



GREEN HORIZON

Magazine

..... AN INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL PUBLISHED BY THE GREEN HORIZON FOUNDATION

Building the New



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A Sense of Place

Excerpts from a 1992 Fifth Estate review of HOME! A Bioregional Reader, edited by Van Andruss, Christopher Plant, Judith Plant, and Eleanor Wright (New Society Publishers, Gabriola Island, British Columbia, Canada, 1990).

Bioregionalism presents a model for a conscious transition from a late industrial society to a society which values ecology, community, and diversity, a society which emphasizes the limits as well as the regenerative powers of the earth.

The first six essays in the book comprise a section titled, “What is Bioregionalism?” Jim Dodge introduces the idea this way: “Bioregionalism is from the Greek *bios* (life) and the French *region* (region), itself from the Latin *regia* (territory). Etymologically, then: bioregionalism means *life territory* or place of life.” Dodge goes on to discuss various biological criteria for what constitutes a region (biotic shift, watershed, landform, elevation, cultural factors) without being compelled to state which of these is to be preferred. There is an attitude of letting things take shape on their own.

The Haudenosaunee, also called the Six Nations Iroquois Confederacy, make a statement in a later chapter: “The destruction of the native cultures and people is the same process which has destroyed and is destroying life on this planet. The

technologies and social systems which have destroyed the animal and the plant life are also destroying native people.”

Gary Snyder notes that Native American creation mythology referred to North America as Turtle Island. Does this matter? Canada, Mexico, North America, USA, Turtle Island—aren’t names just human constructs? Do they have any inherent relation to the land they describe? “The State is destroyed but the mountains and rivers remain,” notes Snyder. Therefore, insofar as the name dialectically reflects and shapes our consciousness of our environment, perhaps it is crucial.

Bioregionalism values human cultural diversity, seeing it as a response to varied locales and niches. Snyder states that cultural pluralism and multilingualism will be found in the natural scheme of things: “We seek balance between cosmopolitanism and deep local consciousness. We are asking how humans can regain self-determination in place, after centuries of having been disenfranchised by hierarchy and centralized power. Do not confuse this exercise with ‘nationalism’ which is exactly the opposite, the impostor, the puppet of the state, the grinning ghost of the lost community.”

The great strength of the bioregionalist concept is its focus on ecological concerns as the primary concerns of the community, while at the same time emphasizing freedom and interconnectedness. Thus, it is a viable model for post-modern / post-industrial / post-capitalist eco-communitarian lifeways.

THE TEAM

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Toward building the new within the shell of the old

Columbus sailed in 1492, but the encroachment upon the flora, fauna, and lives of the natives here started to have a significant impact just four hundred years ago. The Mayflower landed at Cape Cod in 1620. Even by 1720 there were fewer than half-a-million settlers in the New World. It's been during the three hundred years since then, about twelve generations, that the transformation to what we see around us now was accomplished.

In addressing what kind of "accomplishment" it has been, Kirkpatrick Sale dedicated his seminal 1980 tract, *Human Scale*, to a coterie of fifty discerning new-paradigm thinkers and provided this context:

An old cautionary tale has it that there once was a kingdom in which all the grain crop one exceptional year somehow became poisoned, causing anyone who ate its products to go insane. That posed a terrible dilemma for the king and his advisors, for the stores of grain from previous years were very modest, not nearly enough to feed the entire population of the land, and there was no way to procure food from without. The kingdom would face either widespread famine and starvation, if the harvest was destroyed, or widespread madness and chaos. After much deliberation, the king reluctantly decided to have the people go ahead and eat the grain, hoping its effects would be temporary, that at the very least human lives would be preserved. "But," he added, "we must at the same time keep a few people apart and feed them an unpoisoned diet of the grain from previous years. That way there will at least be a few among us who will remember that the rest of us are insane."

The book was dedicated to the "few among us" (for example: Lewis Mumford, Ursula LeGuin, E. F. Schumacher, Leopold Kohr, Frances Moore Lappé, Wendell Berry, Mildred Loomis) who have been notable for remembering—and for elucidating what hath been wrought.

WALKING ON TWO LEGS

Ecological degradation and social malaise; mass society and insane extents of hypertrophy in all aspects of life. How could we have arrived at this point? The sorry state of things has resulted from a process that invokes that other old cautionary tale, the one where the frog (supposedly) boils to death because the temperature in the pot of water heats up gradually. The process has been gradual enough such that each successive generation tends to take for granted the increasingly problematic scales of the society's institutions and technologies, of the culture's noise and distractions, of the system's exploitations, inequalities, and depletions.

We need governmental policies that can serve to mitigate the latter. System change will be required to counter the *egregious* exploitations, inequalities, and depletions which are consequences of industrial capitalism. So, by all means,

Greens should run for office seeking influence and power at the "macro" level. But we must not forget how important it is to keep "walking on two legs" . . . one in the electoral arena and one in the social/ecological movements.

There are movements of resistance, movements of deconstruction, movements of regeneration. Some of the articles in this issue focus on movements that are laying the groundwork for building up the new. **One idea is to establish networks of ecovillages. Those networks could become the basis for the eventual bioregional reorganization of our society.**

Ecovillages could be the supportive lifeboats that will be needed during what James Howard Kunstler calls The Long Emergency we are facing. In that respect some of them might, unfortunately but understandably, be prone to insularity. Greens could motivate social consciousness within that movement so that ecovillages become base camps for transformation, prefiguring the rejuvenation of local community life with a "living more lightly" orientation. The concept can be applied to urban and suburban neighborhoods as well as rural agro-communes (as our contributor Joel Rothschild explicated in a series of articles several years ago; confer *Green Horizon* issues 37-39). Ultimately, bioregions could enable a more participatory form of democracy and a more direct praxis of land stewardship. A bioregional world would provide the context for regaining our grounding by restoring our sense of being home again among the biotic communities of our localities.

RECOGNIZE, REACT, REBUILD

Relative to that vision of health and sanity, it should be clear that our current reality is unacceptable. It's aberrant from the perspective of our full species history; it's grossly unsustainable, meaning that we'll hit a terminus sooner or later without a major course correction. It would be sad if humanity succumbed to the consequences of the arrogance of anthropocentrism. It would be shameful if the collateral damage resulted in a broad ecocide.

But our capability for edification means that we have at least a chance to recognize and react. Course correction may come primarily from the jolt of crisis. The unfolding mass extinction indicates that the crisis has begun. But so has the corrective reaction. It's embodied in the greening movement, which counsels that ecological wisdom must increasingly guide each generation going forward: to scale down, slow down, democratize, and decentralize; to restrain the irresponsibilities, alter the trajectories, rein in the lusts for power and control. To deconstruct the Leviathan. And to consistently, incrementally, steadily build the new society within the shell of the old.

— SW

Pioneering Work Takes Time: The Story of Altair EcoVillage

BY JOEL BARTLETT

Precedents in Pennsylvania

ECOVILLAGERS are pioneering communitarian alternatives and setting important precedents. For example: At one of the hearings where the East Pikeland town council was considering the progressive ordinance that would enable Altair to move forward toward construction, a skeptic said something like this to the council members: “I feel as if by opening the door to the development of the Altair EcoVillage you’re subjecting East Pikeland to some kind of experiment that might turn out to have a deleterious effect on our community. There isn’t a single other ‘ecovillage’ in our state! And that makes me think it’s just a bad idea.”

By striving to get built the first ones in the state, Altair and Rachel Carson will be doing a great service to co-thinkers who may have been hesitant. First of all, tangible and visible ecovillage communities will be inspiring. They will make it more likely that other similar projects will get initiated. And then, when the successors have to navigate zoning challenges, they’ll be able to point to Altair and Rachel Carson as existing models. No one will ever again be able to say “nothing like this exists in Pennsylvania.” — Ed.

Introducing new paradigms takes time! In the summer of 1999, my wife Margo and I were invited to a meeting of Chester County, PA elders who called themselves STAR (Seniors’ Talents And Resources). They had heard about a local cohousing initiative, inspired by a national conference at the George School in nearby Bucks County in 1997. They were hungry for community—living together to combat the isolation they felt, to say nothing of the difficulty of having to maintain homes now too large for their needs. “Would you be interested in starting a cohousing project with us?” Sure, we said—we loved the concept, and we were in our early fifties, so we had the energy. Little did we know we’d still be trying to realize this dream 23 years later!

In the early years of “Altair” (named after the first magnitude beautiful star in Aquila, the Eagle, part of the Summer Triangle of constellations) we didn’t talk about “ecovillages,” “sustainability,” or even “universal design.” We focused on the neighborhood model which had appealed to us at the 1999 Cohousing Conference held at Pioneer Valley Cohousing in North Amherst, MA. We weren’t developers, didn’t know how to evaluate sites, had no use for project management or timeline tools—in short, we were wide-eyed idealists. But, regardless, we saw an immediate

Rachel Carson EcoVillage: A Bridge between Past and Future

BY STEFANI DANES, RCE COMMUNITY MEMBER

Rachel Carson EcoVillage (RCE),¹ in the early stages of development in western Pennsylvania, will be an intentional community designed to foster residents’ connections with each other, with nature, and with surrounding neighbors. Once completed, RCE will be home to an intergenerational group of like-minded individuals from diverse backgrounds in a 35-unit cohousing arrangement.

In the Pittsburgh area, a region of over one million households, 35 housing units is, of course, a small drop in the bucket. Could such a project have any significance beyond its value for those homeowners? What role might such a project play in the larger shift of society toward a deeper democracy and a more life-sustaining world?

We suggest that it could make three notable contributions that might transcend its own boundaries: sociocratic governance, infrastructure performance, and ecological fit. First, though, it’s important to recognize that Rachel Carson EcoVillage is building on a history of successful communities.

response when we publicized the idea. Fifty attended our winter holiday party; and within a year we were able to host our first “Getting It Built” workshop.

Then we embarked upon a search for a suitable property. We looked at many and considered many site designs. Meanwhile, we were drawing in participants and investors. We finally managed to buy an 8-acre plot of pasture and woods in the village of Kimberton, about 30 miles northwest of Philadelphia, and we started putting the pieces in place, but it was only recently that East Pikeland Township approved a zoning ordinance conducive to our distinctive concept (clustering units, parking cars at the periphery, etc.).

That breakthrough now enables us to advertise, take reservation deposits, and hold member design workshops to finalize our plans and practices. We feel confident that in the next year or two we’ll be able to build the low-impact intentional community embodying our vision. We also are intent upon becoming a model of sustainable housing for our region.

IT’S AN ALTERNATIVE TO THE SUBURBAN NORM

We’re often asked: How come you’ve been at it for so long and haven’t built yet? We explain that our conception of how to live lightly and foster community is somewhat alternative relative to the current standard American suburban residential model. We’ve needed to educate zoning boards and lending institutions

We are intent upon becoming a model of sustainable housing for our region.

(and neighbors!) as we’ve carried through our practical organizing. A downsized, pedestrian-oriented community is different from what the housing market is used to. But we’ve always noticed how it has resonated when we’ve pointed to the unique features of ecovillage living—the open space preserved because we are clustering homes, the reduced energy bills, the quality of the green construction we propose—in addition to the high degree of community interaction and support fostered by the cohousing model.

The latter, developed in Denmark in the 1970s, strives to bring people into relationship. It provides an answer to the isolation modern living has generated and promotes equitable governance. The six principles that Charles Durrett and Kathryn McCamant brought over from Denmark in their landmark book

COHOUSING TODAY

RCE is part of a growing movement around the world, fueled in part by the increasing prevalence of social isolation that is the by-product of hyper-individualism. According to an article by Phillip Perry, “... cohousing could help solve a lot of the world’s most pressing problems, such as how to provide affordable housing, how to help people find work-life balance, how to regain the loss of community and connectedness we once had, and how to adopt sustainable living practices.”²

In Europe, the cohousing movement has been accelerated by support from local and national governments. In Great Britain, for example, cohousing is incorporated into city housing strategies as a way to offer better housing options for young families, elderly individuals, and low-income households. In the US, cohousing is a private initiative that must be accomplished without public subsidies or incentives. A successful cohousing project in the US therefore demonstrates a great amount of sustained determination, a high degree of risk-taking, and an impressive collective will. Each new community contributes to the momentum of the movement as a whole, even though it’s only one more pin on the map.

Today, cities like Boston, Seattle, and Oakland, California have become hubs of cohousing. In Pittsburgh, though the idea of creating an intentional community has been drawing people to discussions for over twenty years, the closest fully-developed community is Ecovillage Ithaca (NY), a half-day’s drive away. So Rachel Carson EcoVillage will fill a large geographic void.

But cohousing is growing—not only in numbers, but also as a network of communities that collectively demonstrates the viability of an alternative lifestyle with documented benefits

In Europe, the cohousing movement has been accelerated by support from local and national governments.

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Cohousing still resonate with Altair's mission:

1. future residents organize to plan their community;
2. the design promotes community interaction;
3. each family owns their own home, supplemented by extensive common facilities;
4. the residents manage the community;
5. the residents operate using a non-hierarchical structure;
6. residents have their own income sources.

Cohousing is a particular model of ownership. The 'ecovillage' concept broadens the vision to include green characteristics that we plan to embody via:

- building using Passive House principles;
 - obtaining a Silver Rating using the US Green Building Council's SITES v2 Guidelines for sustainability (that applies both to the design and the maintenance of the community);
 - establishing a non-profit entity that has as its mission helping others build sustainable ecovillages;
 - participating with local Community Supported Agriculture farms;
 - promoting an electric car sharing system;
 - trying to reduce our carbon footprint as much as possible.
- And, all the while, we are designing homes intended to "fit in" to the historic little village of Kimberton. We'll be enjoying a walkable community—one not dependent on owning a car.

Altair EcoVillage ↑

Rachel Carson EcoVillage ↓

for people, land, and society. Rachel Carson EcoVillage, Altair EcoVillage in eastern Pennsylvania, and others in development are building on thirty years of successful cohousing advocacy in North America. Today there are 165 such communities in the United States. Through organizations like the Cohousing Association of the United States³ and the Global Ecovillage Network,⁴ residents are part of a community of communities learning from each other and offering hopeful and practical ways to avoid the potentially discouragingly high costs—to themselves and to society—of ongoing suburban sprawl.

