question.

For individuals and families at EVI negotiating their position on the public/private continuum is a matter of personal preference and comfort. While there is a general expectation that residents will participate in the community there is no formal requirement beyond taking part in one of the work teams that spends a few hours a week engaged in various maintenance tasks. The previous quotation highlights the degree of visibility that different residents assume, pointing out that some had, at that time, retreated from most community interaction. There is no screening process for those wishing to join the community, the assumption being made that only those truly interested in living in a close community would consider moving to the EcoVillage.

The first neighborhood community at the EcoVillage at Ithaca is a complex social unit that depends for its smooth running on a relatively high degree of interaction and participation from residents. While varying degrees of engagement can be accommodated, non-participating residents who effectively become invisible to the community place an increased burden on those who are engaged in maintaining the community. Visibility in this sense refers to both physical presence in formal and informal community spaces and affective presence in the sense of openness to the community. Thus, there may be residents whose work, for example, keeps them away from community participation and leads to less visibility, but this becomes acceptable if that resident is in close affective communication with the community. When residents withdraw both physically and affectively from the community this creates a vacuum that residents experience as a draining of their energy.

The process of being a part of the community at the EcoVillage relies on establishing a sense of affective bond with other residents. Those who are not attracted to making such connections with their close neighbors will, it has been assumed, either not

move there in the first place, or move away once they realize that it is not a lifestyle that will work for them. The vision of creating close and supportive community is one of the founding principles of the EcoVillage, and those with strong commitment to purely ecological goals will not flourish at the EcoVillage unless they can also make the commitment to developing the community side of the vision. This theme will be taken up in the following sections.

The manner in which residents position themselves in terms of their physical presence and visibility, and their affective presence, determines the nature of the community that will develop. In this section this has been investigated through utilizing a continuum that runs from the very public to the very private, and examining residents' responses to the demands of the community as this is expressed both by the expectations of fellow residents and by the spatial arrangement of the EcoVillage that provides specific potentialities for increased interaction. Other factors that bear on the manner in which residents respond to the demands placed upon them, including the particular vision that they bring to the project, and the decision-making practices that are evolving at the EcoVillage, will be covered in the following sections.

The public/private continuum is closely related to the concept of communion, which will be discussed in the next section. Communion moves the discussion beyond the kind of linear assessment implied by reference to a continuum, and explores the connections that develop between residents in another dimension. In explaining the nature of his relationships at the EcoVillage, one resident, who is a therapist, made the distinction between *intimacy* and *closeness*. Closeness implies a certain amount of predictability and safety, whereas intimacy is a sharing at a deeper level that tends to

change things. When a person really encounters someone at an intimate level and really hears what someone says, a change takes place inside. It is impossible to stay the same when you have had an intimate encounter. This resident observed that they have done a pretty good job on the closeness side at the EcoVillage. Residents get along pretty well and make decisions pretty well. Conflicts come up but they get worked through. But intimacy is a much harder thing and more dependent upon the function of the individual relationships. And it is actually difficult to maintain intimacy. People can only stand so much. Too much intimacy becomes destabilizing and tends to create chaos. On the other hand, too much closeness and not enough intimacy is stultifying. As one resident expressed it:

> There are some people I see here that I feel comfortable with, that I look forward in fact to sharing with at a very deep level. And other people, they are very nice people, and I am very friendly with them, but I don't feel the same draw to that level. So again, that goes back to the definition of community.

The public/private continuum deals largely, though not exclusively, with closeness, as defined above. As previously indicated, the interplay between the physical layout of the dwellings and the intentions that residents bring to the EcoVillage encourages a new set of social practices to be developed. The structuring of the physical and social environments offers the opportunity for the emergence of new psychological dispositions. These may be realized according to the extent that each resident engages with the residential experience of the EcoVillage. The public/private continuum invokes the process by which each resident positions himself or herself with regard to the rest of the community, and thus engages with the practices of a new habitus.

The nature of residents' experience of the community is explored through the concept of communion. It is through this concept that the nature of residents'

relationships and sense of community intimacy are analyzed in the next chapter, as the

community is examined as an affective entity in the lives of its residents.

CHAPTER 6.

6.0.   Communion, consensus, and legislation: Decision-making through affective

collaboration

From observations made at regular meetings attended by the researcher, three

elements make critical contributions to the community decision-making process. These

are defined as *communion, consensus,* and *legislation.* From the way that they function at

the EcoVillage at Ithaca, legislation and communion may be described as the twin pillars

of community. Consensus connects these together, as the process of arriving at decisions

(legislation) that emerge from close, affective association between residents

(communion).

Legislation refers to the movement towards defining normative behaviors through

specific wordings or accounts that identify decisions or situations in unambiguous terms.

Legislation consists of the guideline-defining process that takes place at organized

EcoVillage meetings. Regulations and agreements that result from legislation are created

to protect both individual and communal good, and require that individuals balance the

needs of the community in relation to their own needs.

The establishment of guiding principles and community norms and regulations is

recognized as an important part of the development of the EcoVillage as residents work

towards realizing the day-to-day details of the vision. EcoVillage living presents residents

with new situations that require new responses. Research indicates that establishing

effective norms and guidelines is a method of reducing uncertainty and tensions, and

promoting an increasing sense of stability within the community. In addition legislation

provides the necessary sense of authority to individuals within the community to uphold

the values that are expressed in the guidelines and accepted norms.

The term communion was adopted in this research in order to identify the process that was observed by which residents strive to create close and heartfelt communication in an atmosphere of trust and reciprocity. Communion implies acceptance of the individual by the community, and a commitment by the individual to maintaining a sense of openness, cooperation, and active participation in the affairs of the community. It is proposed as working on an affective level in creating a sense of community cohesion and common goals. Thus, communion turns the community into a tangible affective entity for its residents. While a sense of communion is pursued at the EcoVillage as an end in itself, it is also of critical importance in that it forms the basis for community action. It was observed by two residents in conversation with the researcher, as well as by members of other communities in emails to the EcoVillage, that no community can successfully use the consensus decision making process without having a certain level of open communication, affective connection, trust, and a sense of group cohesion. It is the combination of these factors that is characterized in this research by the term communion.

Communion is founded upon a common vision, and the perceived need to develop and maintain modes of relating that are appropriate to the vision, as well as the conditions that are presented by the physical layout and social arrangements of the EcoVillage. Factors such as the concentration of the dwellings around a pedestrian space, shared laundry facilities, occasional shared meals, and shared regular maintenance tasks, create special physical and emotional situations that require concerted responses in order to create appropriate norms and guidelines.

Residents have generally recognized that the self-imposed spatial proximity of the living conditions at the EcoVillage has the potential to create frictions. At the same time, these conditions present an opportunity for personal growth in a more public,

community setting. According to one resident, the EcoVillage is "a relatively closed circuit, so that whatever you put out tends to loop right back at you at some point and 'smack you in the face.'" Under these circumstances, establishing a sense of communion that prevents divisiveness and factionalizing and promotes community cohesiveness becomes a priority. Recognition of the importance of creating strong community bonds appears throughout the eleven year history of the EcoVillage. Success in this area has been variable over the course of these years, which have been marked by various efforts at community building exercises, and is underscored by circulated reminders of the need to work at open, honest, and heartfelt communication.

The decision-making method that forms the core of the movement towards creating an inclusive sense of community at EVI is the consensus process. Consensus may be defined as a group process in which each member's input is carefully considered in order to craft an outcome that best meets the group's needs. The key factors for successful participation are humility, a willingness to hear other's perspectives, and an ability to share ideas without insisting that they are the best ones. According to proponents, the result of successful consensus process is that people extend their relationships, deepen their sense of commitment to each other and the mission, and develop a sense of belonging. As consensus represents common agreement, decisions made by this process generally do not need to be enforced. If there is sufficient desire within the group for a sense of community then the decisions made by the consensus process will be upheld, and there will be no subgroup of resentful, outvoted members who will undermine or ignore the decision (Sandelin, 2004).

The consensus process usually goes through several stages. Widespread informal discussion to explore all facets of the issue is the first stage, which results in a proposal that receives formal discussion at an organized meeting. This may result in some modification before the proposal finally achieves consensus. In coming to a consensus-based decision on a proposal at EVI each resident has three options. One is to agree, one is to stand aside, and the third is to block the proposal. A resident stands aside if they are not totally happy with the proposal or have some concerns, but not enough to stand in the way of reaching consensus. A resident chooses to block a proposal when they are seriously unhappy with it. If this is the case then the community knows that they need to have some serious discussions in order to work towards a position of compromise.

A fundamental aspect of the consensus process is that participants must be committed to the idea that the best interests of the group outweigh their own self interest. For residents this means that that validating other perspectives may lead to alternative views of what constitutes the 'right' decision. The history of the EcoVillage at Ithaca, as well as many other cohousing groups, demonstrates a long-running struggle to adapt to the requirements of the consensus process, which are considerably different from simple majority voting. Majority voting, while it may be considered democratic in that each individual gets to vote, can lead to disenfranchised parties who feel that their interests are not represented. If this begins to happen on a regular basis, especially in a relatively small-scale community setting, this can lead to major divisions and long-standing resentments. The consensus process attempts to avoid such outcomes by building a sense of inclusiveness and representation in the decision-making that reflects the range and diversity of the community.

The history of the EcoVillage at Ithaca provides graphic examples of the need to create communion in the service of creating consensus. The group that came together to realize the EcoVillage vision met for four years before construction got underway. Consensus decision making was adopted from the beginning, and was seen as an appropriate tool in the creation of the kind of community in which, according to an early statement of principles, "people are respected and esteemed by others," which is "appropriate for their mental, emotional and spiritual growth," and is "socially sustainable, just and humane, and which actively fosters social cooperation."

The model of the process that developed from the research observations was one in which consensus has the potential to emerge through the cultivated sense of communion within the community, and results in the development of specific legislation that firmly establishes the community's normative values and behaviors. Observations made during the course of research that followed various topics as the community went about the business of developing its vision reveal the manner in which individuals work and sometimes struggle to balance their needs against the needs of the community as they engage in these processes. Accounts that follow of specific topics will serve to demonstrate the day-to-day working of the processes.

Through the consensus process a forum for all points of view is created. The essential aspect of the consensus process in practice at EVI is that persuasion through eloquence and verbal aggression gives way to creating the space for free expression and a commitment to hearing the smallest of voices. Observations made during the dissertation research affirm that at the EcoVillage consensus is achieved through consideration of all the options presented by the various opinions. The challenge on a social level is to keep

this a manageable process, balancing the right of each individual to express themselves freely against the need to manage time and avoid excessively long meetings.

From the very beginning the vision for the EcoVillage at Ithaca contained two distinct components; an ecological goal, and a social goal. The aim was to bring these together, to foster ecological and social sustainability, and to demonstrate that these are intimately linked. According to Joan Bokaer, whose original vision inspired the project,

> I don't separate them. When I decided to start this thing it was just the deep conviction that the design of our human settlements was very, very destructive, and very isolating. And that the two go together, the social isolation and the destruction of resources.

Previous research at the EcoVillage revealed that residents expressed varying degrees of commitment to the social and ecological components. More residents expressed a primary need for creating a sense of community than for pursuing primarily ecological goals. Thus, the need would arise to generate consensus on the balance between these two elements that would be struck at the EcoVillage.

The years of planning and organizing prior to construction gave rise to what one resident identified as kind of a pre-community. In the period following the completion of construction, as families moved in and began to inhabit the EcoVillage many decisions had to be made. Many residents felt overwhelmed by how much there was to do, in addition to the everyday tasks of maintaining their work and family lives. Animosities that had developed during the pre-community stage erupted with renewed vigor as residents struggled to cope with these competing demands. Excerpts of printed records from this period include a number of efforts to foster effective communication strategies. A sample of the kinds of behavior that were to be encouraged is as follows:

> Do not squelch your own voice by withholding important information....
> Work to Understand before being Understood.
> Use "I" statements and avoid blaming or accusing.
> Distinguish between people and their views.
> ...take responsibility for our own feelings

If the consensus process does not function within a setting in which a high degree of communion exists it is liable to work ineffectively and inefficiently. A few disgruntled individuals who put their own agendas over those of the group as a whole can defeat the process, and cause a great deal of confusion and frustration. The cohousing movement in the U.S., in its relatively short history, has provided many examples of nascent communities that have floundered through an inability to use the consensus process effectively. Any group that uses the consensus process runs the risk of succumbing to the "tyranny of the minority" Some of its members choose to insist on their particular vision over the possible emergence of an agreement from the whole group.

In February of 1998 a team of professional outside facilitators was hired to aid the community in dealing with the seemingly irresolvable tensions that had built up.

> February of '98 there was a lot of tension in the community so we actually hired a team of professional facilitators to come in and teach us how to work with conflict. It was very slow going, and there were some people that were not interested in the process, that were considered outsiders and didn't really want to work with this process. But, for those of us who did work with them, it was beneficial and the communication got more open because of it.

Introducing outside facilitators to open channels of communication led to significant improvement in the ability of EcoVillage residents to listen to each other and to respond appropriately. The third-party perspective offered by the facilitators proved invaluable. Over the next two years three families decided to leave the EcoVillage and eventually put their houses up for sale. Several residents reflected back on this period during June 2003. There was general agreement that some individuals were not able to

commit themselves to any kind of community process that might diminish their personal views and goals. Thus for example, a resident who had a very strong ecological vision, and record of pro-environmental activism, could not bear to see this vision compromised by a consensus process that sought to develop a path that fitted with the views of the whole community. According to one resident, this individual would sit silently during the entire meeting, then deliver a divisive lecture at the end before walking out. This was interpreted as an inability to take part in the kind of exploratory discussion that was necessary for developing the vision of the community.

Another resident, relating their own insight into the process of coming to terms with living in a community such as the EcoVillage, commented that they were all pretty intelligent people, and had all arrived confident that they knew how things ought to be done. All they thought they had to do was put their ideas out there and everyone would line up behind them. But being in community is not about being more right than the next guy. It doesn't matter how right you are, the important thing is to be able to hear what everybody else is saying and adapt accordingly.

By 2000 those residents who had been unable to go along with the community process had sold up and moved, to be replaced by new residents, moving into an established community that had expended considerable energy on community-building. The consensus process had become somewhat streamlined and more efficient, both in response to complaints that meetings tended to eat up too much free time, and as a result of an increasing sense of communion.

The question of ecological versus community priorities remains, and will be explored in later sections. Voices on both sides tend to be moderate, and considerate of the other's needs, and within the community decisions are not generally viewed as

revolving specifically around this axis. Contact by the researcher over a four year period has established that for the majority of individuals both ecological and community interests are important, varying only in degree of emphasis from person to person.

Through repeated effort the principles of open, non-judgmental communication have become a community standard at the EcoVillage. This is not to say that there are no disagreements, and that tempers do not flare occasionally. There are and they do. However, there is now an awareness of the centrality of the consensus process in developing the EcoVillage vision, and a general commitment to seeing the process work. A September 1999 document, "A process for Working towards Understanding and Consensus in the EVCC," states that "As a community of individuals, we each have unique perspectives, yet the clearer people are about their shared vision and values, the more meaningful the consensus process can be..." In this document the consensus process is placed within the community context as follows,

> Heartfelt consensus is achieved when people willingly agree to a solution that they will support in the future. Willing agreement includes that people who don't agree with all parts of the solution, stand aside to allow the community to move forward, and will henceforth support the consensus decision. It is heartfelt consensus if those who stand aside believe they understand why others think and feel the way they do, and who believe that others understand what they believe and why they think that way.

Communion may be defined as the process that underlies the ability to reach 'heartfelt' agreement on issues that face the community. In this sense, it is the foundation upon which consensus operates. The promotion of a sense of communion within the community takes place through a variety of channels. At organized meetings specific time is often set aside, as in the first item from the EVCC agenda, July 13, 2003.

2:10 PERSONAL SHARING: An opportunity to let ourselves be more known: a non-facilitated speak-when-moved context: not for dialogue nor for community business.

This event offers an opportunity for residents to share significant aspects of their lives. It presents those in attendance with insight into the personal concerns of other residents, as well as offering those with something to share a forum for making themselves understood a little more. At one meeting attended by the researcher, one resident used this time to express frustration over his relationships with two orphaned children whom they had developed a connection with, and who had experienced a succession of traumatic events. His partner, having been reluctant at first to join in commented on how helpful everyone at the EcoVillage had been with the children when they had stayed there, but cried when she too expressed her inability to help them come through a series of very unfair situations. Other residents talked in general terms about their concerns, looking forward to a road trip, apprehension over a job change, and suchlike upcoming events in their lives. Residents sharing was punctuated by periods of silence as they awaited the next person to speak. This kind of deepening of personal relationships directly affects residents' attitudes and behavior towards each other during potentially stressful decision-making times. As one resident expressed it,

> And then when you do that, when people can do that for each other, then that brings out the compassion. Then you can begin to say, "Oh well, I can see why John is having so much trouble with doing this."

When meetings are conducted with an attitude of mutual respect and concern for each others' values, and a commitment to the good of the group, the promotion of solutions through individual will gives way to a forum of ideas and suggestions. A primary goal of the decision making process then becomes to ensure that no-one gets left out. This does not prevent meetings from getting heated, and tempers from flaring at

times. However, at such times the researcher observed that the community is able to assert its influence over disagreeing parties, and to work towards ensuring that each party comes to an understanding of the other's perspective. Relying upon an established sense of communion and a commitment to consensus, residents tend not to get drawn in to taking sides or thinking in either/or terms, such as would occur under a simple voting structure.

Another example of the conscious and organized attempt to promote a sense of communion comes from the agenda for the VA meeting, Sunday, June 29. This item on the meeting agenda was intended to address specific concerns that had arisen as the influx of new residents brought about by the completion of the second neighborhood unsettled established patterns and strained existing resources.

> 3:15 Inter-neighborhood Community Building Exercise – . In small teams we'll explore our feelings and perceptions about different areas of actual or potential disharmony between the neighborhoods, THEN do some creative problem solving/preventative maintenance about those areas and, briefly, share results with the whole group. Teams/Topics you may choose include: a) -Inter-neighborhood Stereotypes and Judgements and how to unravel them, b) The Unfinished Legacy of the CH [commons house]Usage Agreement and how to heal what still needs healing c) Balancing the need for INTRA- neighborhood identity and intimacy with the dream of village synergy. (Also related to: how to stay balanced and open in the face of so many people and such complexity) d) Send in YOUR suggestions.

This exercise is intended as a response to the significant changes that were occasioned by the construction of the second neighborhood and the accommodations that were required as the population of the EcoVillage effectively doubled within a period of months. Like the previous example, it represents a structured event scheduled into a regular community meeting that is designed to build community and increase communion.

Promoting a sense of community cohesion also takes place through semi-structured and unstructured occasions, as residents work on developing their inter-relationships. Email communication between residents offers examples that demonstrate the importance of creating communion as a shared value. One new resident, in an email that presented their views on a current topic, offered the following opinion,

> I believe that in a community like this nothing could be more useful than for every one of us to continually – every day - cultivate an attitude of non-judgment towards each other. I'm sure people here have already done a lot of that, or this place wouldn't be what it is. And still, there's always more - every time a "hot" issue surfaces or resurfaces it presents another opportunity to continue cultivating a more accepting attitude. The more deeply we do it, the more sustainable our effort here becomes.

As noted in the introduction to the concept of communion, it is largely promoted through everyday activities and interaction of the residents at the EcoVillage. Communion is related to Coleman's (1988) notion of social capital. Like social capital, communion is a value that expresses the relationships between people. Out of communion a sense of trust and reciprocity emerges. This applies not only to day-to-day concerns over such topics as child-care and sharing of possessions, but to emotional and value-oriented levels. Residents often express that they feel confident that they can "put things out there" without fear of negative evaluation or judgment. Observations and data gathered by the researcher provide examples of residents addressing the community in this way, putting out ideas to see if anyone else picks them up, and on occasion, expressing personal aspects of their emotional lives. Sometimes though, this is not the case. In this section, the case is being made for communion as a fundamental element in a trio of interrelated elements comprising, legislation, communion, and consensus, and proposing this as a model for processes that take place at the EcoVillage. Chapters eight and nine will discuss the actual working of these elements, through particular topics that

arose during data gathering, in order to provide a richer understanding of the model and the ways that residents handle the process of decision-making.

Communion and consensus are closely related. Communion is a process that generally occurs in semi-structured and unstructured venues at the EcoVillage. It is the feeling of unity and commitment that residents create through the ways in which they interact. Consensus is a process of moving towards making a unified decision. It often emerges from unstructured and semi-structured interaction, but is spotlighted in structured situations where specified guidelines, norms, or regulations, are required. Thus, consensus rests on communion, and forms the bridge to legislation. Consensus decision making promotes communion at the EcoVillage through its inclusiveness and egalitarian approach. Having a body of decisions that have been reached through the consensus process helps to promote a sense of communion among residents. One resident, echoing a view expressed by other residents in an email concerning a particular topic, expressed an understanding of the consensus process that goes beyond purely decision-making.

> Finally, the consensus model is oriented towards deepening understanding. A few folks have suggested to me that perhaps the idea of the consensus process is not so much to arrive at a decision, but to sensitize each other to who we are and what our needs are. To do this, we need to know what's on each others' minds and in our hearts.

The concept of communion shares many aspects of social capital. However, it differs in its emphasis on the affective component of community interaction. Communion is the result of consistent emotional engagement with other members of the community. While the nature and depth of this engagement will vary between residents in a community of over 60 individual adults, communion is primarily expressed through this emotional commitment. Social capital utilizes the metaphor of finance, which evokes

functional notions of community interaction based upon 'stocks' of social 'capital' that can be 'spent' or 'saved.' However, the focus in the concept of communion is less on its utilitarian value than on its affective role in the lives of the residents of a spatially-bounded community who share a particular vision.

While communion is a process that is pursued as an end in itself, it also stands in a specific relation to legislation. As residents establish themselves in a new social setting this calls for the development of new norms and decisions, based upon the vision that is being pursued. Ideally, norms evolve in an atmosphere of communion, and through a process of reaching consensus find specific expression in guidelines and regulations. These are subject to review and change by the community as time and events demonstrate their aptness or reveal the need for amendment. There is a fundamental understanding that the existing guidelines and regulations are 'live' in the sense that they emerge from the community in the ongoing development of the project.

As will be demonstrated in the following sections, a project like the EcoVillage at Ithaca that is dedicated to creating profound social change through the development of an alternative to the present social paradigm, creates many opportunities for redefining accepted norms. The establishment of the EcoVillage as a bounded location with a different spatial layout requires that some accepted patterns be renegotiated. Legislation represents the establishment of new norms through the processes of communion and consensus. This process stands in contrast to conditions beyond the boundaries of the EcoVillage, in which norms and regulations are received, and access to the means to alter them is scarce.

The purpose of legislation is to codify the newly formed norms and values of the community, and establish concrete records of the decisions that have been made. Having records that have emerged through consensus provides a body of established norms and regulations for new members that reinforce the vision and goals of the EcoVillage. The existence of specific regulations also relieves individual residents of the need to challenge behaviors that they deem inappropriate to the consensus that exists within the community. In this respect, legislation and communion may be thought of as ends of a continuum of sorts. Between the sense of deep communion at one end and specific legislation at the other there is an area of more or less normative behavior in which residents may or may not be expected to uphold certain values or standards. When such behaviors are contested there is a movement towards establishing concrete guidelines and norms through the act of legislation.

A small amount of reservation with regard to the legislation process has been expressed by some residents at various times. Establishing the point at which a sense of communion or communal understanding around an issue would be best served by specific legislation is sometimes contested. In a survey conducted by the community in 1998, after three years of living at the EcoVillage, the issue of guidelines featured prominently, with opinions across the spectrum. In response to some residents' fears that the EcoVillage was developing a tendency to "codify behaviors," other residents responded in ways that serve to pinpoint the balance that is being striven for between communion and legislation.

> I believe it's important that guidelines don't deter communication. Trust and honest communication should come before "rules." I believe that we can handle differing perspectives as long as we communicate effectively and treat each other with respect.

I believe some guidelines are a common sense way of simplifying life in community, reducing the need for repetitive, time- consuming negotiations. Reduce confusion, conflict and frustration. Make it easier for kids and adults to get through the day. We are not idiots-we would not overly "codify" things. Just a few simple guidelines with flexibility and room for change, please.

I also feel that there are a number of us who would rather NOT spend a lot of time working our unnecessary conflict with our neighbors on a "deep level" all the time, over and over, because we have no guidelines. I believe clear guidelines would reduce the NEED for a lot of "deeper level" angst.

Most of all I'm bugged by my own feeling of being helpless in situations which are unacceptable but unfixable due to lack of guidelines-here is a list of examples (I care far less WHAT the guidelines are, more that there are SOME guidelines); these are examples or recurring, frustrating situations where it is difficult to intervene BECAUSE we have no guidelines: ...
I don't feel it's fair for me to unilaterally step in and make a judgment in these situations, and yet often I feel I HAVE to, because, in my judgment, the situation is unacceptable. In a situation without guidelines, it falls to the person WITH THE LOWEST THRESHHOLD to either speak up or suffer frustration, over and over.

These comments demonstrate the realization that consensually validated guidelines hold the key to reducing individual stress through the expression of normative values. Residents' comments reveal their commitment to maintaining an awareness of the value of open communication, and a concern to resist becoming rule-bound. The need to establish norms and guidelines for behavior calls for consideration to be given to the kind of values and ideals that each resident feels that the EcoVillage should represent. Through open and clear communication residents move towards developing suitable rules. Thus legislation becomes a normative process that establishes a set of ground rules on which further community development can take place.

An example of the contestation between legislation and communion that was witnessed by the researcher was demonstrated at a meeting of the EVCC on Sunday, June 29, 2003, at which guidelines for safe and appropriate use of the pond were being

discussed. The topic of possible fecal contamination of the water by infants and toddlers who were not properly toilet trained came up. Several residents were aware of the potential dangers that such contamination posed to other young children. One resident pointed to a recent instance of five children dying from contamination of chlorinated water in a water park, even though the contamination had been quickly dealt with. It was accepted that steps must be taken to ensure that no such accidents occur in the relatively small and un-chlorinated swimming pond at the EcoVillage.

It was proposed that all children who were not properly toilet-trained should wear swim diapers that would contain any potential accident. This was generally accepted as a suitable safety principle. However, when it came to defining exactly how 'properly toilet-trained' was to be defined, the matter became more complicated. At the heart of the issue was the principle that a parent ought to be in the best position to know whether their child met the criteria, or whether a specifically-worded piece of legislation would be preferable in the eyes of the community. One resident offered the suggestion that the wording be specific and not open to interpretation. One particular resident who had lived at the EcoVillage for less than a year, invoking the sense of communion that exists at the EcoVillage and the shared values and concern that goes with that, gave the alternative opinion that the sharing of the value was in itself sufficient to make all parents concerned enough to ensure that no accidents resulted from their children swimming in the water. An email sent out the following day by the resident who had most strongly pushed the legislation option captures the dilemma.

> During the VA meeting yesterday I asked for stronger, more specific language about children and swim diapers, and I'm still feeling rather stressed about putting myself out there in the "hot seat" on a sensitive subject. I'd really appreciate a few more words of support from folks who were at the meeting or who agree with me so I don't feel so alone with the issue of tightening-up our safety guidelines to keep accidental human feces (and deadly bacteria) out of the pond....

I'm TOTALLY NOT looking for an email-debate about the issue--I think the place for that was at the VA meeting itself, face-to-face. If you disagree with me about the language we consensed upon, and you could not or chose not to be at the meeting to share your thoughts and feelings in person, it's just going to stress me out more to deal with an emotionally-laden email exchange. If you disagree with me, please talk to me respectfully in person in a way that gives us both a chance to sit and hear each other, or send an email to "all."

