SELF-RELIANT COMMUNITIES:
LOCAL RESPONSES TO GLOBAL CHALLENGES

by

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B.A., The University of Victoria, 1995

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF ARTS
in
THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES

Department of Sociology

We accept this thesis as conforming
to the required standard

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

December 1998

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Abstract

In recent years, a great deal of interest has arisen with respect to the somewhat mysterious process of globalization. All manner of claims are made by our political and economic leaders in its defense. Presumably, globalization is the de facto and globally defining process toward which we all must bow. It is touted as being an inevitable and evolutionary development toward a one-world economy and a one-world consumer culture which, while possessing a few short-term, negative side-effects, promises to raise the quality of living for the world’s people.

Globalization is characterized by a newly developed and extreme mobility of capital. Recent advancements in computer and telecommunications technologies have allowed transnational corporations to manage far-flung corporate empires, and to move at a moment’s notice to wherever operating expenses promise to be the least, and profits the most. These same technological advancements have given powerful impetus to the international investment community, who can now virtually instantaneously transfer truly massive sums in a ceaseless, 24-hour-a-day speculative frenzy.

Globalization can be conceptualized as comprising three important sub-trends: i) economic consolidation, as more and more economic power is concentrated into the hands of a tiny coterie of transnational corporations and the powerful and newly arisen international investment community; ii) disintegration, as extremes in capital mobility confer on corporations and investors the ability to maximize gain regardless of the costs to communities, workplaces, and the environment — anything fixed in time and space; and iii) re-localization, as groups everywhere struggle to break free from the spell of globalization and chart their own course. Globalized capital now knows no allegiance to anything but itself, and in its ceaseless drive to maximize gain it often leaves in its wake plundered communities and ecosystems. Re-localization represents a growing impulse to survive or thwart the relentless pursuits of globalization.

While re-localization can take any of several forms — ethnic conflict, tribalism, Balkanization, and the rise in the U.S. of gated communities complete with armed guards — its most positive expression is identified herein as the Community Self-Reliance (CS-R) movement. The CS-R movement represents a departure from current understandings of new social movements in that it is a composite movement, really a social movement of new social movements, all orbiting around the goal of self-reliant communities as a means to stave off or survive the deleterious effects of globalization.

Of the virtually innumerable constituent movements and individual strategies or initiatives that comprise the CS-R movement, I examine several of the more noteworthy in the following study. The Community Economic Development movement is a particularly key player in the CS-R movement, particularly through its bid to democratize the economy. I examine, in particular, the cooperative phenomenon, including marketing, consumer and workers’ cooperatives. As well, community currency schemes are examined, with emphasis on the Massachusetts Self-Help Association for a Regional Economy (SHARE) and B.C.’s highly successful Local Employment and Trade System (LETS).

With respect to regaining access to and democratizing control over farmland and agriculture potential, particularly in the face of especially aggressive agribusinesses determined to cement
their control over the world’s food supply, I examine the rapidly growing Community Supported Agriculture movement along with Community Land Trusts.

The Intentional Community movement, along with its subsidiary co-housing movement, represent powerful strains within the overarching CS-R movement which are determined to redefine the manner in which we live. In today’s fragmented and individualized world, many people are waking up to a profound sense of social alienation and are joining with others to create unique and innovative ways of living.

Finally, I examine a proposed model for the alternative, de-centralized polity. Known as the shire system, its fullest articulation is by Frank Bryan and John McClaughry who apply the model to the state of Vermont.

In all, I attempt to establish the veracity and validity of the community self-reliance movement, both conceptually as a composite movement and as a bonafide opponent and option to global economic consolidation and social and ecological disintegration.
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<tr>
<td>APEC</td>
<td>Asian Pacific Economic Council</td>
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<td>CED</td>
<td>Community Economic Development</td>
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<td>CEO</td>
<td>Chief Executive Officer</td>
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<td>CLT</td>
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<td>CSA</td>
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<td>CS-R</td>
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<td>EU</td>
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<td>GATT</td>
<td>General Agreement on Trade and Tariffs</td>
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<td>Gross Domestic Product</td>
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<td>GNP</td>
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<td>IIC</td>
<td>International Investment Community</td>
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<td>ILSR</td>
<td>Institute of Local Self-Reliance</td>
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<td>IMF</td>
<td>International Monetary Fund</td>
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<td>LBO</td>
<td>Leveraged Buy-Out</td>
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<td>LETS</td>
<td>Local Employment and Trade System</td>
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<td>MAI</td>
<td>Multi-Lateral Agreement on Investment</td>
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<td>NAFTA</td>
<td>North American Free Trade Agreement</td>
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<td>NSM</td>
<td>New Social Movement</td>
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<td>SHARE</td>
<td>Self-Help Association for a Regional Economy</td>
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<td>TNC</td>
<td>Transnational Corporation</td>
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Acknowledgement

The lion’s share of thanks must go to my Mother, Maureen Hill, for without her unflagging moral and material support these past seven years, word one of this thesis would not have been possible.

The original idea for this study came from my reading of the work of Jane Jacobs, particularly her *Systems of Survival*. To her work I owe a significant debt.

