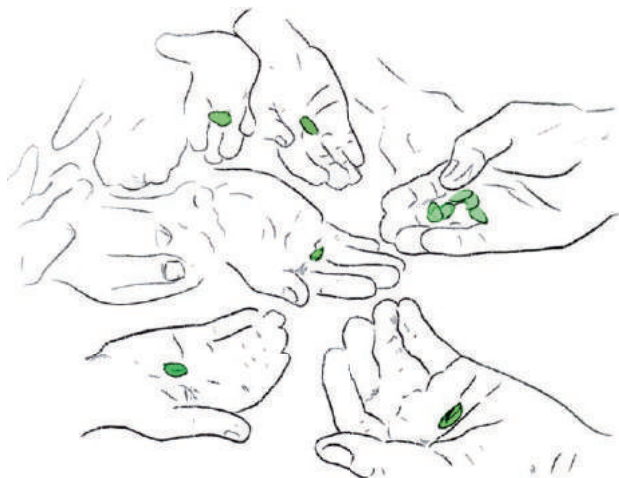
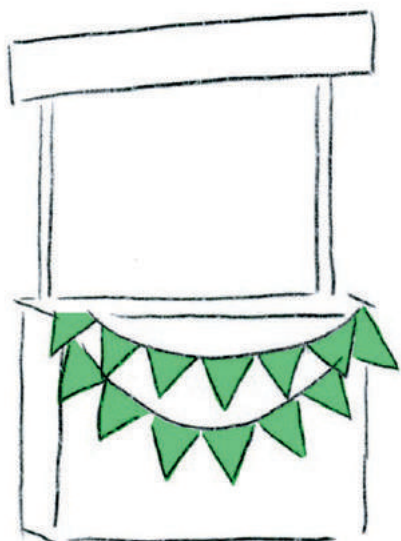


# THE ENTERPRISING ECOVILLAGER

Achieving Community Development through  
Innovative Green Entrepreneurship







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## Achieving Community Development through Innovative Green Entrepreneurship

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## INTRODUCTION

This handbook is written in the scope of the EU Baltic Sea Strategy Project “Ecovillages for Sustainable rural development” (ECOVILLAGES). The project's aim is to foster ecovillage development in the BSR by creating valuable outputs for ecovillages; by creating links between ecovillages and the public and by gaining political recognition of the ecovillage movement. One specific project output is Ecovillage Road which is an internet platform where ecovillages and similar projects are able to offer their goods and services to public visitors (visit [www.ecovillageroad.eu](http://www.ecovillageroad.eu) for more info). The aim is to foster entrepreneurship and thus economic independence of ecovillages and at the same time make the ecovillages more accessible to the public. This handbook, as an auxiliary project output of Ecovillage Road, is an attempt to help and inspire ecovillages to engage in green business and entrepreneurship and further to become members of Ecovillage road.

The handbook has been the collective effort of the ECOVILLAGES project team at Suderbyn Permaculture Ecovillage on the island of Gotland in the middle of the Baltic Sea. Those who have been instrumental in its development are lead author (equal to the voice of the first person in the text) Robert Hall, trained economist, eco-technologist and internationally engaged ecovillage activist. The text has been edited, improved and expanded by Erik Lindman-Mata, Karl Randau, Steven Porter and Sonia Cropper. Karl Randau and Steven Porter, Katrien van den Berge and Jesús Pacheco have drafted the case study examples inserted throughout the handbook, and acquired the accompanying photos. Steven Porter has provided the illustrations throughout the book.

Standard textbooks on business can provide basic techniques for drafting business plans and calculating profitability. Other literature available outlines the problems and shortcomings of the Western dominant business model of today. This book addresses neither of these aspects, but rather illuminates a way forward for new thinking in green business suitable for ecovillages.

Ecovillages by default desire to create another world. This better world, a new society with new values, is already being created. Across the globe hundreds of ecovillages have sprung up without any coordination or stimulus from above. Traditional villages predominantly in the global South embrace transition to sustainable ecovillages that can withstand the market, as well as global technological forces of centralisation and concentration. The Global Ecovillage Network (GEN) is comprised of regional bodies and national networks, the outcome of which is greater collaboration between ecovillage members around the world in their ability to support each other's development in transition to more resilient settlements focused on well-being. This community of communities is essential in order to significantly contribute to the global transformation of society.

The EU project for the Baltic Sea Region “Ecovillages for Sustainable Rural Development” has made efforts to support the spread of the ecovillage movement in Europe's first macro-region. One of the project's initiatives is the Ecovillage Road ([www.ecovillageroad.eu](http://www.ecovillageroad.eu)). The purpose of the Ecovillage Road is to create more mutual exchange between curious and progressive people living in the European mainstream with those who have selected to live a more ecological lifestyle in ecovillages. The Ecovillage Road website facilitates learning for visitors, and income-generation for ecovillagers. This handbook is therefore intended to stimulate more ecovillagers to create sustainable goods and services for other ecovillagers, as well as ecovillage visitors, in order to stimulate the proliferation of ecovillages and wider societal transition. This book is not intended to replace “start-a-business” handbooks that are easily available at libraries, bookstores, government agencies and EU programmes. This publication is focused on the potential ecovillage entrepreneur and can function as a complement to, or introduction to, more conventional business start-up books.

CHAPTER 1:  
**WHY ENTREPRENEURSHIP?**



## CHAPTER 1: WHY ENTREPRENEURSHIP?

Despite my own childhood growing up in a very entrepreneurial family in California with the stereotypical North American reality of yard sales, bake sales, selling magazines, advertising matchbooks, and chicken eggs, my own insight into the power and value of entrepreneurship came quite recently, and oddly enough by a visit to Africa. Corporate business, Multinationals, Wall Street and WTO had long been the antithesis of what we in the environmental movement saw as the solution to global challenges. But at SEKEM Farm, a unique type of ecovillage located 60 km from Cairo, I witnessed how one man's vision of a better world could be realised through business.

After almost two decades in Austria, Dr. Ibrahim Abouleish visited Egypt in 1975 to see the difficult economic and social situation of his homeland. By cross-pollinating Islam and Anthroposophy, he sought to develop a plot of farmland bordering the desert in the Nile valley. The Bedouins nearby were integrated into the project with jobs and provision of their needs. The result was a proliferation of ten SEKEM businesses created to solve problems and transform agricultural and industrial production in the area towards more socially and ecologically oriented production. Such businesses involved making organic clothes, organic farms, and factories interested in organic clothing. For this to be achieved, farmer education institutes and an organic certification system were needed. Similar chains of businesses and NGOs were needed in food and spice production. SEKEM and Dr. Abouleish received the Right Livelihood Award, also known as the alternative Nobel Prize, in 2003 for integrating their commercial success with promotion of the social and cultural development of society. Today the small ecovillage at SEKEM has around 30 inhabitants, and offers jobs and schools for over 1500 inhabitants of the surrounding villages.

Less visible but just as important is the entrepreneurship that I have seen in Russian ecovillages. The Anastasia movement was key to inspiring the creation of what is now the mainstay of Russia's ecovillages during the toughest years of Yeltsin's transformation of the Russian economy. Ecovillagers with very little material possessions arrived at what would later become ecovillages, and everyone had to embrace microbusiness as a way to survive. Today any gathering of Russian ecovillages is accompanied by a market faire to sell honey, candles, home-sewn clothing, tea and other handicrafts. Business for them is a tool to free each other from urban shopping and industrial products, and to support each other's independence and creativity. Ecovillage-made organic products are also in demand by quality-conscious Muscovites.

The ecovillages of Russia know that the easiest way to build a local economy is to facilitate home-based businesses, making space in the homes for production. However, sales of such products need to use other channels. "Talking Cedars" ecovillage on the west coast of Canada is experimenting with a shared home-based business workshop that facilitates sales from the shared production site, as well offering social contact with neighbours. Entrepreneurship in ecovillages is motivated by economic needs, but there also exists a desire to use business as a tool to create community and ecological lifestyle. As few ecovillages attain full self-sufficiency, lack of entrepreneurship in ecovillages actually creates dependency on the mainstream. Most Swedish ecovillages suffer from a lack of local employment opportunities and production of goods and services within the ecovillage, thus maintaining dependency on transport and purchases from outside the ecovillage. Therefore, green entrepreneurship is a principal tool in decreasing ecovillage dependence on mainstream production for basic life sustenance and its accompanying ecological footprint.



## The Transition Imperative

In the past few decades, and especially in the last few years, the planetary boundaries have been exposed. It is not only climate change that threatens human society's growth on the planet. Johan Rockström and Will Steffen, from the Stockholm Resilience Centre and Australian National University respectively, along with 26 other scientists have identified nine boundaries we ought not to cross, and two of these we have overstepped already which are worse than the climate issue. We have no choice but to affect radical change in societal behaviour and consumption patterns immediately. However the dominant economic system has a problem in adjusting to the limits of growth. While such a system has an ability to adapt it also has a pattern of behaviour predicted to destroy itself. *"Capitalism [...] is by nature a form or method of economic change and not only never is but never can be stationary. [...] The fundamental impulse that sets and keeps the capitalist engine in motion comes from the new consumers' goods, the new methods of production or transportation, the new markets, the new forms of industrial organization that capitalist enterprise creates... The capitalist process in much the same way in which it destroyed the institutional framework of feudal society also undermines its own."* [Schumpeter: 1942]. Capitalistic businesses will eventually destroy the capitalist system by themselves if its industrial output does not first cause irreversible and abrupt environmental change. As Chris Hedges concisely sums up *"The demented project of endless capitalist expansion, profligate consumption, senseless exploitation and industrial growth is now imploding."* [Hedges: 2012].

Ecovillages were initially a reaction to existing societal structures in which intentional communities left the mainstream to create isolated experiments in ecological living. Ecovillages have now become more accepted and less physically and mentally distant to the mainstream. The most recent ecovillages often wish to engage with the mainstream in a dialogue concerning societal development, understanding that no ecovillage can survive if the basis ecosystem services are severely damaged by the mainstream. Thus it is up to ecovillagers to create new models and make the existing obsolete just as Buckminster Fuller surmises:

*"You never change things by fighting the existing reality.  
To change something, build a new model that makes the existing model obsolete."* -

Richard Buckminster Fuller

How should ecovillages mobilise resources in order to create change to the desired situation? Innovation and the processes of creative destruction, described by Austrian economist Joseph Schumpeter (1934), are in fact a normal phase in the current economic system. Therefore it is not difficult for newer more suitable forms of businesses to innovate and replace older and less appropriate forms of businesses. The future holds a place for flexible micro- and nano- businesses that focus on local synergies and cooperation, for cooperative and community-owned enterprises that serve the community with social benefits without destroying the preconditions for future generations.

One example of a different concept of business is the Auroville ecovillage, which has more than 150 service and commercial units and a population of 2000 people. Some of these commercial outputs are very small in size while others have a large yearly turnover and sizeable exports. *"Business in Auroville is based on non-ownership and stewardship of assets, which are held in trust by the Auroville Foundation for 'humanity as a whole'... From photovoltaic systems and computer software to village handicrafts, its business units are encouraged to give at least 35 percent of their profits towards community development"* [Gaian Economics]. As one of the world's largest ecovillages, Auroville demonstrates how new forms of business can interact and cooperate. This is seen in part through the joint marketing channels that they create.

## The Attraction of Vital Ecovillages

One of the greatest hinders in expanding ecovillages is lack of employment. If jobs were to open up in ecovillages, people would be easily attracted to them. If ecovillages are truly well functioning micro-societies then it follows that workers in ecovillage-based businesses should have greater satisfaction by their situation, thereby being more stable than workers in the mainstream. What many of us seek when we visit ecovillages is bubbling business activities, as illustrated by the former international president of the ecovillage movement Jonathan Dawson, in his description of an ecovillage (in this case of Findhorn, his own ecovillage in Scotland):

*“One sees bakeries, theatres, shops and cafés that draw in visitors from far and wide. Local organic cheeses, wines, fruit and vegetables combine great quality with very low food miles. Crafts studios turn out beautiful ceramics, textiles, carvings and candles. Schools and training centres for both children and adults flourish. Publishing houses, printing presses, solar panels manufacturers, wastewater system designers, consulting companies. Everywhere there is evidence of economic vitality and diversification.”*

[Dawson p194: Gaian Economics]

However, Dawson’s colourful image may not be so accurate for most ecovillages that are smaller or more rurally isolated, thereby lacking sufficient opportunities for bustling commerce. In fact, while I agree that his description is true for Findhorn, only one other ecovillage in Europe really is in the same league, that of Damanhur in Italy. The Welcome Centre of Damanhur- along with Crea, its alternative two-floor shopping mall in the former Olivetti factory- actually surpasses what Findhorn musters in visual economic vitality. The other major ecovillages, for example, Tamera in Portugal, and Sieben Linden and ZEGG in Germany, have limited visible commercial businesses on-site. In the Baltic Sea region, few ecovillages offer the picture that Dawson illustrates. Håga By ecovillage near Uppsala is Sweden’s best example of economic vitality with around 20 businesses on site including Tant Grön, one of Sweden’s largest eco-supermarkets.

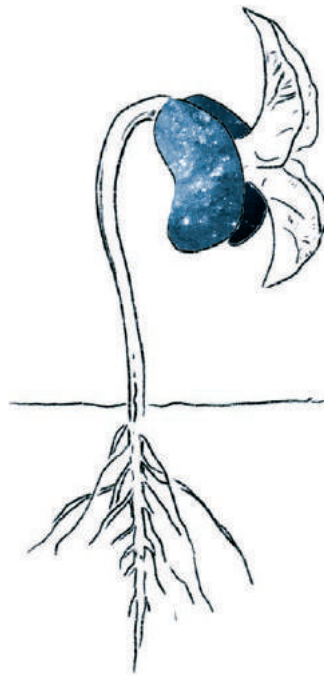
Businesses in ecovillages are not just visual proof of dynamic settlements. Jobs in ecovillages are necessary for people to be part of the transition to sustainable lifestyle. Either existing residents need to create them or the newcomers themselves need to be able to establish them on arrival. Diana Leafe Christian, a well-known author, editor and authority on ecovillages, describes the business atmosphere in her own ecovillage of Earthhaven in the Blue Ridge Mountains, as well as the controversy it can create.