RCE'S CONTRIBUTION TO THE MOVEMENT

Rachel Carson EcoVillage is the only independent cohousing community in North America being established on a university

campus. It will be located on Chatham University's Eden Hall campus, home of the Falk School of Sustainability and Environment. The school educates professional sustainability leaders through innovative experienced-based undergraduate and graduate programs. The campus is the school's learning laboratory for teaching, research, and public service. The school, taking its inspiration from Rachel Carson, one of Chatham's most notable alumna, is emerging as a new world leader in finding answers to the growing global challenges we face today.

It would be hard to find more fertile soil on which to create an ecovillage. RCE is located just beyond the campus gateway marker, on which the opening lines of Rachel Carson's most famous book are inscribed: "There was once a town in the heart of America where all life seemed to live in harmony with its surroundings." This

Through organizations like the Cohousing Association of the United States and the Global Ecovillage Network, residents are part of a community of communities learning from each other.

Recalling all that our group has been through—the six or seven townships we have discussed the project with, the many sites we have explored, the several developers who have helped us, and the people numbering in the hundreds who have walked through our doors—it’s a welcome feeling to now be on the cusp of design and construction. We have starter funds, excellent professionals under contract, and the support of the Township. We’re proactively learning to use the robust governance model called Sociocracy.

Never having given up on the dream, we’ll be gratified to finally see it come to fruition. We still have a lot of work ahead of us as we move into the next phase of our project, but things now are falling into place. Over the years so many have told us of their interest in ecovillage living. We hope to soon be able to provide the opportunity.

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the ‘ecovillage’ concept broadens the vision
to include green characteristics.

We’ll be enjoying a walkable community—
one not dependent on owning a car.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Altair EcoVillage: altairecovillage.org

Global EcoVillage Network: ecovillage.org

Cohousing Association of the United States: cohousing.org

Sustainable SITES Initiative: sustainable-sites.org

Passive House Alliance: phius.org



JOEL BARTLETT

is a retired architect, hiker, and oboe, scrabble, and tennis player, in addition to serving as the project manager of the Altair EcoVillage initiative.

alignment of visions and values is the foundation for a productive partnership between the ecovillage and the university. While Rachel Carson EcoVillage brings academic theories to life, the school amplifies the impact of the community. RCE residents will enjoy lifelong learning on the campus. They will be able to participate in academic events, volunteer in campus projects, mentor students, and host learning activities. In return, the EcoVillage is creating unique opportunities for collaborative research in social organization, building performance, and ecological integration. In each of these ways, Rachel Carson EcoVillage is looking to break new ground and offer lessons for future communities.

SOCIOCRATIC GOVERNANCE

“Who decides who decides?” is perhaps the most important question for any organization to answer. In a book by that apt title, Ted Rau of Sociocracy For All explains the fundamentals of sociocracy—participatory governance by friends. Rachel Carson EcoVillage adopted sociocracy as its governance structure from the outset.

Good governance is the basis for harmonious living. In a sociocratic organization, everyone agrees to working toward

a common vision and goals. Decisions are decentralized, and leadership is developed throughout the organization. Meetings are facilitated so that each person’s voice and time are respected. New RCE members take an introductory course taught online by Sociocracy For All, and then they practice in the community’s planning groups. All of Rachel Carson EcoVillage’s decisions have been made by consent, which connects people to each other, rather than a majority vote, which is inherently divisive. In this

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Excerpts from the Global Ecovillage Network (GEN) January 2022 newsletter

In this edition, we want to share with you some of our plans for 2022, including our first course of the year, our Ecovillage Design Education live online program starting in March, and our first International Research Colloquium happening this month. We also feature an urgent cry for help from Auroville Community in India; GENOA's ReGEN-Nations learning journey; and an introduction to NextGEN.

Looking for a unique ecovillage design course? GEN is excited to announce a special opportunity to attend a full Ecovillage Design Education LIVE online, certified by Gaia Education and GEN, with top facilitators and experts from around the world.

After our first successful cohort, we're excited to offer this program again from 12 March to 24 July 2022. This course is a transformative learning journey providing knowledge and practical skills for how to design thriving communities and societies within planetary boundaries.

The program will explore the four areas of regeneration (society, ecology, economy and worldview) including formal classes with presentations, Q&A sessions, videos, and exercises as well as group dynamics and deep sharing. Participants will create and co-develop group projects during the design sessions.

Rachel Carson EcoVillage ↓

way prospective residents are taking an active role in planning the project and its long-term management. They are also getting to know, trust, and respect each other well before moving into their new housing.

Rachel Carson EcoVillage is the first organization of any kind in the Pittsburgh region with experience in practicing sociocratic decision making. While there is growing interest in a model of governance that connects people—especially in a time when society has become so fractured and distrustful—two years of on-the-ground implementation puts the community in the role of a leader with lessons to share, not only with community organizations, but with local government agencies and boards, businesses, non-profit groups, and others.

INFRASTRUCTURE PERFORMANCE

As good stewards of resources, Rachel Carson EcoVillage has identified specific targets for the design of a low-energy, low-carbon-emissions community. It has an expert team of designers, builders, and analysts with experience in state-of-the-art green construction working together in an integrated process. From early in the design process, iterative energy modeling and carbon lifecycle accounting have informed design decisions. For example, the buildings will be US Passive House certified.⁵ The general contractor is hiring an offsite fabricator to construct wall,

roof, and floor panels in a controlled factory environment. Not only does this guarantee higher precision and performance, it reduces the risk of exposure to unpredictable weather, minimizes construction waste, cuts field time by almost half, and provides exact as-built documentation for homeowners.

Once they are constructed, the buildings will be independently “commissioned” to test actual performance before they are sold. A monitoring system will be installed to enable homeowners to control their comfort and air quality as well as track their energy savings. Building performance can also be evaluated on an ongoing basis for community/university research. RCE promises to provide a unique laboratory for empirical analysis as part of its commitment to learning and sharing.

ECOLOGICAL INTEGRATION

Traditional site plans and landscaping have a way of fragmenting space. They aim to distinguish and elevate the human condition above that which is around it, often cutting down flourishing diverse vegetation to a turf lawn to provide a dramatic contrast between the land and the house. Relationships between people and nature are further suppressed in the dominant culture when we aspire to individual convenience and chemicalized “landscape hygiene.”

Even some cohousing communities have tended to adopt such an approach to landscape design. Rachel Carson

GEN Research Colloquium (January 12)

Decolonial thinking in an age of uncertainty and transformation

In this colloquium, we will reflect on how ecovillages provide alternative development paradigms and on the role of decolonial thinking as a means to challenge dominant paradigms.

Auroville Community needs our help!

Auroville, an intentional community in South India, is facing a difficult struggle. Some of its forest, watersheds, and homes are being bulldozed and destroyed. When municipal authorities, without warning, started to bulldoze forests containing endangered trees, many Auroville residents tried to protect ecologically sensitive areas. Township authorities are pushing for building a road which would cut through forest and precious water catchments. Concerned residents presented an alternative plan. But the community's participatory decision-making is being bypassed by governmental authorities who are reinforcing their development plan through violent authoritarian measures. Protesting residents want Auroville to be developed sustainably—respecting nature and people's voices, and honoring the reforestation work of the past 50

years. You can help Auroville by signing a petition of support and visiting a special "How To Help" website.

ReGEN-Nations

Are you interested in resilience and regeneration design solutions? If so, you cannot miss the ReGEN-Nations program, an online learning journey and prototyping lab using whole system thinking by the GEN Oceania and Asia Projects team.

About NextGEN

NextGEN is the youth-led group of the Global Ecovillage Network. With presence in all five regions [Africa (GEN Africa), Europe (GEN Europe), Latin America (CASA), North America (GENNA), and Oceania/Asia (GENOA)], they stand as living examples of young people intentionally connecting with and taking action in their communities. NextGEN works to empower, educate, connect, and inspire youth to participate in the ecovillage movement, and contribute to community-led change for eco-social regeneration.

EcoVillage is committed to realizing an "interdependence" approach—design for the betterment of the natural ecosystem, not just the human community. It is based on an ongoing study of the ecology of the fields and forests of the campus by both community members and professionals, including eco-walk explorations and an iNaturalist project.⁶ Residents will be collaborating with students in invasives-control projects. With the advice of an expert in meadows, the community will transform a monoculture field into a beautiful and diverse meadow and introduce the first stage of a natural forest succession that will allow the existing forest to reclaim a former potato field. RCE will be working hand-in-hand with the university on long-term landscape management of the area around the village.

The Rachel Carson EcoVillage community is laying the groundwork for a lifestyle that is socially vibrant as well as ecologically purposeful. Its goal is to explore ways of living harmoniously with each other, with nature, and with neighbors. While it is an outgrowth of several generations of successful cohousing, it is inherently a practical test case for new ideas in community and sustainability that require a thoughtful foundation for success. That foundation combines looking back at lessons learned and looking ahead to new ways to build not just a better community, but a better society.

LINKS

1. <https://rachelcarsonecovillage.org>
2. <https://bigthink.com/personal-growth/cohousing-could-help-solve-some-of-the-worlds-most-pressing-problems>
3. <https://www.cohousing.org>
4. <https://ecovillage.org>
5. <https://www.phius.org>
6. <https://www.inaturalist.org>



STEFANI DANES, FAIA

serves as Rachel Carson EcoVillage's development project manager. An architect by profession, she designs urban affordable housing, cohousing, and community facilities. She also teaches courses on housing, intentional communities, and urban design in the School of Architecture at Carnegie Mellon University. Stefani has visited more than forty communities in the US and Denmark, prepared post-occupancy evaluations, and has completed a course in cohousing development. She has been a presenter at two national Cohousing Conferences.

SONG *Harmonies*

From inception the EcoVillage at Ithaca (EVI), located on 175 acres in the Finger Lakes region of New York State, had space for a good number of houses in addition to multiple tracts of land for farms, orchards, and wildlife habitat. The resident-designers decided to cluster the homes in cohousing neighborhoods of no more than 40 units, influenced by sociological studies indicating that people are only able to relate to a limited number of neighbors in an interdependent way that fosters familiarity and support. After obtaining a parcel of land in 1992, EVI proceeded to construct their housing in three phases: The neighborhood called “FROG” (First Residents Group) was completed in 1997 with 30 homes; “SONG” (Second Neighborhood Group) added 30 more in 2006; finally, “TREE” (Third Residential EcoVillage Experience), a neighborhood with 40 units, was completed in 2015. Each neighborhood has its own Common House which (in normal, non-COVID times) hosts shared meals and neighborhood gatherings. Each coordinates work teams for self-maintenance, self-management, and self-governance. There are also Village-wide activities and responsibilities. To give a sense of the eco-communitarian culture that prevails, below are excerpts from the Members Reference Guide of the Second Neighborhood.

VISION AND PRINCIPLES

SONG is a cohousing neighborhood dedicated to cooperative, healthful, and ecologically sound living. Along with the other EcoVillage at Ithaca neighborhoods, it is part of a village-scale experiment in sustainable living that works to enhance the lives of its members and the health of its surrounding ecosystems. SONG is positively involved with the larger local community and sees itself as part of a broader effort to create a more just, humane, and sustainable society. The following principles reflect our members’ common ground. These principles will evolve as our community and the individuals within it evolve.

Sustainable Lifestyles

We want our lives to have a restorative impact on the Earth. We hope to inspire ourselves and others to consume and drive less, share resources, reuse and recycle more, and innovatively utilize sustainable materials, technologies, and design strategies whenever possible.

Community and the Individual

We are creating a community where members feel connected, supported, and appreciated, yet where privacy and space for unique individual and family growth is cherished and encouraged.

Diversity

SONG is striving for diversity at all levels, so that members at all age levels, from different backgrounds, incomes, abilities, and

lifestyle choices, feel respected and empowered. We recognize the deep-rooted patterns that keep people of different backgrounds isolated from each other and we embrace the opportunity to work through them.

Communication and Personal Growth

We recognize that living in community requires ongoing learning of communication, conflict resolution, and other collaborative skills, including honestly expressing our feelings and our differences, while respecting the rights of others. We follow communication and conflict resolution guidelines to assure a safe, honest, and healthy group environment. We welcome the personal growth and social responsibility that living in community can bring.

Self-governance

Through shared leadership, rotating facilitators, nurturing meetings, and other methods, we self-govern in a way that honors each person’s truth, that helps us arrive at harmonious and creative solutions, and that takes into account the needs of the larger community of life and of future generations.

Shared Responsibilities

SONG members recognize that many hands make light work and that every individual has a unique contribution to make. We feel that working together can be a joyful experience, enhanced by the satisfaction of shared accomplishments. We uphold a commitment to the basic maintenance and well-being of the community by actively participating in decision-making and 2–4 hours a week per adult of shared work. We value young people’s contributions to community responsibilities and encourage them to join in at appropriate levels.

Children in Community

We seek to create an environment that is safe, supportive, and inspiring for our children, and that significantly involves them in community responsibilities, decisions, projects, and celebrations. We want them to grow up comfortable with people of all ages and backgrounds. We respect individual family and parenting styles, at the same time as we are attempting to integrate more shared adult responsibility for guiding the next generation.

Land Stewardship

SONG is committed to learning how to respect the land and its nonhuman residents and to helping restore its diversity and health. As part of this commitment, we are building on only 3.5 acres while preserving multiple acres of open space.

Shared Costs

We share common maintenance and improvement costs through a flexible, integrated approach that may include considering the number of people in a household, house size, annual household income, etc.

Economic Sustainability

SONG would like to evolve a range of on-site enterprises that reduce auto use, create more integrated lifestyles, and add to the economic viability of the overall Village.

Community Character

Our homes will blend harmoniously with the landscape, and the exterior of the properties will be well maintained, with substantial exterior changes requiring group review. We want aesthetically pleasing common spaces, with well-maintained areas that are both peaceful and energizing. We support playful and exuberant behavior by children and adults alike, but expect that the noise and energy level will respect the peace in common areas.

WELCOMING NEW MEMBERS

When a new person is moving in . . .