Along the way, many instructors and professors have been instrumental in shaping my understanding of the world and directing my research interests. Of them, special thanks goes to Dr. Sue Nelson, Dr. Martha McMahon, and Dr. Inge Bolin. Without their extra effort and encouragement I might very well have given up the struggle long ago.

Very special thanks goes to my thesis committee, whose extra willingness to accommodate a tight timeline proved invaluable: Professors Tissa Fernando, Brian Elliott, and Bob Ratner.

And, as my thesis advisor, I owe an enormous debt of gratitude to Professor R. S. Ratner. In many ways, this thesis is his work as well. Professor Ratner possesses the rare abilities of the true teacher who, instead of forcing education upon the hapless student, leads by example and inspiration. Many times he subtly urged me to go beyond my limits by quietly indicating a powerfully reaffirming belief in my abilities. And his knack at knowing just when to push me on, and when to let me alone, proved both uncanny and enormously helpful through an often grueling thesis process. It is his work and his thinking that continues to provide me with a benchmark for my academic pursuits.
Introduction

This study concerns globalization, more specifically economic consolidation and ecological disintegration, and the myriad implications and impacts that follow. This study also concerns another aspect of globalization — relocalization — which pertains to the kinds of strategies recently emergent to help individuals and their communities deal with the consequences and magnitude of the effects of globalization.

To introduce this study, to prompt in the reader a conscious and hopefully critical review of a normally deeply buried or otherwise unexamined frame of reference, I pose the following thought exercise: How much of your daily existence revolves around the acts of producing, consuming, and discarding in the service of economic growth? Or, to reverse the question, how many aspects of your life are free from the encroachment of the imperative for sustained economic growth that characterizes the time and place in which we live? How much of your life is devoted to creating wealth or profit, sometimes for yourself, but more often for others? How ‘natural’, in your mind, is the connection between an increase in your nation’s Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and an increase in your nation’s overall well-being? For that matter, how deeply tied to your personal sense of success or achievement of meaning is an income
that steadily increases in its purchasing power? How much of your life is devoted to "getting more," or at least ensuring that what you already have, you do not lose?

Can you think of any activity you might undertake, from work to leisure and birth to death, that does not have at least one bid for profit from somebody somewhere attached to it? The act of birth perhaps? Not usually, unless you eschew the services of doctors, hospital staff, expensive hospital equipment and technology, cameras and film to record the moment, refuse all the baby shower gifts, make your own decorations for the nursery, avoid using expensive, disposable diapers, reject infant formula and breast-feed, decide to not buy and mail out birth announcements, resist telephoning far-flung friends and relatives to break the news... Already, just for being born, an individual in the industrialized world is likely to have triggered an avalanche of economic, growth-stimulating, profit-producing activity. And all before they could form and articulate their own consumer desires, before their exposure to the marvels of mass media and the machinations of modern marketing. Today, in the industrialized world, even the process of birth is deeply embedded within a matrix of economic activity, to the point where it has virtually been reduced to the level of an economic event, rather than the miracle of life.

How deeply ingrained, unconscious and unexamined, are our consumer-producer-discarder impulses? How unconsciously do we simply order our lives as our society's key institutions — government, education, big business, the media — would have us? Are we chained to a yoke of endless economic growth, both as individuals and as a society? Is this a good thing, or a bad thing? Or does it even matter? What are the implications of a society grounded upon the pursuit of sustained economic growth for the individual, families, communities, or the
environment? Could we change directions? Are other expressions of social organization possible, say, those that emphasize the pursuit of *qualitative development* over the pursuit of *quantitative growth*? Would you rather spend more of your life contributing to the qualitative development of your family and community, or the quantitative growth of your employers bank account, your nation's GDP, or the size of the pile of material possessions you own?

Are you troubled to know that those of us in the advanced, industrial sectors of the world comprise at most 20 percent of the world's population, yet we control 85 percent of the world's wealth and resources and produce the vast majority of the world's waste and environmental degradation? Meanwhile, there exists a steady trend toward an even greater concentration of wealth in the hands of the already wealthy. Figures from the United Nations show that in 70 countries, citizens are on average poorer than they were in 1980. In 43 countries, they are poorer than they were in 1970. And since 1970, the world's wealthiest one-fifth has increased their wealth, from 70 percent to 85 percent of the world's total, while the world's poorest one-fifth steadily lost ground, moving down from 2.3 percent to 1.4 percent (Theobald, 1997: 11,12). In light of this reality, are we advanced or too-advanced, developed or over-developed, living within our means or off the means of someone else, fortunate or greedy?

It is the purpose of the following study, directly and implicitly, to explore these questions, to examine the implications and consequences of our ongoing acceptance of the infinite-growth model of economics that is driving globalization (otherwise known as neo-classical economics or the economics of globalization) as well as, more directly, explore alternatives to this model. Our examination will come from the perspective of a recently arisen counter social movement,
in actuality more a collection of social movements, referred to herein as the community self-reliance (CS-R) movement. It is the purpose or the effect of the CS-R movement to challenge our present growth-mania, either directly by way of sustained critique, or indirectly as leaders-by-example, providers of alternative, low-impact, qualitatively oriented, forms of social organization. In many cases, the movements that make up the overarching CS-R movement do both.