*“While most Earthaven members appreciate and support these entrepreneurial efforts, others believe that small businesses – which necessarily involve money and budgets, buying and selling – are antithetical to ecovillage values. Or that onsite agriculture means the community risks the excesses of industrialized agriculture and its inevitable pollution of soil and water, rather than seeing the farms as sustainable agricultural projects that build Earthaven’s soil and protect its streams and groundwater... Yet a thriving rural ecovillage requires viable, ecologically sustainable cottage industries to provide needed goods or services and jobs, and onsite, ecologically sustainable food production.”*

[Diana Leafe Christian, p203: Gaian Economics]

People will not move to ecovillages if there are no opportunities in these villages. And if there is little opportunity in ecovillages, few new one will be established. The future of a vibrant ecovillage movement requires an abundance of initiatives to fill needs in ecovillages and surrounding society, yet staying within the bounds of the basic tenets on which these ecovillages were founded. The following chapters will suggest how such business enterprises can be developed.

CHAPTER 2:  
**DREAMING "GREEN GREEN" BUSINESS  
INTO REALITY**



## CHAPTER 2: DREAMING "GREEN GREEN" BUSINESS INTO REALITY

Starting an ecovillage is a venture that takes management skills, risk and desire to innovate. When Suderbyn Ecovillage was founded in 2008 we knew that it would take years to reach a viable and stable level of development. We were motivated by a burning desire to affect wider societal change. Entrepreneurs, just like ecovillagers, also want change. Transition to a more sustainable society will create many opportunities for entrepreneurs to exploit the failure of existing actors to respond to new market demands of consumers and businesses. The term "green entrepreneurship" stems from Gustav Berle's book "The Green Entrepreneur: Business Opportunities That Can Save The Earth And Make You Money" [1991]. It defined that green entrepreneurship as taking responsibility to create the world we want. A green entrepreneur, or "ecopreneur", can be anyone who wants to successfully earn a living while striving to solve environmental problems.

### Thinking of Place

*"Place shapes us. Place defines us. Place is what forms our identities, our attitudes, and our relationships."* Peter Kageyama

Localisation of the economy runs parallel to globalisation, and signals a break between New Economy and Old Economy. Localising the economy is to design around people changing the way we look at our communities. Inputs need to be locally sourced in order to fulfil local demands. Young people, and what it takes to keep them committed, become important. The involvement of residents is crucial to building sustainable, vibrant communities. But a place-making management approach requires a different level of governance that considers inhabitants' views and responds appropriately. Cultivating the cultural assets of a community can spur vitality in business.

### Using Permaculture Design For Innovation

Permaculture design is something used in many ecovillages to objectively study a piece of land and to cultivate how it could be most useful. Permaculture can also be used to analyse transport, economy, or social structures. It requires plans to be well thought through, and for each component to have multiple benefits to the whole. Many permaculture ideas for economy were promoted E. F. Schumacher's book "Small is Beautiful" [1973]. Design needs to be smart rather than big, seeking a human-scale and stable state, and avoiding uncontrolled cancerous growth and unhappiness.

One example of a business that should use permaculture principles is the UK company behind the Permaculture Magazine which functions as a public communication channel of the Global Ecovillage Network. Businesswoman Maddy Harland of Permaculture Publications said that her company had always used these principles. When it is possible, Permaculture Publications sources locally, and cycles its energy and paper-related and kitchen waste back into resources. *"We fit a lot of elements into small spaces which minimises use of space and saves energy. We would happily say that we are a small-scale intensive system and each human element performs many functions! We also use as many biological resources as possible. Obviously, we have to use machines to design but we minimise waste as much as we can"* [Harland: Gaian Economics]. Permaculture design means smart, lean (waste-free) and resource-conscious operations, usually leading to economically optimal design. What may be the unique aspect of using permaculture design in business is the utilisation of synergies and producing resources without waste, which are not usually present in conventional business design.

## Serving Local Community

Serving the local community with robust resilience, avoiding both overspecialisation and a focus on exports are ways entrepreneurs can offer positive change for their communities. Green entrepreneurship must benefit the wider community. In my university town, the successful Village Homes ecovillage in Davis, California, (45 hectares, 240 homes), 6 hectares were set aside for shared agricultural land, and 372 square meters of space were built for commercial activity. In Village Homes the villagers are the landlords, and the income from the commercial leases goes into a community fund. The village uses edible landscaping (fruit trees and bushes), and the agricultural land enables families to grow their own food, thereby building a highly localised economy.

Instead of being simply self-sufficient in small isolated ecovillages, ecovillage businesses can exist in symbiosis with their wider bioregions. In Findhorn, a Community-Based Agriculture (CSA) scheme called EarthShare was started in 1994. A mutually reciprocal relationship was established whereby community members could volunteer, with agricultural demands benefiting from free labour thereby creating faithful customers who learned to demand quality. Many communities design a "Local Exchange Trading System" (LETS) to intensify localisation. A LETS infrastructure makes local trade easier and trading distance less attractive. However, creating a local parallel trading system requires mobilisation of participants, building trust and ensuring a basket of goods and services that can lead to a closed circulation of wealth. Many LETS models suffer from a lack of a supply of goods and services that adequately fulfil daily needs, leading to the failure of such systems.



### Case on CSA: Livonsaaren osuuspuutarha Community Supported Agriculture (CSA)

*CSA is an agricultural model in which a group of consumers collectively pay a farmer at the start of the growing season, enabling the farmer to make the necessary purchases and investments to grow food for them. Usually CSA members also help the farmer out by volunteering on the farm. With the CSA model, the farmer doesn't have to spend time or money marketing their products or negotiating with wholesalers and retailers. Consumers on the other hand receive fresh, high-quality produce with an awareness of its origin, and have the opportunity to see the daily operations of a farmer. The consumers share the risk with the farmer; if there is a bad crop, the shares of the harvest are smaller.*

#### CSA in Livonsaari

Livonsaaren Yhteisökylä (Livonsaari Community Village), situated on an island to the West of Turku, Finland, founded a farming cooperative in 2012. It follows the idea of Community Supported Agriculture (CSA). Livonsaaren osuuspuutarha's (Cooperative garden) purpose is to promote the availability of local and organically produced food and to provide meaningful work for Livonsaari and surrounding areas. The cooperatives main activity is the horticultural and agricultural production. In addition, the cooperative are not only restricted to their own produce if this proves limiting; providing it adheres to the values of the cooperative they can also provide food from local and organic sources.



Preparation of seedlings  
for the garden  
Photograph:  
Martin Lenzinger



Parsley is amongst the many herbs grown at Livonsaari  
Photograph:  
Martin Lenzinger

Livonsaari grows a huge variety of plants and vegetables – including staples such as leeks, celery, red cabbage, broccoli, cauliflower, and a huge amount of onions. They also have a greenhouse, currently used for germination. Their Field is around 20 hectares and is rented from the Livonsaari Community- who own the field- by one member of the community, who has been farming the land since the beginning and who applied for the organic certification from Evira, the Finnish Food Safety Authority. One hectare is then rented back to the cooperative for the CSA.

### A share of the Garden



Community planting  
in the field  
Photograph:  
Simo Annala

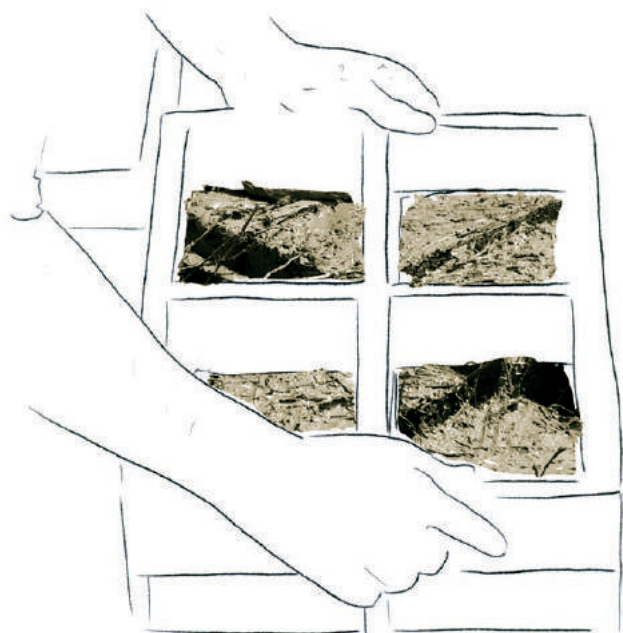
The cooperative collects the “harvest fee” in advance. In 2013 they started to collect the fees in March, and they accepted new members until the end of May. Currently there are nearly 100 households signed up for summer 2013 compared to 70 households in 2012. The basic fee is €175, with this they aim to deliver at least 12 vegetable boxes from August to the end of September. If the harvest is plentiful then the members will naturally benefit with more produce. Plans are in place to sell to local shops and/or at the market if the garden produces more than the members actually need. But the priority lies first and foremost with the members.

In addition to the basic fee, there is a one-time cooperative fee of €50 for new members. Noticing how labour intensive the harvesting was and with a need for volunteers, they introduced the possibility to reduce the costs of membership if able to assist with practical work on the farm; with reductions of up to €50 off the basic fee. Now, from 100 members, around 40 have pledged to volunteer, mainly with harvesting and preparing the vegetable boxes.

The budget for 2013 is around €22- 25 000. With the pre-paid money they have hired one full time gardener- who was helping them last year- and one part-time gardener with a lot of experience of small scale gardening in this area. The gardeners are the only members who are paid for their labour. The cooperative has a board consisting of five members each taking responsibility for different tasks. The roles divided among them are: cultivation of the crops and overview of the yield, bookkeeping and maintaining and developing contact with members and media.

Livonsaaren osuuspuutarha’s focus is to provide a vegetable box for its members each week during the harvest season, from August to October- depending on the weather- while storable vegetables can be delivered at a later date. They also grow vegetables, which are generally not available to an organic standard in Finland, for example chard, broccoli and fennel.

CHAPTER 3:  
**ORGANISING A GREEN ENTERPRISE**



## CHAPTER 3: ORGANISING A GREEN ENTERPRISE

An ecovillage is meant to be an example of a future society we yearn for. I noticed that I put higher demands on myself when handling purchases and investments for the ecovillage than if I was doing the equivalent transaction privately. It was as if I had the responsibility for a purer concept, which did not allow for pragmatic short cuts. I would have to be able to defend choices that I made in the name of the ecovillage, and there are plenty of people who will question the choices made. Logically, this same sense of responsibility applies to ecovillage businesses.

If green enterprises are to be vehicles to take us from the current unsustainable economic system to a sustainable one there is a need to acknowledge the pitfalls of conventional business organisations to be avoided. Both conventional enterprises within the current capitalism of the West and the past State Socialism of Eastern Europe have had difficulties in achieving sustainable operations. Capitalism's inherent need to accumulate and concentrate wealth in order to maintain returns to owners of capital create a conflict with steady-state business operations. Capitalism requires the State's market regulation to protect and reward intellectual property rights and enforce contracts. This benefits wealth concentration along with market-driven research and development resources that increase the rate of destruction of the ecosystem services that make life on the planet possible.

As Stefano Zagmani points out, capitalism is just one "recent" (of the last half millennium) variation of the market economy. The market economy has existed since prehistoric times; excess tomatoes, berries or fish have always been exchanged for something more needed. Markets led to urban settlements. While the market economy has proved to be an efficient re-distributor of resources, capitalism has shown to have a number of negative characteristics that now endanger humanity. Therefore, the key to truly green enterprises is overcoming the built-in shortcomings of capitalistic enterprises. These can be simplified in a focus on how the business is owned and how it is led. Below we will explore green enterprise ownership and discuss how to organise democratic management and control of business.

### **Building on Democratic Governance and Ownership**

Social attitudes are changing towards more cooperation and community-led initiatives, and away from competition and the profit-seeking individual, *homo economicus*. Open source, Wikipedia, couchsurfing, free cycle, and Zipcar are all examples of growing phenomena that demonstrate a new mentality with regard to sharing in the social sphere.

While it is a quite contemporary insight that society sees the environmental disadvantage of capitalistic business behaviour, the socially negative aspects were clear 200 years earlier. It was these insights in the early industrial revolution that gave rise to the ideas of business organisations that would not damage and destroy those humans involved. Weavers in Fenwick, Scotland created the first co-operative society in 1769 [Ellwood: 2012]. The initial cooperatives, not unlike the intentional communities being created today, had a high rate of failure. Zagmani attributes this to their rejection of direct benefits to workers for their labour, and the rejection of exchange at market price rates. Robert Owen, considered the father of cooperative enterprise, drafted a report for the British Parliament proposing "Villages of Cooperation", not so far from some of our ecovillages of today, with the means of production being owned collectively by the community and the provision of intellectual and spiritual education for all the members of the community. Proudhon, Fourier, Owen, Marx and Engels all advocated a better system where people would come before profit and co-operation before competition [Ellwood: 2012]. Cambridge economist Alfred Marshall ["Cooperation": 1889] saw the cooperative enterprise as a way



to create “excellent human beings” who would work for their own benefit, thereby innovating diligent, high-quality work that might otherwise be suppressed by capitalism.

Cooperatives have existed over the last two centuries, even if their existence has been perceived as marginal. In fact, they are very much a part of modern society. The International Cooperative Association (ICA) estimates that more than a billion people are connected to cooperatives – as members, customers and employees. Cooperatives employ over 100 million people around the world, 20% more than multinational corporations do [Ellwood: 2012].

*“Italian cooperatives are some of the most successful businesses in Europe. The Desjardin Group, the financial cooperative in Quebec, is that region’s leading employer. In Switzerland, cooperatives are the largest private employer. In the UK, the cooperative sector has a turnover of £33.2 billion, with 12.8 million members. The cooperative model of organisation has already huge impact on employment and economic success not only of course in the Global North but also in the South. In Africa, one in every thirteen people is involved in a cooperative enterprise, providing vital support whether in terms of marketing for farmers or finance, through cooperative credit unions, for families”* [Noreen Hertz: 2011].

*“Waves of Jewish and Italian immigrants brought the cooperative vision with them [to Argentina] during the early 20th century. Co-ops were well established, especially in agriculture, prior to the financial and political meltdown in 2001. According to the International Cooperative Association (ICA), nearly a quarter of the South American country’s 40 million people are linked directly or indirectly to co-operatives and mutual societies”* [Ellwood: 2012].

