

Excerpts from Harimedia Forum

Discussions with Hari

Community and Hari-livingdreams

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How will you live in a community?

by Hari » Wed Mar 18, 2009 4:35 pm

Community social structure tends to boil down to economy as being the most powerful factor in its growth and development. Even if you are living in the best of communities if you cannot maintain yourself and your family, you cannot get enough to eat, a proper place to live, maintain your health, or live life according to some standard that you need, you cannot remain there. Therefore the first and foremost responsibility of every person desiring to live in any community anywhere is to have a means of support.

If you are self-sufficient and have enough money, you could consider buying land and building a house with the idea to use it as a vacation house or a hobby garden. However such developments are not necessarily useful since there is no real community there in the sense of a living and growing group of people whose economic and social survival are interconnected. Retirement communities are an example of this. Although the idea of co-dependency is frowned upon by spiritualists, in context of community, co-dependency is that which makes it grow and thrive. When there is no longer a possibility to earn money within a specific locale people tend to move to another location. Many communities have been built with the ideal to have a nice place to live but have not considered the very basic and fundamental requirement of economic sustainability. A hobby community is an opulence available only to the rich.

Modern society has centralized most aspects of community. Farming is large scale, utilities provide water and power, communications are provided by a central source, and supermarkets and malls have replaced village centers. This is all well and good in times of prosperity for those who do not wish to worry about the basics of life outside of making money. Perhaps this is the most important consideration for those who wish to create a community. Why does one wish to live in a community if one already has what one needs?

Each individual has to determine what they will do to earn money within that community structure. If the community is far away from the city then there is a possibility to earn by providing goods and services to those who live there. However, if the local population is small, one will not be able to earn enough and will have to find other customers outside of the immediate community. This is possible in some situations and this possibility has to be taken into consideration. Another way to create economic relevancy within a community, and one that is often used by alternative groups, is to manufacture something compatible with the location and the ideals of the people who live there. For example those who are, or were, part of the movement of Rudolf Steiner created the brand Weleda that provides a useful line of products. Another possibility is to have an organic garden and provide vegetables weekly, or in some predictable interval of time, to people in the nearby areas on a subscription basis where they would regularly receive a box of a variety of vegetables. Along the same lines, one could provide meals for those who either do not have time or whose health does not permit them to cook. One could create a center for seminars, healing, or a retreat for others needed escape from the pressures of work or the city and this would be a good interim means to support the community while the society at large remains intact. If and when there is a social breakdown, one can adjust the community to be more self-sufficient.

If one lives in a community yet must commute long distances to work, one will, after a while, consider the long trip to work as being more significant than the communal living situation and move to an area closer to work. If one is economically prosperous in the community or due to living in the community, one tends to be more tolerant of local politics or difficult communal social situations. If one is struggling economically, one might still be inspired to remain in the community if it's a pleasant experience, but one would leave rapidly if it was not. Therefore,

nothing is more important than establishing the economic basis of the community and every individual family or person living within it.

From Hari-LivingDreams.com

The Community of People -- Our Only Real Asset

Homes, money, income, livelihood, health, youth, enjoyment, control and a myriad of other illusory constants in our drastically changing world are neither secure nor are they stable. What we have taken for granted is now slipping away. All that is left is ourselves. We are all in this together.

In this series of essays, I will describe my vision of community in terms of the challenges and obstacles that generally afflict it. My goal is to assist the development of a meaningful alternative to the present non-functioning social structure of the western world.

Family

Friday, August 11, 2017 by [Robert Campagnola \(Hari\)](#)

The basis of every society is the family. It provides stability, security, association, a learning environment, and continuity.

The basis of every family is the cooperative and respectfully appreciative union of a marriage between people who are compatible and capable of expressing their desires, needs, and feelings to their partners. Obviously, when the family members are aware and sensitive they have a better chance at understanding each other.

Even if a particular family may not be a perfect partnership due to personal difficulty, it is still the basis of the society for without it there can be no continuation of its members. It is possible to create a society that is non-continuous, but it will wither and die within a short time. Procreation is such an important aspect of social survival that the bible requests us to prosper and multiply. Most religions of the world recognize the need for a solid family union that continues the generation of new members. Even great economists state that without the family there would be no economic impetus.

When children are left alone, uncared for and unwanted, they are scarred for life. These scars manifest in self-destructive and anti-social behavior that not only costs the society economically, but digs deep into its psyche. Traumas such as those created in early family life are extremely difficult to eradicate. A progressive society is based on making the experience of early growth as rewarding and uplifting as possible.

What Do We Want in a Community?

Friday, August 11, 2017 by [Robert Campagnola \(Hari\)](#)

One might think that everyone who enters into a communal environment has different reasons for being there. While we do have our own unique reasons for being where we are and doing what we do, we all share the basic motivations in life.