As will become increasingly clear, the CS-R movement is unlike most commonly recognized social movements (such as the feminist or environmental movements) in a crucial regard: it is a composite movement, more a social movement of movements, comprised of a multitude of individual movements, strategies, and initiatives that have coalesced around the tasks of creating community and restoring these communities to a level of relative self-reliance vis-a-vis the gluttonous, impersonal and dependency-deepening forces of globalization. This concept of the composite movement will be expanded upon later in Chapter Four.

The CS-R movement is not separate or wholly distinct from other social movements and draws inspiration and support liberally from many other social movements that are not necessarily determined to bring about community self-reliance. For example, many CS-R practitioners are women, motivated by a feminist consciousness and outraged by their continued exclusion from the societal opportunities that might spell for them a greater degree of independence. Other practitioners are ethnic groups, particularly First Nations, finally grown tired of having their realities administered for them and who are now desirous of greater autonomy. A New Age spirituality also pervades many CS-R movements, particularly community supported agriculture with its emphasis on a holistic, biodynamic farming method.
that perceives the universe and all within it as a cosmological unity of consciousness, a unity in which our individual consciousness is either in sync or at odds, but never separable -- either in the flow or against the grain but always of the One. According to biodynamic farming, the farmer must seek to merge his or her consciousness with the natural processes upon which he or she relies in order to find the correct growing path, or state of homeostasis, to follow.

An environmental consciousness also informs a great deal of the CS-R movement’s endeavours. Mainstream (global) economics, predicated as it is on the feasibility and desirability of infinite economic growth, has proven itself to be, as well as anti-community, avowedly anti-environment. A healthy, unplundered environment, as much as relatively self-reliant communities, is not compatible with the economies of scale, maximized resource throughput, or the export-led strategies so favoured by the proponents of a global economy. In fact, the community self-reliance movement stands very much opposed to the imperatives of a globalizing economy and represents one key source of opposition to globalization.

Today, it is no secret to most people that, presumably, we have entered a new era, that we now live in the age of globalization, a time of the global economy or of global capital, a time when, purportedly, the nations and peoples of the planet are coming together like never before to weave together into one vast, global interdependency; all as borne through an integrated global marketplace. Spearheading this drive toward globalization, vis-a-vis greater global economic interdependency, and toward the final fruition of Marshal McLuhan’s “global village,” are the champions of modern economics: Transnational Corporations, the International Investment Community, along with various sympathetic national governments and supra-
national trade bodies such as GATT and the WTO. Presumably, all of these agents of globalization possess a vision clear enough and resolve strong enough to lead us in the creation of a New World Order, an order that will, once-and-for-all, unite humanity into one planet, one world, one people. And just what will unite us? Nothing less than our inevitable absorption into the global economy, to enable the pursuit and satisfaction of all material needs and wants and the attainment of a global level of prosperity of undreamt proportions. This, in any event, is at least the promise of globalization, a promise for some that is coming true. But for many more it is not.

Central to the intent of this study is an examination of the processes, or the intrinsic dynamics, of globalization. Herein, globalization is defined as a longstanding but rapidly accelerating major trend toward greater international integration with respect to matters of, primarily, economics, and secondarily of politics, culture, and (but not least) technology. At the same time, national boundaries and national sovereignty are seriously eroding in the face of massive capital mobility. Corporations and investors are no longer interested in national markets per se and no longer consider themselves national entities (except where economically expedient). Capital has gone global, and its allegiance no longer rests in any one place. Indeed, in a globalizing world, capital holds allegiance only to itself. Globalization represents the highest realization of capitalism and the climax of a project perhaps 500 years old, that of a global capitalist society — a world wherein less and less remains outside of the orbit of infinite growth economics, profit maximization, ceaseless commodification, perpetual production, consumption and wastage, and the ever-deeper entrenchment of the powers-that-be with their imperative to protect the system of global capitalism that is the source of their power.
As noted before, the agents most responsible for the present dynamics of globalization, those behind the drive toward a global capitalist society and representing primarily the "advanced" industrialized sectors of the world, can be traced to the transnational corporations (TNCs), the international investment community (IIC), and various sympathetic governments (e.g., the U.S., Japan, Canada, Germany, etc.) and trade bodies (e.g., NAFTA, WTO, MAI). However, responsibility for the rise of global capital must also be spread throughout the world's body of affluent consumers, mostly located in the advanced, industrialized nations, a group that now includes about 1.1 to 1.2 billion individuals. It is the voracious appetite for material comfort possessed by this affluent population, an appetite created, stimulated, and harnessed by the agents of global capital, that has provided the energy necessary for continued global capitalist expansion.