Cooperatives, due to their differing behaviour, are more long lasting than shorter-sighted “for profits”. Hertz [2011] cites a Canadian government study which found that cooperative businesses have twice the longevity of conventional enterprises. This also is reflected in consumer trust, which is key for market stability. *“79% of shoppers in the UK believe co-operative enterprises will act fairly, compared to only 18% for business at large”* [Hertz: 2011].

There are many types of cooperatives that can be suitable for transition of society towards resilience and sustainability. Financial, producer, retailer, and consumer cooperatives are the main categories. They share a vision to benefit many, and to prevent profit going toward just one physical owner. Profits might instead be reinvested in the operations, distributed to members or used to support the local community. A core principle of all cooperatives is ‘one member, one vote’. This sense of control is what builds social capital and makes cooperatives such a key builder of community identity. Cooperatives empower people, build community and strengthen local economies.

One example of a cooperative ecovillage I have visited is Kommune Niederkaufungen near Kassel, Germany. All inhabitants are expected to contribute with their work (including a few who work outside). If someone has an idea to set up a business, the community supports them financially and physically, and pays for any training needed. All the profits from each of the 11 work groups – carpentry, seminar centre, construction, kitchen, organic gardening/farm shop, dairy farm, leatherwork/baby booties, architecture services, kindergarten, metal workshop and construction – go into the common community account. The community’s businesses earn enough to meet communal living costs of around €50,000 per month [Gaian economics: p193]. There is collective critical analysis if a work group does not produce the expected surplus. However, communards enjoy free access to all their personal needs, such as collectively owned and managed transport, equipment, monetary and food resources. Twin Oaks ecovillage in Virginia, US, similarly supports all its members based on income from community-owned hammock, furniture and tofu making businesses [Gaian Economics: p194].

Many ecovillages are applying cooperative ownership models to different spheres of their organisational structure, most often in the common ownership of land and property. Thus there is already knowledge in many ecovillages that would allow using the cooperative model as a legal form for ecovillage business. A cooperative needs statutes which are often prescribed by the national law on cooperatives, yet allow some modifications such as the choice between profit or non-profit orientation, ownership by means of equal share-holding or differentiated, and the details of the election of the cooperative leadership. Each country has different procedures for the registration of the cooperative but all require clarity on membership capital. However, as membership capital is likely to be insufficient to begin business operations, other financial institutions are often needed to lend money for a business start-up. Financial institutions in turn will demand that the cooperative is able to show a business plan whereby the firm is able to become financially viable within a reasonable time period, often between 1-2 years.

My own ecovillage Suderbyn on the island of Gotland, Sweden is involved in a number of cooperatives and I expect that these will grow in number. The land, buildings and car pool are owned by Suderbyn Cooperative Society, and the land purchase was possible thanks to Sweden's two first member banks JAK and Ekobanken. The Swedish member bank is a relatively new specialised legal form of cooperative bank in which Suderbyn is a member, and in the case of Ekobanken has invested capital into. The ecovillage's electricity is entirely sourced from the wind power cooperative O2. Suderbyn owns part of one of O2's wind turbines in Grötlingbo, also on Gotland. Ecovillage children have gone to local cooperative Waldorf and Montessori schools on Gotland. Ecovillages without tradition businesses may find that they already have substantial experience working in cooperatives that can be used to start more commercially-oriented businesses. Running an ecovillage enterprise need not be so different than running the existing ecovillage land-owning cooperative or co-housing association.

## **On Business Governance and Decision-Making**

Why should it be universally accepted that states must be governed democratically but our life-giving systems of producing wealth can be managed undemocratically? Logically people should be more concerned that they have influence on their immediate proximity than in the abstract debates in the capital city's parliament. Yet we accept that food stores, restaurants, bus companies, electric companies etc. that form our quality of life only offer us the ability to vote with our cash every time we buy goods and services. Unlike the previous section that focused on how ownership forms affect the distribution of wealth, we now look at the impact of business being run by those involved.

University of Wisconsin sociologist Erik Olin Wright feels that cooperatives can play a vital role in opening more democratic space in our contemporary society. Cooperatives can rebuild the public sphere of our lives caught between the expansive market and the expansive state. Wright has pointed to a growing 'symbiotic' transformation in which cooperatives lead a wider democratic resurgence, which will strengthen civil society and help bring about a paradigm shift [Ellwood: 2012].

While cooperatives are the obvious form of democratic enterprise, democratic principles can be strengthened in any business form if there is will. Traci L Fenton [2002] studied existing businesses that sought to instil practical democracy in larger companies. Her perspective is that these companies did this out of a desire to work in democratic environments but as well from the belief that democratic leadership would lead to efficiency. Fenton found a large number of clear advantages of democracy in business including increased productivity, profitability, sales and efficiency due to better dedication, loyalty and responsibility of staff. This explains democratic business' increased ability to attract and retain top talent and its decrease in staff turnover. Increased levels of trust and communication found in democratically led enterprises tend to lead to improvements in customer service and increased

flexibility and ability to adapt to both external and internal changes. Regarding more outward relations, democratic companies seem to have a heightened awareness of a company's surrounding community and are able to find opportunities for civic engagement. An example of attitudes about democratic practices within the ecovillage enterprises might be that from the Twin Oaks ecovillage in Virginia which declares, *'We use a trust-based labour system in which all work is valued equally. Its purpose is to organise work and share it equitably, giving each member as much flexibility and choice as possible. Work is not seen as just a means to an end; we try to make it an enjoyable part of our lives'* [Gaian Economics: p192].

Having studied the experience of a number of democratic businesses, Traci Fenton [2002] found similarities that these enterprises had consciously selected to develop their democratic atmosphere. Below are Fenton's ten lessons for democratising business that I paraphrase for concise clarity.

#### **LESSON 1: Don't Manage People**

Manage resources instead of micromanaging people. Give people sufficient freedom to act to realise their potential while serving the needs of the firm. Focus on leadership and leading people to discover their potential.

#### **LESSON 2: Choose to Grow Slowly**

Choose slower, contemplative decisions, ensuring that everyone in the organisation is on board.

#### **LESSON 3: Treat People Like Adults**

Treat people like capable, trustworthy, intelligent human beings.

#### **LESSON 4: Give People a Reason To Care**

Give financial or spiritual incentives, such as meaningful work that engages their minds, talents and hearts.

#### **LESSON 5: A Shared Vision and Purpose as Institutional Glue**

Ensure that the entire organisation has a shared vision that is widely, clearly and repeatedly shared to keep all the different parts of the organisation connected and acting in alignment.

#### **LESSON 6: All Work is Teamwork**

Emphasise teamwork, regardless whether an employee is actually working in a formal team or working independently. All should understand how, why and to what degree their work benefits the entire team.

#### **LESSON 7: Openness Opens the Way**

Be open with employees about information, especially financial information. The more information they have, the more intelligent and insightful decisions they can make.

#### **LESSON 8: Keep Learning**

Promote learning and training for everyone. The leadership team should be comprised of ferocious learners, reading everything they can from a diversity of disciplines.

#### **LESSON 9: Small Is Beautiful**

Have an acute awareness that smallness, expressed in a familial atmosphere, smaller divisions, and a sense of informality, is the vital balance to growing an unwanted 'bigness' attitude.

#### **LESSON 10: Fear is the Worse Tyrant of All**

Fight the tyranny of fear, the tyranny of ego, the tyranny of misinformation, the tyranny of job insecurity and the tyranny of unfulfilling work. Ensure people are not afraid to come and leave work each day.

## Inclusive Decision-Making Processes

Perhaps participatory decision-making is both a hallmark of ecovillages as well as a caricature image of the endless discussions that may take place in a community. Unfortunately my experience is that ecovillages often struggle with effective and inclusive decision-making. In my own Suderbyn Ecovillage I see that everyone wants to be involved, or at least not left out, perhaps as a sign that we have not reached a sufficient level of trust between us. That all decisions are “democratic” is required to gain social acceptance. I find this makes for slow and not always well-balanced decisions. The standard in business decision-making is conventionally not that of the democratic model we otherwise insist is worth fighting wars over. Ecovillages and green businesses often aim higher to try to involve all relevant stakeholders in the decisions that affect them, or that they could have informed the decision-making process with important information. Ecovillages have long been associated with long group decision-making following the consensus model. Those organisations which have succeeded with accomplishing themselves or expanding have often needed to regulate and define how consensus decision-making can be used in a business-like decision-intensive environment. Other models have also now entered the ecovillage movement from more mainstream businesses that search for decision-making models that are more efficient than tradition structural and hierarchical ones. These are often referred to as Consent Decision Making models.

### Consensus Decision-Making

Consensus decision-making is a group process that seeks the consent of all participants. Consensus may be defined as an acceptable resolution or compromise, one that can be supported, even if not the “favourite” of each individual. It is used to describe both the final decision and the process of reaching a decision. Consensus decision-making is thus concerned with the process of deliberating and finalizing a unanimous decision, and the social and political effects of using this process. Ecovillage initiatives are often drawn to consensus as it ensures that the interests of everyone will be taken into consideration.

When a participant does not support a proposal, a dissenting delegate has one of three options:

**Declare reservations:** Group members who are willing to let a motion pass but desire to register their concerns with the group may choose “declare reservations.” If there are significant reservations about a motion, the decision-making body may choose to modify or re-word the proposal.

**Stand aside:** A “stand aside” may be registered by a group member who has a “serious personal disagreement” with a proposal, but is willing to let the motion pass. Although stand asides do not halt a motion, it is often regarded as a strong “nay vote” and the concerns of group members standing aside are usually addressed by modifications to the proposal. Stand asides may also be registered by users who feel they are incapable of adequately understanding or participating in the proposal.

**Block:** Any group member may “block” a proposal. In most models, a single block is sufficient to stop a proposal, although some measures of consensus may require more than one block. Blocks are generally considered to be an extreme measure, only used when a member feels a proposal “endanger[s] the organization or its participants, or violate[s] the mission of the organization” (i.e., a principled objection). In some consensus models, a group member opposing a proposal must work with its proponents to find a solution that will work for everyone.

Practical consensus decision-making processes usually encourage the exposing of initial opposing views to maximize the chance of accommodating all views. This can be done by an initial round of “taking temperature” with thumbs up, down or in between. Questions such as “Are we ready to take a decision?” and “Are we agreed the options are X, Y and Z?” can be used to narrow the alternatives

and help the group focus. Since unanimity may be difficult to achieve, especially in large groups, or unanimity may be the result of peer pressure, fear, undue persuasive power or eloquence, inability to comprehend alternatives, or plain impatience with the process of debate, consensus decision-making bodies may use an alternative benchmark of consensus. A number of techniques have been adopted to get near-consensus and not paralyse decision-making. These are unanimity minus one, two or three, or rough consensus. There are books explaining these consensus techniques, and detailed treatment of consensus decision-making falls outside of what is possible to cover in this book.

The contributions that consensus has given to community-building are great, but its drawbacks have also prevented constructive developments. Consensus empowers the divergent opinions in the form of the blocker, thus creating the so-called tyranny of the minority. Consensus needs to be as inclusive as possible and this requires not imposing values or expectations of unanimity, and not interpreting harmony as agreement. It's a difficult balance. This is one reason there is interest in "consent" decision-making.

## **Sociocracy Decision-Making**

Sociocracy is a method for decision-making pioneered in post World War II Netherlands. The Dutch pacifist, educator, and peace worker Kees Boeke updated and greatly expanded U.S. sociologist Lester Frank Ward's ideas by implementing the first sociocratic structure in a school in Bilthoven, Netherlands, which still exists today. In the late 1960s and early 1970s Gerard Endenburg, an electrical engineer and former student of Boeke's, further developed and applied Boeke's principles in his electrical engineering company. After years of experimentation and application, Endenburg developed a formal organisational method, Sociocratic Circular Organizing Method. The "circular" refers to what was then called the "circular causal feedback process," now referred to commonly as the circular process and feedback loops.

Sociocracy developed out of cybernetics, systems thinking, and Quaker organisations that exerted huge influence on business practices in America. The International Non Violent Communication (NVC) organisation was one of the first to use sociocracy decision-making and one of the initial proponents of the method. Sociocracy provided a governance structure that is very aligned with NVC values and their technique for defining personal needs and how the individual can fulfill them. The language of "needs" is more NVC's, not sociocracy's. The key of sociocracy is that it allows for people to give consent that others can decide in specialised circles. As all circles are double-linked with a person dedicated to report upward and another to report downwards, there is always functioning feedback loops and thus good communication through the organisation as a whole.

Policies are set by the circle members in meetings, in which each person participates as an equal. It is entirely possible for them to decide that operations will be led in a different way- with rotating leaders, for example. Normally operational decisions are made autocratically by the operational leader "within policies set by the circle". Staff meetings are only held when necessary and are led by the operations leader.

## **Holacracy Decision-Making**

Holacracy (also known as holocracy) comes out of the Sociocracy method, keeping the concept of double linking and the election process from Sociocracy. Holacracy advocates "purpose" of the organisation so that everyone can rise above their personal needs and devote themselves to the higher purpose. The "purpose" is quite similar to "vision, mission, aim" in sociocracy. Holacracy has a distributed authority system that empowers organisations avoiding reliance on patriarchal leadership. Everyone is a leader and a follower, with real authority and real responsibility. It tries to balance current

reality from the purpose of the organisation. Tension is seen as important part of interaction that must be made useful by processing it into meaningful change. Holacracy provides several explicit channels to process tensions, but handling just one tension at a time to keep clarity. Holacracy separates the processes for “governance” and “operations” on every level through different meetings with different focus.

Governance meetings give everyone a voice, without empowering single individuals to hold the organisation in the tyranny of the minority found in consensus. At the meeting clear rules ensure to prevent egos or politics from dominating. The continually restructured organisation adapts to new tensions. Governance clarity enables most work to get done by clear roles using clear authority, avoiding the need for group consensus-seeking. In Tactical meetings every agenda item gets processed every meeting, on-time every-time. Radical transparency in these meetings shows all progress, or lack thereof without hiding or protecting underachievement.