1. **GETTING A BUDDY** - New people get connected with a buddy: someone in the Village who agrees to help them get oriented and becomes their go-to person for the first few weeks or months.
2. **SENDING OUT A BIO** - A person or family's buddy invites them to write a short bio/introduction and sends it out to the community. This can be sent to just their neighborhood or the whole Village.
3. **NEW RESIDENT MEET & GREET** - There are many ways for an incoming resident to meet and be met by folks in the community: attending meals, meetings, projects, and events before and after moving in. At the least, there is a dedicated Meet & Greet organized by their buddy. A Meet & Greet can include informal chatting, a round of introductions, and/or sharing by current residents such as surprising, wonderful, or challenging things about life in EcoVillage. The format can be a brunch, a game night, a group project, and so on. Some people are more comfortable with being the focus of attention or structured sharing than others; it's okay to be creative. Each Meet & Greet can be shaped according to the preferences of the incoming resident, while fulfilling the basic purpose.

THE PEACE AND RECONCILIATION COUNCIL (PARC)

PARC was formed some years ago by a group of neighbors who were concerned about how conflicts might be handled in our neighborhood. The people working on this realized that

we needed a mental shift from avoiding conflict to embracing it as a healthy part of any relationship. People also needed some helpful hints or tools to use in working to resolve any conflict that might arise.

PARC intentions:

- To build SONG's capacity to deal with conflicts in preventative, constructive and transformative ways through education and skill-building opportunities.
- To develop and implement supportive guidelines and procedures.
- To work directly with conflicted parties when complex and difficult situations may require it.

PARC members are a group of people committed to developing our knowledge and skills in peacemaking and creative conflict management in order to support a more authentic and compassionate culture in SONG. We will educate through researching and summarizing relevant practices and resources; facilitating discussions and practice sessions at meetings; offering workshops/trainings; and creating concise postings online and in hard copy that summarize guidelines, procedures and tools. We will help determine which aspects of complex conflicts require attention by the community on a value and a policy level and which are best dealt with interpersonally.

LANDSCAPING GUIDELINES

Home Landscaping Areas

1. Each household may landscape and use as backyard space: [area specs stipulated]
2. Within the previously defined home landscaping areas, homeowners who wish to plant trees or shrubs that can grow to more than 5' or to erect structural elements (trellis, gazebo, totem pole, etc.) more than 5' in height may do so after accommodating the concerns of all neighbors whose views are affected.
3. We will respect our neighbors' solar access by avoiding plantings that will grow up to shade south windows or south-facing roofs.
4. We will avoid planting invasive species not native to this region.
5. We will make every effort to avoid using not only synthetic chemical herbicides, pesticides, fungicides, or fertilizers but also any highly toxic "natural" products. Please inquire about alternatives (use the SONG listserv) before using any toxic materials in your yard.
6. Neighbors who cannot resolve landscape-related disagreements among themselves are encouraged to take advantage of the services of Village-wide mediators in conjunction with the expertise of members of the Landscape Committee/Outdoor Team or other relevant resource people.

EcoVillage New Jersey

We're hoping to eventually seed urban, suburban, and rural communities in order to showcase diverse models.

Activists will create ecovillages on the basis of having a vision of broad social change in mind.

There have been efforts to provide the 20 million people of the New York-New Jersey metropolitan area with a variety of eco-living options, but not a single cohousing or ecovillage project has yet come to fruition. Land is expensive in the region and zoning laws tend to be prohibitive.

“EcoVillage New Jersey” is a Meetup that endeavors to coordinate the efforts. We’re hoping to eventually seed urban, suburban, and rural communities in order to showcase diverse models. For inspiration, we’ve sponsored group tours of existing ecovillages in the northeast.

Prior to the pandemic-related shutdowns we were hosting monthly meetings for the sake of education, skills-sharing, and fundraising; and we launched a study-group called “Toward Fostering Bioregionalism.” The latter is reflective of how we want to incorporate long-range social change visioning into our work, having a conviction that constructive refiguration is the best path toward healing ourselves and the biosphere.

Governmental policies for environmental remediation are important, no doubt. Online cyber-communities can help us learn and organize. But to re-inhabit, care for, and relate to particular places will require a new rootedness and groundedness. And to achieve that we’ll need to re-establish *real* communities.

REAL COMMUNITY

Localist identification and attention has withered under conditions of mass society and industrial-scale economies. The idea of committing to a lifestyle oriented toward direct collective support of a stable group of familiar other people is now hardly imaginable. Ecovillages model this new/old alternative way of living. It can apply to all settings: the community-of-support could be a rural agro-commune, a humanly-scaled walkable township, or a neighborhood within an urban or suburban setting. The point is re-inhabitation and re-stabilization.

Sometimes we hear: “Well, there must be jobs in the area.” How about this dissenting idea: The real job is the sustenance of the immediate human community around us and the maintenance of its physical space. That involves quite a bit of work! When we go off to labor for the institutions of the Leviathan we neglect our families and our communities. When we pay attention to careers instead of right livelihood, we gain a hollow status at the expense of deep interpersonal satisfactions.

As the ecovillage living option becomes increasingly available, many people will choose it on the basis of lifestyle appeal. But Green activists will choose it on the basis of having a vision of broad social change in mind. Ecovillages will be the lifeboats during The Long Emergency that we face. Moreover, they can be the base camps for the movement to green our society. And they can model how future generations will need to live. Echoing Samuel Alexander from the Simplicity Institute Report titled “The Deep Green Alternative:”

In the not-too-distant future the misguided trajectories of our civilization may very well provoke a series of crises. A result could be a widespread change in consciousness that opens up space for our deep green vision to be embraced. A sage once wrote: “When a crisis occurs, the actions that are taken depend on the ideas that are lying around.” On that basis we should be doing all we can to actualize and mainstream our alternative ideas and values—aiming to prefigure sustainable practices, so that they are extant and available when the crises hit.

AEUoM/Co/ITR6



Homecoming: Creating Just and Sustainable Bioregional Societies

BY LINDA CREE

To many seeking hope in this time of converging ecological and social crises, bioregionalism appears the most promising way forward. Living deeply rooted in place and meeting our needs from local sources represents the necessary antidote to the ecocidal way of life in which we're currently enmeshed. In a crowded world with resource shortages and societies riddled with racism, classism, and ageism, however, we could see bioregional cultures evolving new forms of feudalism rather than the Green bioregional world we dream of. It seems wise to anticipate and deal with such potential problems upfront so we can be sure bioregionalism will fulfill its promise as both the most ecologically wise and socially just path to tomorrow.

Kirkpatrick Sale, an early proponent of bioregionalism, points out that “. . . truly autonomous bioregions will likely go their own separate ways and end up with quite disparate political systems—some democracies, no doubt, some direct, some representative, some federative, but undoubtedly all kinds of aristocracies, oligarchies, theocracies, principalities, margravates, duchies and palatinates as well.”¹

This projection is echoed in James Howard Kunstler's warning of a decentralized post-oil world where politics could become ever more extremist, our southern states could revert to forms of plantation servitude such as share cropping and even slavery, and the latent violence and racism throughout our nation could grow ever more virulent as resource stresses increase and the power of the central government weakens.²

Another American writer, William Ophuls, believes that societies without strong, centralized governments will not be able to guarantee basic human rights: “[I]t is clear that total equality and social justice are at least conceivable in a total, centralized regime; just as clearly, they are not attainable in the basically decentralized frugal society.”³ His premise is patently false. The most egalitarian and socially just societies anthropologists have observed have been those of decentralized, frugal, Indigenous cultures! And why does he pendulum-swing from “a total, centralized regime”? Anyway, he is evidently not overly concerned about inequalities as he goes on to say: “As compensation for this, however, the plane would be characterized by a certain spicy variety . . .”⁴

A certain spicy variety? feudalism? servitude? slavery? little fiefdoms and monarchies? Certainly NOT the kind of spice Greens want to see in a bioregional society! Obviously, even as we seek to return more autonomy to local entities, we need to assure that some kind of centralized authority has the power to safeguard the basic rights enshrined in our Bill of Rights for everyone.

CONDITIONS OF FEUDALISM

Unfortunately, it seems too many American intellectuals are steeped in feudalistic European notions of bioregionalism. They look to the European past and see localized economies based on feudalism. Too many accept class disparities as part of the future bioregional societies they envision. If we look more closely at history, however, we can see that such a *laissez-faire* approach to human rights will undermine any chances for a thriving, bioregional nation.

The truth is, those Medieval examples were actually *failed* bioregional cultures. The people of Europe's Middle Ages may have lived intensely local lives, but most no longer had the values and understandings that would allow them to thrive in sustainable (let alone just!) bioregional communities. They were already on a treadmill of growth and ecological destruction that propelled them into the Great Famine of 1315 and the Black Death of 1347.

Taking a cue from the Jeffersonians, bioregionalists need to make land reform a top priority of the transition.

Right from the start, we need to clarify the powers a centralized authority must retain to insure that the value of each and every human being and their right to equality and dignity are protected.

Inspired by contact with Indigenous peoples, some American founders recognized the chance to rethink and refashion government and culture.

We must never forget the conditions of feudalism under which people in Europe and other areas of the world suffered lest we romanticize and fall into the trap of recreating those same conditions as we try to relocalize. Although most little girls play princess, and Disney's medieval castle sparkles enchantingly on our screens, reality was quite another thing. What happened in Europe under feudalism as populations increased and resources dwindled is a horror story with which we should all be familiar.

It began with loss of self-sufficiency for the majority of people. In the various monarchies of Medieval Europe, the monarch, his/her chosen aristocrats, and the Church owned and controlled the land. Most of the population was forced into actual serfdom, and the gap between the haves and have-nots was enormous. Many people couldn't even obtain life's basic necessities. There was little recourse in the law, which was created by elites for elites. Punishments were extreme, even for misdemeanors, even for children, and hangings were used as examples and entertainments. The sheer pettiness and mean-spiritedness of the times can be seen in the laws banning peasants from wearing certain colors which were meant to be for the exclusive use of aristocrats! As the Middle Ages ended, power gradually shifted from blood-line nobility to enterprising merchants, but it didn't much change the servitude in which most people lived. Instead of laboring for a lord in his farm fields, one might now labor for an industrialist in his factory.

Although the new nation of the United States begun on this continent was deeply flawed, it's well to remember the social climate of the era it was created in. Aristocracies of privilege (whether by blood or wealth) were enshrined in law in Europe. Such aristocracies were taken for granted by almost everyone as simply the natural order of things.

AMERICAN VISIONS

Our victorious Revolutionary War broke the colonizing chains of England, but the mental chains still held many in thrall. Alexander Hamilton, and those of his ilk, wanted to throw off monarchy but establish an aristocracy of the wealthy. He scoffed at the idea of "democracy" and sought rule by "the rich and well born."⁵

Others saw a very different vision for this "new world." Inspired by contact with Indigenous peoples here, they recognized that the American continents offered a chance to rethink and refashion government and culture. Thomas Paine advocated extending voting rights to women and to blacks.

Thomas Jefferson believed it was possible to create a society where every man [sic] would have the opportunity to acquire some education and—impossible to conceive of in classist, overcrowded Europe—even some land of his own!⁶

These opposing visions were reflected in the land policies each side promoted. Hamilton pushed the idea that American land be sold to the highest bidder. He saw this as a way of favoring the wealthy and assuring that land would eventually be concentrated in the hands of a few. Jefferson, on the other hand, advocated giving out land in small parcels so that small farmers and landholders would be the democratic bulwark of our nation. He also promoted progressive taxation of large estates.⁷

In anthropological terms, Jeffersonians were trying to safeguard our new nation from the oppressive stratification heavily populated, complex societies tend toward. It's important to recognize that, in general, Hamiltonian land policies won out. Today over 75% of the non-public land in the U.S. is owned by only 5% of the population.⁸ Taking a cue from the Jeffersonians, bioregionalists need to make land reform a top priority of the transition.

LOCAL AUTONOMY VS. CENTRALIZED AUTHORITY

The founders of our country struggled with the inherent conflict between state and centralized government. Much of the conflict, as we all know, was sparked by the issue of slavery. Our founders didn't so much resolve it as compromise—out of fear the slave-holding southern states would slip back into England's grasp. It's instructive to note that the failure to resolve the issue early and definitively eventually created the schism that led to our Civil War.

We must keep that lesson in mind as we advocate for more local autonomy. Right from the start, we need to clarify the powers a centralized authority must retain to insure that the value of each and every human being and their right to equality and dignity are protected. In our efforts to relocalize and live more simply, we must vigilantly guard against slipping back into feudal aristocracies or petty oligarchies.

Regardless of our family roots, we all come from tribal peoples somewhere in our past. With population growth and the move to feudalism and then industrialism, we lost the egalitarian practices of small-scale cultures. What we need today are non-feudal examples of bioregional living to help us in imagining our options. Luckily, we have close-to-home examples of successful bioregional cultures throughout the United States that can inform and inspire us as they did some of our nation's founders.

In our efforts to relocalize and live more simply, we must guard against slipping back into feudal aristocracies or petty oligarchies.

Where I live, in the northern Great Lakes area, the traditional Anishinaabe can prove instructive. Whether it's the respect and restraint integral to The Honorable Harvest that Robin Wall Kimmerer writes eloquently about in her book *Braiding Sweetgrass*, the use of consensus in decision-making, the Three Sisters planting strategy for gardening, the concept of “the democracy of species,”⁹ or the careful family planning the Ojibwa used to maintain balance with their region's carrying capacity—there are numerous vital lessons to be learned.¹⁰ Bioregionalists can find those Native American voices that speak for their particular region and use them to assist in the transition.

Various other cultures have managed to live bioregionally and retain egalitarianism even with scarce resources. The traditional Ladakhi of Tibet come to mind. Living in one of the harshest regions of the world—the extremely dry, cold, almost treeless Tibetan Plateau—the Ladakhi evolved a long-term sustainable culture of great beauty.