If globalization is to be checked, a democratic resurgence is necessary wherein many of the world's affluent consumers will no longer wish, or can be persuaded otherwise, to exist in pampered servitude to their corporate masters. It is the life energy of these consumers, along with that of the many immiserated producers under them, that has been effectively harnessed and channeled to create the world of capital accumulation that feeds globalization. Our complicity spells their seemingly irresistible power. A democratic resurgence means that the world's overconsuming class will need to reduce its appetite to a level compatible with the world's sustainer class, or return to the consumption levels compatible with our largely agrarian and self-sufficient ways of life scarcely four generations past. As C. Douglas Lummis, professor of International and Cultural Studies, argues in his recent book, *Radical Democracy* (1996):
Democratic power is the one sort of power which can bring the world of public freedom into being. It can dissolve the most powerful-seeming institutions — as when the people who are the building blocks and cogs and motors and fuel of those institutions decide to stop being those objects and simply walk off and do something else. It is the ever-present danger that people may vote with their feet which reveals the fragility of institutionalized power (1996: 116).

A good deal of the purpose (or effect, at least) of globalization is the transformation of the world’s people (or at least as many as possible with those remaining rendered increasingly superfluous), into a one-world consumer society, that is, a global society that accepts the subversion of all other human ends in favour of the pursuit of endless economic growth vis-a-vis never-ending and ever-increasing material consumption. Globalization is all about profit and economic growth, and all about yoking an ever-greater proportion of the world’s people to a wheel of interminable consumption, production, and discarding — of increasing the ranks of the pampered and complicit consumers to increase the flow of wealth into corporate coffers.

Perhaps the central motive-force of globalization is the unprecedented level of mobility and hence influence that capital now commands. Propelled by new communications and transportation technologies and augmented by stunning technological advancements in processing and manufacturing, TNCs and members of the IIC now possess the ability to maintain highly decentralized, far-flung yet extraordinarily tightly controlled corporate empires, as well as shift operations and investments practically anywhere, anytime they please. This gives these agents an enormous advantage over those confined by time and space (such as communities, labour, consumers, local governments, the nation-state or the environment).
Those who effectively control the flow of the world's resources can effectively control the form that the emerging global society shall take. Those who refuse to play ball as the globalizers require are effectively locked-out, starved for capital, local investment, or employment opportunities, and thereby denied full access to the dominant economy. For those communities, cities or nations who wish to participate in the global economy, increasingly they are compelled to exhibit their faith in the globalization project by offering up to TNCs or investors sizeable incentives: large and accessible markets, a cheap labour base, abundant natural resources, few or no restrictions against corporate activity, tax concessions and abatements, a malleable population, or the provision of expensive infrastructure may all obtain for the community, city or nation in question access to the arena of globalization. But only so long as, when considering the extreme mobility capital now commands, those knocking on the door of the global economy (or those already in and hoping not to be thrown out) are willing to offer up more than most anyone else in a game of global economics where yesterday's winner can easily become tomorrow's loser.

If a community, city, or nation fails to provide the TNC or investor with what they require to feed the voracious appetite of their bottom-line, they may seek more fertile pastures elsewhere. Cities like Hamilton, Ontario or Flint, Michigan might see their principal employers (automobile manufacturers in the case of these two cities) relocate to the Southern USA or to Mexico, where labour is much cheaper, environmental regulations much less stringent, or unions are criminalized. This new reality of extreme capital mobility also confers on TNCs an enormous advantage: the threat of an easy departure always casts a shadow of insecurity over the corporation's host community, thereby significantly increasing its bargaining power in the
process. As one might assume, conferring this much leverage on the corporation usually works against the interests of those not given to extreme mobility, those confined to the time and space of the locality in which they have made their lives. The impacts upon the local community, its economic security, political autonomy, and environmental integrity, can be, and often are, ruinous.

If a nation or region fails to engender investor confidence, as happened in 1994 in Mexico and is presently (09/98) happening throughout Asia and Russia or with Canada's dollar, many of those who hold wealth in that nation's currency, investment instruments, or other assets, may suddenly liquidate these assets, convert their funds to a safer currency (usually US dollars), bank offshore whatever they can pull out, and avoid investing further in that area, as if it were possessed by the plague. A sudden lack of investor confidence, a contagious condition amongst the investment community, perhaps on the basis of perceived social instability or because a newly elected government appears less than enthusiastic about the global economy, can quickly prompt an outflow of capital of epidemic proportions, a process generally referred to as capital leakage or hemorrhage. While the investment community may have protected its assets, the people of the community or nation experiencing the lack of confidence typically must endure great suffering as the economy contracts, unemployment skyrockets, inflation reigns, and communities collapse. Economically, they bleed to death.

Identifiable within the process of globalization are three distinct yet deeply interrelated sub-trends: i) global consolidation, of power, wealth, and influence in the hands of TNCs, the IIC, and the very wealthy in general. Good examples are provided by the proposed bank
mergers in Canada, moves that will increase the concentration of economic power dramatically in Canada's financial sector, but will see the loss of thousands of jobs as the merged banks take advantage of a new economy of scale to eliminate 'redundant' services, branches, and personnel; ii) *dis-integration*, of the workplace, many communities (particularly rural), prospects for a hopeful future, social relations, and, especially, the environment. As well as the job losses associated with the above noted bank mergers, other examples are provided by the near-collapse of the Pacific fishing industry, as has already happened on the Atlantic coast, or with the collapse of small, resource-dependent towns, such as Port Hardy or Prince Rupert in the province of British Columbia, in the face of avoidable resource depletion; and iii) *re-localization* as, in its most positive variant, many of those on the receiving end of the downside of globalization attempt to create or re-create the means for their own survival and that of the planet's ecological integrity through efforts to regain control over their realities, away from the forces of global consolidation and disintegration.