To recap, the original language in the proposal said: "Children who are not toilet-trained must wear special waterproof diapers." What I suggested, and what we tweaked as a group and consensed upon, was: "People who have not been 100% toilet-trained with no accidents other than with illness for six months must wear special waterproof diapers." (Other folks, not me, suggested "people" 'cause adults can be incontinent, too.) Now we have two neighborhoods, and many many friends and visitors coming to use the pond (I just had to ask a visiting family yesterday to not put their baby into the pond to wade with only a regular diaper, and it was awkward, because at that time the meeting had not happened yet and there was no consensed-upon guideline to refer to)

This email, which only has a few extraneous details omitted for clarity, demonstrates several of the processes that have been discussed so far, and gives voice to observations that were made by the researcher in attendance at meetings and informal discussions over this issue. The concern for working towards legislation from a position of communion, through the consensus process is expressed clearly. The frank expression of emotional exposure and call for support can only be possible in a social situation in which communion is a widely held value. The entreaty to be approached respectfully and the commitment to respond by listening to alternative views emphasize the importance of these values to the consensus process. Finally, the email ends by offering an example of how legislation provides backup to the individual in maintaining community values.

Making the decision as to where to draw the line between taken-for-granted norms and values and issues that require specific legislation is an ongoing process at the EcoVillage. A line needs to be established between over-regulating every aspect of EcoVillage life and trusting unspoken norms and values that arise out of the sense of communion that exists. The above is only one example of this negotiation in action. For

some residents becoming involved in the minutiae of decision-making is seen as tedious. Hence there is a tendency for individuals to only get involved when there is an issue of particular interest or importance to them under discussion. This attitude itself becomes incorporated into the normative structure of EVI, as many residents go along with decisions on which they have little concern, using unstructured and semi-structured forms of communication, especially email, to monitor community development.

Communion promotes mutual respect, coherence of vision, free expression, openness, concern for community, and a sense of inclusion. It implies, ideally, behavior that is in the best interest of the community. It is a state that residents aspire towards, in a movement that residents experience as one that goes against the normative values of the dominant social paradigm. Legislation allows certain values and norms to be made explicit, whether these are about safety at the pond, alterations to the interior of resident's houses, public nudity, or guidelines for renters. In the face of competing demands from individuals, or competing visions of the goals of the EcoVillage, legislation expresses a community response to a particular multifaceted topic. Making norms and values explicit through legislation is a factor in working out the vision of the project on a daily basis. In addition, once a decision is reached it has the potential to empower residents by demonstrating a clearer sense of the direction of the community and providing community-sanctioned backup in upholding established norms and values.

Where the lines are drawn between specific legislation and normative communion is decided through the process of consensus. Consensus is as much concerned with establishing common understanding as with arriving at decisions. Thus, consensus occupies a mediating role between legislation and communion at the EcoVillage. Minutes

from a June 13, 1999 meeting of the EVCC demonstrate the relationship between

communion, consensus and legislation, in light of the overall vision of the EcoVillage.

> Intentional community such as this one, is a shared body of conscious or committed, caring relationships and values that include and go beyond our immediate self and family. In a healthy community, individuals find synergistic ways to care for their own well being and that of the larger community; they do not value one over the other; and they look for such synergy in their decision making process as well. "In a sustainably oriented community such as this one, the caring commitment extends to other living things on this land and to the land itself, to the children not present at the meetings, and to generations to come in this place (not to mention our present larger human family and biosphere). This is part of the "community" we identify with and consider when we make sound community decisions. "Heartfelt consensus is achieved when people arrive at a solution/decision that honors their own core interests and values (or at least doesn't violate them) and that also appears to serve the highest good of the community. The process of arriving at consensus helps individuals align their sense of their own core interest and values around a particular issue with their concern to further the highest good of the community. The clearer people are about their shared vision and values, the clearer and more meaningful the consensus process will be, since they will have a shared context to refer to that is larger than the immediate difference of opinion.

This excerpt demonstrates concern for balancing the needs of the individual with

the needs of the community and the needs of the ecological environment. It also affirms a

commitment to the wider social and ecological environments, as well as honoring a

temporal commitment to the future. The author emphasizes the establishment of a sense

of communion as a basis for the consensus process to arrive at sensible and vision-

promoting decisions. Through linking concern for personal well-being with community

and ecological well-being the document indicates movement in the direction of

cultivating a different construction of selfhood than is promoted by the dominant

individualistic social paradigm. An indication of the effects of living in this manner is

provided by the following email from a resident who had been working on a set of

guidelines for alterations to the interior of EcoVillage homes.

> These are some of the many things that I learned (and relearned) in working with everyone on bringing this proposal together.

    * Connecting to our Mission, our Vision
- As Mason recently said to me "I want us (EcoVillage) to be about something."
    - And I realized working through this that We are about something.
- For me, I realized again how deeply my own behaviors have changed since moving here and it is because of what we are about, what we are becoming, and trying to become.
- What are we about - for me it boils down to * a constant working to be more "eco" * a sharing of our stuff and our selves * working on creating a "consensus culture" - because we are all connected.

This quotation demonstrates awareness of the three levels on which changes are taking place at EVI, as residents strive towards a common vision that balances the needs of the individual with the needs of the community and the needs of the ecological environment. The role of the consensus process is made explicit, building from a base of affective communion towards a proposed set of guidelines that reflect the unity and vision of the community. The author also acknowledges the considerable changes in behavior that have taken place as a result of living at the EcoVillage.

For residents to engage in the processes that have been outlined in this chapter requires the development of a self that is willing to adapt to the conditions that living in a relatively egalitarian community impose. Consensus requires that individuals maintain a healthy connection to the community. At the same time, engaging in the consensus process from a position of affective communion with other residents opens the individual to a realm of new possibilities as differing perspectives are considered and cooperative solutions are sought. Residents proceed from recognition of their interconnectedness on an emotional level that sustains the decision-making process. The resulting legislation produces provisionally adopted, normative guidelines that reflect the vision and will of the group. The previously quoted email continued, expressing clearly these points.

    * We are all connected.
- Our houses our connected by view, by sense, by internet, by a conduit running under the houses - We help each other a lot, we share meals, we share stories, and

sometimes when we do things we step on each others toes. The more we live here, the more I realize how are lives are becoming interconnected.
- I am better aware that when I follow process mindfully while trusting the process and the community that the process works better, and I sleep better.
- I am better aware that when I make changes to my house it does have an impact on others. Sometimes subtle, sometimes not.

Communion as an affective feature of residents' experience of the EcoVillage is clearly evident in the above quote. A developing sense of connectedness that underlines residents' interdependence is made explicit. In addition, the evolving process of individual engagement with the community is held to account for an increasing sense of peace of mind.

Communion, consensus and legislation comprise the essential social developmental process at the EcoVillage at Ithaca. They constitute the core practice of EcoVillage life. Focus on these inter-related processes highlights EVI as a kind of social laboratory in which its residents are engaged in reworking social relationships to express a more equitable, just, and sustainable mode of interaction. As some of the previous quotes have indicated, and as the next chapter will explore in greater detail, realization of this goal requires a commitment to examining personal patterns of relating, personal dispositions, and related goals and ambitions. The successful accomplishment of the goal of redefining social relations is viewed as dependent upon the individual's ability to accommodate to the emerging social environment. This environment is being shaped collectively through the processes of communion, consensus, and legislation. Analysis of the data gathered for this research suggests that the contribution of each individual to this development, while it is not always smoothly or unproblematically achieved, is an essential element in structuring a reconstituted experience of the relationship between self and world.

Commenting on the way that the community had developed over the first eight years of living together, and having come through a period of discord out of which two families left, one resident observed that now,

> I think that the community has got a lot stronger on calling people when someone is putting out very hostile negative vibes, as often happened with these people. Now, when that happens in isolated instances in either the first or second neighborhood, people will say –wait a minute, this doesn't sound like consensus to me. I don't feel that you are being respectful of me. And I think we have learned as a group to be less victimized by a few forceful individuals who could talk circles around the rest of us, and instead assert our own power as a community to say –wait a minute, this is not what we are about-.

To develop these themes more fully, the case studies in chapters eight and nine will serve to demonstrate how communion, consensus, and legislation inter-relate as residents strive to make decisions on topics about which a variety of strongly held opinions exist. Before that, the following chapter concludes the presentation of the processes that take place at the EcoVillage, examining the three ideals and visions that motivated residents to become involved in the project, and continue to direct their energies as residents.

CHAPTER 7.

7.0. The 3 ideals of ecological, social and personal reconstitution: Tensions between

motivating forces

The introduction to this chapter briefly lays out the nature of the three ideals that

were the inspiration for the development of the EcoVillage at Ithaca. Following this, each

ideal in turn is explored in greater detail. Examples from current and past events are

introduced in order to illustrate the manner in which residents' ecological, social, and

personal ideals continue to affect the development on an ongoing basis. An underlying

metaphor of reconstitution may be discerned as providing the impetus for the realization

of each ideal at EVI.

The vision of creating a series of EcoVillages on the 176 acre site was based upon

a perceived need to redefine social and ecological relationships. The design that emerged

for the first neighborhood incorporated technical specifications and design features that

made the homes significantly less energy consuming than the average comparable

American home. These features, together with the creation of an organic farm, and

conservation easements on 55 acres of the land, defined an approach towards the

ecological environment that would begin to address the pressing problems that were

perceived to be afflicting the wider culture. At the same time, the spatial arrangement of

the first neighborhood was designed to promote interaction between residents as a means

of facilitating the development of a different kind of community. Smaller than average

homes were connected via a pedestrian space with a commons house that drew some of

the traditional functions of the individual home out into the community. Thus, the

physical design and layout of the EcoVillage privileged a sense of connection or

reconnection with aspects of the social and ecological environments.

It has been left to the residents themselves to develop the kind of social system that would allow the design potential of the EcoVillage to find its fullest expression. It is this aspect of the project that has provided the greatest challenge. Implicit in the task of developing a different way of relating to the social and ecological worlds is the need for individuals to engage in a process of personal change and growth. Research has revealed that for some residents the challenge of personal growth was an acknowledged goal stemming from a personal value. Some residents were what one interviewee described as "personal growth junkies" prior to their involvement with the EcoVillage project. For some of these people it was a surprise to learn that not everyone shared their value. Other residents who were attracted primarily by the need or desire for a close community found themselves challenged by personal growth issues in the development of their vision. Those who were primarily interested in the ecological aspects of the vision were also challenged by the need to develop ways of relating that would permit common agreement to emerge.

These then are the three principal motivational forces that prompted the original residents to become involved in the EcoVillage project, as well as being drivers for those who have moved to EVI since its completion.

    a. Ecological behavior: to live in balance with nature, ecological restoration.

    b. Building community: create meaningful community and communion.

    c. Personal growth: create safe space for self-development in a community setting.

Individual residents express very different levels of interest in these three ideals. Residents have sometimes been surprised that others do not share their particular blend of

vision. For example, as previously observed in Chapter 5, after the initial settlement of the EcoVillage it was particularly hard for one or two residents who could not bear to subject their ecological visions to the consensus process of the group. While most of the group was open to the mediation provided by outside facilitators, there were those who chose not to become involved, and who eventually ended up leaving the EcoVillage. Thus, while the goal of personal growth is not one that all residents profess, or even recognized as being a necessary aspect of living at the EcoVillage, it is implicit in the process of building community and realizing the ecological vision.

The underlying metaphor for these three ideals is one of reconstitution. This takes place on an ecological level as residents seek to demonstrate a lifestyle that is considerably more in balance with the natural world than the current dominant paradigm. The potential of the EcoVillage settlement to provide for restoration of the natural environment is a principal goal. On a social level, the EcoVillage intends to demonstrate the kind of pro-social, community-based mode of living that is widely held to have been lost through the development of individualistic consumer capitalism. On a personal level, the EcoVillage environment is intended to provide a safe space that promotes individual well-being and offers the opportunity to undo many of the negative traits and habits that develop through participation in the dominant culture.

Thus, reconstitution defines three ways in which residents give meaning to their lives through creating a pro-social, pro-environmental way of life that promises personal growth and fulfillment. Undoing the effects of the dominant social paradigm on these three levels becomes a holistic process of systemic reconstitution that moves residents towards realizing a new environmentally based paradigm. This process constitutes

movement towards a new sense of self that is connected across the five dimensions outlined in chapter one.

What has been presented above represents the idealized account of the goals and vision of the EcoVillage. Research on the daily reality of working towards consensus on the direction and meaning of the community presents a wealth of detail that reveals residents' struggles to define themselves in relation to the overall vision and direction of the community. It is fundamentally a struggle to define selfhood in a radically different social environment, one in which many of the taken-for-granted norms that apply in the wider culture are open to renegotiation.

7.1.   The ideal of ecological reconstitution: One man's meat is another vegan's

suffering

The ecological component of the EcoVillage vision was an integral aspect from the very beginning. In a proposed statement of principles drafted on 9/12/91 two foundational principles are presented. One is social, the other ecological. The ecological principle states that:

> Respect for nature and a regard for the welfare of our children and for future generations requires that in our interactions with nature:
> we preserve and conserve natural species, systems, and processes
> we minimize rates of resource consumption
> we work to restore degraded environments and resources.

These principles are fleshed out in a set of environmental goals for creating a sustainable settlement on EVI land. Despite broad agreement on the ecological vision potentially divisive topics came to the fore from the start, and continue to challenge the community's ability to achieve consensus. One of the early disputes concerned the role that animals would play in the development of a sustainable land-use strategy. The land

had previously been largely agricultural land with some woodland. Over the course of a couple of years in the planning stage through the work of an agricultural committee discussions had been held and experts consulted on the subject of developing a land-use policy. In an email dated 6/3/96 one resident, referring to the comprehensive land-use plan that had been developed, pointed out that "It has always been part of that plan that we should have animals."

However, some members were of the opinion that animals, other than wild animals and domestic pets, should play no part in the management of the land. Potential residents who were committed vegetarians and vegans insisted that they did not want to be part of a community in which any animal was to be exploited or killed. Other residents viewed animals as an integral part of any sustainable management scheme, pointing out that it was far more ecological to allow grazing rather than to use up fossil fuels mowing grass instead. Some residents were for keeping chickens for eggs, horses for riding, sheep for grazing, and there was a brief experiment in raising organic turkeys for Thanksgiving.

The question of human relationships with animals was carried into the commons house kitchen as well, where strict vegans not only did not want meat served at the common house meals, but did not want their food to be prepared using utensils that were also used for meat.

> ...It's like we have people who want meat with every meal, so how do you accommodate that in one kitchen? You know, how do you do that? And we have got these weird things, we have meat utensils, because the vegans don't want any of their food ever cooked in the same pot that meat has been. You know, and everyone has their ... what's important to them, what they believe in. And how do you accommodate all of that in one community when there's also those who feel that well if I don't have meat four times a week then I don't feel good. You know, it's like, important to my health. It's tricky. There's a lot of things like that, those who think that cats should always be inside, never allowed out, which most people are. And then there's me who thinks, my cat's a creature, living on the earth. It should have a chance to walk on that earth and not have to walk on shellaced plywood all the rest of its life. So, you know, they have got camps

around that. So there are those who like this kind of landscaping and there are those who like that kind of landscaping. Those who think we should have animals for eggs and those who think, oh my God, we should not exploit animals in any way whatsoever. There have been people who were interested in living here and who decided not to because we have chickens, or because we raised turkeys on the CSA, which isn't something that this community did, but that they were raised for sale on Thanksgiving. So that kind of thing is tricky. And I think it would be easier to be in community if you had a little more in common, you know. Because we are not really, well, we are middle class Americans, but we have different spiritual beliefs and we have different eating habits and different types of work.

At one commons house meal that I attended where the main course was lasagna, there were four types served. One contained turkey meat, one was vegetarian, one was vegan, and the other was wheat-free. Generally however, meat did not form part of the community meals, which were usually vegetarian and featured a vegan option.

Concern over the question of animals at the EcoVillage also focused on domestic pets shortly after everyone had moved in. A survey conducted in 1996 revealed that among the 30 households there were 7 dogs of various sizes, 14 cats, and assorted rabbits, gerbils, birds and fish. The community's intentions regarding pets were reported in a proposal dated 9/3/96 as being:

> to balance protecting natural wildlife with maximizing the quality of life for pets, pet owners, and non-pet owners, while maintaining cleanliness, health, and safety in the neighborhood and working in conjunction with the agricultural activities on the land.

Consensus was created around the topic of keeping pets indoors for the most part. Special concern continues to be demonstrated for ground-nesting birds at certain times of the year when they are most vulnerable to predation. Concern for the maintenance of a natural balance on EcoVillage land between predators and prey was expressed in an email reminder to keep domestic cats indoors during nesting times

> We have asked all resident to keep indoors their cats particularly during bird breeding season. (Which is now.) We have many ground nesting birds. Cats destroy birds. They hunt for pleasure not food. I hope new residents will respect this community history. We are an EcoVillage.

The topic of animals revealed a wide variety of opinions among residents regarding the ecological vision of the EcoVillage. While there was a general acceptance that land management would involve animals in some form, the topic did uncover wide and potentially irreconcilable differences on a moral level. In email communications and minutes from group meetings from the early days of the EcoVillage it is evident that residents recognize that in considering these issues they are becoming aware of the extent to which such considerations were hidden by participation in the dominant culture. One resident freely admitted that although they could envision a role for animals as part of the overall ecological strategy of the EcoVillage, there was no way that they could ever take part in the killing that would necessarily arise. Another email that summed up many of the pros and cons on the subject of animals contained this paragraph:

> But perhaps the most important role of animals is teaching us, and our children, about the interdependence and sacredness of all living things, and about responsibility, love, companionship, nurturing, birth, vitality, sickness, and death. It is inevitable that loving and caring for animals also involves taking responsibility for their deaths in certain situations. Just how much or that responsibility we ought to take on is a question our community still needs to work through.

Formal and informal discussions among the group both before and after the completion of the building of the EcoVillage led many members to recognize that they did not know enough about the topic to make an informed decision. For some, as urbanites and suburbanites, such questions had not previously been considered. However, the discussions that took place generally adopted a holistic approach that sought to consider the role of animals in relation to their lives at the EcoVillage, the situation of the wider cultural and global contexts, and the moral and spiritual dimensions of potential courses of action.

A topic that arose in September of 2003 demonstrates the ongoing debate and variety of opinions that surround conceptualizations of human responsibilities with regard to the natural environment. The pond had been stocked with wide-mouthed bass some years ago, by one resident after informal conversations with several other residents who had agreed that this would be good for the ecology of the pond, and help to keep down the insect population. After a few years it was felt that the fish population should be reduced through fishing. The first fishing day had taken a whole year to gain approval from the community and arrange. In the summer of 2003 it was felt that the time was right for another fishing day to thin the stocks. An email discussion developed that demonstrated a variety of opinions and prompted a review of the history of the topic. An email from a resident who was on vacation, dated September 16, to the community explained a little of the history.

> I just found out about the fishing issue and want to respond with what I remember of the history. Fish were put into the pond at my instigation around 1997 or 98 after speaking to a few people who said they had no problem with it. To my later surprise, I found that there were some people who were horrified at my intention to provide food and fun for those who were interested in fishing and at my lack of sensitivity to process and other points of view. …Since then, I've learned a lot about process in our community, thought about the killing aspect of eating fish, read about Native American ceremonies before killing animals and have been moving towards vegetarianism. My recollection is that the decision to have a fishing day started about four years ago and, after, much discussion first by the Outdoor Team and then by the whole community, we agreed on the Decision Clipboard to allow fishing on one day only which would begin with a ceremony in which the issue would be aired and a detailed set of guidelines to guarantee safety, respect for all opinions and limits on the size and number of fish caught would be followed.

The principal reasons proffered in favor of fishing this time around were to reduce the fish population, to have fun, and to help children to understand cycles of birth and death at first hand.

My guess is that the aim of EcoVillage is to manage the pond in holistic way so that it is a healthy ecosystem. If there are too many fish and a certain number of fish need to be harvested, I am in principle for it.

I was thinking of a low limit but it could be higher and we could catch and release fish that aren't injured so the kids can have more fun. ...If we use pliers to smash the barbs down, keeping the fish on becomes more challenging. Gotta keep the tension up. If the limit were 7 fish, perhaps we could fish for a week. I think more days would be nice to prolong the experience.

I could envision it being really good for Melanie to first take part in honoring the bounty of the land and the pond and saying thanks for the fish, and then for her to actually see the sacrifice of the fish.

Several concerns were raised against fishing. One of these was that, contrary to common conception, it caused considerable pain to the fish to be hooked through the mouth, not to mention suffering as they suffocate once out of water. Another reason was that:

We are raising our daughter to have reverence and compassion for all animals. We have been modeling respectful and gentle interactions with all animals, and feel it will negatively impact her to see others treat living beings cruelly. -We feel that the fish are no less worthy of our respect and protection than the birds, frogs, squirrels, deer and other wild visitors that grace the land. We would not support hunting and do not see sporting for fish any differently than sporting for deer, birds, etc.

Consideration of fishing in relation to the overall vision of the EcoVillage was offered as another reason for not fishing.

We see EVI as a life-affirming, nature-respecting, sacred space, and fishing, which we perceive to be cruel and destructive of life, seems incongruent.

In the above excerpts from community email correspondence the vision of the EcoVillage is invoked as both reason for and against fishing. Several residents invoked Native American traditions of giving thanks to the creature for giving up its life, and the performance of some kind of ritual to acknowledge the fishes sacrifice was widely encouraged. It was also expected that the fish that were caught would be eaten, rather than being wasted, and that this would form part of the children's ecological education.

We also talk about how the Native Americans in South Dakota viewed the bison as a gift from the creator, prayed before hunting, never hunted for "sport", and made use of all of the animal as a matter of respect to the sacrifice of this magnificent being.

The central issue in considering whether to encourage fishing as part of regular pond management was conceptions of human-nature interaction and the concern to avoid anthropocentrism. For those against fishing the idea of children and adults enjoying catching fish represented an obvious case of anthropocentric values. One resident whose views were undecided warned against becoming over serious in the pursuit of a suitable reaction to the death of a fish.

...And does respect imply we ought to be grim about it? Do we remind the kid that the fish is dying, as s/he's jumping about in elation about having caught one? - Nature, left to her own devices, is not even remotely humane or respectful. I've watched what cats do to mice. So an attempt to be humane and respectful to all living creatures is, in essence, an attempt to transcend nature. I usually try to live in harmony with nature, not transcend it, and usually that carries the same idealistic gloss as any other religion.

The idealistic gloss being referred to here is that the act of living in harmony with nature exposes us to the fact of suffering in the world. The email goes on to develop a parallel between this insight and the sense of discomfort that Christians experience in accepting that God allows suffering in the world. The essential difference for humans is held to be the ability to exercise choice over conduct in the world, unlike other creatures that either graze or hunt, according to species. Underneath much of the rhetoric that permeates this debate about whether to allow fishing or not at the EcoVillage is a profound sense of the damage that is presently being done to the ecological environment and the need to refrain from inflicting needless pain and further damage. It is a debate that is informed by an affective reaction to current ecological destruction, and seeks to ensure that ecologically destructive and anthropocentric values are not smuggled in to the EcoVillage space through such a seemingly innocuous activity as fishing.

Reference to Native American traditions invokes an alternative value system that promotes a non-exploitative relationship with the natural world. Being at the top of the food chain implies a set of responsibilities to the ecological world upon which we depend. Accordingly, much of the debate about the role of animals in the EcoVillage vision and goals is couched in fairly idealistic terms. The overall aim is to create a space in which human-nature relations are equitably and sustainably arranged. It is an effort to create a demonstration of an ideal system on a local scale that has global implications. Residents are aware of the inequalities that exist in the world's agricultural systems, and the waste and ecological and social destruction that intensive livestock production entails. Vegans believe that it is not necessary or desirable to use animals at all, while some vegetarians and meat-eaters see a useful role for animals in establishing a sustainable agricultural system.

The critical factor from all sides is that pain and suffering should not take place for human gratification, whether this is for sport or food production. The importance of reconnecting on an affective level with the natural world is the basis for respectful stewardship of natural resources in the pursuit of sustainability. This much is generally agreed upon by the residents of the EcoVillage. However, in the precise details of how to translate an affectively-based ethical system of animal and land management into daily practice, residents are not yet in agreement.

On August 31, 2003, as part of a Village Celebration involving residents from both neighborhoods, a ceremony to reinforce the community's connection to the land was held. It was presented in the schedule of events as:

> The Land walk.... The land walk is intended as a blessing. It reminds us that the land weaves us all together. It is at the foundation of our connection to each other.

As a collective expression of the intimate connection between the land and the people who live at the EcoVillage this ceremony reflects a general sense of a relationship that is more actively experienced by some residents than by others. For some residents the central role of the natural world in supporting their lives forms a core experience, and finds expression in the promotion of the kind of activity identified above. Review of the data gathered during research reveals that residents' expressions of connection to the natural world tend to be conflated with the EcoVillage as a place. Out of this feeling for the land on which they live the notion of stewardship arises, invoking a sense of responsibility towards the natural world in general that is experienced on a local level. The following chapter will explore in greater detail a topic that was current during data gathering in June, 2003, which revealed the commitment to ecological stewardship experienced by some residents. Eight years after completion of the first neighborhood some progress has been made on the ecological vision for the EcoVillage site. The CSA has expanded to 11 acres, and permanent conservation easements have been applied to 55 acres of the 176 acre site. Environmental educational programs such as a Summer Institute in Sustainable Living, and courses involving students from Cornell and Ithaca College, have become regular events. As for the houses, these have demonstrated considerable savings over more conventional housing, using an average of only one third of the resources of comparably situated homes. However, the question of exactly what sustainability means in the context of the EcoVillage at Ithaca has never been satisfactorily addressed, and is a topic of considerable dissention between those whose interests lie on the ecological side as opposed to the community side.

In a conversation with one resident who is passionately concerned with the ecological vision of the EcoVillage project the question of what constitutes sustainability

was addressed. It was pointed out that if the rest of the world was using resources at the rate that the EcoVillage was still using them up that would still lead to ecological catastrophe. So even though by American standards the EcoVillage has made significant progress towards resource conservation this resident's opinion was that they should be working towards greater savings all the time. However, he observed that many residents seemed to feel that just living at the EcoVillage was itself enough to be able to say that they were living an ecological lifestyle. This was held to constitute reliance on technology rather than on commitment to changing individual behavior in the pursuit of sustainability.

The question of appropriate development of the EcoVillage land in pursuit of the ecological vision of the project takes on a different complexion depending on where each resident stands on the continuum between ecological and community interests. Those who are primarily concerned with the human community tend to promote schemes that privilege the further development of the villages, stressing the original vision of creating up to five ecovillages on the site. The ecologists however tend to point out that in terms of carrying capacity the site is already overpopulated with humans with only two EcoVillages constructed. It was the need to repay the original land purchase loan that necessitated the building of successive EcoVillages in order to make the plan financially viable.

According to one resident, if sustainability is defined as consisting of using resources in proportion to your share of world resources, then Americans would need to reduce their consumption by 500%. Thus, the EcoVillage would need to be moving on an annual basis towards that goal in order to be making progress. To be at a point of being able to reduce consumption to only about one third to one half of average American

consumption, although it sounds like a great accomplishment, is only the first step. This resident's experience however is that many other residents do not want to hear that. The next step would be to demonstrate that it is possible to live comfortably without being dependent upon imported oil. To the disappointment of the more ecologically-minded residents this was never part of the original plan.

Thus, from a committed ecologist's perspective the EcoVillage at Ithaca represents a first gesture in the direction of sustainability. As a model, the EcoVillage was intended to appeal to middle-class Americans, in offering an acceptable alternative that would demonstrate the possibilities for living in a more eco-friendly manner. But the ecological mission of the EcoVillage has also to be balanced with a social mission. For while the technologies of sustainability can be put into service, the adaptive practices that are required need to be developed and embedded in a suitable normative social matrix. From that perspective, the tension between the social and ecological components of the EcoVillage vision is a defining force in the development of the project.

Insight into the relative nature of the notion of sustainability that is being pursued at the EcoVillage at Ithaca was provided by a visitor, a young Nepali woman who had been staying at the EcoVillage for several months. Having arrived at the EcoVillage straight from a small and remote village in Nepal where she had been born and raised, and in which there was no electricity or running water, the first neighborhood appeared to her to be the height of luxury. Far from seeming like an ecovillage in which residents were living lightly on the land and cutting back, it seemed like a five star hotel, with more amenities than she had ever seen. This woman's experience highlights something of the dilemma of the EcoVillage movement in seeking to define a lifestyle that promotes

something approaching ecological sustainability and, at the same time, is relevant to the culture which it aims to affect.