## Legal Forms for Green Enterprises

I am surprised in our modern information society how incomplete the flow of information is regarding legal forms for business. I remember how my children’s preschool was a parent-run NGO and the parents and personnel wanted to change the legal form and transfer ownership to the personnel. The teachers turned to different sources to get help but some resource persons knew only about limited liability companies while others knew only about cooperatives. No one could help with a comparison of which legal form would be best for the preschool.

Information about alternatives to choose legal status for your green business would seem easy to access but some forms are more promoted than others. Those perhaps most suited for green businesses are not those most promoted by authorities and business associations. There are essentially three types of legal form: individual or partner-owned (sole proprietorship/ sole trader or general/trading and limited partnerships); group-owned (cooperatives/economic association); and, shareholder-owned (private/ public limited liability companies and corporations). If we oversimplify, most micro-businesses tend to be individually owned while most big businesses tend to be limited liability companies or corporations of shareholders. The concept of limited liability is relevant regarding green business, as limited liability partnerships, cooperatives, companies and corporations are protected from being unlimitedly responsible for the damage their businesses cause nature and society. The limitation of responsibility allows more risk-taking over cautiousness, thus one of the support mechanisms of negative business behaviour that green entrepreneurs are to avoid.

## National Legal Forms

Green enterprise is often organised as sole proprietorship or sole trader. It is probably the simplest to start, and becomes the natural choice of people in ecovillages who wish to get into business with minimal investment and hassle. Normally sole proprietorships are owned and run by one individual and there is no legal distinction between the owner and the business. The owner receives all profits (after taxation) but has unlimited responsibility for all losses and debts. A sole proprietor may use a business name but often uses the owner’s legal name. While the sole proprietorship is easy to organise it is harder to get capital needed for start-up and growth. The risk of personal economic responsibility for a business failure can as well cause stress for a small green entrepreneur.

Partnerships are perhaps a suitable solution for many ecovillages that consider starting a business but are not ready to invite everyone in the ecovillage to join a cooperative. Instead the partnership allows a select few or even a mid-sized group of people to start a joint undertaking. If it is just a few people and a small initial investment the *general partnership* with unlimited liability for debts can be a simple and

quick solution. If the level of involvement varies and not all are equally involved in all the operations, a limited liability partnership may feel more suitable. Partners in this form contribute differently, some with their time and others with capital, and no one needs to take personal economic responsibility for debts in the case of a business failure. For this reason the *limited liability partnership* needs more external control and transparency than in the more simple and informal general partnership.

As previously stated, the legal form of the *cooperative* found in most countries provides a very good legal status for green business as it encourages participatory ownership and democratic governance. A cooperative can often be set up as community-beneficial and non-profit, while being designed for market transactions. The types of cooperatives are many: worker coops; consumer coops; marketing coops; purchasing coops; housing; and, transport coops. Cooperatives can be owned by just a few physical or legal persons and can choose between equal shares of capital or not. But unlike the company, the concept of one owner – one vote is a basis in the cooperative. Likewise, a cooperative can be for profit and share this profit out to its owners. However, the cooperative is designed to be democratic and in most cases non-profit.

Companies are the main legal form for business and logically should be a common legal form for green businesses. Companies can be *limited liability companies*, which most small- and medium-sized enterprises choose, or publicly listed companies, a form reserved for larger companies in good economical and administrative condition. The limited liability company as a form is often promoted and is easily started however demands investment and has stricter regulations than the sole proprietorships and general partnerships. Even more demanding are the transparency demands on public companies that need to reveal all their annual accounts publicly so as to allow investors to purchase and sell stock freely and be listed on the national stock exchange. Few ecovillage businesses would have the volume of turnover to merit being publicly listed. However, this is a way to access expansion capital. Limited liability companies can have a more intensive relationship with their owners which *public companies* do not have. Usually stockholders need to cooperate to influence annual meeting decisions. Not all stockholders have voting rights. In other words, the public company separates operations from ownership and even ownership from governance. Therefore, the general recommendation is that a public company is not a suitable legal form for green business.

The concept of being *for profit* or *non-profit* can be applied to both companies and cooperatives. Community Interest Company (CIC) in the UK or Utvecklingsbolag in Sweden are examples of special variations of basic legal forms suitable for community-oriented social and green enterprises. Associations and foundations are legal forms that are often non-profit. There is no common recognised definition for foundations (also called charitable trusts) in Europe and in general it is a form not suitable for organisations fully focused on market-oriented green enterprise. However, *charity-status*, regardless of legal form can be relevant in organisations involved in part in green business. Charity-status is now being more harmonised across Europe so that tax deductions can be made for donations even across borders.

## EU Legal Forms

Besides national legal forms for green business, some EU legal forms now exist that make it possible to allow easier cross-border activities. Unfortunately, the work on Europe-wide legal forms for foundations, mutual societies and associations have so far failed to become European Directives which would harmonise legal framework and operating conditions within the EU. The European Company Statute that does not apply to non-profits was approved in 2000 and came into force in 2004.

*European Cooperative Society* (SCE) is a new legal form of company, established in 2006 and is related to the European Company. European Cooperative Societies may be established and operate in any

Member State of the EU and EEA. The SCE removes the need for cooperatives to establish a new legal entity in each Member State in which they wish to operate. Furthermore, it allows a cooperative to move its head office from one Member State to another without having to re-register. All SCEs are governed by the same EEA-wide rules and principles together with the national laws on cooperatives in each Member State.

Many green businesses, particularly socially oriented green business may start as NGOs. Unfortunately the implementation of a common European Associations directive in Europe seems far off. Only in the Treaty of Nice in 2000 has civil society and its main vehicle, the NGO, appeared on the EU agenda. Member State support for Community harmonisation of this area is still weak.

There is as well a need for a European legal form for foundations in Europe. The number of foundations and funders that wish to have more cooperation and cross-border activity has grown as the EU has integrated. A *European Foundation Statute* would offer them an appropriate legal tool to perform and increase their work and operations across Europe. While foundations are perhaps not ideal for focused green businesses, many idealistic projects may wish to combine green business with non-commercial promotion of ideas. If this is to be done at the European level then the European Foundation may be an attractive legal form for green entrepreneurs. The European Commission presented a proposal on a European Foundation Statute in 2012 but has yet to be approved.

There is a Statute for a public EU company, (*Societas Europaea*, or SE) even though it is not clear that this is a recommendable legal form for a green enterprise. An SE can register in any EU Member State and move its operations between EU states. Just as with nationally registered public company there is no guarantee that there is a substantial connection between firm ownership and firm operations. There is no EU-wide register of SEs (an SE is registered on the national register of the member state in which it has its head office), but each registration is to be published in the Official Journal of the European Union. More appropriate for a green business operating at the European level would be a European private company, which is better suited for smaller operations. The *Societas Privata Europaea* or SPE is still however a proposal for a new legal form for a EU-wide limited liability company to be introduced in the EU and EEA. The aim is to remove the current need for small and medium-sized businesses to register themselves in all the EU member countries.

## Ethical Financing of Start-Ups

One of the challenges for the enterprising ecovillage is to acquire capital to start a green business. The easiest is to have money, or approach a friend or relative. But this is not always the situation and the tendency is to go to the established financial institutions nearby. Traditional financial institutions will demand a business plan. If the business plan is reasonable and the entrepreneur is not burdened with a bad credit history, a start-up loan is possible. There are even support functions in most countries to start companies and these are normally funded by national and EU programmes. These might offer softer loans or grants. But many ecovillagers may feel that there is a conflict in approaching commercial financial institutions while trying to create a new society that avoids the environmentally and socially detrimental financial institutions of mainstream society.

If possible, the best way is to find community financing. Some ecovillagers at The Farm community in Tennessee developed a community finance system called the Second Foundation. Participants living in the ecovillage pool income to provide low-interest loans to community businesses. The interest repaid for these loans finance in turn basic services for ecovillage entrepreneurs like bookkeeping and legal advice, medical and pension schemes. This functions in a similar manner of many purchasing cooperatives in southern Europe in which, for example, 50 families pay into an account each month and just one family wins the lottery each month. Once you win you are obliged to continue to contribute



each month even if you cannot win again. However in the case of the Farm's Second Foundation, the members make a one-time fund contribution and the loans are repaid so the fund does not end. The capital itself continues to be used as a revolving fund for low-interest loans for ecovillage initiatives.

A second method is to offer supporters outside the ecovillage the opportunity of being part of something promising. Highly promoted in the ecovillage movement, John Croft's dragon-dreaming method ([www.dragondreaming.org](http://www.dragondreaming.org)) promotes sharing one's dream with others, through a "dreaming circle". The dream becomes a collective dream of the project team and allows others to give input in time and effort, energy, imagination, and perhaps even a monetary investment. Dragon Dreaming is explained as a process in four equal stages: Dreaming; Planning; Doing; and, Celebration. In the Dragon Dreaming Wheel, each complementary stage is split into three steps. By seeing the structure of the project realisation process, individuals are better able to grasp the otherwise abstract original vision. Dragon dreaming thus brings in a larger group to solve financing, and a favoured solution is inviting friends be a part of something positive. Related to the dragon-dreaming method is crowdfunding. Crowdfunding (also known as crowd financing or crowd-sourced fundraising) is a technique for individuals who network with like-minded to pool their money, usually via the Internet, to support initiatives or organisations they wish to assist. The Barefoot Academy in North-Eastern Poland has employed crowdfunding to allow people to support the development of the alternative training centre at the ecovillage. Located at Barkowa Ecovillage near Goldap in Masuria region, the Barefoot Academy is an alternative, experimental and independent institution oriented to educating practical knowledge, creativity and skills useful in the development of individual and local self-sufficiency. Through promotional videos of supporters, viewers are solicited to join in and support the project. Finally there is a possibility to allow future clients to pay in advance for a good or service that they want. This is often done to stimulate organic vegetable production through Community Supported Agriculture or CSA-contracts not unfamiliar in many ecovillages.

## Alternative Banking

Alternative banking is becoming a more attractive option for green businesses looking for other financial institutions outside the realm of mainstream commercial banks. *Interest-free banking* and *ethical* or *social banking* are two streams of alternative banking that has grown in Europe in the last few decades.

As green entrepreneurship is inherently a critique of business as usual, the interest-free banking movement is also a critique of capitalism's financing of investment. The cooperative Jord Arbejde Kapital (Danish for Land Labour Capital- a name derived from the three pillars of classical economics), abbreviated to JAK, was founded in Denmark in 1931 during the Great Depression. The Swedish JAK movement, based on the Danish JAK began in 1965 with a group of Swedish university students associated with the Green Party, searching for a sustainable financial formula of using credit lending to achieve "economic emancipation". The founders of JAK believed that interest causes economic instability, which in turn caused unemployment, inflation, and environmental destruction. Personal loans, as well as pension and investment funds, made individuals and society as a whole dependent on a system based on interest transfers to owners of capital, a system over which most people and nations had little control over. "Fairness and respect for human beings and the environment" is the core of JAK's philosophy. JAK Member Bank's mission is to promote a society of economic rules that do not create divisions between people and regions. With the acquisition of its banking license it wants to prove and show that it is possible to operate a banking business not based on interest rates. Served by 700 local representatives and 26 local groups throughout Sweden, JAK reached 36,300 members during 2010, with an overall 12% yearly growth rate. During the same year, members' savings

amounted to 111 million EUR of which 99 million EUR were granted as loans. Today, JAK in Sweden is the best established interest-free bank in Europe, but others are being developed. Now JAK Bank or similar interest-free banking organisations exist in Denmark, Finland, Italy, Germany, the Netherlands and Spain.

The ethical or social banking system is more developed than the interest-free system. Unlike the interest-free system it has a well-established international cooperation and advocacy platform. The International Association of Investors in the Social Economy (INAISE) is a global network of socially and environmentally oriented financial institutions created in 1989. INAISE has grown rapidly as social and ethical banking became more in demand. Through INAISE ([www.inaise.org](http://www.inaise.org)), social and ethical investors from all over exchange experience, disseminate information and show that ethical finance can achieve positive social and environmental change. INAISE members promote social and ethical investment in specific sectors, particularly that which could be called green entrepreneurship. These sectors are: environment and sustainable development; social economy; health-care; social development; education and training; North-South cooperation; and finally, culture and arts. INAISE members try to be as transparent as possible so as to let individuals see what is actually going on with their money. Some of the European members of INAISE are: Triodos Bank in UK, Belgium, Spain, Germany and Netherlands; Merkur in Denmark; Ekobanken in Sweden; Cultura in Norway; MFC (Microfinance Centre) in Poland; and the first and oldest ethical bank, GLS Gemeinschaftsbank in Germany.

## **Public Support for Green Business**

Along with financial institutions there are public grants and low-interest loans to encourage start-ups. This is particularly true in rural areas in the EU. The EU rural development programme and LEADER programmes focus on rural enterprise while national and EU competitiveness and innovation programmes offer support to business start-ups. As most regions are keen to be evaluated as having pro-business climate, these services are nicely bundled with other support in “one-stop shops” that are quite easy to access. However, support to cooperatives maybe kept separate from the mainstream business development centres. Most information on public sector support for business is available online. Particular support for green business is less common even if green themes are often priorities for the mainstream programmes. Eco-innovation and Intelligent Energy Europe are two current programmes well suited for green enterprise.

## **Financing of Suderbyn**

I suggest a look at the complex reality of financing the starting of an ecovillage to understand the potential finance avenues for an ecovillage business. The initial purchase of land for Suderbyn was financed through 120,000 EUR loans from the interest-free bank JAK and the ethical bank Ekobanken, plus 60,000 EUR of member capital. However, this was not enough to develop the ecovillage property. Instead, it was the combination of private loans from members (roughly 100,000 EUR) and EU projects that allowed the cooperative to build new buildings, landscape for a forest garden, construct a water retention landscape and buy equipment needed to operate the growing community. During Suderbyn’s first 5 years, projects funded by the EU Youth in Action, Interreg, LEADER, Rural Development, Gruntvig programmes, Anna Lindh Foundation, Nordic Council of Ministers and Swedish Energy Agency, Swedish Institute and Swedish Economic and Regional Growth Agency were implemented to benefit the development of the ecovillage.

## Ecovillage Support Structures for Green Start-Ups

A recommended way to stimulate new green entrepreneurship in ecovillages is to start a start-up incubator project or centre to support new initiatives with information and advice. Two good examples of planned developments are the eco-enterprise centres at Cloughjordan Ecovillage in Ireland and Earthworks Ecovillage in Ontario, Canada.