Re-localization can take many forms, some highly constructive, others less so. As re-localization is a localized response or reaction to global consolidation and disintegration by people caught up in and confused by rapid social change, it can often take on the character of these two sub-trends and is expressed either as an attempt to consolidate power locally or as ethnic conflict. For example, re-localization has manifested as a resurgence of small-scale ethnic conflicts as in the case of Yugoslavia, which resulted in further disintegration and untold suffering. In this case, re-localization appears to have taken the form of balkanization. Or, as detailed by Benjamin R. Barber in *Jihad vs. McWorld: How Globalism and Tribalism are Reshaping the World* (1996), the re-localization impulse is evident among the vigorously
resurgent, devoutly anti-consumerist and anti-Western rise of Islamic Fundamentalism, a movement which lends much to global instability in an already unstable world. Re-localization is even evident in the proliferation of pseudo-communities of security in the United States, as seen in the rise of gated communities, often replete with sophisticated surveillance equipment and armed guards, to provide a frightened affluent class with a greater sense of walled-in security in an increasingly uncertain world.

The threatened breakup of Canada with the secession of the province of Quebec may provide another example of the re-localization impulse. In the face of a trend toward the irrelevance of nation-states in a globalized world, many Quebeckers have less reason than ever to tie their fate to that of Canada and are instead agitating for separation into a 'sovereignty association.' In this manner, many Quebeckers are saying that they can govern their own affairs more advantageously without Canada. A more constructive expression of the re-localization impulse can be seen in the rise of treaty claims and with the bids for cultural autonomy and self-government that many indigenous groups worldwide are launching. This important trend, as detailed by James Tully in Strange Multiplicity: Constitutionalism in an Age of Diversity (1995) and Jerry Mander in his In the Absence of the Sacred: The Failure of Technology and the Survival of the Indian Nations (1991), bears a close resemblance, if not substantial overlap, with the aims of the community self-reliance movement.

While attention will be paid to all three sub-trends that make up the dynamic of globalization, it is the third trend of re-localization that is of the greater interest herein. More specifically, what motivates this study is an interest in the constructive or re-constructive aspect of re-localization, the efforts of individuals and communities to regain a quality of
control over their lives by regaining decisive control over the creation of the basis for their shared realities. It is this constructive aspect of re-localization that is epitomized by the community self-reliance movement (CS-R).

This third trend, of re-localization, as it pertains to the CS-R movement, is identifiable in a host of varied yet complementary local initiatives toward the development of communities of self-reliance -- community economic development strategies, community supported agriculture, community land trusts, micro-enterprise initiatives, co-operatives of various kinds, community currency schemes, intentional communities, as well as the formulation of alternative polities, such as a proposed “shire-system” for the state of Vermont that restores democratic power and autonomy to the level of the small town or neighbourhood assembly. What all these primarily grassroots level initiatives share in common, to varying degrees, is a commitment to either countering or effectively coping with the pernicious effects of globalization, or at least the effects of social change prompted by forces external to a community and outside of its control. Some are intentional expressions of opposition, others are simply attempts at survival in the face of the many seriously disintegrative effects strewn in the wake of globalization. But all are alternatives to globalization.

Beyond the commitment to community development and the creation of relative self-reliance (as a community) there are several other common denominators loosely shared between these otherwise diverse expressions that comprise the CS-R movement: i) most important and deserving of further discussion below is a renewed commitment to decentralization in decision-making, social life, and economics, as premised upon a foundation of radical democracy; ii) a commitment to an economics of permanence, or a steady-state
economy as an alternative to globalization's manic, infinite-growth economics; iii) a commitment to achieving and maintaining ecological integrity - developing sustainability and harmony with natural processes throughout all human endeavours; and iv) post-material values that emphasize the pursuit of, for example, meaning as grounded in co-operative human relations or harmonious relations with the natural world, over the endless acquisition of material wealth.

These four common denominators, on top of the emphasis on community development and self-reliance, overlap and mutually reinforce tremendously throughout the individual expressions that comprise the CS-R movement; they are only identified herein as separate for ease of exposition. As well, these four common denominators are not necessarily equally present for each individual expression; they more represent ideal common tendencies that go toward unifying the CS-R movement.

The concept of radical democracy as a unifying principle tying together the diverse expressions that make up the CS-R movement is of such importance that it bears further elaboration. Indeed, we could easily consider the CS-R movement as just the most recent installment of a centuries old historical project toward the establishment of a truly democratic society. For purposes of this study we borrow our understanding of radical democracy from the work of C. Douglas Lummis, author of Radical Democracy (1996).

It is important that we pay appropriate attention to the concept of radical democracy for it resides both at the heart of the community self-reliance movement and, simultaneously, provides the movement with its long-term goal, its trajectory of struggle. As G.K. Chesterton once said, words that the CS-R movement has taken to heart, "You can never have a revolution
in order to establish democracy. You must have a democracy in order to have a revolution” (quoted in Lummis, 1996:2).