Each person wants good food, a nice place to live, friends, family, entertainment, an education, a possibility to grow and develop and express themselves. A society is required to facilitate the fulfillment of these basic, universal desires.

Although we all have these things to a greater or lesser degree, times have changed so radically in the past year that more and more of us are feeling an intense pressure that challenges our capacity to maintain our status quo.

Looking forward, creating a community that fulfills our natural requirements in a sociable and pleasant manner seems to be an important and perhaps even critical means to survive the present chaotic situation.

It is easy to make a list of what we want from a community and it is even easier to get others to agree with our desires. The discussion stage is not complex when we speak about our communal goals as we all share the same basic needs and desires. It is when we start to implement this that trouble begins.

Trouble is born from human interaction. Humans have problems created by their own personal natures, inflamed by the traumas that have scarred them, and complicated by being forced to interact with other humans in the same situation. A community may be initiated with great enthusiasm and conviction, only to be deteriorated from within when the native qualities of the uncultured spirit choke off cooperation.

Greed ruins sharing, anger destroys all peace. Psychological difficulties create conflict and tension. The fear of not being in control of others or placing unreasonable demands on them creates personal and communal stress. This stress and tension creates an atmosphere that dissolves the spirit of the union.

It is for this reason that none of the many communities borne from idealism or religious conviction survive for long. A community cannot be held together by conviction alone neither can it find harmony through shared ideals. While conviction, dedication, hard work and idealism are certainly good qualities, especially when they are spiced with sufficient selflessness and a healthy desire to be of service, communities only succeed when they are based in strong economic principles and the guarantee of personal and familial integrity and security.

If the community is not created in a win-win mood, it simply will not survive regardless of our sincere efforts. Every single member of that community must have a very good answer to the question, "What's in it for me?" Unless each person has a good reason to contribute to a community in a self-fulfilling manner, the community will not succeed. Indeed, it is the whole point of a community to insure that its members are self-satisfied.

The question next appears, "What is self-satisfaction?" As we have already defined it, a community is meant to insure the basic needs of life. But that is not a complete understanding for one can fulfill one's basic needs living isolated in a building of flats within an extremely impersonal city. If one has money and some walls for protection, one can survive. It seems that our desire for community has to be more than simple maintenance of our bodies.

Yet, considering the depression that has arrived, if a community could simply create stability and prosperity, or even just guarantee food on the table in an acceptable dwelling, it might be exactly what is needed for many families. I suggest that combining this basic win-win communal cooperative society with the possibilities of a pleasant association amongst mature and stable individuals is the minimal requirement to inspire community development. Let us now take a look at the economy of the community.

The Economy: The Basis of Everything

Friday, August 11, 2017 by [Robert Campagnola \(Hari\)](#)

Ultimately, everything we do is affected in one way or another by its cost. Anything that is consumed has its cost. Even the air we breathe, usually considered free, has a hidden, yet substantial cost. Considering the environmental pollution and the impact it has on our lungs, skin, eyes, and other organs through toxic stress, allergic reaction, and the reduction of brain capacity due to decreased oxygen supply, air costs us quite a lot! Obviously food, clothes, homes, transportation, utilities, entertainment, health and so on have their price.

Although it sometimes sounds too materialistic for idealists to swallow, I feel that every community rises or falls on its economic basis. I do not mean community in this sense to be a group of houses in a complex for in that case the economy of your neighbor does not affect you and even their total bankruptcy will either usher in a new set of neighbors or an empty home for some time. The community I speak of fits more within the traditional village model. Even if the village is small, it still depends on its members for its economic survival. When a village can no longer sustain its members economically, they all leave and the village dies.

Economy is not necessarily tied to money, although one of the greatest problems in the modern world is the paper currency society. Since the monetary instruments are no longer linked to real value goods, it is easy to manipulate paper in the form of impersonal numbers in a computer system. The most solid form of economy is that which is directly linked to real value. For example, when the coins themselves are worth exactly their face value, as they were in the past when gold and silver were the only real tender, inflation, deflation and scores of other modern monetary diseases cannot exist. Also, it becomes harder for larger groups of individuals to accumulate wealth as it is a physical mass rather than a number on a balance sheet.

Naturally, in the past when there were gold and silver coins there was also a lot of poverty and exploitation. I am not suggesting we return to this unjust system.

If you examine the needs within a village and the capacities of each of its members, we see that food is produced and traded for other forms of food, goods or services. Some perform services, some trade goods, some produce items of need. Everyone potentially has a productive work to perform that engages them and brings in the needs of life. The success of the barter system, even amongst people in this modern age, is not difficult to understand. When everyone acts in whatever manner they can to produce what they can there is almost always someone who needs their work.

Thus one could initially conclude that a successful community is one that is based on each person having a part to play in the economic prosperity of the group.