In Cloughjordan, WeCreate is a co-working space in the centre of the ecovillage. It provides the space and resources needed for small businesses, independent workers, designers, developers, educators, and entrepreneurs to work on their own projects. A Food Hub is being developed at WeCreate, which will provide growers, makers and food producers with space to process, distribute, and market their locally or regionally produced food goods. WeCreate will also feature a Fablab, a digital fabrication workshop, which is an innovative way to bring prototyping capabilities to communities.

A sustainable enterprise development is one of the objectives of Earthworks Ecovillage. An eco-enterprise centre at the ecovillage will be designed to incubate new green businesses that can employ members with income generation activities that are congruent with the community's sustainable principles and mission. The centre will feature shared facilities and resources to support the needs of community based businesses. The centre will provide expertise and assistance in areas ranging from business planning, sourcing, manufacturing, communications, administration and marketing and offer business mentoring and training programs. Earthworks will be involved in incubating several business activities such as: green building design and build services; eco-landscaping; permaculture design; organic food production; heritage seeds and nursery; organic beekeeping; passive solar heated green houses; passive solar heating and cooling systems; healthy home design and decorating; eco-products; natural health products and services; eco-education; community supported agriculture (CSA); and, eco-tourism. The profits from the Eco Enterprise Center are reportedly reinvested in the community.

CHAPTER 4:  
**EMBEDDING DEEPER VALUES  
IN GREEN ENTERPRISE**



## CHAPTER 4: EMBEDDING DEEPER VALUES IN GREEN ENTERPRISE

I, like many ecovillagers, have perhaps initial doubts to the intentions of businesses. After all aren't all businesses aiming to maximise profit? My experience working with regional development reminds me of the frustration of development bureaucrats with the many smaller rural businesses that are uninterested in business growth. For many "mom & pop" family businesses, the set of values that govern operations are quite different to what I read in microeconomics textbooks. Businesses are run by as a diverse set of values as the people that run them. Ecovillage businesses can and should be run on the values of ecovillages.

Green Enterprise as previously stated can be a vehicle to help us create the new desired society. In Satish Kumar's article 'The Spiritual Imperative' published in the UK magazine *Resurgence*, the author wrote '*Business without spirit, trade without compassion, industry without ecology, finance without fairness, economics without equity can only bring the breakdown of society and destruction of the natural world. Only when spirit and business work together can humanity find coherent purpose*'. However, starting a green enterprise can be so demanding with attention to detail that the project can end up not being the vehicle to a better tomorrow but a time-demanding, energy-extracting hobby that does not really reflect original aspirations. As conventional business is not designed to be that transformative vehicle, many easily available solutions are unwise choices. The best insurance again becoming misguided is to embed green thinking into the venture's business plan. While there are a number of potential guidelines for ensuring that a business venture stays green, below is an exploration of the three Permaculture Principles, which can be used to continuously check if the business is contributing to a positive societal transformation.

### Care for Earth

No enterprising that leaves the world in worse shape for future generations than the world we received can be accepted as "green", but are instead to be found in the category of "greenwash". Business ideas that leave an Earth in better shape, with resilient eco-system services must be the goal of Green Entrepreneurship. Does your business strengthen the Earth's carrying capacity or at least is a more ecological substitute than what is currently on the market? Does the product or service have a negative production and end-of-life cost to the Earth? What behaviour does it encourage among your suppliers, your partners and your customers?

The best green enterprises are able to strengthen eco-system services by building up the soil's humus layer, by facilitating cleaning of water, and stabilising local climate. Others may hope to reduce the number of unsustainable products on the market with green alternatives, which indirectly strengthens the Earth's capacity to handle human activity. Green enterprise has to at least be benign to the environment, fulfilling needs with deteriorating the Earth's capacity to continue to provide eco-system services.

### Care for People

Green businesses must be social businesses- providing jobs, meaning and social context. Noreena Hertz points out that co-operative enterprise intrinsically value the quality of human relations, the quality of human networks, the value of collegial collaboration and the value of community better than conventional businesses. Green entrepreneurs see the workplace as a social setting rather than a production unit. The co-workers are the individuals you spend much of your life with. Similarly, our personal relations with customers are also part of the reward of green business, knowing that you are delivering goods and services that offer your clients well being.

Diana Leafe Christian, resident of Earthaven ecovillage, author of “Finding Community: How to Join an Ecovillage or Intentional Community” [2007], and editor of the free online newsletter Ecovillages (www.EcovillageNewsletter.org) wrote “*In an ecovillage context, a ‘social enterprise’ is a profit-making business or income-earning non-profit set up to meet the group’s social and environmental needs, including the need to earn an income on-site*”. Earning income is still an economic need people have. As well, community members need meaningful roles in society, and for an ecovillager the definition of meaningful is often much more demanding than in mainstream society.

Care for People also includes celebrating human diversity. Respecting our individual human rights to diversity in appearance, preferences and ideas are as well part of green business. Having a genius perspective and being able to see patterns in the roles of men and women, girls and boys within the firm or as consumers is not only an ethical requirement but good business practice. Does the business facilitate each individual’s own development to attain personal happiness and their potential, by creating a balance of supportive group environment with space for individual growth?

## Fair Share

The final principle of Fair Share is to have a world-view of the business’ place in the broader perspective of human development. The world is globalised and interdependent – resources and people continuously move around the globe in usage patterns that do not benefit most people, and particularly not future generations. Our ecological footprints tell us that most of us in the global North consume beyond that which is possible to maintain at the cost of deprivation of basic needs, mainly in the global South. Knowing this we need to assess how our businesses promote a more just sharing of available resources. Green businesses enrich their local environment, and offer goods and services from the local area produced in ways that strengthen resilience. If the green entrepreneur is involved in globally traded products, these are produced and transported in an ethical, sustainable and fair trade manner.

At the same time a green entrepreneur is aware of one’s role in changing usage patterns and showing solidarity to those who face situations created by global malpractice. Do the green enterprise operations recognise the firm’s place in the global perspective, reducing dependence on unfair trade, acting to empower those marginalised by the global production, supporting healing of the negative effects of imbalanced power structures and mass-transfer of wealth? It is perhaps not easy for an ecovillage entrepreneur involved in a local micro-business to see such abstract notions. But by carefully checking the sourcing of one’s inputs, the market for the goods and services provided and the post-life of one’s products, we are usually able to see that we are very much interconnected to the rest of the world, affecting others in a positive or negative way. By doing so, we are also able to answer how the business can support a fairer sharing of global resources.



### Case on Social Enterprise: La Poudrière

*The idea of a social enterprise is a business that conducts its trade for a social and/or environmental reasons rather than monetary profit. Even though they earn and make profits like any other business, profit is not the end goal. Whether reinvesting their profits into communities or environmental projects, or for creating work for those less fortunate, profit is regarded as the means for achieving another goal. Ecovillages share the same values at heart celebrating diversity and creating meaningful roles for people so naturally business in an ecovillage should be a social enterprise. There are many examples of social enterprises outside the ecovillage context that could work as inspiration for the enterprising ecovillage.*

## La Poudrière

La Poudrière is a non-profit organisation working and living as a community in and around Brussels, Belgium. They are part of the Emmaüs Movement; A charity that provides people with a home and work, usually collecting, sorting and reselling donated furniture and household goods, the community aim to make their living from second-hand shops. Instead of striving for profit, success is rather measured in social and environmental terms. The organisation is embracing to all: young and old, families and singles, refugees, immigrants, academics, persons with disabilities, priests and the homeless. Values such as solidarity, autonomy, community, equality and happiness saturate the community and all areas of their work.



Sorting through the many second-hand items can be quite a task!

Photograph: La Poudrière archives

## Operation

The organisation has more than 60 members living in 5 communities: Three within Brussels, a farm 70km from Brussels and an old concrete factory - which serves as recycling station and scrap yard - close to the border with France. All members work inside the organisation, supporting themselves financially through their work related to their second-hand shop. They have no external funding, with every member pooling their incomes including pensions etc. into the organisation and no one has personal savings. Expenses are kept to a minimum through sharing and reusing. The Community's farm further supports material needs, providing a production of fruit, vegetables, eggs and meat for the whole community throughout most of the year. Any surplus is sold locally; even though this is today a minor source of income.



Community gathering

Photograph:  
La Poudrière archives

La Poudrière receives clothes, furniture, crockery, ornaments etc. that people or companies donate, which together they sort, to later sell in the second-hand shop. The shop provides a service for the public that gives access to affordable recycled and reused products and is also environmentally friendly.

## Business and community

La Poudrière live together like a family without any strict rules, they put into practice good manners, common sense and respect. All this is a personal effort each member of the community makes to work towards an enjoyable life for all. Regulations and rules are not listed but rather instilled through their lifestyle requiring a certain amount of discernment and prudence from the members.

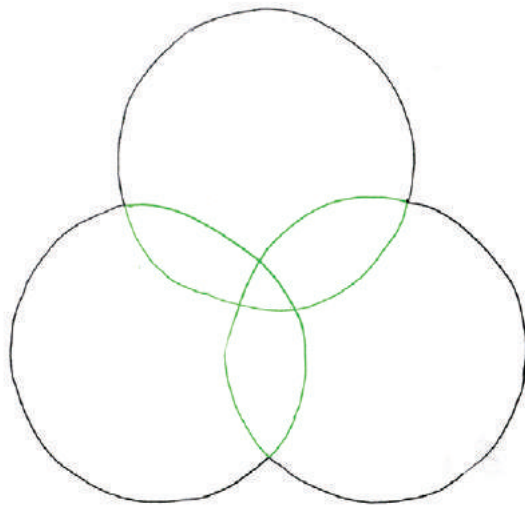


Celebrating 50 years  
of La Poudrière!

Photograph:  
La Poudrière archives

The community, the organisation and their business are completely interlaced and the organisation is run as a social enterprise trying to achieve positive social and environmental outcomes over commercial profit. Everybody is encouraged to find their place and work responsibilities are distributed whenever possible according to people's abilities and gifts. There are no privileges and everyone should be involved with the work, on all levels. Except the social benefits of the members they get their material needs including food and accommodation covered by the organisation, as well as an allowance of 25€ per week which is equal for everyone.

CHAPTER 5:  
**DESIGNING GREEN OPERATIONS**





## CHAPTER 5: DESIGNING GREEN OPERATIONS

Suderbyn Ecovillage is in a progress of identifying which enterprises are appropriate for our ecovillage. We consider what we ourselves need, what we are suited to produce and what our residents would be interested in producing. While value-added agricultural products like food and drink are under consideration so are services based on the skills and knowledge we have and are ready to impart on others. At the UN World Commission on Environment and Development (1987) conference, sustainable development was defined as *“development that meets the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”*. In the same way Green Entrepreneurship must provide for needs and wants without damaging nature’s ability to continue to provide eco-system services.

### What should Green Enterprises produce?

- Services before physical goods: We need to slow material throughput by buying less goods. By sharing the goods that are produced we increase use efficiency. In a sustainable world common needs can be solved in sharing circles that co-own or co-manage.
- Prioritise durable goods lasting generations, by avoiding single-use or short product-life products.
- Create a product-life tailored for actual needs; for example, many medicines are potent after we need them and can cause damage to other humans and species that ingest them.
- Facilitate multiple owner/user goods rather than individualistic goods: jointly own community goods, for example, car pools are business opportunities which allow many to access environmentally-friendly transport.

These basic principles outlined above can help in identifying the right types of goods or services that fit your business interests. However, incorporating ecological values into business plans requires more complex thinking about regenerative design. The first step in this is to grasp life cycle assessment. As all products have life cycles it is important to view the cycle and know if your business is downcycling or upcycling resources. By downcycling you re-work the resource into a less reusable state, while upcycling your product is more pure and reusable. Almost all processing deconcentrates and mixes resources so that the process creates waste and the product and the end of its life cycle is waste. Upcycling does the opposite. For example, extracting organic waste at a landfill for composting to produce soil is upcycling, Producing electricity from manure via biogas digester would also be considered upcycling.

### Life Cycle Assessment (LCA)

Life cycle assessment (LCA, or cradle-to-grave analysis) is an analysis tool to assess environmental impacts during all the stages of a product’s life from raw material extraction through materials processing, manufacture, distribution, use, repair and maintenance, and disposal or recycling.

LCAs are useful to grasp the main impacts of the product on its surroundings by:

- Compiling an inventory of energy and material inputs as well as emissions
- Evaluating the impacts of inputs and emissions
- Interpreting the results for informed decision

LCA methods only account for a handful of ecosystem services. Ecologically Based Life Cycle Assessment (Eco-LCA), having the same approaches and strategies as standard LCA, also considers the direct and indirect impacts on ecological resources and surrounding ecosystems. Developed for resilience

research by Ohio State University Center, Eco-LCA is a methodology that quantitatively takes into account regulating and supporting services during the life cycle of products. Services are categorized for Eco-LCA in four main groups: supporting; regulating; provisioning; and, cultural services.

An ecovillage business product can be analysed with Eco-LCA to fully identify potential negative impact of the product. While the product itself may seem societally beneficial, an eco-LCA may reveal that the marketing of the product, the repair of the item, or the insuring of the item creates environmental costs not seen in the LCA of the main product itself. For example, many ecovillage businesses resell wholesale imported items considered ecological. However, when the broader perspective is used, many negative impacts surface that make the item less environmentally friendly.