The traditional people of Ladakh are self-sufficient farmers residing in villages whose size is limited by the amount of water they can obtain from snowmelt off the mountains. Democracy is built into their way of life as most decisions are made at the household or village level, and there are minimal disparities in wealth. Every family owns two to four acres of land. In such a harsh environment, the Ladakh people are always mindful of their land's carrying capacity, and families are kept small. Humility and patience are the most prized virtues, and cooperation, not competition, is emphasized.¹¹

Today the Ladakhi traditional way of life is being eroded by the global industrialism that's destroying so many Indigenous societies—and the biosphere itself. Yet Ladakh has much to teach us of how democracy, as well as music, art, medicine, architecture and other cultural amenities, can flourish in low-tech bioregional communities with a proven track record of long-term sustainability.

IT'S HOW WE ARE MEANT TO LIVE

As we move away from destructive industrialism and the gigantic scale of things to simpler, small-scale living in harmony with the natural world, it will become clearer and clearer that this is how we are meant to live as human beings on this Earth. One of bioregionalism's early visionaries, David Haenke, tells us: bioregionalism is “nothing new. It's how humans have seen and done things throughout the bulk of history.”¹²

This is the great power of bioregionalism—it comes so naturally to us!

The route that took us away from tribal societies to feudalism and then industrialism has led directly to the overwhelming crises that threaten us today. In trying to change course and return to sustainable, localized ways of living we need to avoid falling back into any form of feudalism. We can look to Indigenous cultures around the world and to those specific to our own bioregions for guidance. They have both the ecological wisdom and egalitarianism necessary to make bioregionalism work.

In a sense, those of us living in industrialized societies are all displaced and traumatized Indigenous people. When we rediscover the Green Path, we can find our way home.

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LINDA CREE

is a longtime Green and retired educator. She lives in Michigan's rural/wild Upper Peninsula where she enjoys her family, the land, and creating folk art celebrating both.

Bioregional Catalysts: Weaving Together Towards a New Paradigm

Bioregionalism invites all humanity into a new paradigm where social, economic, and decentralized governing structures prioritize ecosystemic interdependence with land, water, and living systems.

We're endeavoring to create the cultural scaffolding of relationships and resources necessary for establishing a world-wide network of bioregional hubs for sharing wisdom and learning.

This article is a bit unusual, by intention. Instead of having a single author, it is the product of a collaborative effort by seven individuals, all living in different places around the world, who are part of a group called the Bioregional Catalysts [BCs]. This composition is a living exercise for the BCs, who are actively experimenting with how to approach tasks and objectives as Commons, thus minimizing emphasis on individualized ownership of the work. Another anomaly is that while this article has a beginning and an ending, with several points of interest in between, the discourse it contains is far from complete. Like an old-fashioned Polaroid picture where shapes and colors materialize from a blank frame until, ultimately, a recognizable image can be discerned, the story of the BCs is still emerging and awaiting full definition. That said, it very clearly begins with a singularly pressing issue: planetary collapse.

Regardless of the forum in which it is raised, planetary collapse is always a complex and disturbing subject. Just saying those words can trigger strong emotional reactions—or even social and political turmoil—caused by the many differences in understanding and acceptance of what is actually occurring on Earth at this time. These differences run the gamut: from those in denial, to the wide middle range of those who believe that life on earth is at risk but there is still time to change and avoid collapse, all the way to those who consider themselves “collapse aware.” The latter small but growing contingent, when presented with compelling narratives—such as Joe Brewer’s book *The Design Pathway for Regenerating Earth*—understands that collapse is already underway. This understanding, which acknowledges the complexities of our biosphere and the fact that we aren’t separate from nature, comes with the hope of a sobering-but-plausible path to restore planetary balance and health.

Bioregionalism, as a movement, invites all humanity into a new paradigm where social, economic, and decentralized governing structures prioritize ecosystemic interdependence with land, water, and living systems. It is at this end of the perspective-continuum that the BCs live, learn, and find their purpose. They are answering the call to create the cultural scaffolding of relationships and resources necessary for establishing a world-wide network of bioregional hubs for sharing wisdom and learning. And, like any pioneering process, it has started with more questions than answers.

REGENERATORS AND WEAVERS

Currently, Bioregional Catalysts is a 77-member subset of a larger group called Earth Regenerators, a decentralized ecosystem of people and activities held together by a global platform comprising more than 3,400 members world-wide. Earth Regenerators is two years into a discovery process that begins with building productive, equitable and collaborative groups through *prosocial* gatherings based on evolutionary science. According to Joe Brewer, prosocial behaviors revolve around “the sentiments and social capacities for working together toward common goals.” He cites the writings of David Sloan Wilson (*Does Altruism Exist?*) and Peter Turchin (*UltraSociety*). Prosociality combines insights from such psychological and behavioral foundations with the political economy of writers such as Elinor Ostrom, who showed what the design criteria are for effectively managing common-pooled assets—things like shared pastureland, waterways, and forests.

Capacity for regenerative leadership is evolving and inspiring new strategies for living and working in this transitional time.

On this basis group configurations have been forming organically within Earth Regenerators around a variety of common interests and innovations. Out of these groups, capacity for regenerative leadership is evolving and inspiring new strategies for living and working in this transitional time when existing systems and structures will be giving way to emerging bioregional alternatives.

Bioregional Catalysts is one such evolving group. Initiated and stewarded by Benji Ross of Monterey Bay, California, it is attracting a growing number of bioregional “Weavers,” another descriptive label for those who are exploring and engaging in this living laboratory. Beyond the labels, establishing comprehensive definitions for the people and activities of this movement is an ongoing challenge. To understand what BCs are, we need to look at what they do. Some close synonyms might be *network builders* and/or *community organizers*. However, those common terms are associated with transactional relationships contextually familiar to us from the marketplace, non-profits arena, and political activism where groups are separate with constrained opportunities or incentives for generative collaboration. As such, they don’t adequately reflect the relational aspects of interdependence, decentralization, and the fostering of prosocial Commons that are essential aspects of effective bioregionalism.

TRANSITIONING INTO A BIOREGIONAL WORLDVIEW AND WAY OF LIFE

As a learning cohort, Bioregional Catalysts come together from around the world for weekly Zoom meetings, exploring subjects and ideas proposed and chosen by the participants. The process of bioregional weaving that is central to BCs’ purpose involves reaching out and making contact with well-aligned people and projects in various locales. The development of “curriculum” for the BCs’ learning journey has served as a living model of certain aspects of the work itself. This has been especially true with The Story of Place (confer: regenesishgroup.com/services/story-of-place), a key subject area that has included presentations like Isabel Carlisle’s *Bioregional Learning from the Devon Doughnut* and Glenn Page’s COBALT (Collaborative for Bioregional Action, Learning and Transformation). Other areas of particular interest for the group include the history of bioregionalism, prosocial governance, conflict resolution, social system mapping, and conscious finance.

Aside from structured meetings, there are also frequent opportunities to connect informally in Zoom sessions called

Campfire Talks. These gatherings are inspired by aboriginal Australian yarns as described by Tyson Yunkaporta in his book *Sand Talk*. Yunkaporta explains that every person’s story must be heard because the truth exists in the aggregate of all stories, even the outliers. In order for this to unfold, the stories spun into the yarn are overlapping and dynamic, and the process unfolds naturally. Although the BCs’ context is quite different from the cultures that evolved through deep-time on the landscapes of Australia and surrounding islands, the intention is to honor the origins and protocols of the yarn that provide access to group wisdom. During the campfires, members build trust and coherence by supporting each other in open conversation around subjects that arise organically. Discourse ranges from specific bioregional experiences to frank exchanges about the more personal experiences of transitioning into a bioregional worldview and way of life.

During a BC session in early January, the subject of aspirations for the new year was raised and received a variety of fulsome responses. Among them were many expressed intentions for deepening relationships within the BCs as well as for reaching out to potential collaborative partners and opportunities outside the group. There was general agreement that the BCs want to develop more confidence in articulating and promoting the concepts of bioregionalism as well as promoting the benefits that Bioregional Weaving offers their respective communities and the world at large. There have been several energetic conversations about vocational development for Weavers through the creation of a guild that would coordinate internships and apprenticeships for bringing new people into this work, as well as provide the structures for engaging with public and private funding sources. It is agreed among the group that developing social and economic support for this work is at the top of the current priority list.

It is an exciting time to be part of this burgeoning movement, but it is not without considerable challenges. There is no tried and true template, no assurances of outcome, nor any reliable gauges to measure how our work will be received. The Bioregional Catalysts are learning by doing and evolving as they learn, which is arguably the most relevant and important attribute of the group to date.

For more information about Bioregional Catalysts and Earth Regenerators visit <https://earth-regenerators.mn.co>

Bioregionalism: Some historical context

BY STEVE WELZER

Human lifeways had always been essentially bioregional for the hundreds of thousands of years of our species existence until the relatively recent rise of states and empires.

In our time bioregionalism is an alternative that reflects a deep-green sensibility of the ultimate pathway toward sustainability and social sanity.

Human lifeways had always been essentially bioregional—tribal or village oriented—for the hundreds of thousands of years of our species existence until the relatively recent rise of states and empires. A tribe is a cultural group dwelling within a particular place. Tribes inhabited territories usually based on watersheds or coastal plains or highland areas, etc. Their territories didn't have rigid geopolitical borders like our states do. Aboriginal people identified with place; their culture arose from the characteristics of their place. That's indicative of the healthy way-of-life that bioregionalists want to recreate going forward via a synthesis of the primal and the modern.

We currently are facing the crucible of a crisis of unsustainability, but—if we can get through it!—an encapsulated story of human social evolution might eventually be told something like this:

During ninety-nine percent of our species history prior to the Neolithic Revolution, humans lived lightly on the earth, bioregionally, oriented to local community and attuned to the land. Then there was a relatively brief (from the standpoint of natural history) period of some millennia, an aberrant period during which we lost our bearings in the pursuit of "wealth, growth, and progress." After recognition of the problematic trajectories that the development-oriented ideology had set in motion, there was a turn—a "greening" transition—fostered by an organic and diverse movement that had the goals of restoration and regeneration. As a result, over time, there was a gradual reintegration into the biotic community, a settling back into sustainable lifeways.

Such a rendition suggests how bioregionalism could be an ideological framework enabling Greens to become appreciated as the heralds of renewal and hope.

MEANWHILE, A SENSE OF THINGS GONE AWRY

All during the aberrant "modern" period—characterized by statism, hyper-growth, and resource depletion—there have been intimations that things have gone awry. So, unsurprisingly, there have been push-backs, counter-movements, rebellions, critiques, and proposed alternatives. In our time bioregionalism is an alternative that reflects a deep-green sensibility. It entails a potential inflection point for what's been referred to as "Western Civilization."

The elites who have benefited from civilizational development have, of course, viewed it as an advancement—even though, all along, it has engendered exploitation, oppression, and ecological irresponsibility. During the nineteenth and twentieth centuries critics tended to name the problem as capitalism. A movement advocating the alternative called socialism arose and swept the world. Its original conception of "system change" involved social, rather than private, ownership of society's productive assets which, in practice, tended to be implemented as statist ownership.

Socialism was a powerful force from about 1850 to 1950. But it turned out that, at least in its "first epoch" manifestations, it didn't actually represent all so much of a paradigm shift. Marxism, like its "bourgeois" counterpoint, was characterized by modernist optimism regarding ostensibly progressive things like growth, rationalization of production, nation-state consolidation, industrial centralization, and economies of scale. Under that influence socialism tended to still view developmentalism as beneficial, advocating higher and higher levels of production as the material basis for a classless society.

Some of the early socialists (and many of the early anarchists) dissented from that viewpoint. During the debates about direction and strategy in their time they advocated

a more localist, communitarian alternative. Marxism prevailed in those debates when the mindset of industrial modernity was the predominant worldview. Despite some resonance for the writings of Peter Kropotkin, Élisée Reclus, William Morris, and others, decentralism was marginalized.

But it wouldn't die. Eventually, the questioning of growth and development led some to a realization that our cities, nation-states, governments, institutions, and technologies were becoming hypertrophied, way beyond human scale. During the 1920s, Lewis Mumford and others initiated the Regional Planning Association of America and the garden cities movement. A decade later Ralph Borsodi and Mildred Loomis started a movement based at their "School of Living" which advocated decentralism, regionalism, cultural diversity, organic agriculture, and what we would now call permaculture. This enlightened-but-premature current failed to gain traction during the 1940s (which were all about World War II) or 1950s (which were all about conformity and affluenza!), but during the 1960s the subterranean accumulation of alternative ideas started to congeal into the beginnings of a deep green social change movement. It would manifest during the 1970s as bioregionalism, Green politics, Deep Ecology, and Social Ecology.

POST-SIXTIES MOVEMENT TIMELINE

1970: Earth Day.

1973: Schumacher's *Small is Beautiful*.

1973: Establishment of Planet Drum Foundation.

1977: The Haudenosaunee (Six Nations Iroquois) Grand Council's *Address to the Western World*.

1978: Peter Berg's *Reinhabiting a Separate Country*.

1978: A new edition of Leopold Kohr's *The Breakdown of Nations* with a Foreword by Kirkpatrick Sale.

1980: Publication of *Human Scale* by Kirkpatrick Sale.

1984: First North American Bioregional Congress.

1985: *Dwellers in the Land* by Kirkpatrick Sale.

Sale had been a journalist and author. He wrote about participatory democracy in his 1973 book, *SDS* (about the New Left group Students for a Democratic Society). Then, in 1975, he focused on American regionalism, discussing how population, industry, and influence seemed to be shifting from the coasts to the south and the southwest. The book was titled *Power Shift*, but he might as well have called it *Paradigm Shift*, because at the time his thinking was being transformed by reading Mumford, Borsodi, Schumacher, Kohr, and Berg. By the mid-1980s he put it all together in a synthesis that defined a new worldview. His *Dwellers in the Land* noted that bioregionalism values stability, decentralization, appreciation for limits and balances, renewal of a healthy relationship with the land and with nature. And it chronicled how the movement was starting to blossom. There were already dozens of local advocacy groups around the country.

During the 1920s Lewis Mumford and others initiated the Regional Planning Association of America and the garden cities movement.

On that basis David Haenke saw the potential to organize what he called Continental Bioregional Congresses. The first one was held in 1984 near Kansas City. The prime sponsoring organizations were the Ozark Area Community Congress and the Kansas Area Watershed Council.