Considering this, if a community were to initially develop in a traditionally organic manner and consume its own production, it would be able to survive in most circumstances. Naturally, one has to factor in the risks associated with the changing climate, increasing ocean levels, or other unexpected natural disturbances that can hinder productivity. To this end another village industry is borne -- disaster preparation.

However, in any working economy whatever is produced has to be consumed. Unless there is a flow, inventory will grow and this will invite bankruptcy. If the community depends on purchases from a nearby store and all its members work elsewhere and bring money in to the village area, one is simply reproducing the usual societal model presently existing and has

done nothing to create community. Any group of people coming together simply to live in the same place are missing the essence of community. Granted, it might be nice to live together, but if there is interpersonal friction, as there will be, or a change of economic status such as a loss of work or capacity, as there will be, the reason for living in such a group will evaporate and the people will leave. Convincing someone else to join the “group” and purchase the departing families home may be more difficult than initially imagined and worse, after a short while all the original friends who gathered to make the community will be gone leaving shells of living arrangements behind.

At this moment in time, it might be that the community can find strength and stability in avoiding the external chaos that can occur when people lose their capacity to maintain themselves in a satisfactory manner. In such situations, simply providing a means to escape from economic depression is a marvelous thing.

Neither I, nor anyone, can provide a cookie cutter description of creating community. I can simply discuss some issues and participate in the mature reasoning behind any community development. One has to balance initial enthusiasm with the harsh reality of human motivation. If one is aware of one’s personal and communal limitations, one can move forward in any situation with an optimal potential for success.

Alternative Energy Sources

Friday, August 11, 2017 by [Robert Campagnola \(Hari\)](#)

When one lives in a non-tropical environment, one is faced with the inevitable need to use energy to heat one’s home, to cook, to pump water or process sewage, to facilitate communication and so on. These needs are not optional and cannot be ignored.

Considering the situation in the world today, one cannot guarantee the uninhibited flow of fossil fuels to one’s home or place of business. One cannot also count on the value of money for it is after all paper. If and when the crisis hits extremely hard, one will have to pay a premium even for the essential energy required to live up to an acceptable standard of life.

I once lived in a marvelous ecological community in Oxie, a small town outside of Malmo, Sweden. All the houses had passive oil filled solar panels on the roof that created hot water when the sun was shining that could be used either for washing or heating. We also had a wood stove in the kitchen that was linked to the heating system of the house (hot water radiators) so burning wood in that stove allowed you to cook on it if you wanted while heating the house. We had large truckloads of cut wood dumped in our communal road and we had to stack it so we could use it during the colder seasons. I loved this arrangement. We also had electrical back-up systems that heated the water in case one travelled so that the pipes did not freeze. All in all it was great and I would heartily recommend such a system.

Solar panels are a great source of free energy for a long period of time. Wind power is even better and one can create wind generators from simple, easily available materials. This is a wonderful source of energy in places where there is a decent wind.

Composting is an essential part of communal life for the recycled organic material will fortify the earth with nutrients for the next growing cycle. Composting is easy for all people to do. If one lives near a flowing river, one can use water paddles to create some energy.

It seems to me that living “off-the-grid” is the best security in difficult times. Generating the power one needs to maintain ones environment is a real freedom.

Construction and Planning

Friday, August 11, 2017 by [Robert Campagnola \(Hari\)](#)

Every community requires to be planned. As we all utilize transportation, we require roads. Roads are best designed before the community is constructed. Facilitating the ease of flow through the community and access to all the plots that will have homes is the goal. Alongside roads should be placed water and sewage lines, utility lines, communication lines and so on, to minimize the expenses of bringing services to the community. If the services procured from the outside world can be hooked up to one location and thus serve the entire community, it will make setting up new homes easier and less expensive.

Each community must consider the relative placement of houses on the plots to maximize the comfort of the residents and minimize the potential disturbances. Placement to the sun, drainage, privacy and protection are all important factors.

Even though it might be somewhat hard to do, having some codes or principles would be useful for attracting new members to the community. Sometimes people get upset by what their neighbors are doing and need some protection from those who are insensitive.

Not all homes are equal and the amount of money one can put into the design and construction of a home is often the main factor. However, with careful and innovative planning one can create a unique and fully functioning ecological home from common materials. Simply digging the home's bottom floor into the North Face of a hill will help keep it cooler in summer and warmer in winter. I have seen innovative designs that have a grass garden roof that insulated the house wonderfully. Students have created homes that have liquid filled glass walls to capture the heat of the sun and use it to create hot water or to heat the home. By cycling this water in the summer it will also help keep the home cooler. Thicker walls made of solid materials reduces the effects of the elements. Using only natural materials reduces allergies, asthma, and a host of other problems now known to arise from the chemicals found in new homes, new rugs, and new materials.

There are many resources to be found on the internet that explain about the best methods to build "green" homes.