At its most basic, democracy, a word that joins demos, meaning the people, with krateia, meaning power, pertains to a political order wherein the people have the power. This simple definition, however, is silent when it comes to defining just who are the people, what is power, should such an order exist, how might it come into existence, and how might it be guaranteed once there? Directly and implicitly, the CS-R movement seeks to answer these questions in the affirmative. When it comes to these unanswered questions, Lummis responds:

Democracy, being only a word and not a proposition, is silent on these questions. That is to say, democracy is not the name of any particular arrangement of political or economic institutions. Rather, it is a situation that political or economic institutions may or may not help to bring about. It describes an ideal, not a method for achieving it. It is not a kind of government, but an end of government, not a historically existing institution, but a historical project. That is, it is a historical project if people take it up as such and struggle for it (ibid., 22).

While there may be little doubt as to the worthiness of democracy as a cause, — everyone from communists to fascist dictators has laid claim to it — as a historical project it has collected a freight of ambiguity. Is democracy “government by the people,” as per the Oxford English Dictionary, “a government in which the people share [with whom?] in directing the activities of the state,” as described by the Columbia Encyclopedia, or is it, as per The Concise English Dictionary, “a democratic State”? Or is democracy, in the Schumpeterian sense, “not a way of governing, whether by majority or otherwise, but primarily a way of determining who shall govern”? Is democracy reducible to a process involving the Government or the State, or to the simple selection of representatives, or is this not a perversion of the original meaning:
power as exercised by the people? And what, if anything, do the numerous variations of democracy tell us about what democracy really is: liberal democracy, social democracy, democratic socialism, Christian democracy, popular democracy, strong democracy, participatory democracy, and the redundant term, people's democracy?

The use of radical democracy is an attempt to restore clarity to the historical democratic project by recovering democracy in its elemental sense, stripped away of confusing modifiers such as liberal or Christian. "Radical is," according to Lummis, "a modifier that does not 'modify,' strictly speaking, but rather intensifies. Radical democracy means democracy in its essential form, democracy at its root, quite precisely the thing itself" (ibid., 25). Accordingly, radical democracy as in the power of the people is by definition politically subversive. It is a critique of centralized power of any sort — charismatic, bureaucratic, class, military, corporate, party, union, technocratic — and is thus the antithesis to all such power.

Contrary to the anarchists' predilection, radical democracy does not seek to abolish power at the same time as it seeks to liberate people. Rather, explains Lummis,

Radical democracy does not abolish power, it says that the people shall have it, that the power will be their freedom. Most anarchists envision the political space abolished, and the people either placed under the invisible rule of 'society' or so set apart by radical individualism that they will no longer be a people at all. Radical democracy envisions the people gathered in the public space, with neither the great paternal Leviathan nor the great maternal society standing over them, but only the empty sky — the people making the power of Leviathan their own again, free to speak, to choose, to act. Of course when the power of Leviathan is restored to its rightful owners it changes: it is no longer monstrous. Still, perhaps the scale of freedom here implied is so dizzying that the mind quails before it and quickly turns to the more comfortable business of demonstrating the needs for centralized authority, representative officials, rule of law, police, jails, and the like (ibid., 27,28).
Radical democracy, as the power of the people, must obviously reside with the people. Lummis sees in the “civil society” the only people-based body capable of achieving and guaranteeing popular power. “Civil society has about as many definitions as definers, but in general it refers to that sphere of society which organizes itself autonomously, as opposed to the sphere that is established and/or directly controlled by the state” (ibid., 30). While some of the more conservatively inclined choose to lump such privately controlled enterprises as large corporations into civil society, most on the Left see civil society as excluding all institutions that encroach substantially on autonomy, including Big Business, the media, the judiciary and the police, as well as the State.

As should become clear over the course of this study, Lummis’ locus of radical democratic power, the autonomous civil society, is very much in keeping with the aims and ends of the community self-reliance movement: the creation and extension of a radically democratic civil society via the widespread and alternative (to globalization) development of communities of self-reliance. Lummis continues, “unlike a class or party, civil society does not rise up and seize the power of the state; rather, in rising up, it empowers itself. It does not take over the state or replace it, but rather stands against it, marginalizes it, controls it” (ibid., 31).

This concept, of a radically democratic civil society rising up to empower itself and thereby render the State (and other centralized sources of power, such as TNCs, while we’re at it) marginalized, in effect, illegitimate, is central to the CS-R movement. Rather than directly contest the State, transnational corporations, or supranational trade organizations for power, community self-reliance seeks instead to “delink” from the dominant order (to use political-economist Samir Amin’s term) and create an alternative, parallel polis, to invoke the thinking
of Vaclav Havel. The CS-R movement does not seek to initiate a *revolutionary* shift in power by launching a pitched campaign against the agents of centralized power, who possess virtually inexhaustible resources to fend-off or destroy such an attempt. The origin of real or authentic power, in the radical democratic sense, is always the people. Centralized power exists by convincing people to give away their power, to bow or defer in the face of authority. The CS-R movement exemplifies the tradition of radical democracy in its attempt to convince people to keep their power, or take back what they have given away, and thereby gradually undo the basis of centralized power. Without the stolen or coerced power of the people, with this power restored to its rightful owners, both the State and corporatized power wither away into irrelevance.