Evaluation of the ecological soundness of the EcoVillage settlement is one that lacks any absolute framework from which to arrive at a judgment. As was pointed out in Chapter 4, ecovillages adopt strategies, technologies and practices that reflect their development in the cultural settings in which they operate. For the first neighborhood, many technological innovations have been either prevented by local planning ordinances or were beyond the financial means of residents to install. Thus, the current configuration of the EcoVillage reflects a series of compromises between factors operating on various levels. In this light, the level of affective connection that any resident experiences with the ecological environment cannot be correlated with any specific level of ecologically-benign living. In other words, the investigation of how living at the EcoVillage may affect residents' sense of self is not tied to an evaluation of their actual performance in achieving their ecological mission. The general recognition among residents is that moving towards sustainability requires them to engage in developing practices that reflect their commitment to the vision within the social and structural constraints that the EcoVillage operates.

From this perspective, research has demonstrated that the principle of reconstitution on the ecological level is clearly articulated at the EcoVillage as residents search for ways to promote the ecological health of the site, as well as to demonstrate the means of minimizing their impact on global resources. In so doing, residents tend towards establishing a closer, affective-based relationship with the ecological environment that surrounds them. The process has been documented through residents' expressions of a personal sense of connectedness with the natural world, in a manner that is strikingly

different from that promoted by the dominant social paradigm. It is an attitude that recalls

the deep ecology perspective that states that nature is the self fully diffused. Therefore it

is in my own interest to take care of nature as a way of taking care of my self.

7.2. The ideal of social reconstitution: Speaking up for inclusiveness and common

   ground

The social component of the original ecovillage vision was laid out alongside the

ecological vision in a document dated 9/12/91. The foundational principle for the social

vision was that:

> People thrive in an environment:
> - which is sufficient in resources
> - which is safe
> - in which people are respected and esteemed by others, and
> - in which conditions are appropriate for their physical, mental, emotional and
>   spiritual growth.

Implicit in the considerations listed above is a critique of the modern social

paradigm. The experiences of many of the residents prior to moving to EVI were that

current urban and suburban patterns did not provide a satisfying lifestyle. Consumer-

oriented, individualistic society was seen to be inimical to the creation of the kind of

community that would provide for the social needs of its members. Interviews with

residents conducted in August, 2000 highlighted their negative perceptions of the social

system that led to the isolation of individual nuclear families from each other. As a result

of their experiences, residents, whether they came from urban, suburban or rural

situations, were prompted to search for an alternative social arrangement that would

provide the kind of rich community-based lives that they lacked. At the same time,

according to accounts by some of the original members, the kind of communal living and

income sharing communities that were a feature of the counterculture movement were not seen as providing a model that was either particularly successful, or that would offer an attractive alternative to middle-class America.

The ecovillage movement shares the drive towards creating alternatives to standard urban and suburban housing with the cooperative housing movement. It has developed both as a form of social movement (Cooper & Rodman, 1992), and out of necessity, born out of factors such as the widespread landlord abandonment of buildings in Harlem that took place in the 1960s to 1980s (Leavitt & Saegert, 1990). In both cases tenants experienced similar advantages and disadvantages to those experienced by EVI residents. The advantages included greater life-satisfaction, the experience of collective accomplishment, closer involvement with neighbors, an increased sense of community, and feelings of empowerment. The disadvantages expressed by cooperative housing tenants that are echoed by EVI residents include impatience with discussing the many details of their lives, and frustration at having to engage over issues that would be quickly settled in a more private setting. Thus, the effort to create a cooperative living situation in modern society is challenged by the competing demands that life makes on individual's time and energy, and the potential rewards have to be balanced against the extra input that is required.

The social side of the ecovillage vision was most often mentioned by residents as being the principal attraction during interviews. While the ecological vision was also a significant consideration, concern for creating community outweighed purely environmental considerations as a motivating factor in the decision to move to EVI by 10 residents to 3 of the 18 interviewed in August, 2000. For the remaining five interviews

the two were equally important, and for several others environmental issues were important, although to a lesser extent than social issues (Kirby, 2003).

Concern to create a meaningful community setting exists in a state of tension with concern to pursue ecological goals. As discussed in the previous section, those residents who seek primarily to further the ecological vision of the EcoVillage are aware that there is much work to be done to move towards a truly sustainable state. Research has revealed that, by contrast, residents who are principally attracted by the social vision tend to view themselves as already living ecologically simply because they live at the EcoVillage with its ecological design features and technology. The point at which the difference between these two competing visions becomes critical is when certain decisions need to be made by the community. The ecologically-minded will tend to promote ecological ideals, whereas those whose concern is more for the community will tend to defend community interests. This split will be explored in a following section that discusses the proposed sale of a housing lot to repay the outstanding land debt. To the ecologists this course of action was an encouragement for exactly the kind of development that the EcoVillage was supposed to stand squarely against. For those concerned about the community it offered a painless way to raise necessary funds without burdening the community.

The same trend towards being slightly more concerned with creating a sense of community than with a purely environmental mission was evident in conversations and interviews conducted in the spring and summer of 2003. For many residents the EcoVillage answers a need to live in a close and caring community setting. Now that the EcoVillage is well established, and has a certain character and presence, promoted through the web-site, as well as other media, it may well be the case that those who are now attracted are responding to precisely the mix of social and environmental goals that

EVI demonstrates. That is to say that just as there were those who fell away from the project in the early days because it was not radical enough ecologically, those who seek that kind of ecological commitment now tend to seek out other ecovillage developments.

One resident expressed that they felt that the EcoVillage project is an attempt to "meet American culture where it is at, rather than being a sustainable alternative." Others commented that the intention was to provide an alternative that would appeal to the middle-classes. EVI is intended as a demonstration project that will provide a positive model for a more sustainable way of life. While it is relatively easy to incorporate the relevant technology for sustainability into the physical structure of the EcoVillage, the major challenge has been on the social side. Residents have worked hard to develop a social system that combines individual freedom and privacy with a more community-oriented approach. Striking the right balance is seen as essential in the effort to present an acceptable alternative to the present dominant social paradigm.

As previously noted, the physical layout of the EcoVillage according to the principles of cohousing encourages resident interaction. In addition, the sharing of facilities such as the commons house further encourages encounters between residents. Thus, a major part of the social vision for the EcoVillage has been realized through careful attention to the physical structure of the settlement. The concentration of the individual dwellings around a pedestrian space and the shared facilities provide a marked contrast to conventional residential patterns. At the same time, the design of the houses in the first neighborhood provides a sense of privacy that has surprised some residents. One resident who moved into a new house in the second neighborhood commented that she now realized how cleverly the first neighborhood houses were designed from the point of

view of cutting down on residents' awareness of the other houses from inside their own

home.

> You could look out the back and see open land, and out the front you could only
> see the house opposite, but all that is to the sides is screened, which is very
> effective at making it not seem like a crowded neighborhood.

Another first neighborhood resident echoed this perception of separateness in her

experience of her home.

> Being right attached to the next door neighbor, but the way they have offset the
> fronts of the houses, it took me a while to realize that we are attached to our
> neighbors. I mean, I knew it all along, but it didn't feel that way. And these
> trellises really kind of provide a barrier that is really more than it is.

The researcher's experience of living at the EcoVillage confirms these

perceptions. The houses are also fairly well sound insulated from each other. Combined

with the triple glazing this tends to cut down noise entering the houses to a significant

degree, making them fairly quiet inside, especially in the cooler months when all the

windows are shut. The house faces across the pedestrian space to the house on the other

side, while at the back it faces onto an open landscape. Thus it is fairly easy, if one

wishes, to turn the attention inwards and not to feel that one is living in a physically close

community. As several residents commented, they have considerable latitude in

positioning themselves on the public/private continuum that stems from the physical

layout and construction of the houses.

Balancing the needs of the individual against the needs of the community is a

primary challenge in the development of the EcoVillage model. In order to offer a

potentially acceptable option to middle-class America, values around privacy and the

individual family must be balanced with a more community-minded approach. The

spatial arrangement of the EcoVillage is intended to open up the potential for an

acceptable range of individual behaviors within a community context.

The manner in which the community has developed since 1995 when residents first moved in was largely covered in the section on communion and consensus. The present section is an examination of community as an ideal, a vision that residents are seeking to develop through the EcoVillage project. The original vision for the development of the EcoVillage concept was a response to the perception that ecological decay and social decay go hand in hand. Thus, neither problem can be solved without taking the other into full account. While social and ecological decay share the same roots, the solutions that are required, which are reflected in the daily decisions that are made at the EcoVillage, are very different. In order to realize the social and ecological visions that residents harbor in differing degrees a concerted effort at clear communication is necessary, along with active engagement and commitment to consensus.

In order to realize the vision of a community-oriented lifestyle, residents must develop effective community processes, as well as accept limitations on conventionally derived notions of individual freedom in favor of the good of the community.

Involvement in community processes takes place on both formal and informal levels. Informally, as described in the section on the public/private continuum, residents interact on a daily basis, making themselves visible to the rest of the community to a degree that is comfortable, and balances their sense of privacy with their sense of engagement with the community. This balance is manifested through informal connections on a daily basis, and through semi-formal connections such as the commons house meals, work team participation, and email communication.

Formal interaction takes place through involvement in community decision-making at EVCC meetings, EV meetings, or EVI board meetings, as well as other meetings that are called to deal with specific issues. Examples of the latter are a meeting that was

organized on June 24 to discuss the topic of the potential sale of a housing lot to raise

money to pay off the outstanding land debt. In general however, the community aims to

conduct all its business at scheduled general meetings. These often take place every

second Sunday afternoon, and have specific agendas that are circulated widely

beforehand. The three inter-related processes of communion, consensus and legislation,

as discussed in Chapter 6, provide the mechanism by which the community comes to

agreement on specific aspects of the development of the social and ecological visions.

In the pursuit of the vision of a close and caring community individuals are

challenged to give equal weight to considerations of their own needs against those of the

community. The individual's connection to the community is often conceived in terms of

a set of responsibilities and obligations. An example from 3/5/98 defines the social

contract of the EVCC through a set of assertions that include:

> I have a responsibility to understand and support the cultural and ecological
> diversity necessary to the long-term health of all inhabitants.
> I have a responsibility to act with tolerance and respect toward other inhabitants
> and guests, and work to better understand their needs.
> [I have] a responsibility to speak constructively to and about others.
> I have a responsibility to reconcile conflicts, large and small, and to understand
> and utilize the community's conflict resolution process.
> [I have] a responsibility to sustain the community through sufficient participation.

These responsibilities are balanced by a set of rights that flow from the adoption

by other residents of their responsibilities as members of the community.

> I have a right to be heard
> I have the right to contribute according to my own strengths, rhythms and
> energies
> I have the right to enjoy safe and pleasant surroundings.

Residents are expected to commit to the mission of the EcoVillage as a means of

providing a guide to their behavior. In the face of the potential for competing interests,

developing the mission of the EcoVillage acts as a super-ordinate goal. Becoming a

resident of the EcoVillage implies acceptance of the mission and goals as stated in the

mission statement of the EcoVillage at Ithaca. As potential conflicts arise reference is

made to the mission as a means of defining what the best course of action would be. At

such times however, it may often be observed that individual resident's interpretations of

what the mission of the EcoVillage is may differ widely, as the following email

communication demonstrates.

> Hot issues will always come up. They can be particularly challenging when they
> touch on areas where we have great diversity in our deepest core values. The
> individuals in this community do not share an identical set of deepest core values,
> nor an identical set of aspirations. It could seem sometimes that we have no
> universal common ground. But there are two things I have consistently heard
> from all sides of this conversation: 1) a desire to be able to express our own
> individual core values and to live them, fully and joyfully; and 2) a desire to not
> be judged for doing so. I honor and celebrate both those desires. !!! I want to do
> whatever I can to support the realization of both those desires for every member
> of my community.

This email affirms a community value of encouraging individual self-expression.

It is a value that is often repeated at the EcoVillage, and appears to represent a marriage

of community-orientation and individualism. This attitude demonstrates not only a

protection of individual rights in the community sphere, but an extension of those rights

in the encouragement of self-expression of core values without fear of disapprobation. It

is viewed by residents as vital to the consensus process to allow the space for each

member to express his or her opinions openly and freely. In another email a resident

warns against the perceived dangers of not developing a conversation around the topic of

differences as these affect the ways that relationships develop at the EcoVillage.

> What I am suggesting is that by exploring our cultural biases and how they
> influence our impact on one another may be an important part of living
> sustainably. Personally, I feel that if we don't do this, we won't "act" together. We
> will be a bunch of people living in an "environmentally" friendly way who are
> pretty much as disjointed and dysfunctional as most other groups in this society.

The importance of establishing common ground for the vision and mission of EVI is emphasized here. Such work is viewed as vital for the creation of a sense of community. As residents look to the future both of the EcoVillage and the wider culture to which they belong, the need for a degree of unity of vision in facing the challenges ahead becomes clear.

> It may also be so that we should stop teaching others and take more time to grow together NOW. If we are a work in progress, perhaps we should work on who we are before we become a model to others. I came to EV because I thought we wanted to become a "sustainable" community. Now I see that everyone has different opinions about what is sustainable. I don't think sustainability is only about saving land and energy.

In many email communications, as well as conversations, between residents the centrality of the notion of the EcoVillage as a community is emphasized. Building a sense of inclusiveness on a daily basis, as well as in the face of potentially divisive issues is a major goal. Creating communion as a base for consensus is a daily task that is recognized as being fundamental to the realization of the vision at the EcoVillage. This point is emphasized in the following email to the community prior to a meeting to discuss and decide on a set of guidelines for interior changes to residents' homes.

> * We are living in a consensus community
> - I realized more than ever this morning that this proposal we are discussing on Sunday has a lot to do with "What we are about".
> - We are working on achieving some balance between
> our individual wants and needs
> honoring other people's wants and needs
> living an eco-vision
> working together in consensus creating a connected living community.

Parents especially tend to value this aspect of life at the EcoVillage for the possibilities that it offers in regard to their children's social development and education. Several parents expressed that they appreciated that their children would learn that there are alternative strategies for solving problems, dealing with conflicts and arriving at

inclusive decisions. They enjoyed the fact that they are living in a community that demonstrates for their children that solutions can be developed through cooperation and dialogue, rather than through argument and conflict.

The period from 1991, when the original group came together, until 1995, when the EcoVillage was constructed was a period of intense envisioning and designing. Realizing the vision within the constraints that were imposed by financial considerations, local zoning ordinances, and residents' own needs involved many compromises. The effort required to push the project forward to the construction phase resulted in a deferral of the community-building side. Once residents moved in to their new community a great deal of work had to be done to find a way to live together. One resident summed up this period in an interview in August, 2000.

> ...there were two major issues that were not dealt with very well, in the original vision. There was a set of guidelines for development that were developed with a hundred or more people from the community to help them design EcoVillage and all of that. And if you read through all of that stuff, you find, or I find two pieces missing. There was very little emphasis on economics.... And the other piece that was not, in retrospect I think, well developed was the social relationships part. The community processes part. How we worked together in order to maintain the community and make decisions and govern ourselves. That was all left to be worked out. And without that piece, no community, whatever its other aspects, is going to survive. You gotta have the cement worked out, how people, work together, live together, interact with each other. And that is the one that is most uniformly overlooked and it's the one that is the most essential. We have spent lots and lots of time and effort on it, because, during the development process it was continually shunted aside. And, I was one of the people who kept saying we have got to slow down, we gotta spend more time on our relationships and work things out because we are going to develop animosities that are going to undermine the effort to move ahead. Most of the people (said) well, we gotta do this now, we gotta make these decisions, if we don't make these decisions this is going to happen, it's going to cost more money, we are going to lose people. And so we kept pushing and pushing and pushing, and the end result was a lot of animosities developed, resentments lingered, because there was no time taken to work through these things at the time. And we ended up doing a lot of work subsequently, to try and heal those wounds. And we have a lot of processes developed as a result, to try and help people to avoid getting those wounds, and ending up with more resentments.

The vision of creating a meaningful and sustainable sense of community was the major task that occupied residents in the years following completion of the first neighborhood. In that period processes for living together in relative harmony emerged from an increasing sense of discord and confusion about why the community was not functioning properly and bouts of intensive community-building exercises. As previously noted, this process resulted in three families deciding to leave and selling their EcoVillage homes to new residents who felt more comfortable with the evolving social system. Eight years later, in 2003, as the second neighborhood approached completion the stability that had been achieved over the years was challenged by the influx of new residents as the size of the project doubled. The EcoVillage at Ithaca became the first cohousing neighborhood in the U.S. to build two conjoining neighborhoods. A small group of residents from both neighborhoods got together and began the process of re-visioning the EcoVillage. As the promise of new synergies emerges residents are eager to explore the possibilities that may develop. The re-visioning process involves both the social and ecological aspects of the EcoVillage. One resident summed up the outlook that guides their endeavors.

> One thing is certain: nothing will happen if we all wait for others to do it first. The first step in creating a healthy, peaceful post-industrial era is for a few of us to start basing our lives on a higher image of who we are and a deeper understanding of what we need for a satisfying life.

The task of creating a meaningful sense of community involves a fundamental reconstitution of the domestic experience. Creating a living situation in which one shares close affective connections with neighbors is a remaking of the increasingly isolating patterns of the dominant social paradigm. The increased involvement, sharing, and cooperative decision making that is required by such changes calls for the development of different practices than those that are promoted by the conventional individualistic

mode. This research is premised upon the supposition that through experiencing the physical layout of the village, and developing the social patterns that are required to inhabit that space, changes in the manner in which selfhood is expressed will inevitably take place. The sense of self that is developed is experienced to a certain degree through its affective connectedness to the rest of the community.

Acknowledgment of this tendency has emerged for residents themselves. The sudden and unexpected recognition of the difference between the experience of living at the EcoVillage and in more normal residential settings has become commonly referred to by residents as constituting a "cohousing moment." Such moments are phenomenological instants, often humorous and/or touching. They are both individual and collective memories that exemplify residents' recognition of the difference that living at the EcoVillage has made in their lives. Two such "moments" follow that demonstrate the sense of difference that residents qualitatively experience. These were collected during August, 2002, at a celebration to mark the 10-year anniversary of the EcoVillage project along with a groundbreaking ceremony for the second neighborhood. As part of the planned events, residents were called upon to publicly offer their own particular "cohousing moments."

> Yeah, this is just a fairly brief moment in time here. I am new, I have been here almost a year. One time Evan knocked on my door, one morning, and asked to borrow a cup of milk because he was making French toast, and I said sure and I gave him the milk. And it was early, and I am in my robe, and two minutes later he comes back - "Come over for French toast." So that was so nice.

> ...fourteen months after we moved here Gerald got really sick. It was incredible, because we really didn't know people that well, yet. He was... totally on the edge of living or dying for quite a while, and was rushed to the hospital in Syracuse, and was there for eight days... We had people taking care of Angela who had just turned four, having sleepovers at neighbors houses. People were bringing us food from Greenstar so that we would not have to eat the hospital food. Melissa and Brad came up to hold Gerald for a few hours so that we could walk around, there were days in a row where all he was doing was lying limp. People drove Angela

up to visit us. Jenny was being the point person so that people could call her up and find out how things were going. It was just this multiple level of care, that was incredible.... I think there is nothing like that in a parents' life where you almost experience losing a child. That is embedded in my soul in a timeless way, that will never diminish. And there is Gerald (pointing) playing with Chris, five years old and as healthy as can be, and we feel that so much of the resiliency that he has came from the support and love of the community. There was a huge sign welcoming him back that all the kids drew and hung on the common house wall when we arrived. He was just, like, embraced with love, as we all were. And I think it's these more intense times that stand out as more striking. I mean we could all talk for hours about amazing cohousing moments that are just these little moments of time. But this was our family's, just like a huge loving and supportive, like that's why we are here type of feeling.

Many instances were gathered during research of residents' expressions of the difference in experience at the EcoVillage as compared to their previous living situation. Out of the increased physical and social proximity many daily acts of kindness and appreciation serve as a binding force between residents. Accounts of support provided during times of stress, illness, or particular need were common. The result is the creation of a sense of communion that results from the ideal of social reconstitution. The residential experience of the EcoVillage involves both caring for others and being cared for by others in ways that are significantly different from more conventional residential settings. This experience generally leads to a sense of belonging and affective connection with the community.

The reconstitution of social relating that takes place at the EcoVillage evolves into a practice that shifts the focus from independence towards interdependence. Through this process of deepening connections residents access a rich source of interpersonal material that is both challenging and rewarding to explore.In this process residents may find that they necessarily become engaged in varying degrees of personal exploration. The following section explores the concept of personal growth as an aspect of the vision that guides the development of the EcoVillage. The idea of cultivating a "higher image of

who we are," as quoted earlier, in both an individual and a group sense implies a process of evolution, and is central to the quest for personal development in a community setting as it finds expression at the EcoVillage at Ithaca.

7.3.   The ideal of personal reconstitution: Undoing the past together

During the development phase there were two committees, a steering committee and a process committee. While the steering committee oversaw the planning and development of the vision for the EcoVillage, the process committee was more concerned with taking care of the way in which the group was functioning. One of their undertakings was to work on deepening the relationships of members of the group. They discussed the kinds of principles that they wanted to manifest at meetings, and worked on practicing them with each other. The aim was to be the change that they were proposing. This involved having long and fairly intense meetings in which they focused on getting to know each other in much greater depth.

Once the EcoVillage was constructed and residents began living there, the process committee had widened its undertaking to include promoting those ideals more in everyday life, beyond the meeting process. This task was viewed as essential to creating the kind of community that would be able to realize the EcoVillage vision. The challenges that discovering new and deeper ways to relate presented on a personal level required residents to commit themselves to personal growth and change. While this requirement was understood by some residents to be a central part of the development of the EcoVillage, others were much less aware of what the implications would mean on a personal level.

The social and ecological goals of the EcoVillage were the focus of the original envisioning process and much of the subsequent developmental work. The personal demands that would arise from the move towards creating a close and supportive community were underestimated by some residents, and tended to be pushed aside during the development, as was indicated in the previous section.

The kinds of changes that have been part of the adaptation to living in the EcoVillage community revolve around moving from a culture in which competition, individualism, and polarization are the norms to one in which communication and cooperation are the fundamental values. The challenge of developing and realizing a common vision that was based on consensus required a fundamentally different approach to dealing with differing opinions and opposing viewpoints. Attempting to successfully negotiate the public/private continuum on a daily basis, and remain committed to decision-making processes that are based on a desire to find common ground, while still maintaining one's core beliefs and values, is an ongoing challenge that requires residents to engage in processes of personal development.

A draft document on communication principles (5/20/96) lays out, under several headings, the way to create a successful communication process. It asserts that communication is the responsibility of all residents, and that in accepting this, residents accept that they will show respect for others in their communication, take responsibility for themselves, strive to communicate from their clearest and most centered self, take time to express genuine appreciation and acknowledgment of others, and use effective communication techniques. A document like this demonstrates that there was a clearly emerging need to develop effective communication strategies, and a recognition that the very success of the project relied upon achieving this end. In fact, this is one of the

principal factors that make EVI different from other, more conventional housing styles. Residents express, both in documents and records that are produced as well as in daily interaction, that in order to make EVI socially sustainable it is essential to change the habitual mode of dealing with each other that stems from an individualistic mode that often uses argument, dissent, debate, withdrawal, and political maneuvering to achieve ends.

A common understanding that has developed at the EcoVillage is that residents arrive carrying the psychological burdens, the family history, and the mindset from the wider society. These deeply affect the manner in which they communicate with each other, both socially, and in more formal decision making processes. This has been a major challenge, and perhaps one of the most significant changes that people have made as a result of living at the EcoVillage.

In the beginning some residents had wanted to engage in the community-building process of M. Scott Peck. This involves a four stage process of moving from what is termed pseudocommunity, in which differences remain buried and unexamined, to an authentic and dynamic connection with others. There were some residents who were keen, and a few others who were interested because they were unhappy with the process, but many others had no interest at all. The experience of one of the residents who was part of the steering committee, and keen to engage in community-building processes, was that it was hard to come up against the reality of being involved in a community in which most of the people were not "personal growth junkies."

The notion of personal growth as a value emerged during the 1960s and 1970s, following the work of psychologists such as Maslow, May, Perls, Janov, the work of the Esalen institute, and such therapeutic tools as encounter groups, co-counseling, primal

scream therapy, et cetera. A plethora of self-help books followed espousing personal growth and transformation as a laudable value. Critics focused on the emergence of a "me generation," in which such therapeutic tools were focused on benefiting individual and self-interested goals.

In the case of the EcoVillage, personal development is held to take place within the context of a community setting. In this situation personal growth involves an accommodation to a group, and implies a willingness to let go of purely personal concerns, goals, values, et cetera, in favor of extending oneself towards others in an open and compassionate way. In discussing the difficulty that one previous resident had experienced in communicating with the group, I commented to a current resident who is a psychotherapist that it sounded as though he might not have been willing or able to make himself vulnerable. She added that he was not able to be vulnerable, or to see that he might have something to learn in that situation too. She continued by saying that, in communicating with other residents it is necessary that each be able to speak their own mind and stand their own ground while simultaneously being completely willing to be influenced. That is something that is very difficult to do, especially if a resident has strong feelings about something. But if it can be done, that is where strong dialog begins to take place.

In the period following completion and settlement of the first neighborhood, as previously mentioned, the communication and consensus process began to break down under the competing visions held by some residents. The inability of some residents to find common ground with the rest of the community led to a great deal of resentment and anxiety within the community. It was for this reason that an outside group of facilitators was hired to come in and work with residents on their communication skills. This process

required a commitment from residents to examine their personal agendas, feelings, and communication styles.

A series of conflict resolution workshops were held in the spring of 1998. A record of contributions from the first of these workshops lists residents' hopes and dreams for the sessions. There are four categories, the first of which states that:

> This process will help me make important personal changes.
> - That a context, a space, will be created that I can share or reveal my own distress with the way I operate at our meetings.
> - My hope is that I will be able to become a more effective member of this group – both in affirmations and speaking up when the process goes poorly.

The other categories included learning better skills to cope with problems, experiencing greater unity as a group, and hopes for more success in the future. Running throughout these statements is a commitment by those taking part to examining their own personal feelings, values, beliefs, attitudes and habitual modes of interacting with other members of the group. The results of this personal work were expected to be reflected in their ability to contribute to the group process of furthering the EcoVillage vision.

The facilitators of the conflict resolution sessions had focused on what was happening within the system. According to one resident who was involved with the workshops, there would at times be someone, perhaps with greater sensitivity, who was expressing the discomfort of the group with what was going on, with processes that were not that clear, or with sides of people that were not being taken into consideration. When such events occurred, one person might feel that there was something that was not being adequately expressed in the meeting, or something that was being suppressed, and react negatively without necessarily being able to have the insight into what was happening. Through the workshops residents came to realize that if they handled that problem by getting rid of the person, essentially not finding a way to work through the situation, then

they would not be doing the growing that they needed to do. Another resident referred to

the same insight in an interview in August 2003.

> And I think it is easy to scapegoat people as well. It's easy to say –well, that's a problem person. They have strong opinions, and that's the problem- And I think that is something to be avoided in cohousing or any kind of community setting. You really have to be prepared to look really deeply inside of yourself and ask whether I am contributing to this in some way. Is there some way that I could interact better, some way that I could be more flexible in seeing their point of view. But there's a limit in that, if someone won't even talk to you there's very little you can do to initiate change.

While many residents expressed that they benefited greatly from involvement in

the conflict resolution workshops, there were those who found it impossible to take part

and engage the community in the kind of dialogue that would lead to reconciliation.

Reflecting back on that period in the EcoVillage's development one resident related their

perceptions of the events of that time.