## **Cradle-to-Cradle Closed Loop Thinking**

Cradle-to-cradle is a specific kind of cradle-to-grave assessment, where the end-of-life disposal step for the product is a recycling process that delivers a raw input to a new life cycle. Through employing sustainable production, operation and disposal practice, and incorporating social responsibility into product development, less detrimental production systems are created. Architect William McDonough and Chemist Michael Braungart in their book “Cradle-to-Cradle: Remaking the Way We Make Things” [2002] propagates for a new permaculture-like way of manufacturing that mimics nature as a model for manufacturing. McDonough and Braungart suggest that industry and environment do not need to be in conflict. They see “good” green growth as the only way to offer comfortable consumerist lifestyle for all without destroying the planet. The three tenets around which Cradle-to-Cradle is built are: waste = food; use current solar income; and, celebrate diversity. Their innovation-oriented “business model” focuses mainly on organic and technical cycles found between extraction from the source of inputs, the processes in the plant and product life at the consumers. Their five guiding principles are:

- Encourage commitment to new paradigms
- Good growth instead of economic growth
- Continuous innovation and perfection
- Understanding in preparation for learning
- Implementation of intergenerational responsibility

Cradle-to-Cradle is a design methodology and a product certification. Products were certified by MBDC (McDonough Braungart Design Chemistry), a consulting company started in 1995, as being of Cradle-to-Cradle Standard from 2005 when they launched their Cradle-to-Cradle Certified programme. Of all products certified by MBDC, few if any reached the goal of ‘waste equals food’; thus most certified products are in fact not Cradle-to-Cradle. On a more concrete level, their non-profit NGO Cradle-to-Cradle Products Innovation Institute (C2CII) founded in 2010 has five certification criteria which guide manufactures to transparency and avoidance of less desirable materials. Certification process is to be spread and conducted by international certification institutes around the world for manufacturers. The certification allows governmental bodies doing public procurement to specify “Cradle-to-Cradle” standards when procuring goods. This creates a real market for these certified products. Product certification can also function as a marketing tool to companies and a source of income for Braungart and McDonough. The five criteria of the Cradle-to-Cradle Certified CM Product Standard are:

### **1. Material Health**

Transparent identification of the chemical composition of the materials in the product. Hazardous materials such as heavy metals, pigments, halogen compounds need to be listed at any concentration. Other non-hazardous materials need to be reported if they exceed 100 ppm. All use of wood requires

listing the forest source. All materials are categorised according to sense of hazard as “green” materials of low risk, “yellow” of moderate risk and “red” materials of have high risk or “grey” materials of incomplete data. “Red” materials are not “Cradle to Cradle” and need to be phased out.

## **2. Material Reutilisation**

Materials need to be recovered and recycled at the end of product life and become new inputs into other processes. While some materials can be organically composted other clean materials which can be ‘technical nutrient’, an infinitely recyclable material. But many technical nutrient materials are toxic and can pose a great threat if they are not used properly. A “Cradle-to-Cradle” product must be able to be sent back into the biosphere or put into the technology cycle again. Cradle-to-Cradle is based on the premise of endless material recycling, which is theoretically impossible; all materials disperse and degrade over time, which requires new material inputs to the “loop”. Another criticism of Cradle-to-Cradle products is that their material flows are to be kept in a closed loop, while consumers may just throw away their waste to be burned. Cradle-to-cradle does not address the required paradigm shift at the consumer side.

## **3. Renewable Energy and Carbon Management**

Energy required for production must be reported. The highest level of certification requires a production surplus of renewable energy for all parts and sub-assemblies, including initial work on transport aspects. However, Cradle-to-Cradle has been criticised, as it does not provide a solution to the energy problem. The model is focused on material. Per definition material flow management of globally dispersed manufacturing systems require significant transport, which today are not sustainable.

## **4. Water Stewardship**

The handling of water in the production process must be listed, particularly regarding its usage and discharge quality. At the basic level, permits for wastewater discharge need to be in place. At the highest level, discharged water needs to be of drinking water quality. Local concerns and hydrological situation need to inform this criteria.

## **5. Social Fairness**

Social impact for employees, customers, community members, and the environment are also listed. Fair labour practices connected to manufacturing seem to be the core which is assessed and reported. At the lowest level, it is about self-assessed social audits and at the highest level, external social audits. Cradle-to-Cradle is however criticized as not focusing on social sustainability in developing countries where the North tends to purchase its raw materials. The complete picture is an essential part of sustainability.

The five categories above are assessed on a 5-grade scale from basic to platinum.

# **Green Sourcing**

Green sourcing in the ecovillage enterprise would seem an obvious first step but often in the complexity of starting the business and attaining viability, considerations about the source of inputs is skipped. Even in those cases where the main input is sourced properly other smaller inputs come from less than environmentally optimal origins. If a bakery’s carrot cake has 15 ingredients, perhaps only the main components, water, eggs, flour, honey, butter and carrots are local and organic. Spices, baking powder, powdered sugar, vanilla, and salt may be conventional and sourced from abroad under unclear production conditions. Green sourcing is not limited to manufacturing; it should be considered for service businesses that require inputs for the production of services. Consider a health retreat facility.

While the business is offering services of treatments and relaxation, these services need inputs such as creams and lotions, soaps and refreshments, as well as water.

While green sourcing is best to be done prior to start-up, for many reasons it may have to be done after start-up, perhaps due to a taking over of an existing production. It is crucial to have a holistic view of any green sourcing project, considering the complexity of information and the time it will take to redesign and establish the new sourcing process. Throughout the project, keep in mind these four essentials of green sourcing.

1. Green sourcing requires modifications to the current conventional sourcing process.
2. Sustainability must be evaluated together with all internal stakeholders such as designers, production crew and marketing and sales employees.
3. Developing and showing the benefits of a new green sourcing system often involves greater complexity and longer payback periods than reorganising conventional sourcing.
4. Green sourcing requires an analysis of environmental impact, energy use, transport costs, waste production and social impact/labour conditions involved in the production of each potential input.

The key principle of selecting appropriate inputs is to freely utilise flow resources, conserve the use of managed resources and avoid stored resources. This is valid for materials and energy. Examples of flow materials are water and soil, and examples of flow energy would be renewable energy sources. Regarding managed resources that are suitable to be used as inputs if use is kept at sustainable levels, wood products are examples of materials and bio-fuels are examples of energy sources. Some examples of stored material to be avoided are minerals, and stored energy to be avoided are petroleum products.

Labour should not be treated as inputs in green enterprise. Creating meaningful existence, community, identity, social cohesion, and happiness should be the very purpose of starting a green business. However, the initiating group needs to consider what skills, employment needs and interests are available.

Capital is also a production input and should be sought locally, preferably directly connected to the producers or consumers involved. Interest-free and ethical capital should be sought to avoid transfer of wealth for destructive uses.

Many inputs are not available locally and must be sourced at a distance so great that the entrepreneur has no means to check how the input is produced. This situation should be avoided, and local sourcing should always be prioritised. However, certain inputs such as tropical spices are hard to replace and consumer preference puts their use in demand. It is therefore of high importance that only fair trade certified inputs are used in green production.

## Green Production

*“Pollution is nothing but the resources we are not harvesting. We allow them to disperse because we’ve been ignorant of their value”* R. Buckminster Fuller

Green production is not simply pollution control or recycling but seeks to minimize the impact of the manufacturing on the environment at all stages. Green production is a strategy that focuses on environmentally friendly operating processes, which is advisable so as to benefit the natural environment and strengthen the fundamental strategic basis of the business. Stuart Hart, director of the University of Michigan’s Corporate Environmental Management Program (CEMP) and P. Shrivastava defined green production in “Greening Organizations” as focusing upon three fundamental goals:

1. Minimize emissions, effluents, and accidents
2. Minimize the use of virgin materials and non-renewable forms of energy
3. Minimize the life cycle cost (cradle-to-grave) of products or services

The level of ambition of this more mainstream definition can be raised to a level more in keeping with the green entrepreneurship ideas analogue with the ecovillage movement by striving for:

1. Organic and chemical-free production
2. Zero emissions during production
3. Zero waste during production
4. Product durability, or if appropriate, product post-use quick decomposition

How exactly these technical issues are solved is process-specific and cannot be addressed in this book.

## Green Packaging

Packaging is often a key component in a product, important for protection during transport and for attracting the buyer and giving product information. That said, packaging has become a huge threat to sustainability. The most ecological packaging is that which does not exist. The sister network to the Global Ecovillage Network, the Let's Do It! Movement ([www.letsdoitworld.org](http://www.letsdoitworld.org)) promotes zero packaging as an alternative in order to obtain zero waste. Zero-packaging grocery stores are now appearing where consumers are expected to arrive at the shop with reusable packaging, with product information available on the shelf. Such shops attract customers due to the lack of packaging, the focus on simplified product offering, shopkeeper's selective stocking and on the creation of a more harmonious shopping environment.

One rung lower on the ambition ladder would be biodegradable or reusable packaging. I remember buying tea on the train to Calcutta. Vendors along the rails made low-energy teacups out of sun-dried clay and filled the cup first upon purchase. The life cycle of the cup was about 15 minutes, before tea had moistened the clay enough so that the cup began to fall apart. The cup then went out the window and the material was returned to the Earth, potentially providing clay to a new cup. While banana leaves and old newspapers traditionally were a big part of packaging in India, the European market today sees little of these. Reusable glass bottles have however been common for milk, beer and soft drinks. Today single-use is replacing these reuse packaging that were based on deposits. If one has a limited geographic coverage and loyal clients, reusable packaging may be a solution.

Much further down would be recyclable packaging. While the EU has tried to standardise the management of packaging and packaging waste the situation varies between countries how much actually gets recycled and how much is burnt or ends up in landfills. Most EU countries have not tried to control packaging to decrease the negative impact of packaging waste. Increased internal EU trade has hurt the existing deposit systems due to lack of harmonised sizes. Directive 94/62/EC on Packaging and Packaging Waste aims to harmonise national measures in order to prevent or reduce the impact of packaging and packaging waste on the environment and to ensure the functioning of the Internal Market. It is binding on all companies if their products use packaging, and requires manufacturers to recover their own packaging. The directive has been revised several times in an attempt to increase its effectiveness. Some countries are said to deliberately turn a blind eye to the European directive.

PRO EUROPE organises all the national recovery systems for one-way packaging as a business lobby group. One of the dominant forces in European packaging is the Green Dot or in German *Der Grüne Punkt* which is the license symbol of a European network of industry-funded systems for recycling the packaging materials of consumer goods. The German "Grüner Punkt" is considered the

forerunner of the European scheme. Since 1991, the Green Dot system has been rolled out to 23 European countries and is used by more than 130,000 companies, mainly in the EU, encompassing 460 billion packages. Some countries are part of the system but use national symbols for recycling instead of the Green Dot.

## Green Logistics

Focus on production alone can be deceiving. Local organic market-garden vegetables produced near Stockholm have been shown to have an ecological footprint greater than conventional vegetables from even further afield as the transport of small amounts in small vehicles cannot compete with the efficiency of large-scale multi-modal transport systems. There exists a whole range of measures to protect the environment and reduce resource use within logistics at different levels- maturity, range, scope, capital expenditure and resource requirements. In the holistic approach of green logistics, there are five starting points to implement measures for greening logistics:

- Customer, market and product (level 1)
- Structures and planning (level 2)
- Processes, control and measurement (level 3)
- Technologies and resources (level 4)
- Employees, suppliers and service providers (level 5)

Examples of areas within the ecovillage enterprise that could be considered for the greening of its logistics are:

- Lighter, lesser packing
- Route optimization or limitation of market
- Load optimization and vehicle or mode selection
- Cooperating networks connected by logistics service
- Optimizing logistics with IT support

The first four levels are interconnected and impact on the higher levels. Decisions at higher levels reduce the range of solutions at lower levels. Packing mass of a product on the Level 1, for example determines the volume and weight of a product and defines the maximum number of items per transport. Impacts on sustainability – such as greenhouse gas emissions per transported item – are determined in part at level 1. Decisions made on the next levels as well affect CO2 emissions.

## Green Market Analysis

In order to organise a business one needs a business plan, and central to a business plan is a market study to know who might want your planned product or service. As a green enterprise you may want to consider under which conditions you want to sell the good or service, how much and to whom. Once you are sure to whom you wish to sell, the potential consumers need to be consulted to see if your production is in demand. Consumers of different generations have different behaviour, demands and follow different media. Thus, the market is not just people in general or people in the nearest city. Knowing the age of your key consumer groups tells you how you can reach them with information about the introduction of your product and where it is available.

A green entrepreneur could have social considerations, such as offering a local substitute at similar prices to take market shares from the imported competing product. However in most other cases the green entrepreneur will want to identify which consumers are willing to pay more for environmentally

friendly products so that the business can focus on sustainability and quality rather than low price and quantity. Often this means a new type of product that needs to convince the consumer that this is an innovation to be tested. Everett Rogers in “Diffusion of Innovations” lists the following five factors that can help determine whether a new idea or product will be adopted or not:

1. Relative advantage: the degree to which the new behaviour is believed to accrue more beneficial outcomes than current practice.
2. Observability: how easy it is to witness the outcomes of the new behaviour.
3. Trial-ability: the ease with which the new behaviour can be tested by an individual without making a full commitment.
4. Compatibility: the degree to which the new behaviour is consistent with current practice.
5. Complexity: how difficult the new behaviour is to implement.

In addition to considering how difficult product introduction might be, it is also important to consider different types of consumers. LOHAS or “Lifestyles of Health and Sustainability” describes the categories of consumers according to how much environmental and social responsibility influences their purchase decisions. The five LOHAS segments as defined by Natural Marketing Institute include:

- LOHAS: Active environmental stewards dedicated to personal and planetary health. These are the heaviest purchasers of green and socially responsible products and the early adapters who influence others heavily.
- Naturalites: Motivated primarily by personal health considerations. They tend to purchase more LOHAS consumable products instead of durable items.
- Drifters: While their intentions may be good, Drifters follow trends when it is easy and affordable. They are currently quite engaged in green purchasing behaviours.
- Conventionals: Pragmatists who embrace LOHAS behaviour when they believe they can make a difference, but are primarily focused on being very careful with their resources and doing the ‘right’ thing because it will save them money.
- Unconcerned: Either unaware or unconcerned about the environment and societal issues mainly because they do not have the time or the means – these consumers are largely focused on getting by.

## Ecolabelling

Ecolabelling systems exist for both food and consumer products. Both systems were started by green NGOs but the European Union has standardised the rules of ecolabelling. The EU has now its own eco labels, one for food and one for consumer products. There are many competing label systems. Some labels function as product endorsement by organisations that are assumed to have consumer trust, such as MBCD and WWF. For larger organisations, mainly public bodies, purchasing databases like Eco-Buy steer the large-scale procurement purchasing of hospitals, schools and prisons. There are also related social and ethical labels such as Fair Trade certification.