Radical democracy is not something that can be bestowed upon the people, it can not be given, only earned and learned: "democratic power does not fall from above, it is generated by a people in a democratic state of mind, and by the actions they take in accordance with that state of mind" (ibid., 35). The point of departure for the creation of a truly democratic world is now. The people do not need to be given radical democracy from above, which it then is not, or politically educated into creating a radical democracy sometime after they finish their education which never ends. As Lummis puts it, "the only truly effective education system for democracy is democracy — democratic action itself" (ibid., 37). Only democracy, people committed to democratic action, can create and maintain democracy. It is done for oneself, it cannot be won from someone else.

In sum, it is a principle contention of this study that the dis-integrative effects of
globalization will only intensify (as will the need for more efforts toward community self-reliance) as the global economy continues its expansion — there is a direct, inverse relationship between global consolidation on the one hand, and localized (but increasingly planetary) disintegration on the other.

Globalization, driven inexorably by a logic of infinite economic expansion in a world of finite resources and waste absorption capacities, represents an impending confluence of events which together will seriously tax the ability of many populations to survive: the wholesale dismantling of social safety nets together with the present corporate-based trend of labour-shedding, downsizing and union-busting threatens to leave, in much of the industrialized world, an angry and fragmented workplace and an eroded consumer base; over-inflated stock-markets and out-of-control money and bond markets, soon to crash (as is already occurring throughout Asia, Russia, and North America, with reverberating global effects), may leave in their wake severely depressed economies if not trigger a full-blown global recession; and, most importantly, the reaching and exceeding of ecological limits everywhere, combined with the mounting pressures of 80 to 90 million new people on the planet each year, represents a serious wall to continued economic growth and a growing threat to human survival. As these events intensify and collide under the manic logic of infinite economic growth that is globalization, the need for transitional or even outright survival strategies for those “on the ground” is magnified. If ever there was a time for the restoration of a radical democracy, now is it.

In chapters Three to Nine I attempt to reveal the main contours of the re-localization, primarily grassroots level, sub-trend within globalization that I have identified as the radically democratic CS-R movement. This movement, especially, represents the development of a
stock of knowledge and experience available to those attempting to escape the crushing contradictions of global capitalism — it offers both sustained critique and posits alternatives by example. The numerous and highly diversified expressions that constitute the community self-reliance movement together represent a vast, social laboratory full of multiple, ongoing experiments toward the development of new modes of organizing economic, social, and political life that depart from the dictates of global capitalism.

Chapter Three will be concerned with an overview of the global situation leading up to the CS-R response and poses the question, in light of the consolidational and disintegrative tendencies of globalization, “what is to be done”? Chapter Four looks at the roots of the CS-R movement by reviewing the works of many of the thinkers who have come forward to advocate some form of a locally-embedded and self-reliant strategy to counter global capital. Chapter Five delves deeper into theory, and details the conceptual basis of “community self-reliance” followed by an explication of social movement theory as it pertains to the CS-R movement.

Outfitted with a literature review and provided a theoretical basis, we are then ready to tackle various aspects, or constituent movements, that together represent the CS-R movement. Chapters Six, Seven, Eight and Nine are broken down into the key sectors that the CS-R movement represents: the Economy for Chapter Six, Food and Land for Chapter Seven, the Home for Chapter Eight, and the Polity for Chapter Nine. In the concluding chapter I attempt to summarize the CS-R movement and posit an ideal representation that embodies all of the key values that to a greater or lesser extent characterize the myriad individual CS-R movements or strategies. Also discussed in the Conclusion are the future possibilities for the CS-R movement with special attention paid to the organizational and mobilizational possibilities represented by
Indeed, transnational corporations and international investors are not the only ones to have seized advantageously upon the new communication and information technologies. Many activists and social movement organizations have also turned the Internet to their advantage, and are now using it to an appreciable extent to maintain their organizations, attract potential adherents, disperse information, and encourage greater mobilization. The CS-R movement stands as no exception and it may be, though no empirical evidence has yet been excavated, that the movement's remarkable overall unity of intent in the face of an otherwise dazzling diversity of individual expressions owes no small debt to the organizational and mobilizational possibilities of the Internet. New kinds of coalitions — or coalescences — are permitted by the Internet and such an observation may go a long way to explaining the emergence of the CS-R movement as a composite social movement, a movement of movements.

However, before we may continue on to an examination of the many expressions that comprise the community self-reliance movement, an introductory if not somewhat cursory examination of the other two sub-trends of globalization is required — those of economic consolidation, in Chapter One, and disintegration, primarily ecological, in Chapter Two.
Chapter One

The Consolidation of Wealth and Power

The intention for Chapters One and Two is not toward exhaustiveness. This study is about the aspect of the re-localization impulse identifiable as the community self-reliance movement. It is not about globalization per se. There are already many excellent books available on globalization, toward which I direct the reader’s attention. However, a reasonably full understanding of the origins and intentions of the CS-R movement is not possible unless globalization, its impacts and implications, is taken into consideration. Accordingly, a concise highlighting of the major features of global consolidation (Chapter One) and disintegration (Chapter Two), two distinct sub-trends within globalization that the CS-R movement is in reaction to, should suffice for our purposes herein.