> Well, my interpretation of their situation was that, and this just is my view, that in all three couples the men were very stubborn and unwilling and unable to break through emotional barriers. If one of them, and I can say this about any of the three men, if any of them had a conflict with somebody he would refuse to work it out with that person. And that created a lot of ill will over time. Because, in a community, if you don't clean up whatever unfinished business there is, it just accumulates, and it starts smelling bad. It's kind of like compost. And I think that there was not the emotional maturity to look at their internal issues and deal with them in the group context. ...I think it was a situation where what it taught me, and I think a lot of other people may have reflected upon this as well, is that in order to live in cohousing you have to have a willingness to work out conflicts when they arise, and you have to have some flexibility in how you deal with other people and how you deal with issues that bother you. So you can't, you know, if you are going to come in and say –my way is the right way- it doesn't work. And I think that was the situation in each of those cases. And it created an immense amount of tension and conflict in the community that was very sad. It was hard for those three families, it was hard for all of us. One of the ways we dealt with it as a community was, you know, nobody was about to say – you don't belong here. Nobody was going to ask them to leave because that was not our place. That needed to be their decision. But we did, as a group, instigate I think it was about a year's worth of conflict resolution, as a whole community. We hired outside facilitators.

It has become clear to residents from the experiences outlined above that each of them has a responsibility to examine their own attitudes, beliefs, values, and behaviors in the service of creating a sustainable community at the EcoVillage. Many of these attributes were developed through participation in a dominant culture that affected their development in two ways. First, residents came from a culture in which individualistic values predominated, and in which the principles of argumentation and conflict were esteemed as means of advancing individual agendas. Second, residents grew up, by and large, in standard nuclear families, and arrived at the EcoVillage still carrying the perceived deficits that accompany such an upbringing. These include habitual patterns of responding, especially to unfavorable situations, that are products of their immersion in a particular nuclear family system with all its dependencies, roles, and potentially maladaptive patterns of relating.

Taking the first point, the effects of coming from an "argument culture" (Tannen, 1998), residents often commented in different ways about the differences that they perceived in their relating inside versus outside the EcoVillage. Reflecting on the kinds of changes that had taken place on an individual level since arriving at the EcoVillage, one resident replied that there had been many different experiences. In particular she could remember the specific moment in one issue when she realized that the habitual mode of reacting would not work. It had taken a lot of work to change many such "sloppy social habits that people have, coming from outside (beyond the EcoVillage) like gossiping about other people, or forming coalitions against others." This resident could see that, when there was an issue going on fairly early in the development of the community, that she could either jump in and join sides and do what everybody else was doing, or do something different, which was much harder. That involved not calling up other

community members and spreading gossip about what someone else had said. Instead,

she remembered vividly the experience of "holding back the tide" and thinking to herself

that she was just not going yield to the established pattern. On many occasions

subsequently it has proven hard to resist the habitual response.

Another resident, referring to the same problem of learned maladaptive responses

commented that what tends to undermine the process is a lot of petty complaining to

others about issues that ought to be dealt with directly, person to person. What happens is

that by talking to others about it without dealing directly with the issue the

malfunctioning system is further stabilized. This resident commented that a lot of that

goes on in the community. People come into little cliques of those who think like them,

something she confessed to being guilty of herself at times. However, for most people

that is not the value. It is a reflection of people's emotional level of functioning to a

certain degree, and is something that they continue to work on.

On the positive side, one resident offered the opinion that the EcoVillage provides a

good environment in which to bring up or express whatever ideas one has, even if they go

against what the rest of the group is thinking. Years of establishing a sense of communion

and working with the consensus process has created a culture of inclusiveness and a sense

of inquiry into others' viewpoints that makes the EcoVillage a relatively safe space in

which to express ones' core feelings or values without fear of rejection. Yet, it is still

hard for many residents to do it, even though it is, in the opinion of this resident, the only

place outside an encounter group where it is even possible. Other residents, however,

offer a different perspective as the following two email excerpts demonstrate.

> After reading Eliza's email concerning the pond guidelines PROPOSAL, I
> thought it was important to say something. I will also try to make the meeting this
> weekend to offer my input. Additionally, I want to make this a public response

because I always find there are people who feel like I do but don't feel like they can share those feelings.

> Making broad assumptions about what our mission should be is dangerous to the consensus process. It makes those who feel their views don't "fit in" reticent about speaking up. I know this, because in doing the pond guidelines proposal, a number of people came up to me and felt that they could not speak publicly on the issue because they would receive negative reactions and judgments. The views you express here are precisely the kind of negative reaction and judgment they refer to. Respecting each others' views and values means allowing space for them to just be, even when they don't fit neatly into our world view. I believe that it would be healthy for us to learn more about each others views, especially the ones that we don't understand. I believe that this process of understanding is important to doing the consensus process in a meaningful way. For that to happen well, it needs to be in context of safety and mutual respect. "Safe and respectful" means that we will approach each others views with an attitude of acceptance.

The second quote highlights the importance of residents working on their own prejudices and automatic responses in order to communicate effectively with each other. In response to comments that were perceived to be judgmental about another resident's attitude to public nudity, the writer of this email comes to the defense of the consensus process. He stresses the need to create a safe environment for others to express themselves and the need for seeking to understand other's points of view in order to achieve real consensus.

The clear intention to create the kind of open, accepting environment in which residents feel free to express their hopes, fears, disappointments, resentments, and needs, was widely articulated during research in spring and summer of 2003. The advantages of creating and living in this kind of social system are clear to residents. The tendency to revert to past patterns that rely on more or less covert forms of pressure is an ever present aspect of working towards realizing the EcoVillage vision of social and ecological sustainability. Personal growth in a community setting is an integral part of establishing a healthy process in the movement towards this goal. As one resident expressed in interview, referring to another of the original members:

And I have to laugh, because I know this is Ken's growing edge, and I see him growing all the time. Growing in his abilities to make that commitment. So, just watching people, people who are very dear to me, go through all these changes, which as I see it, you know I sometimes describe it to people as living here is like being in a cauldron of personal growth. You just can't escape it. Or if you do escape it for a little while you are not going to escape it for long, because whatever rough edges you have are going to be challenged over and over by individuals in the group, and you are going to keep bumping up against them until you sort of polish out that side of yourself. And as I see it we are all getting more and more jewel like, by understanding how we affect other people, and how we can live lives that are full of personal integrity, but also fitting in to a group setting.

Taking up the second set of external, historical influences, highlighted previously, that residents have worked to overcome, brings forward the ideas contained in family systems therapy. In essence, this approach asserts a more ecological view of the individual than conventional psychotherapies. The individual is considered in relation to the family, as a part related to a whole. The family is seen as a system to which the individual adapts, helping to create a sense of stability for the family unit through adopting a persona, habits, behaviors, beliefs, and attitudes that may not reflect the best interests or real qualities of the individual. Such adopted values then may become accepted modes of interacting with the wider world, transferring family patterns to work and other social settings. Patterns that may have "worked" at home may appear maladaptive when applied to other situations.

Several residents at the EcoVillage who are involved in therapeutic practices invoked family systems in their accounts of the development of the community. The community as an entity is perhaps more prone to attracting problematic interactions between itself and its members by virtue of its appearance as a kind of extended family setting. From this perspective it may come as no surprise to find that some residents adopt similar roles and patterns of interacting with the community to those that they adopted in their own families.

In conversation, one resident introduced Murray Bowen's version of family systems which focuses on self differentiation within the family system. The task for the individual is to develop a clear sense of self within the system, without becoming caught up in the "emotional contagion." It is a matter of staying true to one's own principles, and staying clear despite a strong emotional reactivity within the system. Her analysis was that, at the EcoVillage, people are on a continuum, and it is a point at which all residents have growing to do.

During conversation after one of the commons house meals one evening at which I was responding to questions about ecological psychology with several residents, one resident asked me if family systems therapy would be a subset of the original ecological psychology. Having previously considered whether similar processes might occur at the EcoVillage as take place in family systems I used the opportunity to wonder out loud whether individuals might assume roles that are analogous to the roles they might have assumed within their families. Another resident, also a psychotherapist, responded that this was absolutely the case, and that it would tend to happen in any group such as the EcoVillage. Speaking for the second neighborhood, to which he had just moved, he continued by saying that they had worked very hard to have the process be a whole lot healthier than the family situations that they had come out of. He observed that they had tended to overdo the kinds of safeguards that you need to be able to make sure that people can say the things that they need without feeling ganged up on or misheard. Another first neighborhood resident added that one thing they are trying to do is to get beyond those kind of family systems that constrain people from engaging in healthy behaviors, so that they can help each other and grow through their experiences. I asked if they had found that somebody might adopt the role of, for example, scapegoat. The reply

was yes, and that "there are heroes, and lost children of all ages too." They had seen things change over time, and their assessment was that both individuals and the group had matured in ways that were largely impossible to achieve without being involved to the degree that they are at the EcoVillage.

If the individual struggles to find an assertive and balanced way of interacting with the community, the community as an entity also searches to find a way to deal fairly and openly with individual residents. It is a dialectical operation, as the individuals interact with the community, and also form part of the community with which other individuals communicate. The principle of treating others as you would expect to be treated has become an important influence on the nature of the community that has developed. The result has been a concern to balance the needs and rights of the individual with those of the community. For residents, exploring their reactions to the community and their methods of interacting with other residents forms an important focus for personal growth. As another resident summed it up, cohousing offers the opportunity for people to face up to their own psychological needs and blocks, and confront things that are going on in their own lives.

In the realm of personal growth EcoVillage residents are engaged to differing degrees in a process of undoing the negative influences of the past that prevent them from interacting in an authentic and honest manner. It was observed by the researcher on several occasions, especially in meetings, that an undercurrent of personal development and psychological analysis affected residents' interactions with each other. At times, challenging situations boiled over into harsh words, but generally, other residents were quick to point out negative behaviors, judgmental or disrespectful words, and focus the parties on hearing and acknowledging each other, and separating the person from the

issue. On an individual level this may be conceived as a process of personal

reconstitution. Residents seek personal growth within a community context in a way that

turns the benefits outward, towards the creation of meaningful association with others. As

residents engage in this process, their sense of self may undergo a subtle shift through

developing a greater affective engagement and interdependence with the community.

One of the ways in which this aim was pursued was in the creation of what are

referred to as "deepening groups." These are small groups of residents who meet on a

regular basis. One resident introduced them to me in an interview in August, 2000.

> ...we're sort of stumbling around learning to be able to dare to say to each other
> where we really are and what problems we have. But the best thing we have for
> that is that we have these small groups, these deepening groups, where we talk
> about, obviously, what has given us the neuroses in our lives that we have. And
> then when you do that, see this is something that my church training would tell
> me is a good idea, when people can do that for each other, then that brings out the
> compassion.

The deepening groups offer considerable potential for personal growth, for

learning how to express innermost feelings in a supportive environment. They were

especially valued after the conflict resolution workshops had been held, and formed an

important part of the process of healing the community after a period of dissention.

Gradually the groups fell away, ceasing altogether sometime after 2000. However, they

were revived as the second neighborhood got under way. The changes brought about by

the influx of new people, and the strain on resources, combined with a spike in turnover

of residents in the first neighborhood, led to the deepening groups reconstituting. An

interview with two relatively new residents who were ambivalent about their place in the

community highlighted the positive value of participation in a deepening group.

> The neat thing that Mary did at our last deepening group was to talk. She opened
> up that we had been holding all this in and thinking about leaving, that we didn't
> fit in here. And it was great because people didn't judge it. There was a little
> defensiveness about it with some of the folks who had been here the longest. But

most everybody understood it and just listened, and accepted it as just part of the process. You know, "if it works out great, and if it doesn't work out then that is OK too." It's tough. I didn't think it would be this hard. And it has been really hard to be here. But I would rather be here than in my house in H. L.

The movement towards engaging in personal growth in the service of achieving a sense of personal reconstitution has turned out to be a vital step in pursuing the ideals of social and ecological reconstitution. Both the social and ecological worlds lie beyond the traditionally conceived boundaries of the individual's psyche. In order for the self to experience a sense of extension and interpenetration into these realms it has proven necessary to engage in practices that encourage examination of how the individual's sense of their own being has come to be developed. The process of personal reconstitution is particularly involved with the process of social reconstitution as residents work at realizing their ideal social practice. This is achieved in part through learning to undo the habits and responses that they had acquired growing up in the more conventional social milieu represented by the dominant social paradigm.

General recognition of the negative effects of previously developed patterns of interaction has led to the, sometimes grudging, admission of the importance of personal growth, as this section has demonstrated. The most important factor in this self-development program is that at the EcoVillage at Ithaca it is taking place in the shared context of a co-created culture. Thus, this kind of self-development tends to become a normative experience in residents' daily lives as previous quotes have attested.

This chapter has explored the three ideals that motivated residents to become involved in the EcoVillage project. Some residents were primarily concerned with the development of a humane and sustainable ecological system. Despite the broad array of opinions about how this should be achieved, this was identified as a move towards the reconstitution of human relationships with the natural world. Other residents were

primarily concerned with the development of a close and supportive community. Again, this was presented as an attempt at the reconstitution of interpersonal relationships through the creation of a socially sustainable setting. Finally, the ideal of personal growth, although not developed as explicitly as the social and ecological ideals, has turned out to be vitally important in the process of working towards their realization. As with the social and ecological ideals, the ideal of personal growth was expressed as a desire for reconstitution on a personal level as residents work at undoing the habitual maladaptive responses that stand in the way of realizing their vision.

Each of the three ideals demonstrates a potential development in the nature of selfhood that is significantly different from that promoted by the conventional social paradigm. Residents seek reconstitution of their relationships, intra-personally, interpersonally, and environmentally, in a manner that moves them towards a definition of selfhood that is more grounded in an ecological understanding. Interdependence is stressed over independence, cooperation over conflict. The evolving culture of the EcoVillage is one in which residents tend to recognize that adopting a systems-based and holistic approach to the world implies attending to all aspects of their experience simultaneously.

The previous three chapters have covered the essential processes that take place at the EcoVillage as residents accommodate themselves to the community and work towards a common vision. First, the public/private continuum captures the daily negotiation that residents engage in, adjusting themselves physically and psychically to the situations that they encounter. Second, the twin processes of creating communion and devising legislation are mediated by the consensus process. Out of a sense of intimate

connection, consensus is reached on shared values and goals, which provide a foundation

for the continued development of the project. Third, the three ideals of ecological living,

the creation of meaningful community, and personal growth, all involve the notion of

reconstitution as residents seek reform on all three levels. Throughout the descriptions of

these processes indications of the effects of living at the EcoVillage at Ithaca on

residents' sense of self have been suggested. Reference has been made throughout to

topics and events that provide illustrations of how these processes affect outcomes. What

follows are in-depth discussions of two particular topics that were current during research

in the summer of 2003, and which serve to further contextualize the processes and

demonstrate the manner in which they interweave as residents work their way towards

solutions.

CHAPTER 8.

8.0. Two case studies to demonstrate the unfolding of processes at EVI

During the spring and summer of 2003 a number of topics were being dealt with

by the community. Some of these required fairly rapid responses, while some were part

of the ongoing development of the EcoVillage. Other issues, such as the transfer of a plot

of land to the city of Ithaca for the construction of a water tower, and the construction of

a sauna, although these had been the subject of considerable debate, were in the final

stages of discussion and negotiation. For this reason, this and similar topics have not been

the subject of the same level of data gathering and analysis as the more current topics

presented here. The two following topics reveal the processes in action that were

discussed in the previous section. Through attention to the opinions of residents,

expressed to each other in person, both formally and informally, as well as through email,

and to the researcher, insight into their thoughts, beliefs, values, aspirations, and attitudes

emerges.

8.1. A Proposed lot sale: Ecological versus community concern

This chapter explores some of the processes that take place at the EVI through an

exploration of a single issue that arose during June, 2003. Following an introduction to

the background of the topic of the sale of a potential housing lot the discussions that took

place through meetings, email, and face to face, are presented. An account of the events

that led to an eventual solution is given, and residents' opinions and statements are

subsequently examined through the lens of the processes identified in previous chapters.

This topic arose as a result of a concerted effort to finally pay off the remainder of

the land debt that the project had assumed. The original purchase price of the land was

$400,000, with $380,000 coming from loans from various private sources. Over the years EVI had several times failed to make repayments on time, causing lenders to become very unhappy, to the point that one lender moved to foreclose in order to recoup $120,000. At the last moment a group of lenders was found to assume the loan and avoid foreclosure.

In 2002, a "Debt-Free in 2003" campaign was initiated, to raise enough money to eliminate the land debt. The campaign was very successful, raising $110,000 in nine months. In addition, the first neighborhood was due to receive a payment from the second neighborhood of $85,000 for shared infrastructure costs. However, it was discovered around this time that due to a previous accountant's error EVI owed an additional $23,000. An opportunity to deal with this extra debt arose through the town of Ithaca, which had proposed to site a water tower on EVI land for which the EcoVillage would receive $20,000. Excluding the $23,000 error, there remained about $25,000 plus accrued interest to raise. Two fund-raising events were planned by two residents, a "Coffeehouse" on August 16 that included food and entertainment, and a gourmet dinner, planned for October. The first event raised $1400. The second event was subsequently postponed until the spring.

At the time that the farm had been planned and had begun operations a strip of relatively level land had been left along West Haven road in case EVI was forced to sell lots as a last resort. In 1999 two one-acre plots had been put up for sale in order to make a repayment deadline. One of these was sold to an EcoVillage resident for $18,000, while the other, which remained unsold for a while was sold for $27,000, (netting $22,700) due to an escalation in land values in the area. At the time of sale the realtor handling the sale expressed that she had a number of clients looking for similar plots if EVI was ever

interested in selling more. Thus, the sale of one more plot to finally pay off the last of the land-debt appeared as a relatively easy and painless way to raise approximately $23,000.

On Tuesday, June 17, a community meeting was held to discuss the possibility of selling one more plot. Apart from the committee who had been looking into this course of action, the researcher was the only other person who attended, apart from one, second neighborhood resident who arrived half way through the meeting. It was reported by the spokesperson for the committee that she had received about six positive comments from other residents regarding selling the lot, and had heard nothing to the contrary. As a result of the lack of attendance by residents the assumption was made that there were no major objections to selling one more lot in order to finally pay off the outstanding land debt.

Following the unattended meeting an email was sent out, announcing the intention to go ahead with the lot sale. This began a flurry of email communication on the merits of the proposed course of action, and the topic became a subject of earnest debate amongst the community. As a result of this sudden interest another meeting was called for June 24 to air residents' views. This time, thirteen residents attended. After a brief recap on the situation behind the proposed lot sale the chairperson for the meeting, proposed the "talking stick" method. This involves a stick or another object that is handed to whoever feels moved to speak, and confers upon that individual the right to speak uninterruptedly while they are holding it.

A resident, Dana spoke first, announcing that she had decided that she could lend the community the money and have it paid back to her interest free over the next four years. This was quickly worked out to be a payment of about $8 a month for each household. The offer was contingent upon all residents participating, making this both a

practical and symbolic gesture towards extinguishing the land debt. This was acknowledged as a very generous offer by the group.

Another resident, Jo Ann, was next and reiterated what she had said in an email, that for her there was an almost magical connection between the land and the view to the east which would be spoiled by the construction of a house on the edge of the land. Jack spoke next, explaining that when they had laid out the farm they had purposely left a strip of land by the road just in case they needed to sell off some plots to stay solvent. He was for looking for creative ways to repay the debt, perhaps by building something on the land that was ecological and fitted with the vision, and which could be sold. Jill expressed that she experienced a deep connection with the land at EVI, and found it to be a source of inspiration as she walked the paths across the fields and by the woods. She was of the opinion that whatever allowed that sense of connection to be maintained was OK with her, whether it meant selling just this one more plot, or working out some other deal. Ralph was for selling the plot as it didn't make any difference to his enjoyment of the land. It was in a location that he had never seen, and probably never would. Others, such as Jason, agreed that the sale would be the most effort efficient way of settling the debt. Other suggested various fund-raisers and schemes, but it was pointed out that these would only take away time from other more important duties and projects. The feelings of the group were very varied.

The next step would be to talk about it at the VA meeting on Sunday, at which Dana's offer would be presented. In the meantime a further round of email and face-to-face communications followed, discussing the merits and drawbacks of this course of action. The decision on the sale was organized to take place at a special village meeting

on July 21, 2003. The final decision would be taken by the EVI board following this, and would depend largely on the outcome of the village meeting.

The email that sparked a great deal of comment was sent out to the community on June 19.

> Before we decide to sell another lot, I suggest people go stand in the farm at the crest of the hill. I went there on Tuesday ... and was surprised to see a foundation built for the latest lot sold. I was surprised how dramatically that foundation impacts the whole feeling of the view to the east. And the house isn't even up! I would like to explore an idea Y put out ....Let's hold on to the open views.

The term 'views' was picked up by several respondents. It was variously interpreted; as expressing a kind of middle-class attitude about what constitutes an acceptable vista, as representative of a kind of anthropocentric value that ultimately puts human interests above those of nature, and as demonstrating a tendency towards isolationism or NIMBYism. Others reacted to the word as a linguistic device, using it to explore the nature of the EcoVillage vision and how that vision is perceived from both inside and outside the EcoVillage. These reactions appear in several of the following quotations, where the term 'view' is invoked in different ways.

The central issue that was raised by the projected sale of the one-acre lot concerned the vision of the EcoVillage, as residents understood it in their own ways. The original vision stressed the concentration of the human footprint on the land in such a way as to leave the maximum acreage either unspoiled, or for horticultural and agricultural use. For some residents, selling another plot was akin to encouraging and participating in exactly the kind of development that the EcoVillage project was intended to counter. It was felt, by these individuals, that if the only way in which the EcoVillage could survive was through resorting to the sale of individual lots, the vision and goals of the EcoVillage were being severely compromised. The EcoVillage, according to these

residents, could then make no claim to be better than the system that they were

attempting to change. This opinion is captured by the following quotation from an email,

posted to the community on June 22, 2003.

> ...I have become increasingly depressed - not because of the change in view - but because of the growing realization that the ideals for which I got involved in EcoVillage have been sold out.
> The EV project, to me, is a model of sustainable, alternative, suburban development. We are here to show that there is another way to develop housing out here in the burbs - cohousing, superinsulated-homes, CSA, alternative energy, and perhaps most important to me the concept of developing a small portion of the land with densely clustered housing in order to permanently preserve the majority of the land for agriculture and natural habitat. It doesn't have to be a pre-fab set back lot like the one going up. Is the message now that our alternative model will only work if we sell out and not only allow but encourage the standard model of development?!?

This argument is primarily an ecologically based argument that puts the vision for

the land over all other considerations. Preservation and benign land use are its principle

concerns. Additionally, it calls into consideration the relationship of the EcoVillage to

the surrounding society, and the financial conditions under which the project is

constrained to operate. The particular site that the EcoVillage occupies was chosen over

more remote sites in order to further the educational and social change agenda that is an

integral part of the overall vision. As this quote reveals, there is a fundamental dilemma if

the only way that the EcoVillage can further its mission is to take part in the very activity

that it seeks to change.

An opinion, also against the sale of another lot, that found some support, viewed

the recent construction of a new house on the previously sold lot as an intrusion, both

physical and psychic onto the EcoVillage space. While it also expressed an ecological

viewpoint, it was also characterized as a disturbance of the energy of the place that had

not been foreseen at the time of the previous sale.

> I keep hearing about the "view from the farm." That isn't a view. It's a powerful connection to the entire eastern horizon. The fact that I rarely go there doesn't mean it's OK to disturb a rare and powerful place. Allowing another house in that place is typical of how land is developed all over this country - piecemeal, and unaware...
>
> As an "eco" village, we are about land preservation as much as anything else. There are certain places that just shouldn't be disturbed, and that place on the farm is one of them... We are down to the last $26,000 and are about to do something that goes against the essence of land preservation.

Like the previous quote, this resident offers an ecological rationale for not selling another plot for the construction of a house. Pointing to the EcoVillage's vision of creating an alternative to ecologically insensitive suburban sprawl, this resident carries the argument to a profoundly affective and spiritual level. A sense of connection with nature in its most basic form is asserted, the reiteration of the word 'powerful' underscoring both the strength of the human-nature bond, and an expression of the force of nature itself. Those who worked at the farm, or whose routines took them there frequently, generally concurred with this opinion and favored finding some other means of repaying the loan. It was suggested that a permanent conservation easement could be applied to the lot, and the entire strip bordering West Haven Road.

Several alternative opinions were expressed. One of these also was made on ecological grounds, in an email posted to the community. It was made in reply to the opinion quoted above.

> There is both a 'view out' across the valley from here that will be affected by another house and a 'view in' to us from across the valley. This 'view in' will eventually not only be affected by our road and two neighborhoods but also perhaps by a third neighborhood, a Village Center and an Educational Center.
>
> The 'view out' is far less affected by one house being built than the 'view in' by what we're doing. The land occupation and disruption also is far more affected by what we're doing than by the addition of one house. I think it's important to consider not only how we're being affected but also how we're affecting the view and using the land.

This resident's concern about the use and development of EVI land for its human inhabitants at the expense of the natural ecology is echoed by other residents who also take a more ecologically oriented stance. Notions about 'view' and 'psychic intrusion' are relegated, as anthropocentric bias, in favor of ecological concerns that address the integrity of the land. Over-developing the EcoVillage site, even with the most environmentally-friendly structures and practices, is ultimately seen, according to this approach, as little better than conventional development.

> ...the following is a list of human development I've observed on the land in just a single year: The construction of a new neighborhood, a new sauna, a new bigger playground, an enlarged beach, expanded parking lots and carports, the approval of a town water tank, increased car traffic on an improved entrance road, a proposed sledding hill, a proposed barn, a proposed village center, a proposed education center, a proposed third neighborhood, and now the proposed selling off of a lot for home development. While no single one of these developments is "wrong" or "bad", taken together they are exactly the kind of gradual incremental encroachments that the human community always seems to approve and which have steadily degraded the commons across America and the world. Unfortunately animals and plants and ecosystems have no vote or voice, so we, if we are truly conscientious, must provide it for them.

The concern that is expressed here is for the manner in which the human development of EVI impacts upon the ecological diversity and integrity of the site. The author infers that EcoVillage development is no less threatening to the environment than conventional development in its slow but relentless progression. The big question that is posed by the previous two writers concerns identifying exactly what kind of development should take place at the EcoVillage. To fill the site with human inhabitants way beyond its natural carrying capacity means that some other part of the global energy system must provide the extra input to the EcoVillage.

Directly countering the previous opinion, one opinion held that the effect of the sale would be 'unfortunate but minor.' It would be a worthwhile compromise that would not sell out the vision, and would relieve the community of a tremendous psychic burden.

A similar opinion held that the money realized through selling the lot would not have to be raised through community fund raising events, which would free up a great deal of community energy that could go into other, more forward-looking projects. These opinions represent a community, rather than ecological, bias. Accordingly, concern for the welfare of the community is promoted as a core value. This approach presents the potential sale of a lot as the shedding of a marginal piece of the 176 acre property that is not fundamental to the overall vision of the EcoVillage. From this perspective, the vision of the EcoVillage can just as successfully be realized on a smaller acreage, without the need to assume absolute ecological criteria.

A further issue that this topic raises is the image of the EcoVillage in the eyes of those whom the project hopes to impress and influence. The argument over whether the sale of a house lot compromises the vision of the EcoVillage reflects concerns from both an internal and external vantage point. Consideration of the integrity of the vision from a purely internal, community perspective focuses on a value system that is predicated upon a compassionate concern for the physical environment, as noted in the quotes above. This requires that all 176 acres of the original purchase be attended to and accorded the same level of stewardship. Selling off odd lots to keep the project running represents a breach of stewardship. Those who oppose the sale feel that taking such a course of action undermines the ethical standing that allows them to present the EcoVillage as a model of alternative development.

The ethical undermining of the project through the sale of lots is given physical expression for some residents by the appearance of standard suburban housing on the borders of the EcoVillage. Rather, as it was expressed at the EVI board meeting on June 25, it was felt that the EcoVillage land bordering the road should present the "green" face

of the EcoVillage, through an educational center, woodland, orchard, or other suitable expression of ecovillage ideals. There was a strong desire to see the remainder of the strip of land bordering West Haven road converted to a permanent conservation easement. The search for alternative strategies that would avoid the construction of standard suburban housing on former EVI land led to suggestions such as, taking out low interest loans to repay over several years, trying to get an environmentally friendly building erected there instead of a regular home, and approaching EVI neighbors to try to raise the necessary funds collectively and create a permanent conservation easement to the benefit of all.

The alternative option to selling the lot had emerged at the second meeting on Tuesday, June 24, to discuss the topic, at which a first neighborhood resident proposed to offer the community an interest-free loan of $23,000 for a period of four years. The terms of the proposed loan were laid out in an email that was circulated on Tuesday, 08 July.