Continental Congresses were held bi-annually through 1996, but the energy of the movement started dissipating after that. Only three more Congresses got organized after 1996. Why the dissipation? For one thing, the 1960s and '70s momentum of paradigm-shifting activity was losing steam in the wake of the Reagan/Thatcher era. And then there was an issue regarding the relationship of bioregionalism to the broader social change movement. For example: Kirk Sale got the idea that the newly forming Green political parties ought to embrace bioregionalism ideologically. In 1986 he helped found the New York City Green politics chapter. But then he ran into a wall of contention. Leftists associated with Murray Bookchin's Institute for Social Ecology aggressively contravened the influence of those, like Kirk, who were espousing Deep Ecology. A war broke out: Social Ecology vs. Deep Ecology! In retrospect, rather fatuous—but it was, at the time, extremely disconcerting. Many people, like Kirk Sale, got frustrated or discouraged, and ultimately stepped back from the movement.

Beyond that, in very human terms, it might not be surprising to hear that after some initial, hopeful, but lamentably naive ideas about what could be accomplished in the near term, many activists started to get a sense of: (a) just how alternative the bioregional vision really is, and (b) how enormous is the "project" of civilizational transformation.

It's a pretty big project! It may show the pathway back to sanity, but at this point in history it's very new and very alternative. The good news is that recently there has been a regrouping and a reinvigoration. This is typical of how social change movements experience ebb and flow. Hopefully, rejuvenation of the bioregionalist vision is now on the agenda for the coming decades.



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The Green Party Case for Secession

BY DENISE BRUSH

In 2022 the United States is on a trajectory we have not seen in over 150 years: political polarization so extreme that it could lead to an authoritarian takeover of our federal government by right wing extremists, or to another civil war. It's time to think seriously about secession. Greens could make the case that it's our best hope of avoiding living the rest of our lives in a fascist country.

Support for secession seems to be building on both sides of the political spectrum. Stephen Marche recently wrote in the *Washington Post*:

A survey published in September by the University of Virginia Center for Politics found that 41 percent of Biden voters and 52 percent of Trump voters at least "somewhat agree" that "the situation in America" makes them favor blue or red states "seceding from the union to form their own separate country."¹

Decentralization: As proponents of decentralization, I believe that Greens should advocate for a break-up of the United States into regional republics like the Soviet Union did three decades ago. Yes, it's a radical idea, but Greens often take the lead with far-sighted proposals. The most likely way the break-up would start would be by the secession of the most populous states—Texas, Florida, and California. Non-contiguous Alaska and Hawaii would be natural next steps. If the prospect started to gain currency, Puerto Rico would probably declare independence immediately. Other states might then team up with their politically like-minded neighbors to form break-away regions; for example, the New England states could secede along with New York and New Jersey to form a new republic. Ideally, each region of the present United States would become its own small nation.

Grassroots Democracy: Citizens of these new nations would be politically, culturally, and geographically more homogeneous and thus more able to agree on their future direction together. Politics would tend to become more grassroots-based because each government would be more local and have a smaller reach. Such a context would be conducive for people who were not politically active previously to get involved. Hopefully, independents and alternative parties would assert themselves in the development of the new political framework.

In some republics formed by left-leaning states, I would expect to see a more open form of democracy emerge based on the many successful parliamentary democracies around the world. It would be an opportunity to draft a new constitution that would eliminate the knottiest problems of the current U.S. constitution (like the archaic electoral college) and build in social justice, human rights, and a respect for the Earth.

Peace: An issue, as with the break-up of the Soviet Union, is that one emergent nation would probably retain control of the nuclear

arsenal. It might periodically threaten other American regions and/or the world. Some of the regional polities might continue to move away from democracy and into authoritarianism. But smaller republics formed of liberal or moderate states would likely become exemplary peace-abiding neighbors, since they could no longer support a worldwide standing army nor engage in foreign wars the way the United States does. The former National Guard members in each state would be all those smaller republics would need for defense. I believe that, ultimately, the world would become more peaceful if the United States separated into regional republics.

Community-based Economics: In his *Washington Post* article, Stephen Marche concluded that secession is unlikely because unless or until the regions gained official U.N. recognition as sovereign nations they would not have access to foreign exchange or trade.¹ But Greens know that to halt climate change we need to stop relying on global trade and commerce. We have seen during the pandemic how fragile our supply chains are. We need to end our dependence on China and other countries for consumer products and learn to use our local resources and local businesses to meet our needs. Global trade agreements must give way to the revitalization of local economies that rely on the resources of each bioregion. Secession of states and regions would force these necessary economic changes to happen on a much faster timeline.

A focus on the Green key value of Community-based Economics could make secession successful. For example, many plastics-based products that we buy from overseas could be made from biodegradable local materials, such as hemp. Innovators are already developing these alternatives. In regional republics, small farms, businesses, and worker cooperatives would become essential. So would local renewable energy like solar and wind power. Fossil fuel producers would be cut off from their overseas customers and go out of business. We would be much more likely to see the changes that Greens know are essential to save the Earth.

My conclusion is that the Green key values of Decentralization, Grassroots Democracy, Peace, and Community-based Economics all support break-up of the United States by secession.

REFERENCE:

1 Marche, Stephen. "Secession might seem like the lesser of two evils. It's also the less likely." *The Washington Post* 12/31/2021. Retrieved 2/5/2022 from <https://www.washingtonpost.com/outlook/2021/12/31/secession-civil-war-stephen-marche/>



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Toward Building a “New World”

BY VICTOR WALLIS

The aspiration to “build a new world within the shell of the old” has a long history. It is typically associated with the traditions of cooperativism and anarchism. But it is also part of the socialist/communist tradition, as articulated by Marx himself. Marx characterized communist society, in *Capital*, as the society of “associated producers.” Although he did not delineate this vision in detail, he explicitly situated its embryo in the cooperative movements of his time. Viewing producer cooperatives as a dimension of the labor movement, he argued that their role in ultimately empowering the “associated producers” depended on their embracing, along with their workplace practices, the wider class struggle against the power of capital.¹

The tension between the tasks of transforming one’s immediate surroundings and restructuring the larger society has never abated. It reflects a duality that is present in all living creatures. We are at once separate beings and units of a collectivity. In the case of humans, especially, the collectivity exists at multiple levels, with links of reciprocity not only between individuals and their immediate communities, but also between any such local entities (as well as individuals) and wider regional/national/global structures.

This observation draws us back to recent arguments in *Green Horizon*, where a certain impatience if not exasperation is expressed in regard to socialist agendas, and it is suggested that our movement might more fruitfully focus on transforming our immediate surroundings rather than aiming at state power. More broadly, it is argued that socialism shares with capitalism a top-down and productivist orientation that we should firmly reject, in favor of a supposed Third Way that is neither capitalist nor socialist, but Green.

The inspirational model for this non- and even anti-socialist approach lies principally in the beliefs and practices of indigenous peoples.² I share the appreciation of indigenous societies, as I explain in a whole section of my book on ecosocialism, in which I discuss the conditions under which the priorities of those societies might come to gain wider acceptance.³ The view that socialism or Marxism necessarily clashes with such an approach derives from particular 20th-century experiences of revolution as interpreted through a capitalist ideological prism. The stereotype of Marxism as inherently developmentalist, however, has been thoroughly refuted, over the last three decades, in the writings of Richard Levins, John Bellamy Foster, Paul Burkett, Kohei Saito, and Michael Lebowitz. The common thread in their arguments is that the anti-Marxists attribute to Marx a perspective—as with the labor theory of value—that Marx treats as belonging (on the contrary) to the dynamics of capital, which he seeks to undercut. As he puts it (contrary to widespread misconceptions about his position), “Labor is *not the source* of all wealth. *Nature* is just as much the source of use values ... as is labor.”⁴

A POST-CAPITALIST ORIENTATION IS IMPERATIVE

Marx’s approach, in its refusal to view Nature through the eyes of capital, i.e., as a resource which, like workers, can be used up and cast off at will, clashes frontally with capital’s developmentalist stance. Thinkers who fail to see this then fall easily into the “plague on both your houses” attitude expressed in many *Green Horizon* articles that touch on capitalism and socialism.

These articles consider capitalism and socialism side-by-side as if we were simply shopping for our preferred system (including “neither of the above”). But there’s a problem here, in that, without our having had any say in the matter, we are actually *living under capitalism*. This is so obvious that one easily forgets it. What it means, however, is that if we want to adopt any other way of organizing our lives, the alternative does not just offer itself to us on an even playing field with capitalism. In order to attain

The stereotype of Marxism as inherently developmentalist has been thoroughly refuted over the last three decades.

The framework for whatever alternative arrangement we seek will be set by the process through which we initially escape the claws of capital.

it, we must first get out from capitalist domination; we must strip away the power of capital!

No matter what our ultimate goal might look like, this is the sine qua non. We can have endless discussions about the precise contours of the society we want to achieve, and I share with *Green Horizon* writers a preference for as biodiverse, decentralized, and democratic an arrangement as possible. But the framework for whatever arrangement we seek will be set by the process through which we initially escape the claws of capital.

Given, then, that our starting point is the rejection of capitalism, what we face is not an either/or between socialism and a “green economy.” Our task instead is to envisage the general contours of what we want and then assess the various possible ways of getting there. While certain elements of a green or localized economy can be introduced directly, the complete liberation it envisages cannot be reached without dissolving the core institutions of capitalist power, including its aggressive/competitive/exhibitionistic culture. This has been, and remains, the historic task of socialism. After all, what can replace the power of a minuscule profit-driven propertied class if not the power of the organized majority (whatever precise form this power might take)? And what is it that can weld this majority into a political force, if not a common class interest?

THE REVOLUTIONARY PROCESS

The reason so many Green writers seem to balk at this conclusion is that, echoing the surrounding capitalist consensus, they identify socialism by definition with the harshest of its first-epoch manifestations (e.g., the Soviet Union under Stalin), thereby refusing to challenge the negative impression of socialism that they encounter in workers socialized by corporate media. Lifting actual socialist revolutions out of their historical context, they turn the outcomes of particular mixes of national and conjunctural traits into ironclad axioms as to what socialism entails. They see socialism as being inherently bureaucratic and top-down, whereas in fact the revolutionary process brings numerous impulses and tendencies to the fore, making for a range of possible outcomes.⁵

What drives the frequent negative or repressive traits is a mix of factors, which vary in character and importance from one country or set of conditions to the next. Some aspects of the prerevolutionary culture—e.g., patterns of hierarchy—may be difficult to shake, especially under conditions of scarcity. Probably the biggest adverse factor, however, is the drive of capitalist interests—whether internal or external—to disrupt and destroy the revolution, even (or especially) if it has wide popular support and could serve as an inspiration to others. To the extent that a revolutionary process begins on a note of hope (for example with an election victory by a socialist-oriented party or coalition), globally imposed US sanctions can be counted on to bring it grief, compromising its achievements and giving corporate media and politicians a pretext to call its leadership dictatorial (as in the present case of Venezuela).⁶

Those with “green” goals who seek to avoid such unpleasantness tout the scenario of local grassroots organizing, including

a multiplicity of diverse institutions. I do not reject any of this; it plays a necessary role in drawing people into activism and also in eventually running the society that we aspire to. The problem, however, is that it does not address the current persistence of the monster in the room, namely, overarching capitalist power. Political action to confront that power requires a unified movement. The view that such unity precludes concern for the diversity of popular needs⁷ reflects precisely the negative stereotype of socialism—and of revolution—that the capitalist ruling class invokes to preserve its own legitimacy. The point is not to deny instances where revolutionary parties or regimes have done the wrong thing; the point is to understand those moments and to recognize that socialist movements and socialist-oriented governments are “works in progress,” with conscious protagonists who have every reason to try to avoid the consequent disappointments in the future.

If you really want changes requiring the dismantling of capitalism—and this does include the changes necessary to the imagined “green economy”—then you will join in these efforts rather than condemning the project that inspires them.

NOTES:

1 Minsun Ji, “With or without class: Resolving Marx’s Janus-faced interpretation of worker-owned cooperatives,” *Capital and Class* 44:3 (2020); see also Peter Marcuse, “Cooperatives on the path to socialism?” *Monthly Review* 66:9 (2015).

2 See, e.g., Linda Cree, “The Heart of Green Economics,” *Green Horizon* #42 (2021).

3 Victor Wallis, *Red-Green Revolution: The Politics and Technology of Ecosocialism* (Toronto: Political Animal Press, 2018), 126-133.

4 *Critique of the Gotha Program* (1875), section I.1 (italics in the original). Sidney Smith, in “Socialism and the Green Party,” *Green Horizon* #43 (2021), attributes to Marx (p. 31) the position that Marx here rejects.

5 See the discussions of various revolutionary processes in Chapters 2, 3, 7 and 11 of my book *Socialist Practice: Histories and Theories* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020).

6 On the long tradition behind this, see William Blum, *Killing Hope: US Military and CIA Interventions Since World War II* (Monroe, ME: Common Courage, 1995).

7 A view expressed by *Green Horizon’s* reviewer (in #38, 2019) of my book *Red-Green Revolution*.



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Right to Food in Maine

BY BETSY GARROLD

When I heard that the theme of this issue of *Green Horizon* was “Building the New Within the Shell of the Old,” it seemed the perfect fit for talking about the Food Sovereignty work we have been doing in Maine: Inspirational work with beautiful words and ideas that uplift us all. Words and work that aim at re-localizing the food system within the state by decreasing the dependence on the commodified, over-processed, carbon-intensive agriculture that currently dominates our country’s food system.

The recent landslide victory for a Right to Food Amendment is the latest chapter. We must continue this struggle to work within the current system to make it better and more responsive to the existential threats we face from climate change, threats to our democratic system and the shredding of our social fabric. The achievements of this campaign can be a template for how to work with people from around the political spectrum in solving the problems we can all agree we are facing here and now. The solutions may take some negotiations. But even finding the common ground of an agreed-upon problem is a great place to start. It’s the inspiration we need to persist in the work of making the world a better place.