The international standards cooperation has produced a number of ecolabelling systems. The ISO I collects the broader eco labels like Nordic Swan, EU Ecolabel and Blue Angel (Germany). The ISO II is concerned with specific materials such as CFC-free or recycled content. ISO III labelling gives the consumer information to take better decisions. These include the Nutrient Panel and Environmental Product Declaration.

Organic standards have brought agreement within organic agriculture about what is “organic”. Organic farmers began developing their own organic standards as early as the 1940s. Currently there

are hundreds of private organic standards worldwide, and such standards have been codified in the technical regulations of more than 60 governments. IFOAM is the main international standards body for organic agriculture. In the Baltic Sea region, Lithuania and Belarus are the only countries that do not have a member in IFOAM.

The EU Ecolabel is recognised across Europe. There are already more than 17,000 EU Ecolabel products on the market. The EU Ecolabel was established in 1992 by the European Commission to encourage businesses to market products and services that meet high standards of environmental performance and quality. The EU Ecolabel is awarded according to environmental criteria agreed on by experts, industry, consumer organisations and environmental NGOs at European level. EU Ecolabel criteria consider the whole life cycle of a product, from the extraction of raw materials, through manufacture, packaging, distribution, use and disposal of the product.

The EU Ecolabel helps consumers and public procurer's to easily identify environmentally friendly products. It is a voluntary scheme and represents the only EU-wide Type 1 official Ecolabel, providing a convenient tool for EU Ecolabel licence holders to channel their marketing through a single label, represented by a flower. The criteria have been developed to ensure that the 10-20% most environmentally friendly products currently on the market can meet them.

The Nordic Swan is the official ecolabel in Nordic countries. It uses a system of standards, applications for licenses, and independent verification. It is the official sustainability ecolabel for the Nordic countries, introduced by the Nordic Council of Ministers. This is done by a voluntary license system where the applicant agrees to follow a certain criteria set outlined by the Nordic ecolabelling in cooperation with stakeholders. These criteria include environmental, quality and health arguments. The criteria levels promote products and services belonging to the most environmentally sound and take into account factors such as free trade and proportionality (cost vs. benefits). The Nordic Ecolabel now covers 67 different product groups, from hand soap to furniture to hotels. Products must verify compliance using methods such as samples from independent laboratories, certificates and control visits. The label is usually valid for 3 years, after which the criteria are revised and the company must reapply for a license.

Ecolabels indicating that timber in wood-based products originate from forests that are sustainably managed in compliance with internationally recognized standards include (at a global level) labels by the Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification and the Forest Stewardship Council, and (at regional and national level) labels by the Sustainable Forestry Initiative. The timber is tracked through the supply chain to the end product, so that consumers can choose to buy sustainably harvested wood over alternatives that may be contributing to deforestation worldwide.

Some labels are applied to the direct purchase of energy or to the power stations producing electricity. EKOenergy, an NGO ecolabel originating in Finland, is to become the European ecolabel for energy. EU Directive 92/75/EC established an energy consumption labelling scheme. The directive was implemented by several other directives thus most white goods, light bulb packaging and cars must have an EU Energy Label clearly displayed when offered for sale or rent. The energy efficiency of the appliance is rated in terms of a set of energy efficiency classes from A to G on the label; A being the most energy efficient, G the least efficient. The labels also give other useful information to the customer as they choose between various models. The information should also be given in catalogues and included by Internet retailers on their websites. In an attempt to keep up with advances in energy efficiency, A+, A++ and A+++ grades were later introduced for various products. Since 2010, a new type of label exists that makes use of pictograms rather than words, to allow manufacturers to use a single label for products sold in different countries.



The Blue Angel (*Der Blaue Engel*) is a German ecolabelling system for products and services. Blue Angel is the oldest ecolabel in the world, and it covers some 10,000 products in some 80 product categories. After introduction in 1978 as the first worldwide environmental label, other European and non-European countries followed the Blue Angel example and introduced their own environmental labels. These labels aim to inform consumers about environmentally friendly products thus support product-related sustainable development. In 1994, some countries cooperated in developing the Global Ecolabelling Network (GEN)- a non-profit interest group composed of ecolabel organisations throughout the world.



## Case on Holistic Educational: Spiti Ton Kendavron

*The idea of holistic educational centres is in many ways in tune with ecovillage living. Trans-disciplinary education programmes for sustainable living have been developed by for instance Gaia education and Permaculture pioneers which has become a sort of basis for ecovillage ideology and practice. A holistic educational centre in the same spirit naturally involves non-formal participatory learning on all aspects for how a group of people can live, sustain and flourish due to certain physical constraints. By combining volunteering, eco-tourism and education with the production of food a holistic educational centre has the prospect of being a lucrative business practice in line with the vision of many ecovillages.*

### House of the Centaurs, Greece

“Spiti Ton Kendavron” (House of the Centaurs) is an educational non-profit organisation founded in 2010 focusing on holistic education on sustainable living. It is located near Anilio village on the Eastern slopes of Pelion Mountain and its vision is to evolve into an ecovillage. To sustain itself the centre runs seminars and workshops from May to October experimenting with different aspects of sustainability and community life. The project has already found a solid base for income but is expanding its activities continuously, aiming for resilience, sustainable living conditions as well as cooperation and influence on the local surrounding and society.



One of the courses on offer at Spiti ton Kendavron is massage training.  
Photograph:  
Terry Vergos

### Current business practice

The Centre’s income-generating activities are centred at the main building, a former large family home set in soft woodlands. The building has been extensively renovated to cater for workshop groups. 19 beds in six bedrooms, all with shared toilets and showers, and tents are offered for accommodation. The house has a sufficient infrastructure to host the current income-generating activities of the organisation and a platform from where the project can be expanded.

Currently the centre depends exclusively on dedicated volunteers from all around the world to provide its staff base. The staff is paid €60-75 per week, depending on length of time and experience, for a



Tents and hammock area  
Photograph:  
Terry Vergos

minimum of two weeks work-exchange. This supports the cost of organic food, simple accommodation or tent, transport to the beach and an interesting set of experiences. Work is around 5 hours per day, with one day off per week. Their responsibilities include: coordination of activities, the organisation of kitchen responsibilities, arranging transport to and from the beach, helping with gardening and maintenance and shopping.

The organisation offers holistic holidays for international groups to gather and share knowledge and skills through facilitation, non-formal learning and mutual exchange. Work camps provide an opportunity to join in with the running and feel of the Centre, to learn natural building methods, organic gardening and to participate in authentic community building which includes the building bonds between people in communication, trust and appreciation. Leisure time activities like kayaking, horse-riding and trips to the beach are also part of the visitor experience, often arranged together with local small businesses.

By renting land from the landowner the organisation is able to run its activities. The landowner is sympathising with the project's aims and is also a member of the organisation and plays an integral role in the decision-making, which is done using a consensus model. By involving the landowner in the enterprise and the organisation is agreed to rent the land for a relatively low cost and the project in return is raising its ecological and financial value.

## Vision and ambitions



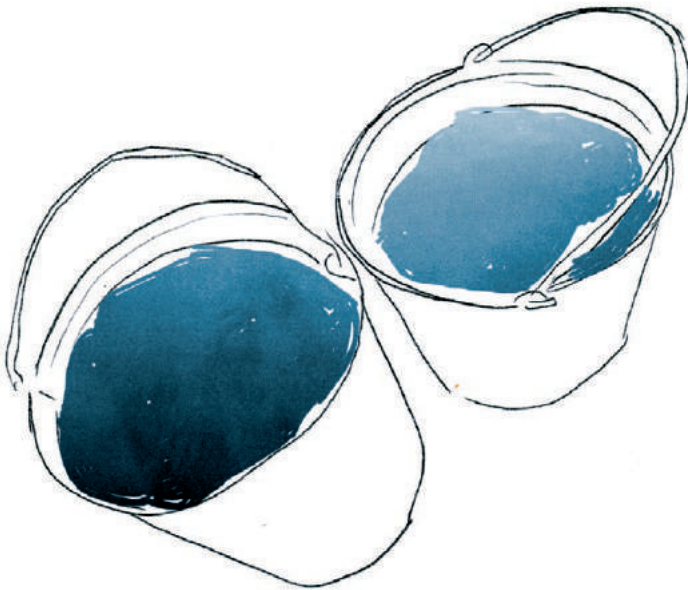
Waste-water management presentation  
Photograph:  
Terry Vergos

Today the income from the activities roughly covers the expenses to run the centre and pay rent to the landowner. After a few years having supported the project with private money; the members decided to move to the next phase by trying to shape a social enterprise with a diversity of activities to increase economic income as well as resilience and synergies between activities. For instance, even though all activities are foremost concentrated on formal and non-formal learning processes, the outputs, like food, herbs and handicrafts, could potentially be introduced to the local market. Also by reinvesting most of the profit into the project it can grow and in return expand its capacity, hosting more people and manage more operations.

By cooperating with the local council and businesses as well as the local community, the organisation strives to find mutually beneficially agreements that develop the organisation and its surrounding. Thus good relationships and participatory decision-making are regarded as key elements for a successful enterprise. The possibilities for EU funding directed to develop sustainable social enterprises are considered which could be used to facilitate and expand the infrastructure and in return the capacity and range of activities.

With a focused value-driven agenda Spiti Ton Kendavron is staying close to its vision. By becoming a hub to connect local people, businesses and visitors with an inflow of international expertise in the broad theme of holistic sustainable lifestyle, the organisation hopes to create positive change on people, environment and society.

CHAPTER 6:  
**BALANCING ECOVILLAGE LIVING  
WITH GREEN BUSINESS**



## CHAPTER 6: BALANCING ECOVILLAGE LIVING WITH GREEN BUSINESS

This book began with the thought that green entrepreneurship is a tool for creating the new society all ecovillagers aspire to. However, being the change is in part in standing for new values of a less materialistic existence, and a more socially rewarding life in community. The searching for balance between work with its associated productivity as well as simply living life, and appreciating that which is and those who are around us, is often a great challenge. I myself struggle constantly with finding balance between obligations I create or accept in order to be “productive” and just trying to live and appreciate the day. There is debate within Suderbyn as to whether outside work, ecovillage enterprise or externally-funded projects can most painlessly provide for us as a community and as individuals the time and money needed to have maximal time to just be ourselves and live the ecovillage life we dreamt of. What we find is that the answer is quite individual. The aversion to or appreciation for the excitement and pressures that these sources of livelihood can offer are perceived differently by different persons.

### Balancing with Quadruple Bottom Line

Defining sustainable entrepreneurship is about finding a balance between a focus on societal, environmental, and economic issues. These three posts constitute the corporate reporting standards at the end of the last century known as the “triple-bottom-line”. The triple bottom line concept is already a reality. 45% of the world’s top companies publish triple bottom line reports [Elkington: 1998]. Obviously it was not enough. The quadruple bottom line is therefore a more ambitious tool to help the green entrepreneur create balance. The bottom line for sustainable entrepreneurship demands adopting new practices to promote not only profit but also environmental, social and personal sustainability and long-term performance. In the quadruple bottom line the four “P’s” stand for **P**lanet (resources), **P**ersonal (individual/passion), **P**eople (social) and **P**rofit (commercial). In short, the personal health and motivation of the individual become part of the equation. Green enterprise has to leave room for the personal happiness of those involved.

### Seeking Happiness Rather Than Profit

GEN activist Agnieszka Komoch once wrote about the Lebensgarten ecovillage process with regards to how values, growth and money are carefully balanced with each other, and are constantly revised and reinvented. They constitute a Gross Ecovillage Product, which is closely connected to learning and teaching, or transformation and outreach. Between the two tension poles of work and money, ecovillages are slowly redefining and returning to the original meaning of the terms: to fulfil the basic needs to achieve happiness, as work as an expression of body, mind and spirit and with monetary payment as recognition.

Happiness is an inner measure of quality of life, of subjective well-being, not related to the material standards in which we find ourselves. In post-modern economies, other issues than material conditions are becoming more important, and among them are a non-material spiritual happiness. But where there may be a subtle shift towards the spiritual, can it be happiness that is the fourth bottom line? New measurement burdens should not be used to increase personal contentment. While a measurement can remind us of balance, there must be deeper value change than that to becoming a green entrepreneur.

Researchers led by University of Illinois professor emeritus of psychology Ed Diener used data from Gallup World Polls in 123 countries, conducted from 2005 to 2010 to find out sources for happiness. The satisfaction of higher needs – for social support, respect, autonomy or mastery – was strongly related to enjoying life. These relate in turn to identity, self-expression, self-realisation, which all can be facilitated through active entrepreneurship, as well they can be lost or under-prioritised by a stressed businessperson.

CHAPTER 7:  
**ECOVILLAGE ROAD AS A PORTAL FOR  
ECOVILLAGE ENTERPRISING**



## CHAPTER 7: ECOVILLAGE ROAD AS A PORTAL FOR ECOVILLAGE ENTERPRISING

The Ecovillage Road website ([www.ecovillageroad.eu](http://www.ecovillageroad.eu)) has been created based on the belief that ecovillages are and should be regarded as important role-models for the broad society on how life as well as economy could be organised and sustained. It also brings with it high hopes that ecovillages will develop, grow and multiply in the coming decades as answers to the ecological, economic and social problems identified by both people and governments of modern society. But for them to be able to flourish they must also be supported by society itself. The Baltic Sea region programme 2007-2013 project “Ecovillages for sustainable rural development”, where Ecovillage Road is one of the main outputs, is one of the most apparent evidences of society starting to acknowledge the value and benefits that ecovillages could have for the transition into a green society and a green economy.

The idea of Ecovillage Road is to gather the ecovillages around the Baltic Sea (the geographic confines could later be expanded) and promote their services to a broad public audience. By doing so ecovillage entrepreneurship is identified and encouraged and more exchange is created between ecovillages and mainstream society. To further improve the flow of skills, knowledge and activity on the site consultants in ecovillage related issues can as well become members and offer their services. In this chapter some of the ecovillage services on Ecovillage Road (in its early stage of development) will be provided. The services presented will be arranged according to how they are structured on the Ecovillage Road website.