> DANA'S PROPOSAL: In response to the controversy about selling an additional lot, Dana E (from FN) has offered a possible compromise:
> 1. She is willing to make an interest free loan of $23,000 for up to 4 years.
> 2. The whole village would repay the loan through a special assessment. If this were equally based, it would be $8.00/household/month for 60 households for 4 years. However, this amount could go down with additional fundraising efforts.
> 3. Dana is willing to have a provision for some people to pay less, and some to pay more as needed.
> 4. She would like every resident household to participate at least nominally, so that we are all involved in the "home-stretch" of paying down the land debt.
> 5. The lot along West Haven Road that might have been sold, will be set aside as conserved land, never to be developed.
> 6. Additional fundraising efforts can still raise money, which would decrease the size of the loan to be repaid.

It was generally acknowledged that this constituted a very generous offer by this resident, and presented a means of ending the land debt without having to sell another lot. However, there were a considerable number of voices that initially expressed resistance to this course of action. For members of the second neighborhood this was mostly on the grounds that they were already experiencing considerable cost overruns, and could not

commit themselves to paying even a few dollars more per month at this stage. In the

words of one second neighborhood resident:

> At the risk of upsetting everyone, I'll state my opinion. I think we should
> definitely sell the additional piece of land. When I saw the new house this week
> (and the fox!), I thought, "Wow! We have new neighbors! New possibilities for
> more connections. We're less of a "city on a hill" that's only available to a few..."
> and so on.
> I would be extremely UN-interested in paying even $.05/month as a trade off
> because I see more neighbors as a positive. View, in my opinion, is what you
> make it. I have not chosen to live 10 miles away from others. I like human (and
> other types of wild and natural) company. I [am] NOT saying we should
> "develop" every square centimeter of our land, but I'm in favor of this decision.

The opening sentence of the above email highlights the kind of process that some

residents go through as they seek to find ways of expressing views that they fear may not

be popular with everybody, especially in the context of email communication in which

the reactions of the audience cannot be gauged. The consensus process depends upon

residents' ability to express themselves, which in turn rests upon experiencing a sense of

communion sufficient to reduce the risk of saying something that might be unpopular to

an acceptable level. The sense of communion that residents experience rests upon a

shared set of values around social and ecological change. However, while residents are

expected to share these values as a prerequisite for being there, alternative viewpoints are

tolerated, even encouraged, as part of the consensus process.

On Tuesday, 15 July a survey was sent out on email to each of the households of

both neighborhoods, soliciting the level of support for the loan proposal. At this time the

options for repaying the remaining land debt had been reduced to either an acceptance of

this proposal or the sale of one more lot on West Haven Road. The final decision rested

with the EVI board, and would be made at the upcoming board meeting. However, it was

understood that the board would act in accordance with the sentiments of the community.

On July 21, the decision was made to accept the first neighborhood resident's

offer of the interest-free loan. The sale of the lot would thereby be avoided, and the land

would be put into a permanent conservation easement. The board approved this decision,

and a legal document was drawn up in order to finalize the agreement. Subsequently an

email was circulated to organize collection of the repayment contributions.

> EVIVA Loan Repayment Pledge Form VA Meeting - September 28, 2003
> OBJECTIVE: To raise enough voluntary contributions from all Village residents
> (and others) to pay Dana the first quarterly installment due on her loan which will
> allow EVI to pay off the land debt without selling another West Haven lot. We
> will handle pledges for the 2004 calendar year when we consider the VA 2004
> Budget at the next VA Meeting (around winter solstice time 12/21).
> METHOD: At THIS VA meeting, VA Finance will take pledges for
> contributions, and then will total those pledges to see if there is enough pledged to
> make the first payment. Pledge amounts will be kept confidential and known only
> by the Finance Committee. If there is not enough pledged, Finance will come
> back to the meeting and, after explaining the shortfall, will solicit additional
> contributions. If there is not enough after the second round, then we will
> determine how to assess every resident Village household, in accordance with the
> consensus decision made at the Special VA Meeting July 21, 2003 (see below). If
> you are unable to attend the VA Meeting on 9/28, you may fill out this form and
> give it to Ian in FROG or Bob in SONG. Anyone who does not come to the
> Meeting or turn in a pledge form ahead of time will be assumed to make a pledge
> of the Average Amount. The VA Finance Committee will determine any other
> details needed to facilitate the repayment, such as how to handle amounts raised
> through future fundraising.
> ...
> "The VA agrees to take on the responsibility of paying the interest-free loan of
> $23,000 back to Dana E. in regularly scheduled payments (quarterly or more
> frequently) over 4 years, with money raised by voluntary pledging and
> fundraising, and with assessments as a fallback if pledges and fundraising do not
> raise enough money. The funds will be given by Dana to EVI after a legal
> agreement is signed." Adopted by consensus with 2 standasides.

By the end of August, 2003, through the first neighborhood resident's loan of

$23,000, a first payment from the SN for shared infrastructure of $41,000, a payment

from the town of Ithaca of $20,000 in connection with a water tank to be sited on EVI

land, and the Coffeehouse fundraiser proceeds of $1400, the sum of $85,400 was ready to

be repaid to the lenders.

Repayment of the land debt was the incentive for the "Debt-free in 2003" campaign and the proposal to sell one more lot. The success of the campaign was a source of great relief for the community, and especially for Liz Walker, who had shouldered the burden of working to repay the lenders. With the acceptance of the interest-free loan and the agreement to collect a monthly pledge in order to repay the loan, the topic of the lot sale had gone through the consensus process and an agreement had been formulated that residents of the community had agreed to follow.

What then had been achieved by the community? Most obviously residents had been successful in avoiding the sale of one more lot for suburban housing development on the border of the EcoVillage property. To get there, the topic of the proposed lot sale had gone through a fairly standard EVI process. This process generally includes, research on a topic by an individual or appointed committee, a proposal that is put to the community, a meeting to clarify and discuss the proposal, discussion amongst residents-face-to-face and via email, a further meeting at which there is a test for consensus, and perhaps a final decision that results in some form of legislation, agreement, or guideline, if consensus can be achieved at that meeting.

After the initial, unattended meeting it had seemed that opinion was in favor of selling the lot. What was required for discussion to be initiated was an opinion against the sale. Those who espoused a more community centered vision for the EcoVillage supported the sale of the lot as a relatively easy way to pay off the outstanding land debt. Once the more ecologically-minded residents found their voice the discussion broadened considerably.

The diversity of opinions that were expressed ranged from a concern to protect the community from excessive effort, worry and financial strain by selling the lot, to a deep ecology perspective that viewed development of almost any kind with a suspicious eye. Given this broad range of opinion, reflecting residents' core values around the vision of the EcoVillage, the task of achieving consensus over an acceptable course of action promised to be challenging.

Communication over the topic took place through formal, semi-formal, and informal channels. The initial formal channel was the appointing of a committee to look into the options that could emerge from selling a lot. The meeting that was organized to present the committee's findings and recommendations went unattended. The second meeting that was organized to discuss the proposed sale was in response to the face-to-face and email communication that had emerged from the announcement of the decision to sell the lot. The emails that were posted to the community lists were an essential element in the unfolding of the issue that allowed residents to express their opinions, and to react to other's opinions. Similarly, at the second meeting, the talking-stick method provided a forum for residents to express themselves openly and clearly without fear of contradiction or rebuttal. The pace of the meeting was very slow, with periods of silence punctuating residents turns at expressing themselves. This format confirms residents' commitment to hearing each other in as non-judgmental way as possible in order to work out a common approach to achieving resolution.

From daily interactions and conversations with residents over the course of four years, the researcher has gained and recorded insights into different resident's orientations relative to ecological versus community concern. Interviews with residents in August, 2000 were aimed specifically at investigating this point, and subsequent research

has expanded the researcher's understanding of where many residents situate themselves in regard to this question. Thus, when the views that residents expressed regarding the lot sale were analyzed in relation to their established positions, it became clear that those who had espoused a primarily ecological motivation for moving to the EcoVillage tended to support action that promoted ecological ends. Likewise, those who had expressed that the community was the primary attraction to the EcoVillage tended to support action that offered the least burden to the community.

The result was that while the more ecologically-oriented residents were generally against the sale on the grounds that it would compromise the vision and constitute a breach of stewardship, more community-oriented residents were only in favor of selling as a means to avoid placing unnecessary strain on the community. In other words, they were not for the sale, per se. Thus, Dana's offer of an interest free loan to the community presented an option for serious consideration in that it proposed only a relatively minor encumbrance on community members through the imposition of a small monthly fee. However, as noted above, some residents, particularly from the second neighborhood, were against paying any more in monthly expenses than they were already committed to by the cost overruns involved in the construction of their houses and the neighborhood infrastructure. This potential problem was overcome by two suggestions. The first was that there could be a sliding scale, by which those who were relatively well off could pay more while those who were struggling could pay less. Second, if there was a serious shortfall in the money collected, fundraising events would be planned to make up the difference.

In the presentation of opinion and discussions that took place over the best course of action, residents formulated and expressed their views in an atmosphere of trust and

acceptance. The question of how to pay off the remainder of the land debt was approached as a community enterprise, despite residents' initial lack of response. It was observed in casual encounters and in the organized meetings that residents experienced the freedom to express their opinions on any side of the debate, and opposing viewpoints were not interpreted as a threat or challenge that required a defensive response in the discussion of this topic. This sense of mutual regard and inquiry is viewed by the researcher as evolving from an experience of communion, through which residents share a history of consensus decisions that arise from a commitment to realizing a common vision.

The work of achieving consensus on an acceptable course of action follows from recognizing the shared values that define the affective boundaries of the community. Respecting each other's right to express their opinions, no matter how different or contrary is held as an essential component of building an inclusive community. Once everyone's mind is known the task of forging a suitable solution can take place. In this instance, resolving the topic of whether to sell a housing lot, the process worked very smoothly and came to a relatively swift conclusion. It was settled within four weeks. This is not always the case, as some topics take a long time to resolve, and may be marked by more heated debate. However, as each topic comes to resolution the community attains a greater level of communion, and becomes more skilled at streamlining the consensus process.

Part of the eventual solution to avoiding the sale of a lot was the hope that everyone would contribute at some level to making the repayment. The symbolic nature of making a concerted group effort appealed to residents' sense of their common goal. Even though they might not have agreed with the principle of having to make any kind of

monetary payment, the fact that it was to be a communal effort to preserve another acre of land from development had its appeal. Of the more than fifty households in both neighborhoods that were involved in the decision over whether to accept the loan, consensus was achieved with no resident choosing to block the proposal, and two opting to stand aside rather than vote in favor. Effectively this meant that all residents were committed to helping to repay the loan at whatever level they felt was appropriate.

Presented with the available options, residents would have individually pursued several potentially different paths. Other possible courses of action that were suggested included trying to get all the neighbors along West Haven Road to contribute to purchasing the lot to put into a permanent conservation easement to everyone's advantage, and taking out a regular bank loan to be repaid by residents. For residents to achieve consensus on the final decision required each to consider their own preferences in light of the suggestions and recommendations that were being made around them. The result was more than merely a compromise solution. It represented a decision that honored the best interests of residents from both an ecological and community perspective. The solution avoided developing the land, and avoided burdening community members with the need to initiate fund-raising activities. At the same time, the solution provided sufficient wiggle room for those who were unable to contribute even a few dollars a month, by encouraging the more well-off residents to contribute more, and by leaving open the possibility of fund-raising at a later date to further reduce repayments.

On an individual level, residents were involved in balancing their own values against those of the rest of the community. The ability to engage in the consensus process requires residents to accept that they do not necessarily have the best answer, and that in

order to achieve an acceptable solution they must each subordinate their own determination and will to that of the group. The most that each is allowed to do is to put to the group their own ideas, thoughts, perceptions, fears, hopes, et cetera, and allow those to become part of the shared awareness of the group, out of which an acceptable solution will arise. The consensus process requires cooperative investigation. By contrast, if the decision mechanism was by simple majority vote, then it would be incumbent upon each individual to put their perspective across in as forceful and persuasive a way as possible in order to sway others to their viewpoint. Instead, the consensus process allows each resident the same opportunity to voice their opinion, and actively discourages anyone from monopolizing group time and using verbally aggressive tactics.

The process described in this chapter offers further indications of the possibilities for a different sense of self to unfold at EVI through the practice of engaging in the consensus process. It requires that each individual acknowledge that they only have a part of the truth, and that the rest of the truth lies within the other members of the group. The consensus process also requires that individuals actively seek to understand alternative perspectives in order to work towards a common solution. Furthermore, once a solution is reached individuals are required to support the decision and work towards realizing its implications, even if it is one that they were not wholly comfortable with.

Observations of residents' negotiations over issues that affect the development of the community suggest that through the process of establishing and maintaining a sense of communion, and by involvement in the consensus process, the individual becomes identified more closely with the group. The experience that develops for residents is one of a shared history that can be read as a gradual, sometimes faltering convergence. This is not to impute that residents are becoming of "one mind" or adopt the same values, ideals,

and goals. On the contrary, the tensions that have been described in previous sections continue to influence the ways in which the community is developing. However, the sense of communion, of affective and heartfelt contribution to creating meaningful association, underpins their continued efforts to, as one resident expressed with reference to a quote from Ghandi, "be the change we want to see in the world."

As one resident expressed in an email communication, "There is a general sense that as a community we honor each others' needs and want to behave in ways that are sensitive to those needs." Resolving the topic of whether or not to sell the lot through the consensus process produced a decision that came as close as any might to honoring the needs of all parties.

The topic of whether or not to sell a lot highlighted the differing opinions that emerge from ecologically-oriented and community-oriented values. The end product, in terms of legislation, was a decision to accept an offer of a no-interest loan from another resident, to conserve the land, and to institute a variable repayment sum according to each household's ability to contribute. The process of arriving at this legislation involved engaging in a search for consensus that was facilitated by an existing sense of communion that continues to bind residents together. At the time of completion of this dissertation it is too early to know how the repayment plan is working out, how well supported it is, or what other methods, if any, will be necessary to complete the repayment of the loan. The only aspect of the core processes identified in section 5 that was not particularly present in the discussion of the proposed lot sale was the public/private continuum. However, this process is more central to the next topic that will be presented.

CHAPTER 9.

9.0.   Nudity at the pond: Casting off conventions to express self-acceptance, and

authentic engagement with social and ecological worlds

This chapter investigates the topic of nude bathing, which emerged at the

EcoVillage during June, 2003. Following the production of a set of draft guidelines for

the use of the community pond, a lively email debate took place, followed by a VA

meeting at which the topic would be discussed. After providing the background to the

topic, this chapter explores the opinions that surfaced through the email discussions,

followed by an account of the meeting and the consensus that was achieved. The

discussion then focuses on the ways in which residents dealt with each other and the

issues while the topic was "hot," and finally, how the processes that have been outlined

can be seen to operate in the debate that took place.

The discussion over the topic of nudity at the EcoVillage emerged suddenly and

unexpectedly, and was prompted by residents' desire to create a set of guidelines for the

use of the community pond. A committee was formed to examine the issues around use

of the pond. Pond safety had been cited as the major issue, including safety and

emergency procedures, avoiding contamination, and ensuring the safety of children using

the pond. The issue of how to incorporate the wishes of some residents to be able to

swim naked was also included in the discussion, but quickly became the major focus.

Initiating discussion over the question of nude bathing caused residents to realize

the breadth of opinions that had lain beneath the surface while the previous informal

arrangement had been in place. The more the topic was discussed the more apparent it

became to all concerned that the issue of nudity touched on core values for a number of

residents. Over the course of a couple of weeks, in addition to informal discussions and

conversations, a sometimes heated email exchange took place in which residents expressed their positions on this topic.

The pond, which utilizes natural water flow across the site, measures roughly two hundred feet long by 100 feet wide at its widest points, and forms a roughly oval shape. A gravel beach has been created by residents at the side of the pond that faces the community, and which provides the closest access point for residents wishing to swim. The gravel slopes into the water, providing easy access to the water for children to splash around and swim. There is also a small island that children can swim or paddle over to and play on. The beach also has two picnic tables and benches that sit under an awning in the summer that provides shade from the sun (see Appendix IV).

Concern has always been expressed to balance the needs of the human residents of the EcoVillage with the non-human residents. Importance has been given to creating an ecologically balanced pond. Invasive species are regularly removed to prevent them from choking the whole pond, and the natural algae that forms around the further edges is recognized as being a natural part of the ecosystem, and not something to be removed just because it seems a little yucky. The fish population keeps down the insects, especially the mosquitoes. There are water lilies and pond flowers in a little spur of the pond, as well as cattails along the banks. These cattails provide a screen from an area at the far western edge of the pond where a rough path has been created that leads to an alternative entry point into the water for swimmers.

During the summer months the pond becomes a gathering place for residents. Children swim and play there under adult supervision, parents hang out and chat, and residents who work at the EcoVillage come down to take a refreshing swim or just to spend time with other residents. The pond is a prime social venue during the summer

months at the EcoVillage, and is acknowledged as a valued resource for relaxation,

entertainment for the children, and exercise.

Existing guidelines for the use of the pond were fairly brief. There were four basic

areas that were highlighted. These were,

- Use the pond at your own risk
- Supervise young people
- Beware of thin ice
- Respect wildlife

An informal arrangement had developed over the years by which people wanting

to swim naked would do so from the gravel beach either in the evening as it was dark, or

nearing dark, in the early morning, or from the western end of the pond which is hidden

from the main beach by the cattails. From this point residents can disrobe, get into the

water and swim about and leave the pond without anyone else at the pond seeing them

naked. This arrangement had evolved over the years, emerging from a sense of

communion between residents, mutual desires for accommodation and acceptance,

without directly challenging each other's values over the topic of nudity.

As part of the wider topic of arriving at a set of inclusive guidelines for the use of

the pond, the question of how to include nude bathing came up for consideration.

Previous guidelines and agreements had largely been worked out by members of the first

neighborhood group. The construction of the second neighborhood led to the creation of

the village association (VA) to organize common concerns. Accordingly, the task of

arriving at a suitable set of pond guidelines became a matter to be decided through the

VA meetings, which are attended by members of both neighborhoods.

Two residents of the first neighborhood had initially expressed interest in being

part of a committee to consider the topic of creating pond guidelines. They began by

soliciting feedback on an informal basis from as many individuals as possible. This involved approaching both those who were uncomfortable with nudity as well as those who were nude bathers. Out of these informal information gathering activities a set of draft guidelines were put together that reflected the varied input that they had received. Primarily residents had focused upon safety issues such as arranging emergency procedures, children's' safety and reliable ice-testing. The part that dealt with nude bathing at the pond essentially described the informal arrangement that had developed under which swimming nude was done at night or from the end of the pond where it was least visible. These draft guidelines were circulated in hard copy to every house in the two neighborhoods on June 22, 2003, prior to the VA meeting that was scheduled for Sunday, June 29.

The introduction to the topic of nude bathing provided a frame of reference for the discussion.

> There are several complex aspects that inform residents' feelings about nude bathing. These aspects include values (e.g., whether or not the current social norm of being clothed in public is a good thing) and EcoVillage's public image (e.g., whether or not it is a good thing to be perceived as a place where public nudity is always/sometimes/never tolerated). A consideration of these issues has great value and can be an important dimension on which to deepen understanding of each others' diverse viewpoints. For the purpose of arriving at workable guidelines at this time, however, it is most productive to focus on the needs of individuals and arriving at a common ground of compromise in which those needs can be met.

This introduction demonstrates that the authors sought to avoid the kind of idealistic and value-oriented discussion that they recognized could take up an inordinate amount of time to explore. Instead, they made an effort to restrict the debate to making a workable decision that would take into account the various needs of the EcoVillage population. However, in the email discussion that followed the circulation of the draft

guidelines considerations of the wider social and ethical implications of their proposed solution inevitably surfaced.

The first response called into question the difference between male and female nudity.

> I also noticed quite a bit of discussion around women's breasts being visible in the rationale section of the guidelines. I was reminded today that New York state law permits women to bare their breasts in public, (perhaps you recall the top-free Thursday picnics in Dewitt park). I'm not sure that I would be entirely comfortable being more stringent than state law regarding bare breasts around here--just a thought. I'm also reminded that this is a community that is very nursing-friendly, and breasts are frequently visible during nursing around here. So, I was just wondering where we are drawing the line. Otherwise, I am fine with a designated time for nude bathing in the pond, and it is clear that effort was made to accommodate the different perspectives on the matter.

This reference to standards and norms that apply beyond the boundary of the EcoVillage was the beginning of a series of emails that explored the relationship of the EVI to the wider culture in which it is situated. This in turn led to a consideration of the overall vision of the EcoVillage and the effect that a reputation for nudity would have on its mission.

> Maybe it could generate some negative comments to see people skinny dipping at ecovillage but maybe it will generate just as much support and possibly it will open some people up to feeling more free about their own bodies. I know that in our society always being clothed is the norm but we seem to be challenging a lot of norms at ecovillage and I think this is one worth examining.

The question that is raised here is just who the EVI is seeking to impress and affect as a demonstration community. The author is asking whether those who are open to hearing the message promoted by the community-oriented and ecological vision of the EcoVillage would also be receptive to developing a new awareness of their physical bodies. The underlying assumption is that there will be many people beyond the borders of the EcoVillage who have no interest in social and ecological reconstitution, so that

alienating these people through public nudity would be no loss. For other residents,

however, the public at large remain undifferentiated, and the chance to positively affect

the attitudes, values, and eventually, the behaviors, of the larger culture around social and

ecological issues remains paramount. These residents believe that the perception that

public nudity is a commonplace at the EcoVillage would overshadow every other bit of

important work that they do. It is the one thing that the public will immediately remember

about the EcoVillage, to the detriment of their greater mission. One resident's email

communication expressed this view.

> ...But I do think that we might have some common agreement around our larger
> mission. I think that we all hope that some of what we are doing here--
> conservation, eco design, community involvement--will someday become
> incorporated into mainstream life. Naked grown-ups freak out mainstream people.
> We may think that conventional attitudes about our bodies need to be changed,
> but let's be clear about the fact that our mission here is not about nudism.

Conversation with two long-time residents about the topic of nude bathing

confirmed the point made above. They expressed that they had worked hard to create a

middle-class community that could be identified with by the wider society. The

perception that the EVI was a place that practiced communal nudity would undo all of

that. Although neither of these residents had a problems with nudity, per se, and one of

them had swum naked one evening while I was at the pond, they both agreed that a

reputation for public nudity would not further the cause of the EcoVillage.

A newer resident entered the debate from a different perspective, questioning the

need to conform to a safe identity in order to further the EcoVillage's mission. In

addition, the question is raised as to how unusual nude bathing really is. Many residents

admitted to having skinny-dipped in a wide variety of circumstances in the past, with

friends and with family. In addition, around Ithaca there are some locations where nude

bathing is practiced.

I have to admit that I am concerned that we feel we need to project a particular image to the world. We have hippies here, and yuppies, and people who don't fit neatly into any category. The best message we can send to the world is that this is a place where people of diverse attitudes can live and get along. I think we'll win more converts by being fun than by being respectable. I also think that, far from being on the fringe, skinny dipping is widespread in Ithaca. I've talked to several people who have mentioned daytime skinny dipping in Six Mile and other local spots.

Another fairly new resident responded to this email, taking the point of view that the mission of EVI was very clearly not about promoting nudity as part of its social change agenda.

I like your observation that "We have hippies here, and yuppies, and people who don't fit neatly into any category." We are, indeed, a diverse lot. So what you say about our mission doesn't feel ok to me. It feels to me like you are implying that our sustainability mission includes a social change agenda to promote public nudity as a way of life. I strongly disagree with this assumption. I certainly don't share it and there are lots of others here who don't share it.

The mention of "hippies and yuppies" was also responded to by an email to the community from a resident who had considerable experience of leading groups and tours around the EcoVillage. This experience gave her a unique perspective on how others react to the EcoVillage.

From a public relations point of view, I am very concerned about visitors (particularly foreign visitors from cultures which do not encourage nudity, tour groups, school kids and people's relatives and friends who are uncomfortable with nudity) plus media. It has been a long journey to put ecovillage on the map as a place that has educational potential for a wide variety of people, and not either a "hippy" or "yuppie" community. I've had the experience of showing CNN around and having them cut out footage of the pond since there were nude children in the picture. I'm not saying that should dictate what we do (I'm all for kids being naked), but it makes me ultra-sensitive to knowing when there will be nude bathing and when there won't,...

This email makes a clear case for curbing nude bathing in favor of promoting an acceptable image of the EcoVillage in furtherance of its intended mission. The ultra sensitivity of the general population to nudity is emphasized by the actions of CNN cutting out shots of naked children. While nude bathing is not rejected as an activity, it

would need to be carried on with sensitivity to who was around to witness it. Some

residents rejected this approach because it made it seem as though there were something

wrong with the naked body. Another resident raised concerns over inhibiting preferred

behaviors at the EcoVillage from quite a different perspective.

> As a lesbian and member of this community , I am deeply disturbed by the
> discussion regarding visitors to ecovillage and how they may perceive "us"
> regarding nudity. Other cultures and in fact American culture have trouble
> accepting gay and lesbian people. Should I "curb" my behavior because most of
> the world is not pleased by the "image" I put forth to the dominant straight
> culture?

This was a challenge that none of the residents responded to. It was precisely the

kind of argument that the committee charged with creating a workable set of guidelines

did not want to get bogged down in, interesting and important though these questions

were recognized to be. Another resident reflected on her experiences as a nursing mother

from a similar perspective.

> ...If I was concerned about how comfortable others were I would probably be
> secretly nursing my daughter in bathrooms, bedrooms, and other hidden places
> instead of everywhere I go whenever she wants to nurse which is clearly (to me)
> what is best for both of us. Sometimes people around me are uncomfortable and
> sometimes people have to see what they are uncomfortable with in order for
> change to happen. I don't want to feel restricted where I live because visitors may
> be uncomfortable. I want to live how I feel best about living and hope that others
> can accept me as I am (as long as I'm not causing anyone harm - and I don't think
> seeing a naked body is really going to harm anyone - make them feel
> uncomfortable maybe, but not harm them). Maybe seeing others so comfortable
> with their bodies will on some level lead to healing for our guests and ourselves.

It may be discerned from the above quotes that with regard to the manner in

which the EcoVillage is perceived by those in the wider culture, the opinions were

divided into two broad camps. One of these maintained that the fundamental mission of

the EcoVillage was its community-oriented and ecological agenda for change, and that

allowing public nudity would distract from its ability to promote that change. The other

viewpoint held that nudity could be part of the EcoVillage's agenda for social change,

that a holistic approach to creating a sustainable system should include more than merely being energy efficient and building ecological houses. What was needed was to look at the wider picture. Accordingly, attitudes towards our physical bodies was part of that holistic view, and part of any consideration of how people relate to each other, especially considering how problematic social relations were deemed to be in the wider society.

The discussion about how to handle nudity at the EcoVillage made a fundamental distinction between the wider culture, what happens "out there," and EVI itself, the kind of social arrangement that exists within its 176 acre boundaries. While some residents made a case for changing social attitudes in the wider society, others were more concerned with resisting the imposition of external standards on their private EcoVillage space. Some residents sought to actively demonstrate the benefits of creating a culture in which nudity can be an accepted part of daily life. Others, by contrast, expressed a desire to resist being confined by conventional social mores in regard to their physical bodies.

Attitudes towards the physical body were, for some residents, intimately connected with the social change agenda as they perceived it. From this perspective nudity becomes both a social challenge to the wider culture, and a personal challenge, as some residents applied a metaphorical link between being physically naked in front of each other and being emotionally open and honest with each other. Before exploring this facet of the debate over nude bathing however, there is a further aspect of the topic that relates to the concern for affecting social change over attitudes towards the physical body. For some residents there was a strong desire to challenge the automatic link between nudity, body image, and sexuality, especially as this would affect their growing children.

The connection between nudity and sexuality was first raised by this email from a concerned father.