SENSIBLE POLICIES

Over the last ten years I have worked with a dedicated group of volunteers—farmers, eaters, value-added food producers and many others—in an effort to come up with sensible policies that work to support our local food system. Early in the process, when the group was attempting to get the Food Sovereignty Act passed in the Maine state legislature, State Senator Brian Langley, a Republican and a surprise supporter, said this in a floor speech: “The purpose of the act is to preserve the ability of local communities to produce, process, sell, and purchase locally produced foods to ensure the preservation of family farms, to reduce hunger, and increase food security as well as to enhance the economic, environmental, and social wealth of rural communities.” Indeed, this was always the basic philosophy of the movement: re-localize the food system, increase food security in all communities, support local economies, and support community cohesion on a local level. All very Green goals!

In 2017, after eight years of working across the state and in the legislature, we got the Food Sovereignty Act passed, which added to the statutes of Maine the following language: “Pursuant

to the home rule authority granted to municipalities by Title 30-A, section 3001 and by the Constitution of Maine, Article VIII, Part Second, and notwithstanding any provision of state food law to the contrary, except as contained in section 285, a municipality may adopt ordinances regarding direct producer-to-consumer transactions and the State shall recognize such ordinances by not enforcing those state food laws with respect to those direct producer-to-consumer transactions that are governed by the ordinance.”

Prior to the passage of this statute there were already over 60 municipalities in the state which had passed the Local Food Sovereignty Ordinance granting control of the hyper-local food system within the town or city to the governing body

of that place. As of this writing there are 113 towns and cities in Maine that have taken back control of their food systems by passing some version of this ordinance.

Re-localizing our food system and building our communities is the greatest insurance policy we can have against disruptions of every kind, be they economic, political, environmental—or a global pandemic. Resilience is built into the DNA of the people of Maine and many others across the country. The Right to Food Amendment allows us to manifest that resilience by taking back local control of our food system.

SIXTY PERCENT VOTED IN FAVOR

On November 2, 2021, the people of Maine had an opportunity to once again lead the nation by passing a Right to Food constitutional amendment. When over 90% of the food consumed in the state is shipped in “from away,” that leaves us vulnerable to the smallest disruption to our food infrastructure. This is something that was playing out as we went to the polls to vote on this amendment. As the second wave of COVID-19 frayed the already tattered edges of our corporate food system I saw a tweet asking folks who don’t have WIC to please think twice before purchasing certain foods that are the only things allowed for purchase by WIC recipients. How sad is that? The shelves of our neighborhood grocery stores were so bare that we had to truly consider if we were taking food out of the mouths of vulnerable women and children. Sixty percent of the voters in Maine said YES to the amendment!

The referendum came from the legislature because that is the process prescribed for amending the Maine State Constitution.

Our aim is to re-localize the food system within the state by decreasing the dependence on the commodified, over-processed, carbon-intensive agriculture that currently dominates our country’s food system.

A resolution goes to Augusta, gets passed by at least two-thirds of both houses (in the case of this bill it passed by 75%), and then it goes to the people as a ballot issue. The people get the final say in amending this vital and foundational document. Ain't democracy grand? A grassroots group, what I like to call "muddy boots in the halls of power," conceived of it, wrote it and worked to get it passed.

No Astro-turf here—unlike the opponents who were funded by big money interests from out of state: Big Ag, Big Pharma, Big Chemical. These groups included the Humane Society of the United States that has as one of its stated goals the elimination of all animal agriculture. This from a recent article on the Mercola website: "[Bill] Gates isn't interested in regenerative agriculture, supporting small farmers or ensuring locally sourced food and food sovereignty but, instead, is furthering an agricultural agenda that supports agrochemicals, patented seeds, fake meat and corporate control—interests that undermine regenerative, sustainable, small-scale farming. One of the key factors in this agenda is the widespread adoption of ultra-processed synthetic meat." Control the food and you control the people.

In looking at the overall health of our food production, land-integrating small scale animal agriculture is vital to having a sustainable agro-ecology system. As La Via Campesina, the international peasant farmers movement, said in a recent press release after the COP26 conference: "As we commemorate 25 years of progress toward food sovereignty, the COP26 agreements fall far short of ensuring a food system that feeds people in a way that is sensitive to different types of food, production conditions, and the relationship between this food and production processes with labor, the environment, and local and indigenous communities. We emphasize that agro-ecology is a critical component of the transition and that market-based solutions will not provide climate justice. We strongly believe that agro-ecology achieves climate justice, based on our own small scale farmers' experience."

The passage of this amendment will in no way negate or overturn any current statutes. The state laws on hunting, fishing, animal welfare, food safety, etc. will all continue to be in force. The well-funded opponents of this effort wanted the voters to think that people would be slaughtering chickens on the sidewalk or keeping cows in closets in major cities. Fortunately, the voters of Maine were too savvy to buy the hype. This was a common-sense amendment, brought to the voters by hardworking, hard-headed Mainers who see the shape of things to come if we continue down the road of increasing consolidation in the corporate food system.

A GROWING MOVEMENT

This is a movement that is growing and spreading across the country. Greens in every state should consider adding the passage of this amendment to their state party platform. Or use the language of the UN's Food and Agriculture Organization, which

says: "Food security exists when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life" (World Food Summit, 1996).

The Right to Food, Food Sovereignty, and Food Security are a three-legged stool for assuring the satisfaction of this fundamental need. One aspect establishes and enshrines it as a basic consumption right, the next is used to promulgate statutes that protect an individual's right to produce and exchange food, and the final one is the fruit of all that labor. When people have the right and freedom to produce and exchange food they stand a much better chance of knowing where their next meal is coming from.

As she worked to establish farming cooperatives in the Mississippi Delta early in the civil rights movement, Fannie Lou Hamer liked to say, in a paraphrase of the common proverb: "You can give a man some food and he'll eat it. Then he'll only get hungry again. But give a man some ground of his own and a hoe, and he'll never go hungry again. If we have that land ... can't anybody starve us out."

As of January 2022, the Maine State Constitution had a 25th clause: "Right to food. All individuals have a natural, inherent and unalienable right to food, including the right to save and exchange seeds, and the right to grow, raise, harvest, produce and consume the food of their own choosing for their own nourishment, sustenance, bodily health and well-being, as long as an individual does not commit trespassing, theft, poaching or other abuses of private property rights, public lands or natural resources in the harvesting, production or acquisition of food."

I have to agree with former State Representative Justin Fecteau: "While most bills are simple text written in statute in order to convey a message, this resolution, to establish a right to food, is pure poetry. Whether it is the theory of Evolution or of Creationism, the Right to Food is the Original Right of all living beings . . . This isn't a bill, it isn't a resolution, it's a manifesto of our Original Right. It's a public health statement. It's an affirmation of our relationship with Mother Earth, and it speaks to the spirit of Maine."

Who says we campaign in poetry and govern in prose? We can have uplifting, inspiring language in support of uplifting, inspiring policies no matter where we are doing the work. These efforts in Maine to work within the system to make massive changes to it should serve as a template for future initiatives on the part of what Margaret Mead referred to as a small group of committed citizens. They're an example of actions that will fix this broken system from within. One issue at a time. With beautiful language included!



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Want electoral success? Let's fix the school bus problem

BY SAM PFEIFLE

There is a historical theory about the fall of the 500-year-old Roman Republic that gets spread around in policy discourse. The last person I heard reciting it was retired Supreme Court Justice David Souter. The Republic didn't fall because Caesar's heir, Octavian, murdered his political enemies and engineered his creation as "Augustus Caesar" and Rome's first emperor. Rather, the Republic failed because government couldn't deal with a series of floods and famine that ripped through Rome, and Octavian—Augustus!—convinced the populace that only he could save them.

The people had lost faith in the Republic because it had failed them. They turned, then, to someone who convinced them he could restore Rome's glory. Sound familiar? It ought to, and not just because it sounds eerily like Make America Great Again, but because it is the story of how many historical dictators have come to power; they thrive on disorder and bureaucratic failure to solve common problems.

With today's ever-present binary discourse—where efforts can only be "failures" or "successes," and where mainstream media is content to allow only two options, Republicans and Democrats, to provide leadership—we find ourselves as a country in a tough spot. Problems that are generational in nature are approached with a series of unserious, quick-fix solutions, and therefore "optics" and "PR" are prioritized over thoroughgoing resolution of issue after issue. Politics in the United States has become a series of cynical attempts at appearing to try.

Therein lies the opportunity for us Greens. We need to demonstrate, through leadership and actions, that government can make people's lives better; that collective action makes all of us stronger; that working together and deploying sound process results in positive outcomes. Too often, proposed solutions are based on "gut feelings," or broad, meaningless statements that sound good but lack details and particulars. Even we Greens fall prey to this.

People who do the work of governmental administration know that the details matter. Ill-conceived laws and policies have a real-world impact, even if they are well meaning. Greens need to marry the good intentions held by many people across the political spectrum with the competent administration and process development that actually gets things done and improves lives.

GET ELECTED AT THE LOCAL LEVEL

At the local level we have the opportunity to make significant and visible civic contributions. Across the country, rural school boards and town councils are seeing a dearth of candidates, with many of those running motivated by a desire for personalistic benefits or driven by ideology and partisan media. When the

ideologically-driven folks get into power, unfortunately, their ideology fails them. Being "conservative" doesn't make one good at ensuring that there are enough bus drivers to get the kids to school (there aren't enough in most municipalities these days). Being "liberal" doesn't make one good at hammering out a fair contract with those drivers so that, in a tight labor market, they'll want to remain in the district and continue providing service.

What makes a good public administrator is someone who takes each situation as it arises, applies solid ethical frameworks to the process of decision-making, and then follows through to implement solutions that effectuate the most good while doing the least harm. What's the best way to get on board more bus drivers? What motivates them to provide exemplary service? What barriers stand in the way of people who would like to become bus drivers?

I have found in my time on a rural school board that when process is collectively created and followed, the logical answers are rarely in dispute and "opinion" rarely enters the discourse. As practical matters come before us, one by one, my colleagues and I consider the best way to proceed toward resolution in each particular case, and then we reach a decision. There is, of course, dissent from time to time, but in general problems do get solved, and usually in an efficient fashion.

As a Green, I did not create this culture on my board. It was brought to the board by a capable woman whom I believe to be a Republican (I never asked, but that was my impression). What she understood, and what I believe to this day, is that when the buses show up and reliably pick up your kids you come to trust those who lead the agency that makes that happen. When the trash always gets picked up, when the water lines never break, when public transport is timely and affordable, people recognize the quality of the work involved (even if they sometimes need a reminder of who was responsible).

As we Greens look to the future and what we'd like to accomplish, there's no doubt that national-scale universal health care, a meaningful approach to the climate crisis, and a radical reduction of militarism are important and admirable goals. But I think we need to spend more time making sure there are enough school bus drivers in our towns before we expect our fellow community members to place their trust in our big-picture ideals!



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Organizing the Green Party

BY HOWIE HAWKINS

I supported forming a Green Party from the first meeting in St. Paul in 1984.

The Left Green Network did political education to advance such notions as the fact that capitalism, with its built-in drive for endless growth, is incompatible with an ecologically sustainable society.

I have a very different view than John Rensenbrink on the history of the Green Party in the US that he presents in “Who Founded the Green Party of the United States?” (*Green Horizon*, Summer/Fall 2021). I may someday write down my perspectives on this history, but today I am much less concerned with rehashing the past than current Green Party organizing and campaigns to address the immediate crises of democracy, climate, inequality, and the new nuclear arms race. However, I would like to correct the record with respect to John’s statements about my activities in the Green Party.

* I have never claimed to be “the” founder of the Green Party. I am just one of many co-founders, having been active since attending the first national Green Party organizing meeting in St. Paul in August 1984.

* I didn’t attend the St. Paul meeting as a “member of the Institute for Social Ecology” (with which I have never been formally associated). The anti-nuclear Clamshell Alliance was invited to send two people to the St. Paul meeting; the Clams chose me and Guy Chichester to go.

* I supported forming a Green Party from that very first meeting. I questioned Charlene Spretnak there on why the Maine Green Party had not been invited. It was she who was not committed to a party at that meeting and was leaning toward a Green “movement” or “caucus” that would try to influence both major parties. See page 203 of Charlene’s *Green Politics: The Global Promise*; and her letter to the editor in *The Nation*, November 2, 1985, reiterating her position: “In the book, I argue for building a Green political movement in this country, rather than a third party.”

* We formed the Left Green Network (LGN) in 1988 to provide a welcoming place in the Green politics movement for progressive third parties (Citizens Party, Wisconsin Labor-Farm Party, DC Statehood Party) and socialists and anarchists who were being red-baited and actively discouraged from getting involved in the Green Committees of Correspondence. LGN was not organized as an alternative to the GCoC but to help build and broaden it. We also did political education to advance such notions as the fact that capitalism, with its built-in drive for endless growth, is incompatible with an ecologically sustainable society; and that we need an ecological socialism that can plan limited production that meets everyone’s basic needs within ecological limits.

* The idea that I opposed forming a Green Party and running candidates until I joined the New York Green Party after 2000 is not true: - I emphasized local organizing and elections in the early years because we did not have the organized base to run credible state and federal

I emphasized local organizing and elections in the early years because we did not have the organized base to run credible state and federal candidates.

candidates. I argued that we could win local races, begin to implement much of our program using the powers of municipal government, and thus lay the foundation for credible election campaigns at the state and federal level.

- I supported many Green candidates in the 1980s and 1990s. For example: Burlington Greens in Vermont in the mid-1980s; Guy Chichester's candidacy for Governor of New Hampshire in 1990; and New York State Green candidates after I moved there and joined the New York Green Party in 1991 (not after the 2000 Nader campaign as John Rensenbrink claims).
- I ran my first Green campaign for Syracuse Common Council in 1993.
- I was the Comptroller candidate on the New York Green Party's statewide slate in 1998.

* At the Elkins Green Congress in 1991, the delegates voted to form the Greens / Green Party USA (GPUSA), not to reject a party and candidates. We announced it at a Washington DC news conference the next week. Hilda Mason, a DC city councilor in the DC Statehood Party, joined us.