### Events

#### **A day at Rikkenstorp / Rikkenstorp, Sweden**

Rikkenstorp held an event on the 30th of July 2013 in the ‘Dan Anderssons’ week, in memory of a famous Swedish poet, with several activities on the programme of events. For the duration of the day there was a market exhibiting different artisans, local producers, craftsmen, expositions and booksellers. Visitors could also enjoy photography, Finnmark, a food exhibition, play on their own musical instruments, experience a smoke house and learn about permaculture. Bergslagsgården sold food and refreshments. Visitors had the opportunity to take a guided cultural tour with the farms’ owner. Additionally, there was music from different artists. One music group ‘*Kolonien*’ had environmental issues as their main lyrical focus, alongside other political messages covering broader issues. Other musicians played folk music and recited Dan Anderssons’ poetry.



**Dan Andersson week  
at Rikkenstorp**  
Photograph: Hélène  
Littmarck Holmdahl

#### **Commemoration of Algirdas, Grand Duke of Lithuania / Zina Gineitiene, Melkys Ecovillage, Vilnius district, Lithuania**

Since being founded in 2001, Melkys Ecovillage has been regarded as a center of competence trainings and organic farming. Currently it is developing towards being a social space for further trainings and seminars, social events, social services and volunteering. Melkys Ecovillage is located in a historical place near Maisiagala, a former second capital of Lithuania, where the Grand Duke of Lithuania Algirdas’ castle stood in the 14th Century. Once a year a festival is organized near the Algirdas’s mound dedicated to the commemoration of the Grand Duke



**A moment from the event**  
Photograph: Zina Gineitiene

of Lithuania. The location is unique because it is a place of glorious ancestries past, fights, spiritual strength and concentration. The Ecovillage community, representatives of the army, children from the day center and residents of other towns gather together to revive and celebrate the history. The programme includes Mass, cortege, theatricalised concerts, music performances and social gatherings around the fire. All are welcome to participate in this annual event.

## Trainings and seminars

### No Mind Festival / Ängsbäcka, Sweden

The first No Mind Festival was held in 1997, and today it is the largest festival in Northern Europe that has a focus on personal and spiritual development. Every summer about 800 participants come together with open minds for a week of celebration and introspection, collaborating with workshop leaders, musicians and volunteers. A festival within the festival offers a special program for children and young people. Participants enjoy nurturing vegetarian food as part of their festival ticket. The No Mind Festival is a vibrant and inspirational meeting place where open presence, love and inner silence is expressed and explored through meetings of playfulness, meditation, music and dance. No Mind is all about being with what is. It offers an opportunity to break free from the internal dialogue, and supports the freedom from the dictatorship of the mind. It does so by creating a space for you to enjoy re-connecting with your true nature through finding harmony between body and mind.



## Consultations

### Trainings and seminars in Permaculture / Laimis Zmuida, Consultant, ecosettlement in Ukmerge district. Lithuania

Laimis Zmuida is one of the Lithuanian Permaculture School founders. This variety of Permaculture is defined by agricultural practices that exclude the use of compost, manure, fertilisers, irrigation, greenhouses and digging. Instead of such industrial-farming components, plants are established with a balanced nutrition from their local environment, enabling strong plants that are healthy and resistant to diseases and pests. During the seminars participants are taught to install convenient and environmentally-friendly beds, so as to be able to plant forest gardens. The following knowledge is explained in detail: the mulching process; the impact of soil bacteria and fungi growth on plants; and, the importance of relations within the local ecosystem when protecting the garden from diseases and pests. Seminars are organised for individuals as well as for small groups of people.



### Compassionate Communication for Communities / Maud Gustavsson, Consultant, Göteborg

Maud offers workshops and trainings for communities interested in focusing their communication towards compassionate dialogues, and exploring communication structures that works for them. Her compassionate communication workshops are based on Marshall Rosenberg's ideas of Non Violent Communication (NVC). NVC is a method of communication that strives to achieve positive contact and compassion between people. The focus is on constructive dialogue instead of destructive



argumentation. Maud has a vision of a world where there is space for everyone to realise their inner dreams, values and needs in order to live in harmony with themselves, each other and nature. She has a Bachelors Degree in Conflict Resolution, is a trained life coach, and has led several workshops and trainings in the realm of compassionate communication.

### **Creation of Kin's Domain Village / Ingrida Zitkauskienė, founder of Krunai and Sventasodis Kin's Domain villages, Lithuania**

Ingrida Zitkauskienė now is creating a second village of Kin's Domain. The first ecosettlement, Krunai, was established a decade ago and is the permanent living accommodation for 14 families. The second ecosettlement, Sventasodis, has 17 planned plots, with 5 families that are already established in their homesteads. In Kin's Domain villages, self-sustainable communities are developed that pursue crafts, educational activities and events: buildings are constructed from authentic materials with ethnic decoration patterns; seminars on natural farming and eco-technologies are held; alongside organising festivals involving local people that preserve Lithuanian cultural heritage. Based on the long-term practical experience, Ingrida Zitkauskienė provides consultations in self-sustainable communities and Kin's Domain village creation.



**Ingrida Zitkauskienė - consultant on kin's domain village creation**

Photograph: Regimantas Zitkauskas

## **Internships and volunteering**

### **Volunteering in the Country Idyll / Cultural and Ecological Farm FREEDOM, Poland**

Throughout the year the Cultural and Ecological Farm FREEDOM is open to volunteers and visitors who want to help maintain the farm. The Farm Freedom is looking for volunteers to assist with: taking care of the garden and pets (goats, dogs, and cats); helping with ongoing maintenance work on the farm; construction work (adaptation: bathroom, workshop, barn, two basements and garage); promotion the place; organisation of workshops; and finally, fundraising for the association. In return, the Farm Freedom offers accommodation in a guest room or campsite (depending on the number of guests) and vegetarian meals based upon Magic Hat custom, which supplies a shared kitchen and current living expenses. Additionally, volunteers will gain valuable life experience and a better understanding of rural living in a relaxed and friendly atmosphere, with weekend country idyll regional walking tours, swimming in the river Cieśniawka and an evening fire.



**Freedom Poland**

Photograph: Jarosław Stadnik

### **Accommodation and Catering Services for Visitors, Agriculture and Maintenance Work [Voluntary Work] / Keuruu Ecovillage, Keuruu, Finland**

Keuruu Ecovillage Cooperative runs the business at Keuruu Ecovillage. The primary business focus is providing accommodation and catering services for visitors (based on prior agreement), alongside agriculture and maintenance work. Keuruu Ecovillage Association receives financial support from the state to employ people with reduced working capacity. In addition, the Keuruu Ecovillage organises voluntary work in the village. It is possible to come and work as a volunteer in Keuruu Ecovillage during specific voluntary working weeks, which are organised every year during the last weeks of May and August. Volunteers participate



**Keuruu Ecovillage**

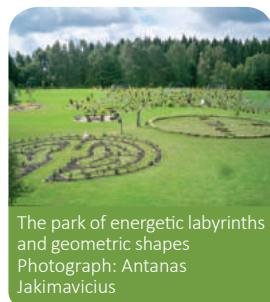
Photograph: Veli Martin Keitel

in the daily life and work of the community. Keuruu Ecovillage is situated near to the small town of Keuruu in the middle of beautiful Finnish countryside, and currently there are approximately 40 residents. The Ecovillage is largely sustained by volunteers. The aim of Keuruu Ecovillage is to promote an ecologically and socially sustainable lifestyle in all areas of life. Keuruu Ecovillage is politically and religiously unattached. Art and music are a part of the daily life for many of the inhabitants, and there is plenty of opportunity for free-time activities including indoor and outdoor sports, playing and listening to music and making many kinds of art.

## Ecovillage Tourism

### **The Park of Energetic Labyrinths and Geometric Shapes / Homestead of Jurga and Antanas, Plunge District, Lithuania**

The park is situated in an old homestead in a beautiful corner of Lithuania, in Zemaitija national park, near Lake Plateliai. The homestead was founded in 1804, and was named by its residents as the house of relatives. Residents learn from each other, and work together to create the park of labyrinths and other geometric shapes. When walking through the labyrinths, looking at the mandala The Flower of Life, staying next to the Merkaba, standing or sitting in the dome you can relax, get inspiration, find thoughts, ideas and answers to the questions of life and understand what you really want. While walking along the labyrinth, you wind forward and back turning 180 degrees each time you start a new circle. When a person changes his walking direction, his perception changes from the right hemisphere of brains to the left. It is one of the reasons why a labyrinth can promote acceptance of perception, sense and consciousness. It also helps to balance the chakras and a person's halo. Each walk is special as an energetic labyrinth is a sacred place with its naturally powerful structure. It is also possible to stay for a longer period in a homestead and in the park of the labyrinths at the 208-year-old barn with the authentic exterior and modern interior equipped with all conveniences.



### **Experience Swedish Life in the Winter / Ekobygden Stjärnsund, Sweden**

Stjärnsund is a new ecovillage project and a center for demonstration and training in permaculture and ecovillage practices. Among other things they offer a complete package for visitors to experience the Swedish winter in the ecovillage, embedded by the wild and typical Swedish nature of Dalarna. They offer accommodation for visitors and cooked meals by letting the visitors cook their own food in the guest kitchen. In the ecovillage there are many different activities and attractions for the guests including ice fishing, kite-skiing, sauna with ice swimming, outdoor hot tub, spa and massage, cross-country ski safari, winter picnic expeditions and winter camping, as well as a "journey back in time" at the Polhems-museum and guided tours through Stjärnsund with its many historical attractions.



## **Sale and Distribution of Organic Products on the Farm and at the Tampere Region / Kurjen Tila, Vesilahti, Finland**

'Kurjen Tila' community and biodynamic farm produces organic products that are sold through a Tampere based company called 'Luomulaatikko' and a shop called 'Tila Kaupungissa' in the city of Tampere. Additionally, 'Kurjen tila' operates a summer café and fresh produce market on the farm, open for 3 hours every Saturday in August and September. Kurjen Tila Farm was founded in 2011 and is located in western Finland close to the Pyhäjärvi Lake, 170 km from Helsinki, the Finnish capital. There is public transport to the farm, although connections are somewhat limited. The farm was initially bought by four families who had a vision to transform it into a biodynamic farm, and build an ecological community village alongside it.

## **Development of Appropriate Technology Tools for Communities / Hakkerikartano, Finland**

Hakkerikartano and the individuals provide help in working with metals and producing machinery that can be used in agriculture or construction activities. They develop open source hardware tools and equipment for the production of tools, food, energy, housing and so on. The first tool offered is the broadfork for small-scale soil improvement. Further examples can be found in the GVCS project on Open Source Ecology. They can help communities and individuals to build the tools they need to live sustainably and comfortably, with minimal financial investment and moderate investment in work.

## *Conclusions*

If it is true that we began with the ecovillagers' desire to significantly contribute to the global transformation of society, then simply living in an ecovillage is not a sufficient contribution to that end. Ecovillagers need to interact with the mainstream along political, social and economic lines. Economic interaction it does not mean dependence on public funding or aid, but rather to interact from a position of autonomy while creating inter-linkages. Green enterprise offers ecovillagers the opportunity to interact in yet another way, to work ideologically but to remain self-financed. In order to have the effect mentioned above, it is necessary to preserve the pure intentions of the green enterprise in a working environment that encourages the keeping of the guiding ideological principles.

Therefore it is of crucial importance not only for ecovillagers to engage in commercial ventures to economically support themselves and their community, but to do it in such a way that it promotes new values associated with the desired societal transformation. Business plans must not only be viable and operations feasible; they must strive to be green in every respect. Green businesses need to strengthen the Earth's resilience, deepen community, democracy and respectful inter-personal relations as well as produce goods and services that make the world a better place. That is a tall order but these are the same ideas that ecovillages are founded upon. Thus it is the ecovillager who is most well suited to take up this challenge and reach these high standards.

## *Afterword*

As emphasised throughout this book, truly green enterprises and businesses must be in the core of the society most of us want to see in the future. The vision of many ecovillages is to become and to be regarded as good examples of social entities practically living sustainable life while maintaining a high quality of life. The success of such a project lies to a great extent on how it can economically sustain, which means that green business is intrinsic to its vision. Along these lines the first step for the ecovillager is to accept and embrace this reality (and the ideological conflict it might imply), the second step to achieve economic sustainability and interdependence and the third step to spread ideas and to act as good example for others to follow.

This book is mainly dedicated to the second step, with other words how economic interdependence can be achieved through green enterprise. As part of the ECOVILLAGES project and as an auxiliary project output of Ecovillage Road, the book must be regarded as part the project's overall ambition, which is to facilitate all the three steps mentioned. Ecovillage Road, as the main output dealing with green entrepreneurship, is designed to encourage green enterprise and services in ecovillages and presenting them for the public to achieve change on a broad societal level. Thus Ecovillage Road supports step 2, by bringing customers to the ecovillages, as well as step 3, by identifying ecovillage enterprises as the forerunners of truly green enterprise. By supporting ecovillages to reach and fulfil their potentials one could imagine how ecovillages could become important players in the transition of society.

Visit Ecovillage Road: [www.ecovillageroad.eu](http://www.ecovillageroad.eu)

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**The Enterprising Ecovillager: achieving community development through innovative green entrepreneurship** / Robert Hall. — Vilnius : BMK leidykla, 2013. – 52 p.

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Today there are an increasing number of people who are starting think about creating lifestyles that do not endanger the Earth and global populations. The ecovillage movement provides an alternative to mainstream way of living. Ecovillages of the new century try to live in a sustainable manner, taking into account ecological, economic and social aspects, through leading by example and being role models for the rest of society to follow.

One of the biggest challenges for ecovillages has been to create jobs and sustainable sources of income within the ecovillage. This book offers a practical guide on how ecovillages can create business opportunities that adhere to the principles of truly green thinking. It gives an overview of the different aspects that should be considered by the aspiring ecovillage entrepreneur, and presents examples of successful business stories from various ecovillages around Europe. This book also strives to remedy the reluctance that many ecovillagers feel toward business. Furthermore, it demonstrates the ways in which ecovillages are ideally suited to run businesses that are compatible with the well-being of both people and planet, the businesses of the future.



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[www.ecohome-ngo.by](http://www.ecohome-ngo.by)



[www.permaculture.se](http://www.permaculture.se)



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BEN (Baltic Ecovillage Network)

GEN-Finland  
([www.rihmasto.fi/skey](http://www.rihmasto.fi/skey))

[www.balticecovillages.eu](http://www.balticecovillages.eu)

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