> ...My wish is that we could all remove our clothes, get past our inhibitions, and begin to look more clearly into each other's eyes. I worry that my 5 year old daughter is entering too quickly into an over-sexed world and cannot enjoy safety and freedom in her greater home and close community. These are societal issues and as a model of a relatively "advanced" community, I would hope we would seek cures for the problems plaguing the mega-culture, rather than perpetuate its ills. I hope I haven't offended anyone. I am not convinced of my views but I have feelings that I think may be important to express. Please be supportive with your input and feedback and thank you for listening.

This email begins by making an explicit connection between open, uninhibited communication and physical nakedness as a positive value to be encouraged at EVI. It also identifies the EcoVillage as a private space and its residents as a kind of extended family, that together provide a safe environment for his daughter. The email goes on to promote the EcoVillage as a project that will positively affect the surrounding culture, and a place that must strive to avoid perpetuating its ills. It ends with the caveat that these are developing views, and invokes a fairly common attitude that emerges in the data gathered in which residents recognize that the opinion held may change through the process of getting feedback from other residents. What is held to be important is that residents, while they may have strong opinions on a particular issue, should avoid adopting an adversarial and judgmental approach to each other, opting instead for a spirit of cooperative inquiry. This attitude is one way in which EcoVillage residents are challenging a cultural norm, avoiding the situation of debating conflicting views in favor of cooperatively seeking consensus. The following responses to this email demonstrate residents' development of the discussion.

In subsequent emails a variety of points were made about a culture that sexualizes and commodifies the body, often inducing feelings of shame and inadequacy in the

population, especially young people. By contrast, parents of children at the EcoVillage

strive to educate their children to a more open and less shame-inducing sense of their

own bodies. The previous email continued by expressing the wish that his daughter

could, at the age of 13, feel free to still be naked without embarrassment or fear.

Residents who had experience of teenage girls replied that in their experience, teenagers

and adolescents are generally mortified by the thought of being seen naked, no matter

what their upbringing, and generally disgusted by the idea of seeing adults naked. In

response to these opinions another resident replied as follows.

> But I think this misses Ted's point, which is visionary: he wants to live in a world
> where his daughter could, if she chose, be naked at 13 without fear of being
> shamed, ogled, molested, abducted, or otherwise made into some kind of sex
> object. We don't live in that world yet. How are we going to get there?

This email expresses a strong inclination towards redefining social attitudes

towards the physical body as part of an overall agenda for social change. Developing a

social system in which 13 year old girls are not sexualized is a task that must take place

not only within the confines of the EcoVillage, but in the wider society as well. The

unique situation of the EcoVillage offers a potential starting point for such an endeavor.

The reply to this email from another resident firmly made the case that although this was

an important issue, it is not one that the EcoVillage should be working to change at the

expense of its ecological mission.

> I'm not sure how we're going to get to that place, even though I do think it's an
> important place to be. I don't think that getting there is the main reason we are up
> here, and I'm not willing to have body issues detract from our ecological vision.

Parents of young children responded from the perspective that as parents they were

striving to develop in their children a shame-free attitude to their bodies. This represented

a family value that had less to do with the desire to change society than to inculcate

healthy practices and values in their own children. One mother commented in an email

that despite their best efforts in this direction, and without any family-originated pressure, their son had still reached a stage of shutting the bathroom door and avoiding being naked around the house. This observation was seconded by another parent. One parent provided a typical assessment of their family's values around nudity and rationale for accepting nudity within the community.

> ...I also feel the need to say that Todd and I have worked very hard in our parenting to have our kids feel great about their bodies and ours (and everyone else's!). I'm sure that's obvious to many by Gill's typical attire ;-). But really, it's not just that he prefers not to wear clothes (which he does), it's a huge philosophical point to me that I don't want my kids to feel any shame about needing to cover up certain parts of their bodies. I want my kids to know that I am proud of and comfortable with my body -- every part! I'm not suggesting that anyone who feels differently about this issue is communicating body shame to their kids, but it is what comes up for me around this issue.... I understand that we live in a community, and so our actions affect others in a way they don't in a more "typical" suburban setting. However, limiting nude swimming does affect our choices and the values we work hard to pass on to our kids.

Nakedness was associated by some parents with their children's expression of freedom and naturalness. The innocence of young children experiencing their bodies free of the repressive filters of the dominant culture was seen as something to protect and encourage. In regard to the debate over nude bathing, there was never any question about restricting children's ability to bathe naked, except in the case of those who were not fully toilet-trained. Instead, the debate focused on how to manage the dual standard of allowing children to bathe naked while restricting adults' ability to bathe nude without communicating to the children that there was something shameful or wrong about being naked. In the context of devising nude bathing guidelines some were prompted to wonder at what age children should be discouraged from bathing nude. This was answered by those parents whose children had developed shyness about their own, and other people's bodies in the course of growing up.

An explicit connection between the act of being naked in a natural setting and ecological awareness of our relationship to the natural world was made by several residents in email communications. It was a value that was equally relevant to both children and adults. Two examples suffice to communicate the flavor of residents' sense of the connection between nudity and nature. One refers to nakedness for children, while the second relates the experiences of an adult with regard to nudity.

> Jan also asked: What is the point? When Lisa was playing naked she would exclaim: "I am naked and free." That is the point. It is an expression of freedom to stand unclad and connected to heaven and earth. It is to imagine that in such a vulnerable state, one can be safe. It is to be cradled by the water as the dolphin is. Just plain natural. It's a feeling.

> Finally, I want to share why I love to swim naked and dry off naked in the sun afterwards. To me, being naked in the water and, afterwards, in the sunlight, is one of life's delights, a natural high. It's something I never got to do as a child (at least not past babyhood); the first time I ever skinny-dipped I was 17, and I was hooked! It's a celebration of being alive and a reminder of my connection with Mother Earth and Father Sky. My skin feels like it's singing! I experience being an animal, a child of nature. My senses are open, and my heart is light.

From this perspective, being naked is seen as an affirmation of connection to the natural world in a manner that recognizes that the removal of clothing parallels the casting off of culturally imposed constraints. Nakedness in the natural world is thus a desirable state. By extension, it is no surprise that a culture that disrespects and subjugates nature would also disrespect and subjugate the human body.

> So the point is, nudity is what we got when we peel it all away. It's what we are when we take away the marketing and the packaging. Perhaps this makes us uncomfortable because society encourages us to use clothing and make-up to help define ourselves. I don't know how many people have told me that the sexy clothes kids wear to school gives them the freedom to express who they are.

The first part of this section on nude bathing focused on the differentiation between what happens "in here" at the EcoVillage as opposed to "out there" in the wider culture. The extent to which the topic of nudity was an issue that the EcoVillage ought to

be tackling as part of its overall social change agenda was a primary consideration in that part of the debate. Following this, the case for including nudity as part of the EcoVillage's mission was made on two counts. Firstly, from the point of view of children growing up in an over-sexualized world, it was argued that there is a need for an alternative approach that would encourage individuals to "see past" the outer shell, and learn to engage more deeply with each other. The second argument proposed that there is a connection between experiencing our physical embodiment in the natural world in a manner that avoids the usual cultural baggage that surrounds nakedness. It is important for both adults and children to be able to experience this connection. Furthermore, this aspect of experience is fundamentally connected to the ecological mission of the EcoVillage.

The first argument, that individuals ought to learn to desexualize the body, get past their inhibitions and connect more deeply with each other is made from a community-oriented perspective. In calling for deeper and more open communication between people those who advance this argument are focusing on human relationships. This is an essential aspect of the vision of the EcoVillage. By contrast, those who advance the second argument are making a claim for a closer experience of the natural world. This is to be based upon physical contact with nature, free of the cultural constraints that are represented by clothing. Here, the ecological aspect of the EcoVillage mission is being promoted. Thus, the concept of nakedness is interpreted by residents according to arguments that are in accord with the overall vision, values, and mission of EVI. Many residents, however, viewed nudity as too great a challenge to the EcoVillage's prospective audience, and an issue that would detract from other's perceptions of the community.

The topic of nudity also elicited responses from residents that explored nakedness as a personal growth issue. This aspect of the topic was expressed in an earlier email that began, "My wish is that we could all remove our clothes, get past our inhibitions, and begin to look more clearly into each other's eyes." Those who expressed reservations about nude bathing on email did so predominantly from the perspective of worrying about compromising the mission of the EcoVillage. There were only one or two comments that related to feeling uncomfortable with the amount of "information" that residents might have to take in while sitting at the pond. A response from a pro nude bathing resident was to encourage those who were against it to talk about their values as a way of coming to understand their point of view. A more confrontational viewpoint was expressed by another resident in favor of nude bathing, who offered a theory as to why some people might have trouble with the idea.

> ...Why does seeing other people skinny dip freak people out? My theory is that deep down most people really want to skinny dip but are kept from it by culturally ingrained body image problems and fear that they'll be labeled an exhibitionist, pedophile, etc. I think what freaks people out is seeing that other people can get past their taboos. Fear that they too could walk away from the safe if repressive social norms and think for themselves.

This email provoked a strong response from one of the committee members charged with drawing up the guidelines. The response began by stating that he had been approached by several residents who had expressed that they felt that they could not express their opinions for fear of receiving negative reactions and judgments. This email represented exactly that type of negative evaluation.

> I find this discourse to be extraordinarily disrespectful of my values and of the other folks here who feel the same way as I do. You say that you "have immense respect for the various opinions that have been expressed" and that you hope what you say "will be heard in that light." It's hard to feel that you're being respectful when you try to explain away my value system by psychoanalyzing me, by saying that my views are just based on fear....I respect that for you, skinny-dipping and public nudity are a way of communicating that your body is ok and that you wish

to pass this value on to your children. Please accept my beliefs at face value, also. Please respect the fact that my value system has integrity in and of itself and does not need to be explained away as being based on fear. My feelings about public nudity are deeply rooted in my core values and my sense of being in the world. Please accept who I am!

Thus, residents who were against public nudity at the EcoVillage for reasons other than its potential to undermine the mission or cause embarrassment to visitors, whether this was for personal, moral, or religious reasons, were largely silent on the issue. No resident expressed that they were opposed to nude bathing on deeply personal grounds. The overall tendency expressed by those residents who expressed an opinion was to assume that they were striving to "move to a place of less inhibition [rather] than more." Through many conversations and interactions at the EcoVillage residents expressed a sense of personal comfort with nudity, which only varied in terms of the degree to which they felt personally comfortable being naked in front of others, or being around others who were naked. I was present on several occasions when residents swam naked, mostly in the evening or at night, and several others expressed that this was something that they too practiced.

On a personal level being naked with other adults was viewed as a means of breaking down barriers. For residents, being naked in each others' presence was an act that created a sense of communion through a mutually shared value. Mostly this took place on an informal, sometimes spontaneous basis, at the pond in the evening or early morning if residents happened to be swimming at the same time. An event that took place last year that was more formal in its organization was an afternoon of "Wimmin Goin' Swimmin," at which many of the female residents of the community convened at the pond to swim naked together. A female resident who participated remembered the event on email.

> I'm only interested in having people be naked in groups if it is done in a spirit of respect and awareness. This was the case at last year's Wimmin' Goin' Swimmin', where 28 women and girls, most (but not all) of us naked, spend an hour or two at the beach and in the pond, enjoying our freedom and each other's company. ...
> For some it was a big step, for others just a refreshing change from the status quo. But I think what was so special about it was the sense of community, of togetherness. Of being female together, and celebrating the beauty and diversity of our bodies. And yes, we did actually look at each other! Not at genitals, but at all the rest, including breasts. (Rumor has it that we had one pre-teen male spectator, from a distance. If so, I can't imagine that it did him -- or us -- any harm. I'd like to think that it satisfied some natural curiosity.)

An event of this nature emphasizes the notion of the EcoVillage as a place that is moving towards a state of less inhibition rather than more. Taking part in such an event offers a personal challenge for residents not used to sharing in this way. However, the intention at the EcoVillage is to offer a supportive environment in which residents may challenge their inhibitions and learn to communicate with, and experience each other, more deeply. Thus, the idea of nudity becomes a metaphor for intimacy and self-acceptance. From a personal growth perspective, as a value that forms part of the EcoVillage vision, nudity would then be viewed ideally as an integral part of the development of the community. This is another reason why restricting nude bathing during the daytime appears to many residents to be against the spirit of the EcoVillage as they understand it. Balancing this view of the value of nudity to the community against the drawbacks, in terms of external disapprobation and the compromising of the ecological mission, required all the accumulated skills of the community in order to reach a workable solution.

The initial circulation of the draft guidelines for use of the pond on June 22, 2003 included recommendations for restrictions on nude bathing. Those wishing to bathe nude were only permitted to do so during the hours of daylight from the west end of the pond, where they would be least visible, and to remain in the northwest quadrant of the pond.

Furthermore, they were only to be permitted to do this after having checked with those on the beach that this was acceptable, and were expected to discretely remove and put on their clothes both before and afterwards. For many residents this appeared much too restrictive, and a little like "going to the back of the bus."

Several residents called for at least equal access to the beach during daylight hours as clothed bathers enjoyed, others suggesting that there be days for nude bathing and days for regular bathing. As one resident commented in conversation, it appeared as though the pendulum was swinging too far the other way, and it seemed as though people who were against nude bathing were now having to push for some control.

Between the circulation of the draft guidelines on June 22 and the VA meeting on June 29 many of the opinions that have been reported were first communicated via email. At the meeting a period of forty minutes had been allotted to discuss and reach consensus on the proposed guidelines. It was stated straight away that the entire proposal was too broad to achieve consensus on in one day. Thus it was proposed to cut it into manageable chunks, and especially to get agreement on the important safety guidelines.

Before they got into this, one resident interrupted to say that everyone should take a minute and breathe in preparation for this issue which had produced so many opinions. She had selected a piece of music to play for a minute, which turned out to be the classic stripper song. This caused a great deal of laughter and some of those present sang along and pretended to begin undressing. Following this, the discussion got under way.

An amendment to the proposed guidelines was added that anyone wishing to swim naked should hoist a green towel from an agreed point that would alert all to the presence of naked bathers. The first concerns that were raised were that visitors would not know the system. However, the group was reminded that this was being proposed as a

temporary measure, in place of the lack of any clear guidelines that exist at that moment, and that they would be reviewed at the end of the season. It was planned to have salons and talking stick circles to really share feelings and gain understandings of other people's perspectives after the end of the swimming season, in September or October.

In order for people to express their views a stacking system was used, in which residents put up their hands and the facilitator made a list, giving each one in turn an uninterrupted chance to express themselves. Many of the points that were made by residents reiterated those which had been made prior to the meeting, person to person, and by email. Thus, a full account of the meeting will not be given here. However, those residents who spoke expressed their opinions freely during the half hour or so that it took to hear them. There was a genuine attempt by other residents to listen to each point of view as it was expressed. Apart from the occasional reminders from the meeting facilitators of the pressure of time when one or two speakers digressed, there were no interruptions.

Following the airing of opinions an attempt was made to have a straw poll to see how the voting might go if they tested for consensus. Several minutes of clarification were needed first while residents got straight the exact terms of the revised proposal for nude bathing guidelines at the pond. As those present gave an initial indication of which way they might vote, one resident was seriously contemplating blocking the proposal. Another encouraged him to do so if he felt that that was really what he needed to do. His objections were heard with no trace of recrimination or impatience, as he finally came to the conclusion that he would stand aside rather than block. It was impressed upon him by another resident that he should not bow to peer pressure if he really felt strongly. Residents displayed a real commitment to the consensus process, and to the idea that

everyone has a right to their opinion, and a right to be heard, and to contribute to the final decision.

In the end the revised proposal was passed by consensus with four stand asides. The concerns of the stand asides were as follows: one thought the towel idea was too complicated, and that the original proposal was clearer. Another felt that there were some pieces that were going to be ambiguous. The remaining two residents did not understand the urgency to swim naked during the daylight hours from the beach. But they were all willing to see how the guidelines would work for the duration of the summer.

One resident interrupted the proceedings before they wrapped up in order to make sure that the precise objections of the stand asides was understood and acknowledged by the rest of the group. This portion of the meeting was supposed to occupy forty minutes, but ended up taking one and a half hours. However, from the considerable variations in opinions that had been expressed over the topic the group had produced an agreement for a trial set of procedures that would be reviewed after the end of the summer. The process of achieving consensus was steered through the efforts of the committee that created the guidelines as well as the facilitators of the VA meeting. The decision that was arrived at left open the possibility of further exploration of the values that lie behind each resident's attitude to the topic, as well as the commitment to re-examining the practical solution that was being tested for the remainder of the summer.

Following the meeting there was much informal discussion over the new guidelines in the community. The general opinion was to adopt a wait-and-see attitude. While some residents had reservations about the guidelines they were willing to suspend judgment until they had been given a chance to work for a while. The principal worry seemed to be that they were too complicated, and that there would be too much confusion. The terms

of the agreement that had been reached were subsequently circulated with the complete

minutes of the VA meeting.

> NUDE BATHING GUIDELINES.
> The following guidelines apply to the current 2003 swimming season:
> --Nude bathing from the beach can take place from 7:30 p.m. to 8:30 a.m.
> Between 8:30 a.m. and 7:30 p.m., those wishing to nude bath from the beach
> should check in with anyone currently at the each to see if it is okay with them.
> --Nude bathing can always take place from the Northwest side of the pond [from
> behind the cat-tails].
> --Between 8:30 a.m. and 7:30 p.m., a green towel should be hung in a designated
> place [the north-facing side of the canopy frame] when nude bathing is taking
> place at the beach.
> --Any resident who would like to ensure the beach is designated for clothed
> swimming only can hang a purple towel to communicate that nude bathing should
> not happen from the beach at that time.
> --If anyone wishes to ensure that nude bathing will not happen from 8:30 a.m. –
> 7:30 p.m. from the beach for longer than they will be at the pond (e.g. over a
> weekend), they should notify the community through email, hang the purple
> towel, and take responsibility for removing it when the time is over.*
> --Spirit of agreement is to always show discretion and respect when nude bathing
> at the pond.

Previous quotes explored residents' opinions on the topic of nudity. A noteworthy

feature of the debate and resolution of the topic that was not considered was the manner

in which residents dealt with each other and engaged with the processes that led to

consensus. The discussions that took place sought, by and large, to establish mutual

understanding. Generally, though not always, as previously noted, residents expressed

willingness to explore each other's points of view and learn from each other. Sometimes

this involved taking the risk of either exposing oneself (figuratively, not literally), or

possibly upsetting others with a particular view.

The topic of nudity at the EcoVillage was fairly unique in its capacity for

revealing residents' core values as these related to their overall vision for the EcoVillage.

The informal arrangement that had been the norm until proper guidelines were proposed

assumed a level of common ground that turned out not to be there when earnest

discussion got under way. While residents offered via email their perspectives from social, ecological, and personal growth perspectives on the topic of nudity, those who were against nudity on personal, core value grounds were largely silent. Indeed, the indication of one of the committee members who was developing the guidelines was that there were people who felt silenced by the apparent normative acceptance of nudity as a value, even by those who were opposed to nudity in practice. A plea, in a brief email, by one pro nudity resident for those who were against nudity to come forward and express their views did not seem to produce any email response.

> I would find it helpful and illuminating if people who are not comfortable with public nudity would talk about their own experience and values. I guess I don't really understand.

The importance of residents understanding each other's perspectives was underscored in an email by one of the pond guideline committee members.

> … If I'm going to ask you to change your behavior in a way that affects your core values, it's going to be easier for you to feel open to the change if I explain to you where I'm coming from. Second, people have strong feelings about this subject, and those feelings need to be honored and respected. …But as carefully as I chose my words, the fact remains that some people experience the very idea of a restriction on nude bathing as a negative judgment about their behavior or about their bodies. On the other hand, if you have a cultural and familial background in which nudity is something you experience only in private, the idea of seeing your neighbors nude feels very different. Finally, the consensus model is oriented towards deepening understanding. A few folks have suggested to me that perhaps the idea of the consensus process is not so much to arrive at a decision, but to sensitize each other to who we are and what our needs are.

Comments on the function of the consensus process in creating a sense of mutual understanding in the community were echoed from several residents, especially in regard to the issue of nude bathing. Residents were aware of the need to integrate potentially opposing views on the topic, and of the necessity for all views to be heard and represented in the decision making process.

The consensus process, as I understand it, is about deeply listening to each others needs and respecting each other values. It does not feel respectful to me to say to you that, because skinny dipping is not social convention out there, you shouldn't be allowed to do it here. I am also mindful of the fact there are people for whom the very idea of having to go to the other side of the pond feels like going to the back of the bus. It's important to the consensus process (and to me personally) that people don't feel marginalized in this way. So the guidelines are all about finding an accommodation that expresses mutual respect for each others beliefs, values, and needs.

Consensus relies for its successful application on each individual making known their position on the topic at hand, while simultaneously striving to comprehend a range of opinions expressed by other members of the community. It is part of the work of learning to live in a community like the EcoVillage at Ithaca to be able to put one's opinions, beliefs, or values out to the rest of the community and get feedback from others. At the same time, this can be a difficult process to engage in.

...Regarding skinny dipping, I feel torn, and therefore have been uncertain about how to respond. I don't want my personal views to keep us from reaching a consensus on such a broad proposal with so many great and necessary things. I feel very torn about how my own values about nude swimming might upset others who have a very different opinion....

The process of moving towards consensus on the topic of the nude bathing guidelines caused residents to explore their own values and assumptions with regard to nudity. The topic also challenged residents to express their views and respond to each other respectfully and without judgment. At the end of the process an email posted to the community, and directed to the committee that drew up the guidelines summed up many of the salient points that the topic of nude bathing had raised.

Thank you so much for the manner in which you have handled this issue, for keeping your cool (at least publicly) in the face of some difficult communications, for insisting that we respect each other's points of view, and for reminding us of the goal of consensus. I look forward to the meeting in the fall where we will have the time and space to discuss this issue at a deeper level. It promises to be very interesting (to say the least). ...I myself have no problem with the nudity of others. I have bathed nude, but not often, as I am uncomfortable being naked in front of others. That is for me to deal with. I have heard excellent arguments for

and against nudity at the pond. But whether nudity at the pond is good or bad, acceptable or unacceptable, is not the issue, as you have pointed out. The point is that there are people in this community who have strong opinions on both sides, and we, as a community, need to find a way to respect everyone's needs. While we should not be slaves to "outside" opinion, it is important to know how the rest of the world views this, and to be aware of the consequences of our actions in this light. And we should keep in mind that this community's mission has to do with ecology and with the ability of people to live together, it does not have to do with nudity per se, although valid connections can and have been drawn between these issues. Thank you again for the way in which you have handled this discussion.

The central issue in the topic of nude bathing at the EcoVillage invokes the public/private continuum in several ways. Physical nakedness under the dominant social paradigm is both historically and culturally a private state. It is closely related to notions of privacy and sexuality. From the perspective of many residents at the EcoVillage the freedom to choose to remove their clothes in the presence of other residents runs parallel to the desire to create a close sense of community. While no resident was calling for nudity to become the norm at the EcoVillage, the freedom to remove one's clothes to enjoy a swim, or to sunbathe, was felt to be a reasonable expectation for many residents.

However, this expected freedom was premised on the notion of the pond and its surroundings as a private space for EcoVillage residents. Such a view is in conflict with the educational and demonstration side of the EcoVillage mission, for which the EcoVillage and its amenities acts as a more public space. This understanding presented residents with a dilemma over how to satisfy the requirements of the pond as both a public and a private space, with many residents opting for privileging the notion of the EcoVillage as a relatively public space in which nudity would not be an acceptable option.

In addition, the pond represented a public space with reference not only to the wider society, represented by visitors from outside the community, but in regard to the sharing of the pond between residents. The nature of the layout of the EcoVillage and its

amenities creates shared spaces that take over the role traditionally played by more private spaces. The communal laundry is one such example. The pond, as part of the EcoVillage property, now shared between two communities, is another example of a space that is considered as an extension of the individual home. As such it combines both private and public elements. For some residents, the pond as part of their extended home, constituted a location in which they felt that they ought to be able to act relatively freely, which included the choice to be naked. In the course of the discussions nudity was promoted by various residents according to personal, social, and ecological arguments in the following ways.

First, as a social tool, nudity was seen as permitting residents to appreciate each other more deeply, without many of the cultural filters that were deemed to be represented by clothing. Nakedness thus becomes, in a sense, a metaphorical state that reflects the commitment to encounter each other at a deeper and less disguised level. Clothes, accordingly, are viewed as a distracting aspect of the material culture of the dominant social paradigm. Metaphorically, the dropping of the physical barrier of clothing was aligned with the dropping of many of the defensive habits and patterns that have been imported to the EcoVillage from the wider cultural setting. Nakedness represented to some residents an expression of a willingness to engage with others more openly in a community setting.

Second, on an ecological level, nudity was advanced as a vital experience in the appreciation of one's physical, emotional, and spiritual connection to the natural world. The removal of clothing in this instance becomes a metaphor for the removal of culturally created barriers to the experience of nature. Thus, the demonstration of nudity to the wider society would be seen by some residents as epitomizing the rejection of the values

of the dominant social paradigm with regard to nature. Nakedness, as expressed by several residents, becomes a celebration of connectedness with the ecological environment. For some residents swimming naked in the evening or at night was a purely personal pleasure that expressed a personal relationship with the natural world, as opposed to representing an affective sense of openness to other residents.

Third, considered in relation to the ideal of personal growth, nudity represented a commitment to self-acceptance by some residents. In familial terms, parents were keen to communicate this value to their children. Teaching their children, by example, to accept their bodies, as they are, without shame, was expressed as a desired goal by several EcoVillage parents. For other residents, the removal of their clothes signified openness to self-examination and acted as a statement to the effect that this is who I really am. Nudity, as expressed in relation to personal growth, becomes a metaphor for self-acceptance. It reflects not only positive self-regard on a physical level, but a commitment to self-examination across the domain of personal experience, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual.

On personal, social, and ecological levels, nakedness was invoked by residents as a metaphor for the rejection of the values of the dominant social paradigm. The EcoVillage vision and mission is one that clearly defines itself in opposition to the principal tenets of the dominant social paradigm on all three of these levels. When considered from this perspective it is not surprising that the topic of establishing guidelines for nude bathing at the EcoVillage evoked such a spirited response from residents. Even so, residents were generally surprised at just how big an issue it did turn into, and at how heated some of the exchanges became. However, when the topic is evaluated through a consideration of the three ideals, personal growth, social and

ecological change, that residents bring to the EcoVillage project, the tensions between the positions and those who feared for the reputation of the EcoVillage become more easily understood. The metaphor of nakedness is one that fits each of these three areas. In each case the metaphor becomes an expression of the rejection of a set of values that is represented by the dominant social paradigm, and the promotion of a set of values that is broadly aligned with the mission of the EcoVillage.

The realization of many residents, arrived at through their deliberations and discussions, was that if the EcoVillage mission is so closely paralleled by the metaphorical representations of nudity then embracing nudity as a practice at the EcoVillage ought to be a natural consequence. However, there were many other residents who maintained that, with regard to the EcoVillage's social and ecological mission, the wider society would not necessarily make the same connections, nor share the same evaluation with regard to nudity. Thus, the EcoVillage's mission would be imperiled by the development of a reputation for nudity.

The concept of nudity was promoted as an expression of movement towards the dissolution of boundaries on personal, social, and ecological levels. It was expressed as the desire to connect more directly, on all three levels, without the constraints of the cultural filters through which our relations with the world are conventionally strained. Analysis of the discourse revealed an underlying use of nakedness as a metaphor for a more direct experience of the lived world.

Exploration of the topic of nudity reveals a commitment by many residents to challenging conventional social norms in ways that go beyond the stated social and ecological mission of the EcoVillage. The topic reveals a deeper critique of the dominant social paradigm than is encompassed by the generally understood vision and goals of the

EcoVillage. The commitment that is invoked by the move towards acceptance of nudity proposes the most fundamental reworking of the relationship between people, intra-personally as well as interpersonally, and between people and the environment. Residents have made a commitment to a more direct and less mediated set of relationships on all three levels.

The manner in which residents reacted to the topic of nudity suggests the ways in which the EcoVillage presents residents with an opportunity to engage in the process of reworking their sense of self. The cultural constraints that are imposed by the dominant social paradigm are viewed as attempts to "market" and "package" people and the natural environment. The result is an overly narrow understanding of both our selves and the world in which we live. A fundamental task for residents at the EcoVillage is to learn to strip away the layers to reach a more immediate and unfiltered level of experience. Through this process a more connected sense of self may emerge. This self will experience a closer and less mediated sense of connectedness across the dimensions of the lived experience.