* GPUSA had many state parties affiliated. The Association of State Green Parties (ASGP) was a split from GPUSA. I was elected by the New York Green Party to represent it at the ASGP founding meeting in 1996 with instructions to argue for unity, not a separate party. But the ASGP did not seat me and had already appointed a representative for New York that the NY Green Party did not elect. Many state parties, like mine in New York, then affiliated with both GPUSA and ASGP in hopes of bringing them back together.

* GPUSA nominated/endorsed Ralph Nader at its 2000 convention in Chicago, which was held a few weeks before the ASGP convention in Denver that Nader attended. I urged GPUSA members to get

involved in Nader's campaign, whose following was far bigger than the GPUSA and ASGP combined. I participated in many discussions and negotiations before and after the 2000 campaign toward the formation of a unified national Green Party—and I urged GPUSA members to join the Green Party of the United States when it formed in 2001.

* Contrary to Rensenbrink's speculation that the Green Socialist Organizing Project formed in 2021 may be setting up an organization to compete with the Green Party of the United States, the principles of unity on the home page at greensocialist.net make it clear that GSOP is working within the GPUS to improve it: "We support transforming the Green Party of the United States from a federation of state parties with indirect representation of individual supporters in the national party into a dues-paying, mass-membership party where individual members have democratic membership rights in the national party and have the responsibility to support the party with dues scaled to their ability to pay."

* I must have missed the 2002 conference where John says I publicly admitted to being an "agent blockateur" to stop the formation of a Green Party.



HOWIE HAWKINS

was the Green Party presidential candidate in 2020. A retired Teamster in Syracuse, New York, he has been active in movements for civil rights, peace, unions, and the environment since the 1960s.

Response from John Rensenbrink:

I'm glad Howie wrote that out. We have different views and recollections of the matter. I stand by mine, as I am sure he stands by his. Viva la difference!

They fear deflation

BY PAULA FISCHER

Reflections upon reading The Lords of Easy Money: How the Federal Reserve Broke the American Economy by Christopher Leonard (Simon and Schuster, 2022).

Ernest Mandel published his final major work, *Late Capitalism*, in 1972 and gave the student radicals of the time the idea that the system was on its last legs, headed for collapse within decades.

Not. The vehicle of innovation, exploitation, and consternation plods on and on. Yet “under the hood” (as Ross Perot used to say) there are signs of corrosion. It seems that ever-increasing applications of fiscal and monetary stimulus are needed to prevent stalls and breakdowns. And the fate of what we might call Modern Managed Capitalism (MMC) is still very much playing out, with consequences unknowable.

THE FED FEELS BOXED-IN

MMC these days is toying with MMT (Modern Monetary Theory, a justification for money printing). To some it seems reckless. Christopher Leonard’s book, *The Lords of Easy Money*, relates how Thomas Hoenig, a former president of the Federal Reserve regional bank in Kansas City, has been warning that excessive printing and record-low interest rates will lead to misallocation of capital.

Hoenig is among many establishmentarians who want capitalism to thrive and are critical of the Fed’s radical policies on that basis. The debate about those policies rages in the financial press daily. What’s often overlooked is how the authorities may feel that they have no choice. The alternative to hyper-stimulation could be a dire extent of deflation. The Catch-22 of the situation is that their low interest rates tend to encourage short-term *inflation* plus the piling up of debt—and that could magnify an ultimate deflationary disaster.

As rates were pushed artificially low in the wake of the Great Financial Crisis of 2008, and then Quantitative Easing was initiated (QE: a type of non-traditional policy in which central banks buy a large number of securities in order to inject money into the markets in an effort to expand economic activity) there were alarms about ultimate hyper-inflation. The *Consumer Prices Index* didn’t indicate such until recently, but for decades there has been massive inflation in the prices of *financial assets*.

In our economy the upper 10% of wealth-holders own 90% of those assets. So the already-egregious inequality of the capitalist system has been exacerbated by QE. But the resultant over-valuation of assets has limits, because a consequence figures to be low returns going forward.

LOW RETURNS CAPITALISM

2008 was a watershed year, and a case could be made justifying the need for temporary radical measures at that time to avoid a depression. But after the worst of the financial crisis had passed there was an expectation of re-normalization of monetary policy. It’s been notable and disconcerting that such has not occurred.

Why not? Leonard explains that underlying deflationary forces have prevented it. But if normalization proves to be impossible, it may be an indication that we’ve entered an epoch of very-low-returns capitalism.

Bondholders invest with the expectation of getting returns in the form of yearly interest on their bonds. Historically, typical bond yields ranged between three percent and seven percent. Over the course of the last decade they’ve generally been well below three percent. Such low yields occurred only once before in the history of the modern system—at the depths of the Great Depression.

Equity shareholders invest with the expectation of getting returns in the form of dividends and capital gains. High stock prices limit both. Hedge fund professionals can find exotic yield-maximizing investments (and they can manipulate markets), but the average “retail” investor tends to just drip money into standard passive mutual funds via their 401(k) accounts month-by-month. Going forward from here their prospects for returns are abysmal. This is unprecedented, and no one knows what the implications will be if the capitalist system will be affording investors so little return on capital and savers so little interest on their savings. In fact, no one can foretell the fate of a system that needs constant stimulus, generates mountains of debt, misallocates investment capital, and is haunted by the prospect of deflation. In *The Lords of Easy Money* Christopher Leonard explains why Thomas Hoenig is so deeply concerned for the future of the system he once extolled.

REFERENCE:

<https://www.politico.com/news/magazine/2021/12/28/inflation-interest-rates-thomas-hoenig-federal-reserve-526177>

The fate of what we might call Modern Managed Capitalism is still very much playing out, with consequences unknowable.

Cooperation: The Key to the World We Deserve

BY FARZAD FOROUHAR

The international Green politics movement is premised upon four interconnected pillars: Peace, Justice, Ecology, and Democracy. With the advent of environmental movements in the 1970s, the distinctive Green paradigm was introduced as the basis for a new ideology and an alternative to prior conventional political philosophies. This new perspective embraced a substantive viewpoint in which ecology was added into the customary Left principles of peace, justice, and democracy. But the idea of political ecology was not new. In the late nineteenth century, Peter Kropotkin introduced the concept of “mutual aid” based on cooperation among species in contrast with the more familiar Darwinian understanding based on competition and survival of the fittest. Kropotkin went further and argued that such cooperation could also benefit human society.

The Green movement and the Left have always had a rich analysis and vision, but issues arise when trying to *apply* such ideas and perspectives. Political ecology offers a sophisticated context for exploring the conditions of social and environmental systems. It provides a framework for analyzing power relations in order to foster the accessibility of better, less coercive, less exploitative, and more sustainable practical measures. Its core concept is based on two notions: critical engagement with the dominant narrative to address its flaws and the development of counternarratives. In other words, political ecology helps to subvert pernicious worldviews while enabling alternative discourses to grow into new socio-ecologies.

With that in our arsenal, we need to consider how we can incorporate the Green pillars into a praxis that's rooted in the real world and at the same time capable of transforming the dominant narrative. One example of such is the collaboration between the Wiyot Tribe and Cooperation Humboldt in Northern California. This experiment is receiving attention and accolades from notable scholars and political and social activists nationwide, including Professor Richard Wolff, the prominent Marxian economist. Last November Wolff interviewed Michelle Vassel, the Wiyot Tribal Administrator, and David Cobb, the Executive Director of Cooperation Humboldt, for an episode of his *Economic Update* podcast.

Michelle plans, manages, and directs the day-to-day operations of the Wiyot Tribal Government. She was active in the historic return of Tuluwat Island to the tribe and the fight to protect sacred Wiyot locations. In addition to directing Cooperation Humboldt, David Cobb is the coordinator of the US Solidarity Economy Network. He helped to co-found the Green Party of Texas, served as general counsel in the early days of the Green Party of the United States, was the Green Party nominee for president in 2004, and managed the national Stein/Baraka campaign of 2016.

STRENGTHENING TRUST

The collaboration between the Wiyot Tribe and Cooperation Humboldt started when the tribe launched a campaign to restore to them land that was owned by the City of Eureka on an island called Tuluwat in the middle of Humboldt Bay. The island is an important ceremonial site for the Wiyot People, having ancient and continuing cultural significance. The tribe started a fundraiser to collect enough money to buy the privately-owned parts of the island with the understanding that the City of Eureka would return an additional 40 acres to the tribe. Cooperation Humboldt was a key participant in that effort. They also supported the tribe in their endeavor to protect a sacred site called Tsakiyuwit. Then came a food sovereignty project and the pathbreaking Honor Tax initiative.

The collaboration between the Wiyot Tribe and Cooperation Humboldt started when the tribe launched a campaign to restore to them land on an island called Tuluwat in the middle of Humboldt Bay.

An Honor Tax is a way of recognizing and respecting the sovereignty of Native Nations and implementing the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

The latter is a “tax” out of respect for Native Sovereignty—rather than a gift or donation. It has been promoted by individuals, organizations and businesses as a voluntary annual remittance paid directly to the Wiyot Nation by people who are living on their traditional territories. The amount is decided by the individual. As a general (and replicable) proposition, an Honor Tax is a way of recognizing and respecting the sovereignty of Native Nations and implementing the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

This level of engagement between the Wiyot Tribe and Cooperation Humboldt strengthens trust and continually fosters new opportunities for collaboration. Their shared focal objectives include advocating for sustainable ecological cooperation in the community and working to transform the local political economy. One dimension of this work involves engaging electoral politics—authentically, as Cobb asserts, not as “electoral fetishists.” Running or supporting candidates sympathetic to the movement’s goals can be done “without allowing it to dictate all of your work.”

STEWARDED THE LAND

The Wiyot Tribal Chairman, Ted Hernandez, has often said that we should consider how we are all part of a family and are grounded in the local place. For us to reinhabit the bioregional territory of Northern California, it will not be enough to have good elected officials making good policies. This place—“Jaroujiji” (the Wiyot name for Eureka), “Wigi” (Humboldt Bay), and the entire area—was once in proper balance, as the Wiyot People understood. Their intention was not to own the Earth but to be part its family, and they knew it was their responsibility to steward the land.

The word ‘economy’ means ‘management of the household.’ That describes how the Wiyot People sought to manage their relationship with their homeland—in balance and harmony. When settlers arrived during the eighteenth century they brought devastation. They implemented an extractive, brutal, and oppressive economic jurisdiction. But now, many generations later, inspiring and encouraging initiatives for economic, political, and social transformations are being led by a collaboration between the Wiyot Tribe and Cooperation Humboldt, recognizing the need for solidarity and a sense of responsibility. Notable is that, more than a century and a half after the massacre of the Wiyot People on Tuluwat Island, the tribe has turned an environmentally hazardous site into a flourishing, ecological place that is enabling a return of the original regenerative economy—surely a harbinger of what our movement will be able to accomplish going forward.

Aristotle believed in a hierarchical relationship between contemplation and action and maintained that the former is primary. Karl Marx asserted the opposite. In his *Theses on Feuerbach* he wrote that “the philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways; the point, however, is to change it.” It is up to us to change things. One of the fundamental objectives of the collaboration between the Wiyot Tribe and Cooperation Humboldt is to prove that it is possible to meet everybody’s needs

without exploiting or oppressing anyone, and more significantly, it can be done in an ecologically sustainable way. That means it must be done cooperatively and collectively, which is what Indigenous people have done since time immemorial. The essential point is to remember that there is always more than one story and culture. We should not forget that we must unite to become invincible.

As one of the Iranian poets from the thirteenth century, Saadi Shirazi, orates:

*Human beings are members of a whole
In creation, of one essence and soul
If one member is affected with pain
Other members uneasy will remain
If you have no sympathy for human pain
The name of human you cannot retain.*

REFERENCE:

<https://www.yesmagazine.org/issue/a-new-social-justice/2021/11/15/return-stolen-lands-wiyot-tribe>



FARZAD FOROUHAR

is a core team member at Cooperation Humboldt and works for the Wiyot Tribe in Eureka, California. Farzad moved from Iran to the United States in 2014 and since then has been residing in Eureka. He holds a B.A. degree in Political Science with an emphasis on Global Politics and Environmental Politics and a minor in Journalism from Humboldt State University.

Thoughts on building the new society

contemplating society as it is
considering what it should be
and what it may become

I sense a chasm
I see a vast gulf

“don’t throw the baby out
with the bath water” ??

I visualize that baby

with its Trumpian nose
and neo-liberal mouth

its Jamie-Dimon-like too big to fail face
heart fabricated by the military industrial complex
spine supporting arrogant sovereignties
fingers all pols reaching for perks
corporate toes trampling upon the grapes of hope

makes me wonder . . .
how big is that bathtub drain?

— Gil Harris

Turkey on the brink

One aspect of the modern crisis has been the proliferation of failed states. Lebanon, Libya, Syria, Afghanistan, Sudan, Somalia, Yemen, Chad, Zimbabwe. This phenomenon is unfolding from the periphery to the center and likely will intensify during the coming decades.

Turkey is on the brink. A Carnegie report in December (“Understanding Turkey’s Direction: Three Scenarios” [<https://carnegieeurope.eu/2021/12/09/understanding-turkey-s-direction-three-scenarios-pub-85936>]) concluded: “Domestically, Turkey’s rule-of-law architecture has steadily deteriorated in the past ten years.” The value of the Turkish currency (lira) declined by almost fifty percent during 2021 alone. If that country succumbs to turmoil and disintegration, it will extend and deepen the failed-states trauma of our times.

It would be tragic. In the following article Romi Elnagar conveys the loss and pathos that an ancient and distinctive culture could face if conditions there continue to deteriorate.

From my Turkish Travel Diary: An Afternoon in Konya

BY ROMI ELNAGAR

Istanbul, October 21–31, 2021

Magnificent Istanbul defies Ibn Khaldun’s classic paradigm of the ebb and flow of civilizations; it has risen and fallen and then risen again for more than 2700 years. According to legend, Byzantium—as Istanbul was first known—was founded between 750 and 660 B.C. by Greek colonists from Megara. During the Middle Ages it was called Constantinople. Larger than Rome, it was the gateway to the Black Sea; a focal point for the Silk Road and for trade and communication throughout the Mediterranean and from as far away as China. Today, Istanbul is ranked among the top 15 largest cities in the world by population (over 15 million) and its bridges cross the Bosphorus, connecting the European and Asian sides of the city.