This last point summarizes a primary intention of residents that provided the motivation for becoming involved in the EcoVillage project, and continues to drive residents towards re-establishing their relationships with the world around them. Echoes of what may be termed "counterculture" values from the1960s and 1970s are evident in residents' views of the dominant social paradigm. The undoing of the effects of this social system becomes a primary goal in the establishment of a new social practice at EVI, and involves working daily on removing the cultural filters through which they have been accustomed to having their experience of the world strained. It is from this perspective that the casting off of clothing became such a powerful metaphor for

realizing the kinds of personal changes that residents are seeking to manifest. Thus, this topic highlights very well the opportunity that living at EVI offers residents for engaging in practices that significantly change their sense of self-world relations.

The following chapter combines the insights gained from the previous five chapters regarding EVI as a site for the emergence of a redefined set of connections to the world.. A sense of the possibilities that unfold for residents from being part of the EcoVillage becomes apparent. These situational variables are then examined in light of the theoretical approach outlined in chapter 2, and the literature that explored alternative constructions of selfhood.

CHAPTER 10.

10.0.   Possible reconfigurations of self-world relations at the EcoVillage at Ithaca

This chapter draws together the various strands of the research that have been

presented so far, and using these, examines the manner in which of the EcoVillage at

Ithaca presents residents with the opportunity to experience a change in their

understanding and experience of self-world relations. Starting with an examination of the

implications for self of residents' initial motivations in becoming involved with the

EcoVillage project, the chapter goes on to explore the meaning for self of reconstitution

on three levels; ecological, social, and personal. Using the processes identified in the

findings section, the public/private continuum, and communion, consensus, and

legislation, this chapter explores the potential for development of a different sense of self

to that which is associated with more conventional living patterns. The chapter ends by

defining the EcoVillage at Ithaca as a space in which a new set of practices is emerging

that offers significant opportunity for the development of a redefined sense of self-world

relations.

The research for this dissertation has been focused upon examining self as a

process. As previously discussed in Chapter 2, one of the more persistent difficulties in

thinking about self as a process is that language unconsciously orients us towards

conceiving of self as an entity. Sense of self is defined in this research as emerging

through the transactions that take place between the individual and their environment, as

individuals shape their environment and experience the effects of the environment thus

shaped. Self is expressed through the activities of thinking, behaving, believing,

dreaming, idealizing, et cetera, that represent an individual's relationship with the world

around them. Thus, potential unfolding of changes in the nature of selfhood at EVI is

represented by the practices in which residents engage as they seek to develop their vision of a sustainable future.

The aim of this research has been to delineate the processes and practices through which residents' sense of self may take shape. The three sets of processes that have been described represent the factors that are responsible for the particular ways in which EVI is developing. The research suggests that through engagement with these processes, residents are moving towards a sense of being in the world that is much more relational, interdependent, and premised upon a sense of affective connectedness to core elements of their experience. The kind of changes in residents' orientation to the world that have been identified through the data that has been presented suggest the emergence of a set of consensually validated norms with respect to the relationships that they experience with their social and ecological worlds. The EcoVillage as a place is central to this emerging sense of self, as residents accept responsibility for creating a space in which human and natural processes are in alignment.

As the introduction to the dissertation indicated, the potential for the creation of the kind of social system that is developing at EVI is not unique to its residents. A long history of intentional community building has demonstrated a drive towards cooperative association. In recent decades cooperative housing emerged as a response to particular social conditions, promoting social involvement and democratic goals at the local level (Cooper & Rodman, 1992; Leavitt & Saegert, 1990). American history can partly be interpreted as a contest between its citizens' tendencies towards cooperative association and individual enterprise in the service of personal profit (Bellah, 1985; Zinn, 1999). The cohousing movement is a further development of the trend towards cooperative living,

focusing on constructing domestic environments that are safe, pedestrian, and community-enhancing (McAmant & Durrett, 1988).

It has been observed that individuals' decisions to become involved in the EcoVillage project were motivated by experiences and feelings that generated a sense of unease with the values and direction of the dominant social paradigm. Residents often recounted instances, events, and observations, from their lives prior to moving into the EcoVillage that demonstrated an awareness that the individualistic, consumer-oriented, industrial society that they were part of was responsible for a continuing breakdown of communities and social systems. Living in a community that promoted a meaningful sense of association was recognized as being necessary for well-being.

Living as part of the conventional system that continued to promote social and ecological degradation led residents to experience dissonance between the behaviors that they were forced to adopt and the kinds of behaviors that they felt would properly reflect their values, beliefs, and ideals. Hence, the project to construct a demonstrable alternative to the current socially and ecologically destructive mode appeared as an attractive alternative. Construction of the EcoVillage at Ithaca offered an opportunity for living in a manner that would promote a sense of consonance between behaviors and ideals on both social and ecological levels of experience.

Thus, it is recognized that a fundamental change was already underway for residents prior to their involvement with the EcoVillage project. Interviews conducted in August, 2000 focused on the question of how residents had come to be involved with the EcoVillage. Data demonstrated that residents were at various stages in the process of realizing that the social system in which they lived did not satisfy their requirements for a just and sustainable life. In interviews they expressed affective reactions to the effects

that they observed were being generated by the dominant social paradigm. Their responses were made as a result of both personal experience, and observation of more global events. These reactions expressed the shift in their consciousness that was taking place before becoming involved in the EcoVillage. For some residents this change had been ongoing for many years, while for others it was a more recent phenomenon. In all cases however, residents' perceptions and evaluations of their social situations led them to search for a course of action that would more adequately express their emerging sense of self (Kirby, 2003). Residents' movement towards realizing a more sustainable lifestyle forms part of a widespread and growing recognition by individuals from many segments of society that present social patterns do not reflect their values and ideals

While residents were drawn to the ideal of demonstrating a more ecologically and socially benign lifestyle, research suggests that for at least some of them, it was the case that they did not fully realize the extent to which they were also going to be involved in developing the EcoVillage lifestyle. The movement from conventional living situations to the kind of social setting that is felt to be an integral part of a new ecological worldview has required fundamental shifts in residents' patterns of relating and the ways in which they define themselves as families and as individuals. From the early days of first moving into the EcoVillage and feeling overwhelmed with the number of tasks and decisions that required attention, and the adjustment to living in a more intimately shared environment, a new set of practices and social patterns has gradually emerged. It has been a process of struggle that residents have expressed as variously, exhausting, challenging, exhilarating, confusing, rewarding, frustrating, and growthful.

Residents have struggled with their own inner processes as well as with their abilities to communicate and develop relationships with other residents. The result is a set

of practices that are significantly different from those that take place in the world outside the EcoVillage. Several residents commented on how they only recognized the extent to which they had changed when situations outside the EcoVillage, at work, with relatives, or in social situations, prompted comparison. Residents' own tendencies to highlight such changes through characterizing them as "cohousing moments" attests to a degree of universality in their experiences. Thus, the residential experience of EVI offers significant opportunites for residents to redefine the ways in which they relate to the world around them. Such changes are often only subtly experienced and are only brought into focus through events that provoke comparison with more conventional social situations.

Close examination of the daily lives of residents of the EcoVillage has revealed their concern with balancing the needs of the individual with the needs of the community and the needs of the ecological environment. The balancing of these three core aspects of experience is the subject of earnest negotiations on an almost daily basis. The EcoVillage project has provided residents with a site at which they can begin to move towards expression of the values, ideals, and visions that are represented by this concern for balancing these core elements of experience. Through the development of practices that bring them into alignment with each other as well as with the wider mission and ideals of the EcoVillage vision possibilities arise for residents to experience an associated change in sense of self.

The individual, the community, and the ecological environment, represent the three levels at which residents are engaged in processes of change. Individuals were drawn to the EcoVillage project by the desire to become involved in a process of reconstitution on both social and ecological levels. At the same time, the need for some degree of personal

reconstitution emerges as a significant contribution to the overall process of working towards just, equitable, and sustainable social and ecological relationships. The movement towards social and ecological reconstitution is driven by an affective reaction to the perceived failings of the current social paradigm. Personal reconstitution, through a process of personal growth that takes place in a community setting, is an essential element in the development of the kind of system envisioned by a new environmental paradigm. It takes the EcoVillage beyond what would otherwise be merely a demonstration project for more ecologically benign technologies, and reveals it as an experientially-grounded reworking of social and environmental relationships. It is within this dynamic set of processes that residents' sense of self can be proposed to be undergoing identifiable changes.

Data shows that through the development of a sense of communion, and commitment to the consensus process, residents continue to move towards placing their faith and trust in the rest of the community. In this process, outcomes based on solely personal criteria take second place to the creation of group cohesion and group consensus. Argument gives way to informed discussion, persuasion to mutual comprehension. Under such conditions, the community, as a resource, becomes a repository of accumulated understanding, wisdom, tolerance, and other communally held values. Through identification with this communal body of established order, coherence, and practice the individual self becomes open to an awareness of being a part of a greater whole. Within the environment of the EcoVillage, residents develop this sense of participation in a larger community that includes both the social and ecological worlds. In more interdependent cultures such a self is often described as constituting a knot in the net of social relations. This self has been characterized in the theoretical section as the

interdependent extended self, indicating its capacity for affective extension into the surrounding environment, both social and ecological. This research suggests that at the EcoVillage at Ithaca such a sense of self facilitates the development of the community. As previously noted, without this vital element to the experience of living at the EcoVillage it would represent merely a location for the demonstration of certain pro-environmental technological construction techniques.

The extent to which this is the case can be demonstrated by reference to the individuals who were unable to continue living at the EcoVillage, despite their initial enthusiasm and dedicated involvement in the project. According to remaining residents, these individuals had been unable to take part in the consensus process, as decisions favored by the rest of the group were seen to undermine their own individual vision of how the EcoVillage "should" develop. The interdependent extended self that characterizes the general attitudes of current residents was contrasted in the theoretical section with the individualistic expanded sense of self that was held to represent the version of self promoted by the dominant social paradigm. This self was defined by its practice of taking the material of the world and utilizing it as material for its own sense of being. Thus, rather than being a self that is recognized by its network-like extension into the surrounding world, it is a self that becomes expanded through appropriation of the material of experience, a self that is perfectly fitted to the dominant consumption-oriented paradigm. Those residents who were unable to adapt to the requirements of living at the EcoVillage may be thought of as characterizing the individualistic expanded self. Despite their involvement in environmental projects and practices, a close association between their sense of self and the eventual expression of the mission of the EcoVillage proved untenable in the light of decisions that were made by the rest of the community.

Several residents reflected on that period in conversation with the researcher.

None demonstrated any lingering hostility or resentment about these individuals, but

instead remarked on how it had taken the community a long time to find its voice and

stand up to the kind of verbal bullying that they had used as a means of promoting their

specific agendas. As one resident observed in an interview conducted in August, 2000,

> We have had a few, two in particular, from the time they joined the group have been
> very difficult. And I feel that the group has not stood up to them. They let them use
> up meeting after meeting after meeting, making every little thing really complicated
> that anybody wanted to do. And nobody ever just said, hey you guys, do you realize
> that all the energy of the group is always going towards you. People just wouldn't,
> and the big philosophical thing a lot of people brought to this is well, everybody has
> a piece of the truth, and we have to learn how to, you know, and people just really
> avoid confrontation and conflict and just couldn't see that these two families needed
> to be stopped. I see the group as a wonderful mirror, to help people see where their
> antisocial behavior can change in a supportive way. But if the group won't ever
> acknowledge that somebody is a problem, and they wouldn't, and these two families
> were really a problem. We got built in spite of them. ...So, that's been the most
> difficult part, just the incredible amount of energy that they took up. But that feels
> like the past.

The fundamental lesson that was not learned by these individuals was summed up

by another resident in an earlier chapter who stated that one of the things that they had all

had to learn when they came was, "that it doesn't matter how right you are, that the

process of living in community is not a process of proving how right you are about

anything, that you are righter than the next guy." There are many visions that have

coalesced into the reality that is the EcoVillage at Ithaca, and residents accept that it is a

work in progress, and a task that they all work on together. The implications for selfhood

that emerge from the experiences related here is that the EcoVillage is a site that provides

the opportunity for residents to move away from the promotion of an individualistic

expanded self, towards a more interdependent extended sense of self. The individualistic

expanded self is not compatible with the kind of consensus-based decision making that is

practiced at EVI. The consensus process is dependent upon residents' willingness to lay aside purely self-motivated concerns in favor of hearing and appreciating the needs of the community as a whole.

As it was observed earlier, residents were experiencing a shift in their appreciation of potential alternative self-world relationships prior to moving to the EcoVillage, and these perceptions became a motivating factor in their decisions to become involved in the project. In addition, the potential for significant changes in self continued to take place as a result of inhabiting the space that they had co-created. These changes are dependent upon a continuing and mutual interaction between individuals and their social and ecological environment. With regard to the functioning of the group of which they are all equal members irrespective of financial or other contribution, and the adoption of the consensus principle, a reciprocal effect is evident between resident's relationship to the group and the group's relationship to themselves. Each individual's relationship with the group is predicated upon having an equal voice in directing the affairs of the group, and thus, in setting the direction and tone of the group. Research has revealed the ways in which the group becomes a significant part of each resident's experience of the world.

The practices that are evolving at EVI lead to the development of a mutual, ongoing feedback loop between individuals and the group. This is a mechanism by which residents' sense of self may be exposed to the potential for change at the EcoVillage. It is often expressed in a broadening of residents' understanding of a particular topic. This tendency is particularly noticeable on email. Whereas some residents will jump in to a debate with an opinion, only to discover the virtues of other viewpoints later on, other residents will put out their thoughts in a more tentative way, and take note of the responses that their communication receives. In both cases, the individual comes to rely

on the group, as a trustable source of feedback, to provide them with the means to extend their understanding of the broad array of issues that face them. Being part of a community from which individuals are prepared to hear alternative viewpoints broadens residents' awareness of those with whom they share the EcoVillage space, and deepens their understanding of the issues they discuss.

The notion of the extension of self becomes a fitting metaphor under such circumstances. Although each resident experiences closer affective ties to the community than would generally be the case in a conventional residential setting, there is no sense in which self becomes dissolved, or absorbed, or is in any way lessened through identification with the EcoVillage community. The conventional view of such alternative lifestyle endeavors that become labeled as communes, cults, brotherhoods, alternative communities, et cetera, is that something of the self must be given up or surrendered to the will of the group or its charismatic leader (Kanter, 1972). Data gathered at the EcoVillage suggests ways that residents tend towards experiencing an extension of self into the surrounding environment that does not compromise their sense of who they are as individuals. Rather, the experience of creating closer affective ties with their immediate environment leads to a developing sense of each individual's roles and responsibilities in regard to the maintenance and enhancement of their situation. In this way, a potential redefinition of self in relation to the world is made possible. It is a two way process, as residents discover a role for themselves at the EcoVillage, and experience the reciprocal benefits of being part of a community in which members adopt these mutually supporting roles and obligations. At the EcoVillage such realizations extend beyond the social world into the ecological realm, a factor which emphasizes the 'eco' aspect of the EcoVillage. Thus, self may be described through engagement in a

process of extension into the surroundings that is experienced as an enhanced sense of connection.

Evidence from the research suggests that if residents cannot engage in, the kind of personal development that will permit them to trust the community process, then the result is that both the individual and the community are going to be unhappy. While this might seem like a predictable observation, what makes the situation different at the EcoVillage from more conventional domestic situations is the extent to which the individual and the community interact. The community develops as an affective home, and as a legislated body of practices. The development of the community and the adaptation of the individual to the community are reciprocal events. It is an ongoing process of mutual change with no definitive end point, which is intended to serve as a model for a new means of interacting with the social and ecological environments.

As previous chapters have revealed, the development of the community relies upon a cyclical process of visiting and revisiting beliefs, behaviors, and decisions. As the community grows and situations develop, commitment to consensus demands that residents be prepared, if necessary, to reopen previous discussions and reexamine their own values on an ongoing basis. The community is continually being recreated through this process, which serves to put residents in closer contact with each other. In addition, it moves the community towards a set of normative values that express the active dichotomy of individualism within a community-oriented context.

The concept of reconstitution defines three ways in which residents give meaning to their own lives through their attempts at undoing the effects of the dominant social paradigm. In seeking to create a pro-social and pro-environmental way of life, residents become engaged in a process of personal reconstitution that has a potential impact on

their sense of self. As residents strive to develop their sense of connectedness to their

social and ecological worlds they adopt means of relating to those worlds that are in

contrast to the conventional means that are promoted by the present paradigm.

The introduction described previous research that revealed five ways in which

residents were seeking to connect or reconnect with their world. Underlying each of these

forms of connectedness is the recognition of the interdependence of the individual, social,

and ecological worlds. Residents' comments often revealed an understanding that was

founded on a holistic, cyclical, or systems-based view of the world that contrasts

markedly with the kind of linear, progress oriented view most often taken by the

dominant social paradigm. Such an understanding places humans within a nexus of inter-

related realms of experience, and implies a unique set of responsibilities and obligations

to those realms. An extract from an email report circulated by one resident following a

meeting that formed part of a series of meetings aimed at re-visioning the EcoVillage

mission serves to demonstrate one expression of such a worldview.

> It's true that working in cooperation with nature's restorative processes is essential
> work, to which all of us should give our best, but just as essential is the task of
> developing the restorative powers within ourselves. These two cannot be
> separated. We can discover and learn to use the restorative powers of nature - its
> cooperative principle, its thrift and artistry, its compassion – only by discovering
> and using these powers in ourselves. In this process, every crisis becomes an
> opportunity to learn what nature is teaching us about life and ourselves...

Connection to nature as a primal force was presented as the most common form of

expression of some kind of "higher" principle, either in a spiritual sense, or as it is here,

as a master teacher. This quotation also makes a significant reference to nature's

cooperative tendency as a guide to human behavior. It stands in marked contrast to the

view that is still often promoted by the dominant social paradigm of nature as a

battleground for the "survival of the fittest." Adoption of this alternative metaphor of

nature as cooperative friend rather than untamed foe is broadly in alignment with the views of other culture beyond the western industrial-consumer culture.

A prominent feature of Western civilization has been its removal of God from the material world. For a long time this meant that "He" is not in things anymore, not in forests or mountains or springs, but up there in the heavens, far away. A view of the world as 'mundane' or 'profane' emerged, rather than as sacred. It became just stuff to be manipulated and used for whatever purpose humans might have. There were no repercussions for misusing or destroying the physical world, an attitude that contrasts markedly with the beliefs of most other cultures. One of the things that are evident at the EcoVillage is that some residents are involved in a re-enchantment of nature and the 'mundane,' a reanimation of the physical world, and reconnection of these elements that have been divided. In this sense residents are developing their own moral ecology, one that recognizes their social and ecological interdependence.

Interdependence with the natural world is emphasized by the manner in which residents seek to establish practices that optimize utilization of the earth's resources while refraining from reducing or compromising the ability of the ecological environment to provide for human support. Inherent in this undertaking is an understanding that is predicated upon a systems view of the interaction of all the parts that make up the larger whole. The task of creating the kind of social system that can live within the parameters of a sustainable lifestyle calls for fundamental changes from the kind of self that is promoted by a consumer-oriented society that upholds a strictly linear view of the world. This view encourages an industrial approach to the environment, which thinks in terms of throughput, and sees nature as a resource for materials for manufacturing at one end and a dump for byproducts and waste at the other.

Expressions of an internalization of the concepts represented by systems-based thinking, as well as holistic and cyclical worldviews are common at the EcoVillage. Through the creation of the EcoVillage as a move towards expression of connection to the natural world, residents demonstrate a sense of self that is different from the conventional linear, and progress-oriented views of mainstream society. The implications for residents of taking on systems-based ways of understanding the world are that from this vantage point their actions, beliefs, attitudes, values, and feelings, matter in a fundamental way. A sense of ethical responsibility evolves from this perspective that encourages residents to do what they can with the financial resources at their disposal to discover ways of minimizing their impact upon the ecological environment.

The crucial point to emerge from the research conducted is that this represents more than merely a practical exercise in resource conservation. It reveals an affective connection to the ecological world that provides the motivation for the entire ecological dimension of the project. Accordingly, residents seek to live the experience of connection with the natural world.

Lessons regarding the ecological impact of living as a human being in 21st Century America continue to be learned at the EcoVillage. Residents are at different points in their journey towards sustainable living, a fact which becomes clear as different incidents arise. Sometimes, some residents' visions of nature "out there" are challenged by its immediate intrusion into their lives. At such times, conventional responses may be invoked without reference to the kind of systems-based, holistic and cyclical kinds of thinking that are generally advocated.

One example concerned the compost area adjacent to the EcoVillage. At one time birds and small mammals began to congregate around the bins, resulting eventually in an

invasion of Norwegian rats. Some residents went immediately to get some rat poison to put down to kill them, saying that these were horrible creatures that would spread disease. This represented a technological solution to a problem that was conceived in a purely linear fashion. Another resident cautioned them against acting too hastily, referring them to the label on the bottle and all its warnings. Seeking advice from several sources, they learned that they had created an ideal situation for the rats by not keeping the compost area clean enough, and by not mowing the grass in the surrounding area, which provided perfect cover for the rats to come and go. Cutting the grass, cleaning up the site, removing cover, and ensuring that food scraps were always covered provided a long-term, system-based solution to discouraging rats. Poison was also put down for the short term to deal with the immediate problem, which, thanks to the other measures adopted, never re-occurred.

This event provides a perfect example of the clash of two paradigms. Through consultation, discussion, and modification of community behavior, a systemic solution was found that avoided the need for repeated poisoning of the rats with all the potential dangers to other wildlife, pets, and young children. While some residents responded out of fear to the presence of unwanted nature by demanding that the offenders be killed, others adopted a more systemic and compassionate approach that relied on discouraging the rats from visiting the EcoVillage. Similar attitudes have surfaced with regard to other creatures that appeared to threaten human health and happiness at various times, such as a family of muskrats that took up residence on the banks of the pond, deer that threatened the farm, and the algae that forms in the furthest reaches of the pond. Ultimately, rather than being seen as nuisances to be removed they are acknowledged as having their place

in the ecological system, and are consequently managed in a manner that allows humans and nature to coexist peacefully.

From these accounts a picture of the development of a self that is oriented to the natural world in a very different way than the conventional Western self begins to emerge. While residents vary in their relative degree of commitment to the ecological or human communities that are represented at the EcoVillage, there is a general recognition of the importance of paying sufficient attention to both. The health of each is held to be dependent to a certain extent on the health of the other. In this respect, the community and the ecological environment strengthen each other.

The experience of a sense of connection to a close and supportive community was identified as an important form of connectedness that residents sought through involvement in the EcoVillage project. Through establishing an environment that is physically, intellectually, emotionally, and spiritually, relatively safe, residents create the conditions for personal growth within a community setting. Thus, EVI becomes a venue for change, a space through which residents' sense of self may be manifested. The manner in which the EcoVillage self emerges, as a process of ongoing transaction between person and world, was succinctly identified by one resident in conversation, whose opinion was that people did change a lot by being at the EcoVillage. As it is a relatively closed circuit, whatever a resident puts out tends to loop right back at some point and "smack you in the face." A similar point was made by another resident in an interview.

> I sometimes describe it to people as living here is like being in a cauldron of personal growth. You just can't escape it. Or if you do escape it for a little while you are not going to escape it for long, because whatever rough edges you have are going to be challenged over and over by individuals in the group, and you are going to keep bumping up against them until you sort of polish out that side of yourself. And as I see it we are all getting more and more jewel like, by

understanding how we affect other people, and how we can live lives that are full of personal integrity, but also fitting in to a group setting.

This quote makes a clear case for an evolving sense of self at the EcoVillage. Several residents revealed in conversations and interviews that through engaging in a process of personal change, they have observed themselves and others learning to let go of the "baggage," the habitual, maladaptive responses that they bring with them from their previous life experience. This process takes place in both relatively informal settings, and through more formally organized attempts to foster self-examination. The mutual nature of the experience of change in selfhood is invoked in the previous quotation, as it takes place in a community setting. At the same time, the quotation underscores residents' appreciation of the advantages of such personal growth. It allows for the formation of deeper relationships and the creation of a more caring and supportive community. Thus, as individuals' sense of self develops at the EcoVillage, the overall sense of communion develops also, which promotes the optimal conditions for the successful development of the community. Progress in this endeavor is measurable in the ability of the community to negotiate and reach consensus on difficult and potentially divisive issues. A historical view of the development of the EcoVillage since residents first moved in, during 1995, reveals significant improvement in the sense of communion shared by the community. The introduction of outside facilitators to develop modes of communication, and the eventual departure of those individuals who were not prepared to take part in processes that the rest of the group adopted provided a big step forward in this regard. The community building work that was undertaken by the rest of the residents has developed into a lasting commitment towards personal change in the service of improved community relations.

As the second neighborhood came to be settled during 2003, and the population doubled, another period of instability and change began to force the community to work harder at maintaining a sense of communion. New challenges and situations demand new responses from an enlarged group. In recognition of this situation an email was sent out advertising a community event that would act as:

> ... a form of preventative maintenance, like "family meetings" or "special times" for close relationships. It is time set aside from daily routines to make it safe to look at underlying patterns, both the ones that deserve more appreciation and the ones that are draining and disruptive. One goal is to locate hidden feelings, needs, challenges, misperceptions, and assumptions EARLY ON and bring them to light in a way that is safe, positive and creative. The alternative is often to let them fester till they become entrenched and divisive "problems". All relationships, even the healthiest, bring up shadow material, and the ones that deal with them openly and honestly, are, from my experience, much more likely to be "sustainable."

In this email communication the distinction between community, family, and individual is somewhat blurred. All share the potential for similar, disruptive patterns to emerge. Just as on an individual and family level, so too at the community level it is important to work on problems and deal with them effectively before they "fester." The recognition of this tendency was previously described by another resident who commented that if residents don't clean up their unfinished business it eventually just starts to smell bad. The connection between personal well-being and community well-being is recognized by residents as an essential factor in their relationship with the community. They are two inter-related levels of experience, which becomes a significant factor in residents' sense of self. The question that is posed by this notion is whether either the individual can experience satisfaction as part of a dysfunctional community, or the community can provide a functionally satisfying experience if some members are dissatisfied. The answer that emerges from interviews and conversations with residents is negative on both counts, which demonstrates the intimate connection between the

individuals' sense of self and their sense of the community as a whole. Residents often

refer to a sense of their relationship with the community. One example of this is an email

directed to the community that was circulated by one person who had attended the event

that was proposed above, to explore the relationship between the two neighborhoods.

> ...I just wanted to say that I've been feeling a little isolated lately, due to my need to channel my energies toward navigating recent transitions in my life. Tonight was the first time in a long time I've felt connected to the whole, like a part of the village. I liked looking around the room and seeing people come together to strengthen connections and build a better life together. I tried to imagine it happening in my old neighborhood. And while it was a great neighborhood, what we did together tonight would not have happened there. I felt glad to be here, very fortunate.... Perhaps I've given some of you cavities from just reading this. If so, sorry. But I realized that I've taken several opportunities to write about what hasn't felt good in the past, and not enough to share what does.... I hope we'll take more of these opportunities to check in with one another around the inter-neighborhood thing. I learned a lot tonight in a short amount of time.

This email demonstrates a sense of connectedness to the community, partly

recognizable through personal circumstances that created a contrasting experience of

isolation. Following the event an account of the highlights was also circulated on email

for the benefit of those who did not attend. This drew a response from another resident

who was on vacation at the time of the event, and at the time of writing the following

email.

> Thanks for this record which permits me to get caught up on what I missed, and for arranging what must have been a wonderful opportunity to get to know each other better. I had an experience on my trip of coming face-to-face with my 'shadow' side and it was illuminating to see what I have been trying to avoid seeing about myself. I believe there's also a 'shadow' side to communities because each of us carry our personal and family histories with us. I sense a similar tendency in our community of not talking about and acknowledging the shadow side. What do we not appreciate? What have we wanted to create and have not yet succeeded in creating? Where do we not have common ground ? When have we not created safe and effective dialogue? What are the 'difficult topics'? Can we create effective problem-solving strategies when we have not discussed the problems? Where are we falling short of our ideals? What ghosts are we keeping in the closet? I would look forward to discussing these issues in the future so that, a couple of years from now, we'll find ourselves further down the road of 'deepening our connections.'