For the first ten days of our visit to Turkey, my husband and I stayed in a small hotel just off the large plaza separating the great mosques of Hajia Sofia and Sultan Ahmed (commonly called the “Blue Mosque”). There are mosques all over Turkey, seemingly more prominent than churches in this country and readily identified by the pencil-thin minarets that pierce the sky next to them. I’m told Hajia Sophia and Sultan Ahmed are by no means the most beautiful mosques in Istanbul, but they are very historic. In its interior, Hajia Sophia is quite imposing with its Roman-style use of marble. “Ayasophia,” as it is sometimes called today, was originally a church; it was built by Emperor Justinian in 532–537 A.D. and was converted into a mosque when the city surrendered peacefully to the Ottoman Turks, who took it after an eight-week siege in 1453. The Blue Mosque was

built in 1609–1616 A.D. It was undergoing renovations at the time we were there.

For days we explored the maze of alleys of “the old city,” the area first settled by the Greek colonists, and took one of the many boat rides available to tourists. From the Bosphorus, you can see Scutari, a district of Istanbul on the Asian side built by the Greeks before founding Byzantium and made famous by Florence Nightingale during the Crimean War. On our last trip to Istanbul, we toured the Asian side of the city and were driven to the top of the mountains there. Looking down on the Bosphorus, Istanbul appears not unlike San Francisco, with its forested hills and ships on the bay. On this visit, we walked the broad avenue which courses the “spine” of the peninsula on which the old city sits, and which leads from the complex of mosques and the beautiful Topkapi Palace towards the Grand Bazaar. This *spina* follows the Hippodrome, the old Roman racecourse, and one or two columns dating from that time can still be seen along the broad and busy street, the Divan Yolu.

MUCH REVOLVES AROUND ERDOGAN

Our arrival in Turkey in late October coincided with President Recep Tayyip’s defiance of the West for meddling in internal Turkish affairs. In a bold move, Erdogan threatened to expel ten Western ambassadors when the European Union called for the release of an imprisoned businessman and philanthropist, Osman Kavala. In language reminiscent of Chinese or Russian denunciations of Western imperialism during the Cold War, he defied the European powers, which have all too often behaved with condescension, arrogance and veiled racism towards this would-be EU partner. Several people on the street that we encountered supported Erdogan’s stand, and the ten Western countries subsequently agreed that they would follow diplomatic convention and not interfere with a host nation’s domestic affairs.

Another bone of contention between Erdogan and the European Community is the status of Hajia Sophia. Following

Atatürk's moves to make Turkey a secular state and minimize the importance of Islam in Turkish life, Hajia Sophia was turned into a museum in 1934. It became a UNESCO World Heritage Site, but religious and political leaders, both in Turkey and abroad, have long pressed to turn it back into a mosque. Asserting that he was exercising Turkey's sovereign rights over its own territory, Erdogan in summer, 2020, did just that. Just prior to his action, Turkey's top administrative court ruled that Hajia Sophia is legally a mosque and should never have been secularized: "The settlement deed allocated it as a mosque and its use outside this character is not possible legally . . . The cabinet decision in 1934 that ended its use as a mosque and defined it as a museum did not comply with laws," the court said. Erdogan's move is supported by Turkish nationalists and his conservative Islamic base but decried by Europeans who claim it should be a bridge between two faiths (while simultaneously denying Turkey's European character).

RECENT UNREST AND INSTABILITY

After visiting the Topkapi Palace with its chaste, elegant architecture, and the grandiose Dolmabaçe Palace, we took a taxi one day to Taksim Square, which is in a business district. In 2013, thousands of demonstrators protested the demolition of one of the last green spaces in Istanbul, Gezi Park, which adjoins the Square, but the protests expanded across Turkey as people challenged Erdogan's Islamization policies and heavy-handed police tactics. Police used tear gas and water cannon to stop more demonstrators who tried to come across the Golden Horn to join those already in Taksim Square.

The Square was peaceful on the day we visited, but prominent police vans maintained the presence of the authorities there; visitors to the Square gazed at the statue of Atatürk within eyesight of a squad of armed *gendarmes*. Clearly, the state intends to maintain order, and with a heavy hand if necessary.

Turkey had been one of the top six destinations for tourism in the world, but after 2015 a general increase in political violence, political tension with Russia, and terrorist attacks all contributed to a substantial decline in sightseeing—even before the pandemic. COVID-19 was responsible for additional lost revenue in the travel industry in 2020, which declined by almost two-thirds (65%) from the previous year. In addition to the stresses caused by the pandemic, the Turkish lira was in free-fall by December 2021. The value of the currency remains a fluid situation, and it is impossible to predict as this article goes to press what the situation in Turkey will be during 2022; one has to hope that the lira will not collapse. Like many emerging economies, Turkey has a low savings rate and needs to attract foreign capital; funding by the United Arab Emirates and possibly Saudi Arabia, to support investments in Turkey may not be enough to keep the Turkish economy stable. Turkey needs \$20 billion or so in investments, but Islamic teachings forbid usury. By following Islamic law, Erdogan seems to be trying in his authoritarian way to keep Western capital from dominating the Turkish economy, and thus, Turkey itself. It is a difficult balancing act.

BRIDGING EAST AND WEST

To the east of Istanbul, Erdogan faces other challenges. Politics in the eastern regions of Turkey have always been a complex interplay between regional actors—Russians, Kurds, Turks, Persians, Mongols, Syrians and other Middle Eastern peoples. Today, refugees find increasing xenophobia and hostility as they flee across the border into Turkey. The largest opposition parties to the ruling party (the latter is called the Justice and Development Party or AKP) want an end to Erdogan's policy of hosting refugees and backing rebels in Syria. It remains to be seen whether or not Erdogan's generosity will continue to inform Turkey's response to this humanitarian disaster.

Turkey is in many ways unique among nations: it is a bridge between Europe and Asia, at times a part of Asia and the Third World, yet also a part of Europe and European history, even if Europeans are reluctant to acknowledge this. A Muslim nation, its culture is different from Europe, although before the twentieth century part of the Ottoman Empire was on European soil. While Europeans, especially the French, are on a trajectory toward secularism, under Erdogan (and previously, Ismet İnönü), Turkey reasserted its centuries-old Islamic traditions and mores.

European reaction to the incarceration of Osman Kavala is seen in Istanbul as a continuation of Western European demands imposed on the Ottomans and imperialist intrusion into the internal affairs of a country viewed as not-quite-fully-European. The British, French and Russians advocated for Greek and Russian Orthodox Christians in the Ottoman Empire at the end of the eighteenth century, and treaties like the Capitulations (dating from the fifteenth century) gave Europeans certain rights within the Ottoman Empire, while discriminating against the Empire's own Muslim subjects.

Gallipoli, November 1

After exploring Istanbul, we traveled down the coast west of the Dardanelles, the waterway heavy with traffic to and from the Black Sea. Gallipoli is a long, beautiful peninsula south of the city, where the battle for the Dardanelles and Istanbul was fought in WWI. From February 1915 to January 1916, British, Australian and American forces fought there, suffering the Entente's greatest defeat of the war. When the Allies finally left, a total of half a million men on both sides were wounded, taken prisoner, or killed. In some places, we saw that less than nine yards separated the trenches of the opposing armies. As in the American Civil War, the unsanitary conditions led to many deaths from disease. Edwin Starr's classic song, "War! What is it good for? Absolutely nothing!" pounded in my head as we toured the battlefields and final resting places of too many young men.

Mustafa Kemal rose to leadership in the army during that war. Atatürk, as he came to be called, was a Turkish nationalist who fought the victors of World War I from his base in Ankara—as well as the Ottoman government in Istanbul—and led his nation in

far-reaching changes and reforms after independence. He began his struggle by advocating for Ottoman Muslim nationalism, but ended it as an authoritarian rejecting tradition and working for secular Turkish nationalism. In 1923, the Treaty of Lausanne—negotiated between Britain, France, Italy and Greece on one side, and his government in Ankara on the other—recognized an independent, secular Turkish Republic. The Centennial of that event will be a major event in Turkey next year.

It was on the battlefield of Gallipoli that Atatürk's words to the families of the Allies, who had been his enemies during the war, brought me to tears. Chiseled in stone there in 1934, they read:

*Heroes... who shed your blood and lost your lives...
you are now lying in the soil of a friendly country,
therefore rest in peace.
There is no difference between the Johnnies
And the Mehments to us, where they lie side by side
Here in this country of ours...
You, the mothers,
Who sent your sons from far away countries
Wipe away your tears;
Your sons are now lying in our bosom
And are in peace.
After having lost their lives on this land,
They have become our sons as well.*

Konya, November 5

For this pacifist, the tour in Gallipoli was moving, but the spiritual high point of our trip was our visit to the shrine of the great Sufi teacher, Jalal ad-Din Muhammad Rumi.

Born in what is today Afghanistan, Rumi left with his family sometime around 1215, when the Mongols invaded Persia. Eventually, they arrived in Konya, Turkey, where the ruler had repeatedly invited his father to head a madrasa, or religious academy. Rumi's father was a highly respected teacher and theologian, and after his death, Rumi inherited his father's position and continued his teaching of Sufism. Today, he is one of the most famous writers of spiritual guidance in any language, and his works, which he generally wrote in Persian, but also in Arabic, Turkish and Greek, have been translated into languages all over the globe.

Even now, Rumi's teachings can uplift and inspire those of us in the Green politics movement who advocate for Peace. When we need to reflect on our actions, and reconnect with The Light, there is no better guide than Rumi. His words encourage us when we face the challenges of activism in a society that too often doesn't want to hear us:

*"A candle never loses any of its light
while lighting up another candle."*

The walls of Rumi's mausoleum in Konya are covered in elegant, ornate tiling, the intricate workmanship testifying to the devotion his disciples must have felt for their beloved Teacher. As I walked across the garden in front of it, peace flooded my being. It was as though the Master reached across eight centuries and touched and lifted up my spirit:

"I know you're tired, but come. This is the Way."

Skeptical me, I would not have believed that this sort of experience could really happen. Certainly not to me.

*"Whoever you may be, come
Even though you may be
An infidel, a pagan, or a fire-worshipper, come
Our brotherhood is not one of despair
Even though you have broken
Your vows of repentance a hundred times, come.*

*You were born with potential.
You were born with goodness and trust.
You were born with ideals and dreams.
You were born with greatness.
You were born with wings.
Learn to use them and fly."*

I would like to dedicate this essay to our outstanding Turkish guide, Mr. Göksu Pamir—who called himself "G" for our benefit—and to his amazing driver Murad. G's knowledge of his country was only exceeded by his hospitality and compassion, and Murad's skill behind the wheel kept us safe on some very challenging roads!

SOURCES:

Three excellent books on Turkish history are:

- Marc David Baer, *The Ottomans: Khans, Caesars, and Caliphs* [2021]
- Alan Mikhail, *God's Shadow: Sultan Selim, His Ottoman Empire, and the Making of the Modern World* [2020]
- Eugene Rogan, *The Fall of the Ottomans: The Great War in the Middle East* [2015]

(Due to space limitations, I have abridged this article and not cited works used. Readers wishing to read the unabridged article, footnotes, and sources are welcome to email me privately at montereypinegreen@yahoo.com.)



ROMI ELNAGAR

is a retired teacher-librarian and a practicing Muslim. She has written for *Green Horizon* on social issues including Islam, nuclear power, and Native America. Her degree in history from U.C. Davis emphasized modern colonial and post-colonial history in the Third World.

Two anti-militarism poems by Jon Olsen

REFLECTIONS WRITTEN ON NAGASAKI DAY

Our faith in government, once based on trust
Has now irrevocably turned to rust.

You think the president calls the shots?
Then it's you who don't connect the dots.
The military-corporate elite, the one percent
Have directed all the laws to be bent
In their favor, against us all,
Who they think should be made to crawl.

Even though all of us are fully human
Except perhaps for Harry Truman
Who authorized those awful bombs
To fall on old folks, kids, and moms ...
Civilians who had nothing to do with war
Yet paid the price to even the score.

Any trust we once had
And to say this is so very sad
Has all been vaporized . . .
Like those whose lives were taken, far away
On that unspeakable and horrid day.

THE BLOATED BUDGET

Political cretins “yas-sir”ing ever more money for devastation,
As the national treasury becomes a sink-hole
Approaching the size of the moral deficit created by
Decades of genocide against Native peoples.

Imposters of humanity hold our children hostage
With the threat of vaporization each moment!
Expecting us to acquiesce in oblivion for humanity
. . . (in the national interest)
And calling us “subversive” for insisting on survival.

We will never forgive Congressional lemmings
Along with their media allies, and associates in
The Presidential Palace, in the Five-Sided Building,
For the perpetual dread with which
They have contaminated our generation.

[these two poems are abridged from full versions
that can be obtained from Jon: joliyoka@gmail.com]

John Rensenbrink is featured in Pawel Kuczynski's film “The Ontological Imperative.” It's being made available in segments on Pawel's Youtube channel called Thinking Camera (<https://www.youtube.com/c/ThinkingCamera>) or reference: <https://www.facebook.com/ThinkingCamera>.

Two Haiku

A traditional Japanese haiku is a three-line poem with seventeen syllables, written in a 5/7/5 syllable count. Haikus tend to emphasize simplicity, intensity, and directness of expression. Ted Becker and Patricia Lantz have compiled over a hundred into “The Haiku Blues” (Wipf & Stock; Eugene, OR; 2017). They've graciously given us permission to share these with you:

**Greed, fear, and despair:
the “rational” motives of
wild-eyed bulls and bears.**

**Beep beep boop beep boop.
“You're in Telephone Hell. Thanks
for holding.” Beep boop.**

The production of Green Horizon is funded by the generous contributions of the Sustainers who are listed on the following page (though some are anonymous). We're the only print magazine in this country focusing on Green politics and related movements. We endeavor to provide vital coverage and thought-provoking discussions, but we need your support. Please join the Sustainers list by sending a check to the address on the back cover or via PayPal at our website: www.Green-Horizon.org.



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