In this email the writer echoes previously quoted residents in acknowledging the link between individual psychological processes and community processes. These are associated with previous, external, personal factors that each resident introduces to the community process. The community may be analyzed according to Jungian psychology, and recognized as harboring a "shadow" side that needs to be explored in order for the community to function optimally.

The data presented has demonstrated the extent to which residents are engaged in a search for a sense of personal integration. This was conceived largely as a desire to connect or reconnect the various aspects of the life experience that participation in the dominant social paradigm tends to break apart. These include work, family, social life, hobbies, affiliations, et cetera. The feeling that these were largely mutually exclusive realms of experience led to the need to find a way of reconnecting at least some of these in meaningful ways. In terms of personal reconnection, residents seek to re-engage with an authentic sense of self, freed from the constraints that have been imposed by previous experience of the dominant culture. The previous quotes highlight this perception from residents. Elsewhere residents have offered their view of a culture that tends to focus on image and surface appearance to the detriment of a deeper and more meaningful sense of self.

Analysis of the data gathered around the topic of nudity at the EcoVillage revealed the desire that was expressed by residents to get beneath the surface of their lives in various ways and expose what lies below. Nudity was used as a metaphor for stripping away the layers of cultural material that hides residents from themselves, from each other, and from an authentic experience of the natural world. In each instance, the goal was to reveal something more essential about the self and its relation to the world. In

the data that was gathered, some of the most expressive and emotive language was produced in response to the topic of nudity. The analysis revealed the common theme running through opinions that were expressed from all sides, of the desire to discover an experience more vital and heartfelt than that which is encouraged by conventional social arrangements.

The debate in the end revolved around whether or not it was part of the EcoVillage's mission to encourage public nudity and the likely effects that this might have on its stated goals. Even those who were against daytime nude bathing acknowledged how valuable and fun nude bathing could be. The topic of nudity underscored the EcoVillage's drive towards redefining their sense of self in regard to their personal, social, and ecological environments. As a metaphor that emerged from the discussions that took place, the notion of nudity acted as a widespread call for that which is hidden, the "shadow" side, to be revealed. Thus, the topic of nudity demonstrates, more clearly than any other, how residents are moving towards defining themselves by significantly different criteria from those promoted by the dominant social paradigm. At the same time, it is clear that the values expressed by EcoVillage residents also find expression beyond the boundaries of the EcoVillage. Certain segments of the wider community engage in similar practices that reflect values that are in broad alignment with a new environmental paradigm. However, the unique situation of EVI as a bounded location within which these practices are being co-developed in a community atmosphere is the factor that provides the opportunity for an altered experience of the self-world relationship to emerge. The EcoVillage site creates an environment that offers the potential for immersion in an experience of social and ecological connectedness. Within

this reconstitutive sphere, residents are working towards realizing the possibilities inherent in manifesting an alternative social practice.

The EcoVillage project offers residents the opportunity to define themselves by movement along the public/private continuum. Residents adopt positions with respect to the rest of the community that reflect their sense of connectedness. While there is a high degree of closeness amongst residents, by comparison with more conventional residential settings, individuals develop multiple relationships to different degrees with a variety of other individuals. These relationships hold through a variety of social situations that vary in their degree of public-ness. In chapter 5, visibility emerged as a key metaphor for the sense of communion that exists among residents. As a metaphor, the notion of visibility is in accord with the previously explored metaphor of nudity. Both imply a sense of openness and transparency in residents' dealings with each other. In exploring the notion of visibility as an aspect of the public/private continuum, it was demonstrated that as conventionally maintained boundaries become more diffuse the individual and the family extend outwards into the community and vice versa. Thus, visibility was shown to reflect a normative value of openness on an affective level between residents. Through acting in ways that make themselves more physically and affectively visible to each other, residents demonstrate a sense of self that tends towards interdependence rather than independence.

Residents may encounter each other in multiple settings; commons house meals, email communications, deepening groups, scheduled community meetings, or any of the ways in which people regularly get together or run across each other on a daily basis. The commonality between these events for residents of the EcoVillage is that they all have the potential to increase the sense of communion that is experienced by the group. This

affective state becomes a powerful binding force among residents, even as they experience widely differing levels of intimacy between themselves and other individual members of the community. The totality of their relationships to the other members of the community defines the community as a kind of entity in itself that invokes an affective response and provides a source of affective support. Evidence for this is supplied by individual resident's expressions via email to the community that demonstrate the role of the community in their emotional lives. On many occasions residents have used email to address the community regarding their emotional state and report on significant events in their lives. This is done both by way of explanation for behavior that may have seemed distant or distracted, and to enlist community support through a trying time. Several examples of emails of this nature were reviewed by the researcher at the time that they were circulated to the community. All of these were deemed by the researcher to be too private in nature to be included as part of the analysis, or to be saved as part of the data set. However, they attest to the sense of trust and affective connection that many residents experience in their relationship to the community.

From these observations the role of the community in residents' lives reveals a self that shows a definite sense of extension into the surrounding environment. Residents, in general, seek to be open to the extent that they feel comfortable with the community and encourage a reciprocal openness from the community to themselves. The health of each is dependent in many ways on the health of the other. This dynamic defines selfhood as evolving in ways that promote a mutual and reciprocal fit between the individual's sense of self and the community.

One remaining thread to pick up that was left at the beginning of the chapter is the relationship between the sense of self that is evolving at the EcoVillage and the rise of an

environmental consciousness that is emerging as a potentially revolutionary paradigm. In the theoretical section of this dissertation it was noted that an enterprise such as the EcoVillage at Ithaca represents one of the most radical expressions of the emergence of what has been termed a new environmental paradigm (Dunlap & Van Liere, 1978) or an emerging ecological worldview (Metzner, 1993). This is seen as challenging the present dominant social paradigm.

From the analysis presented it may be suggested that the development of selfhood at the EcoVillage at Ithaca represents a working out of the ideals generated by the new environmental paradigm. It is a primary concern of several contemporary movements and discourses, such as deep ecology, ecofeminism, and environmental ethics and philosophy, to develop a moral basis for the relationship between the self and the natural world. Thus, residents share an evolving sense of their relationship to the world in which they live with an increasing number of people, nationally and worldwide. This implies that while living in the present industrial/consumer system each individual experiences either consonance or dissonance between the behaviors that structural constraints force them to adopt and their sense of who they are in regard to the overarching question of living a meaningful and sustainable life. Several residents made comments to the researcher to the effect that their goal was to be the change that they wish to see in the world. While it may yet be too early to define exactly the final state to which residents aspire, the data suggests that what is primarily involved is a redefinition of residents' sense of self-world relations. Evidence presented shows that this is particularly directed towards defining a sense of interconnectedness with their social and ecological worlds.

Sense of self, from this perspective, is seen as subsuming a constellation of attributes that are variously labeled as feelings, knowledge, ideals, understanding, values,

attitudes, beliefs, et cetera. A critique of much research into pro-environmental behavior is that such factors tend to be reified and treated as though they represent independent and divisible aspects of the total person, which are then subject to comparisons that produce quantitative data. The process that is of primary importance, according to this research, is the manner in which individuals deal with the sense of dissonance that may be produced when their actions are not in accord with their own sense of who they are. In this way, sense of self emerges in the process of transaction with the world. The search for consonance between self and world is proposed as the force that has led to the development of the EcoVillage at Ithaca. This project is in broad alignment with the movement towards establishing a more benign relationship with the ecological environment. It is driven by scientifically produced knowledge that there is a problem with current patterns of resource exploitation, an affective reaction to environmental and social degradation, and the development of ethically-based values and ideals that represent a solution to the perceived situation. All of these factors contribute to the individual's sense of self, and combine to provide the motivation for change.

Residents of the EcoVillage at Ithaca have chosen to channel their efforts into creating the kind of environment in which they can live lives that are more consonant with a pro-environmental outlook. At the same time, this has meant moving away from a consumer-driven, materialistic sense of self, towards a definition of self that is more grounded in the process of finding expression within a community of like-minded individuals. Satisfaction derives not from material gain, but from involvement in meaningful association and promotion of a sustainable lifestyle.

A fundamental aspect of the move towards a sustainable lifestyle is a rejection of the narrow and linear worldview that has characterized the dominant social paradigm. In

its place a worldview that is premised on a systems-based and cyclical view of the world is promoted. As the introduction made clear, such an outlook has been a common feature of many cultures beyond the present industrial/consumer culture. Thus, the rise of the new environmental paradigm has been paralleled by the emergence of interest in eastern and indigenous cultures and religions. These are invoked routinely as demonstrations of an understanding of the interconnectedness of seemingly disparate elements of life experience, and the incorporation of a cyclical or systems-based view that places the individual in a unique position of responsibility.

Advocates of the new environmental paradigm draw from these traditions in developing their understanding of their roles towards the environment. Together with the knowledge of the world that is being developed through the science of ecology, advocates of this paradigm point to a radically different way of interacting with their environment than that which is currently being pursued by the dominant social paradigm. This pattern has been revealed as being a common feature of the EcoVillage at Ithaca. Residents made frequent reference to Native American and other traditions in their responses to topics that were being discussed. Other residents pursue scientific approaches to their management of resources and the land that they inhabit that incorporate ecological, systems-based thinking, both in terms of physical and temporal dimensions.

In accepting the systems-based and cyclical viewpoint, residents recognize their essential connectedness to their world, on both a local and a global level. Their mission to create a more socially and ecologically sustainable lifestyle is perceived by themselves as a local effort carried on within a global framework. Frequent reference in the data can be found to residents' acknowledgment of the interconnections between the various levels of their experience, extending from personal events within their own homes to the farthest

reaches of the globe where the exploitative and degrading practices of the dominant

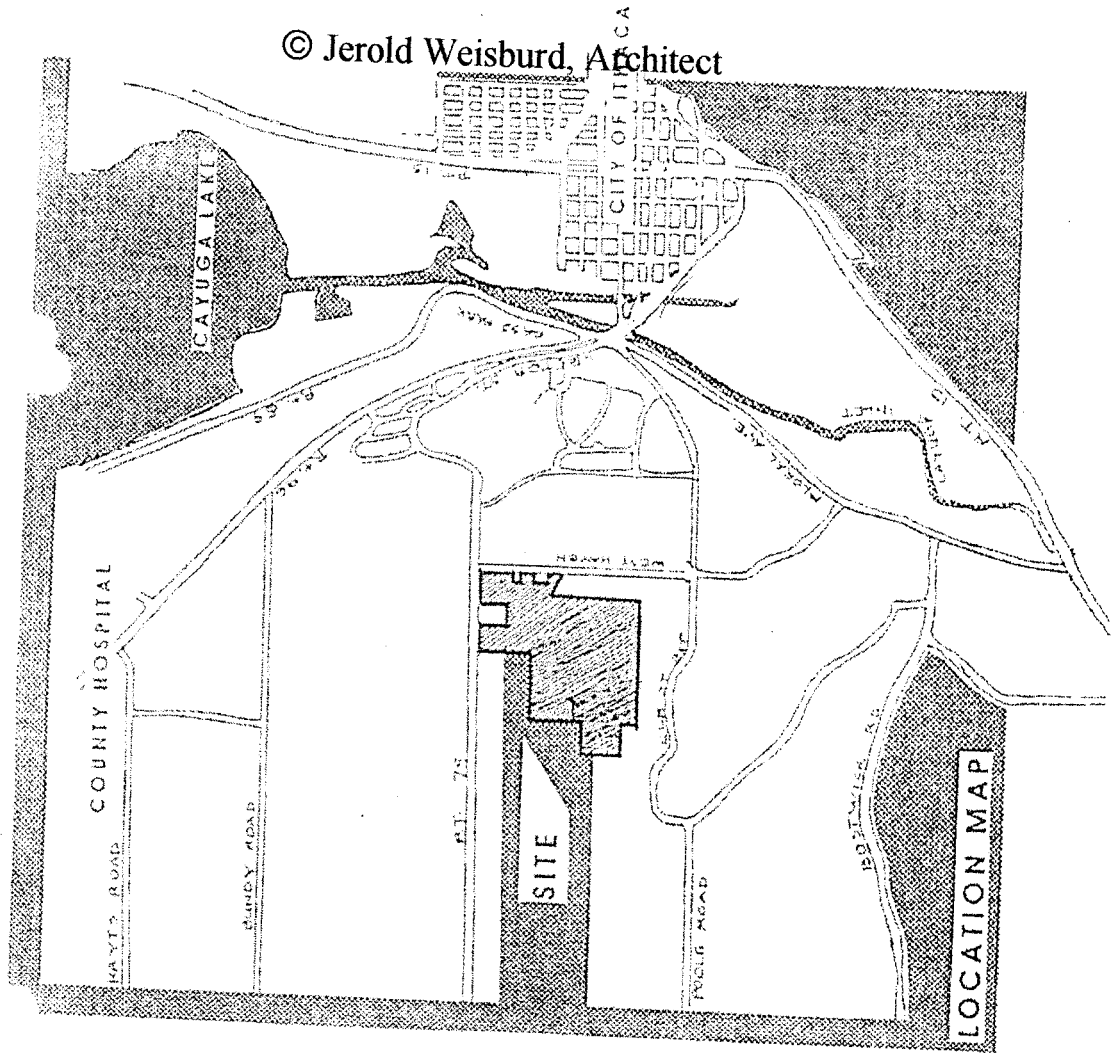culture increasingly threaten long-term social and ecological sustainability.

However, as critiques of the universalist claims of deep ecology and ecofeminism

underscore, the EcoVillage at Ithaca can claim only to represent a local response to a

global situation. Awareness of this factor by some residents leads them, as was noted in

Chapter 7, to the conclusion that the level of resource use at EVI is still many times

higher than the planet can sustain if it were to be representative of the resource

consumption of the entire human population. Thus, EVI may be defined as developing a

local response in an ongoing and exploratory mode, rather than representing a finished

product.

Adopting a systems-based worldview places responsibility on the individual to act

in ways that maintain a sense of integrity for the self. Accepting the interconnectedness

of all things, the self's actions take on an importance that reflects this perception. Moral

ecology is a term that has been used by some authors (Bellah, 1985; Dove & Kammen,

1997; Hertzke, 1998) to identify the sense of obligation that arises from such a

worldview. It refers to the fundamental association between self and surrounding

environment, and the responsibility towards the environment that emerges through the

acknowledgment of this connectedness. Despite differences in EcoVillage residents'

emphasis on personal, social, or ecological aspects of the vision, dedication to the

mission of demonstrating a responsible attitude towards their environment is underscored

by numerous examples of the kind of debates that have taken place on a variety of topics.

Thus, a clear movement towards developing a moral ecology is evident at the EcoVillage.

When pressed, many residents at the EcoVillage at Ithaca express a certain degree

of pessimism about the future. Their efforts at creating and demonstrating a new set of

personal, social, and ecological relationships may be seen by some as being a last minute effort to effect positive change "before the whole ship goes down." The EcoVillage is a complex of overlapping functions. It is home, a place to live, and to develop friendships and meaningful relationships. It is also a place in which to work on developing the kinds of relationships that will be socially and ecologically sustainable, and it is a place to demonstrate to a wider audience the possibilities for living a more sustainable life. Residents generally agree that the work is worthwhile, whatever the eventual outcome. Thus, the EcoVillage at Ithaca represents a unique learning experience for its residents, and a location in which to continue to work on developing the kind of responsible and connected sense of self that they believe offers the potential for a sustainable future.

Appendix I

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CAYUGA LAKE

CITY OF ITHACA

COUNTY HOSPITAL

HAYTS ROAD

BUNDY ROAD

RT. 79

SITE

FIELD ROAD

BOSTWICK RD.

LOCATION MAP

Drawn By: W.C.
Rev. No.: 2
Date: 9-6-94

HOUSE CRAFT BUILDERS, ITHACA, N.Y.
JEROLD WEISBURD, ARCHITECT
CLAUDIA WEISBURD, PLANNER
WILLIAM CHAMBERLAIN, LANDSCAPE CONSULTANT

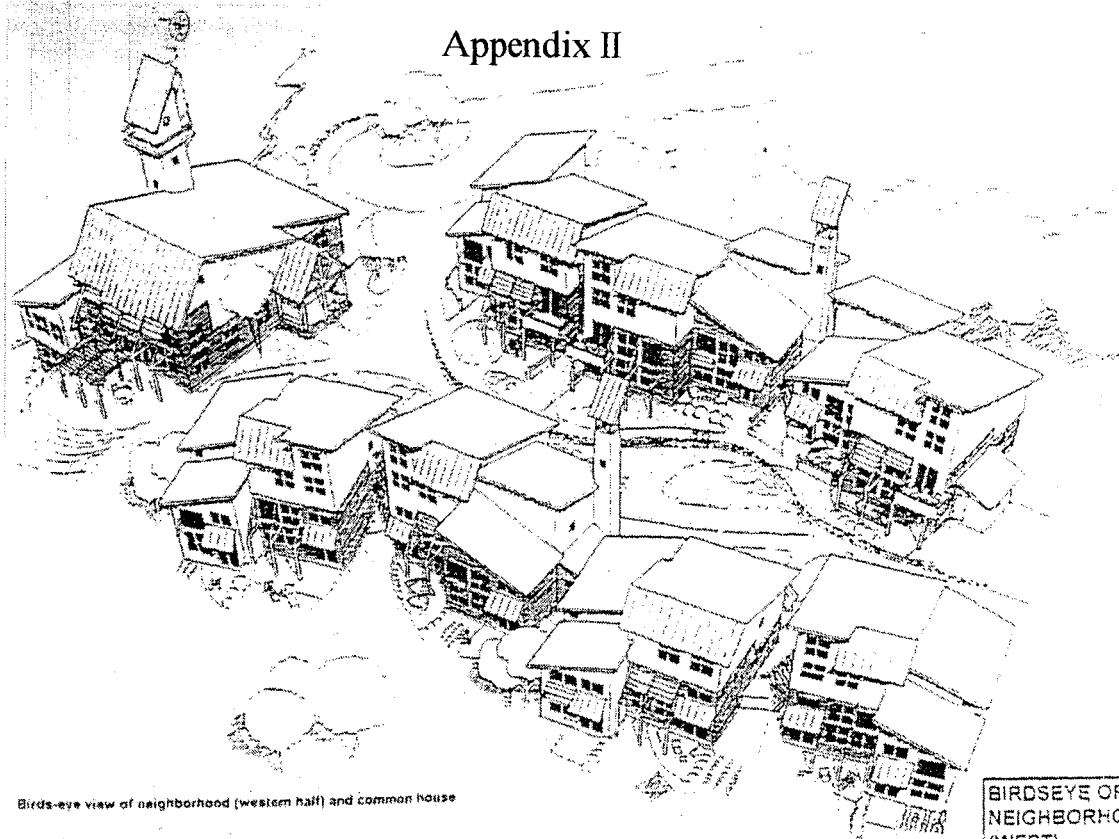ECOVILLAGE
COHOUSING COOPERATIVE
Mecklenberg Road., Ithaca, N.Y.

LOCATION MAP

PB- 1

Appendix II

Birds-eye view of neighborhood (western half) and common house

BIRDSEYE OF
NEIGHBORHOOD
(WEST)

ECO VILLAGE
COHOUSING COOPERATIVE
Mecklenburg Road, Ithaca, N.Y.

Prepared by
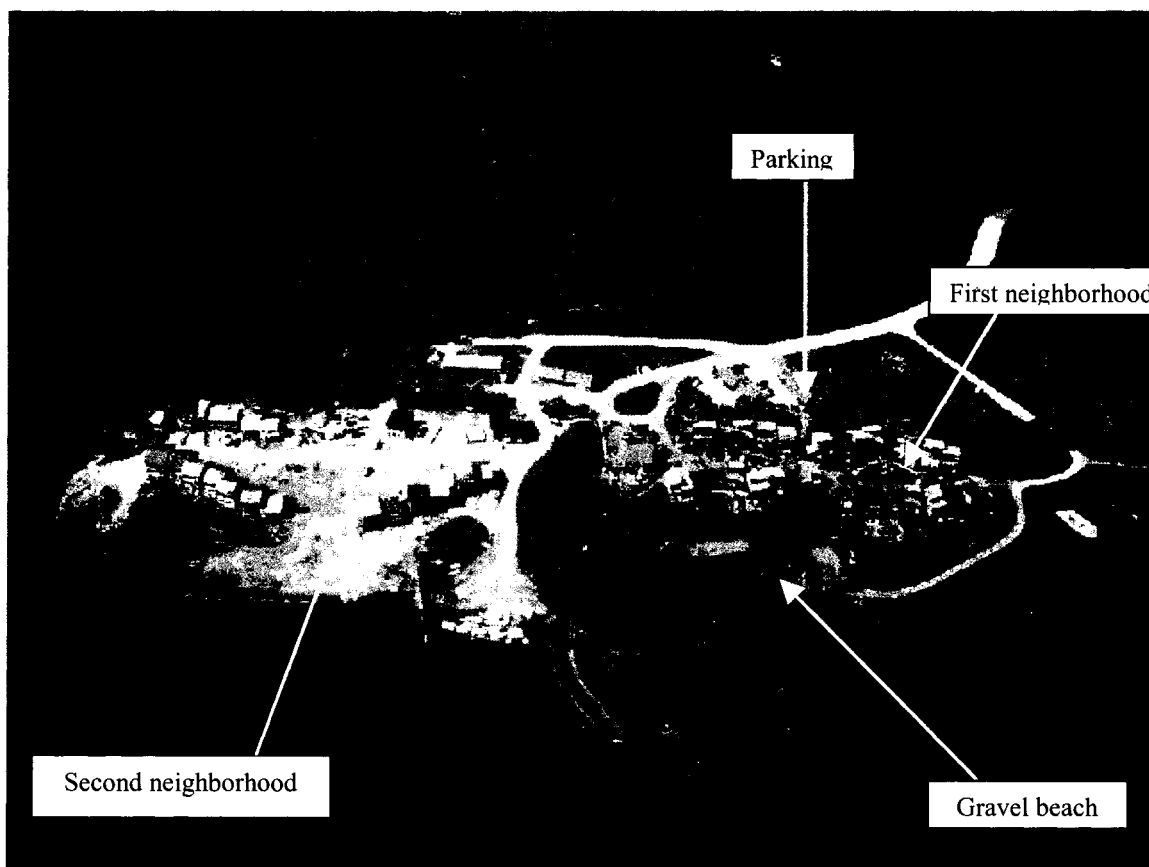HOUSE CRAFT BUILDERS, ITHACA, N.Y.
JEROLD WEISBURD, ARCHITECT

1
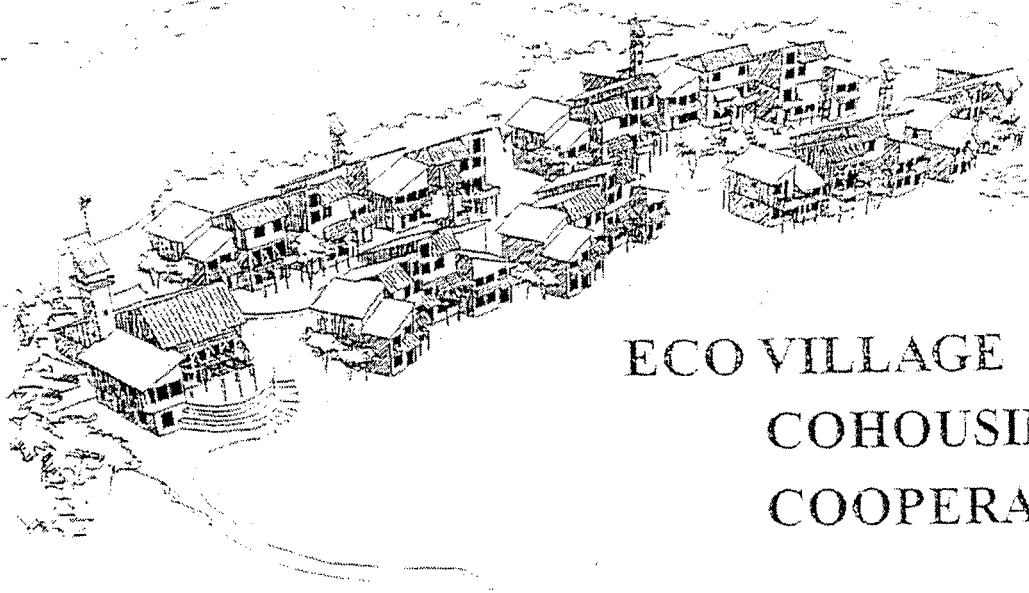
ECO VILLAGE
COHOUSING
COOPERATIVE

© Jerold Weisburd, Architect

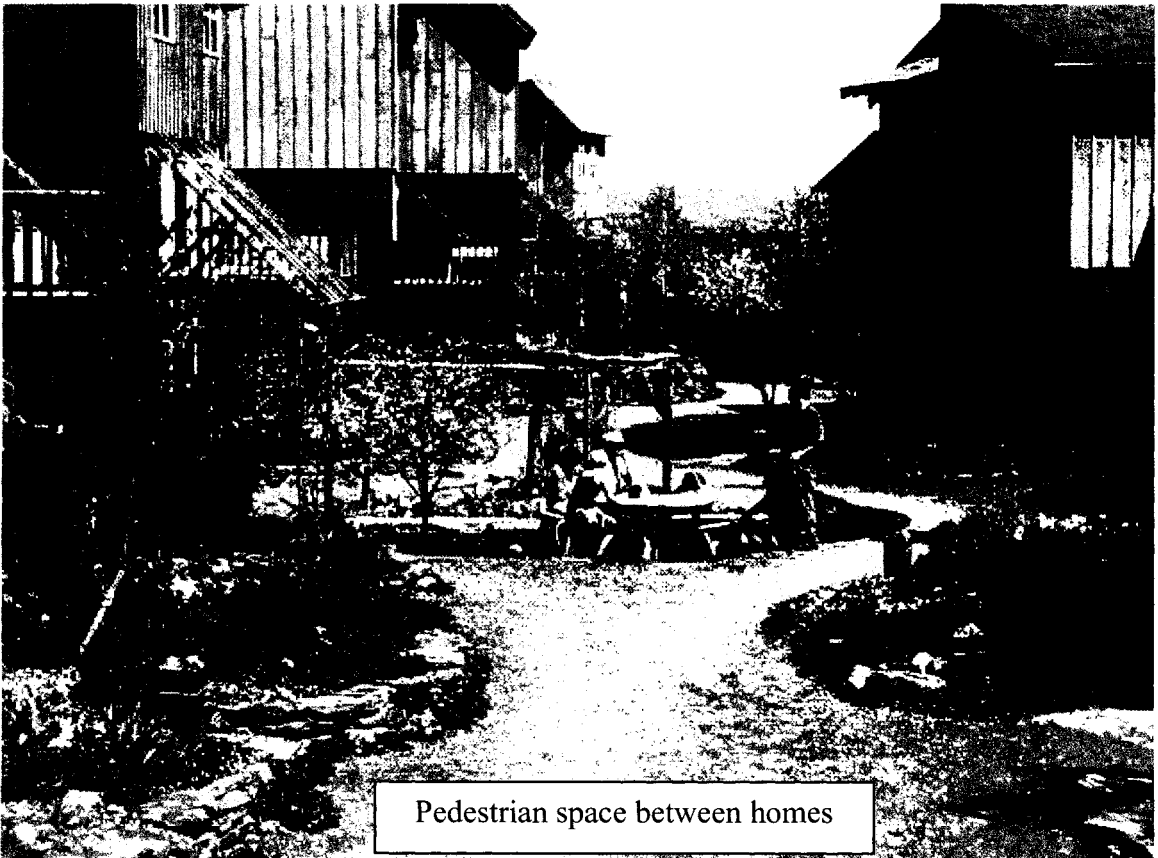# Appendix III

Aerial photograph of first neighborhood (FROG) and second neighborhood (SONG)

Parking

First neighborhood

Second neighborhood

Gravel beach

Appendix IV

Commons house and first neighborhood from pond

Pedestrian space between homes

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