The Ideology of Globalization

The raison d'être of globalization is ceaseless, if not infinite, economic growth. This is seen as the only true path to human progress, the only sure way to bring prosperity to more and more people, and thus the goal of capitalists in general is to draw into the orbit of global
capitalism as many nations and peoples as possible — the opening of more and more markets and the removal of more and more cultural, political or economic barriers to allow a globalized infusion of the materialism that sustains the expansionary economics of global capitalism. The ultimate goal of globalization is the creation of a one world economic order grounded in a global mono-culture of consumerism unified under the banner of corporate libertarianism.

Free markets, unrestrained trade and investment within and between nations and without government interference, combined with an absence of restrictions upon corporate or investor activity, is seen as the path toward the most efficient and socially optimal allocation of the planet's resources. A global economy is the goal, the creation of the ultimate economy of scale, and is thought achievable only through the wholesale dismantling of any and all barriers to the free flow of goods and capital anywhere in the world. Presumably, by doing this, competition is encouraged, economic efficiency is enhanced, jobs are created, consumers enjoy lower prices along with greater choice, and overall economic growth is increased — and, in a limited fashion, these things do occur, but at a greater cost and to the exclusion of the majority of the world's population.

Overall, however, it is held that economic globalization will generally benefit everyone in the long-run; the benefits of an economic, political, and socio-cultural climate fully conducive to the free employment of capital will eventually trickle-down to the lowliest member of the emerging global society. Those who experience otherwise are simply on the receiving end of unfortunate and temporary side-effects. Their lot will, assuredly, improve eventually. For, it is held, globalization is nothing short of the boldest and greatest endeavour yet attempted by humankind and for such a grand plan a little patience and faith is necessary.
In the pursuit of free markets and the freedom to deploy wealth in any way advantageous to the wealthy, a program of national deregulation and privatization coupled with international trade liberalization (as in the World Trade Organization or the Multi-lateral Agreement on Investments) must be aggressively pursued. All individual government regulations that impinge upon the free flow of capital, or upon the ability of capitalists and investors to utilize advantageously their resources, must be removed or harmonized (that is, maximize the mobility of capital). All market-related functions and assets currently controlled by governments, such as medical care, prisons, post-secondary education, or insurance, in the interest of improved economic efficiency, should be privatized, i.e., given over to the private sector whose business is business, in contrast to the public sector whose business is to stay out of business. The remaining and 'proper' responsibilities of government are the provision of the infrastructure necessary to advance commerce, such as basic education for the populace, roads and bridges, seaports and other related infrastructure, as well as the enforcement of rules and laws related to private property rights and contracts.

Governments are disposed to play another role on the behalf of their corporate masters, that of tireless promoter of corporate interests. The actions of Prime Minister Mulroney as champion of Free Trade with the United States and later Mexico is a case in point. That the FTA was an agreement that was opposed to his original mandate and against the stated wishes of the majority of Canadians made little difference to Mulroney, who spared no expense, including deceit, to ensure the passing of the FTA and later the NAFTA. For example, in the two years leading up to the 1988 "free trade" election, Mulroney spent $32 million of taxpayers' dollars promoting free trade. The Conservatives spent a further $14 million during the
election, which saw them win by the barest of margins, go on to form a minority government, and then enact the Free Trade Agreement. Later, they would sneak through the North American Free Trade Agreement (Dobbin, 1998: 45-48).

The 'benefits' to the Canadian public, who financed Mulroney's sell-out, from Free Trade have been little short of non-existent. Canadian corporations, newly freed from any obligation or debt to Canadian society, wasted little time in leaving or labour-shedding. Between 1988 and 1994, an estimated 334,000 manufacturing jobs were lost as Canada's industrial sector shrank by an astonishing 17 percent. Meanwhile, 33 corporations who made up the Business Council on National Issues, a corporate front group that spent millions in their campaign to seize decisive control over the Canadian political process and bring in Free Trade, increased their combined revenues by more than $40 billion, to $158.2 billion. These corporations, many of them very familiar to Canadians, such as Canadian Pacific, Ford, General Motors, K-Mart, Noranda, Alcan, and Abitibi-Price, reaped this economic harvest by labour-shedding 216,004 employees. During the same period, eleven BCNI members did manage to increase employment, but only by 28,073 jobs. The legacy of Free Trade, a deal that was promised to increase net employment by 350,000 "more and better jobs," has been the loss of hundreds of thousands of jobs and an 'official' unemployment rate holding at 10 percent (1.5 million unemployed). While there have been many thousands of jobs created since Free Trade, they have been, with very few exceptions, concentrated in the service industry and consequently are of very low pay, few benefits, no future, and great insecurity. During the period following Free Trade, Canadian corporations have continued to post record annual profits one after another, while unemployment has remained high, social services have contracted, the federal
government down-sized and laid-off 45,000 civil servants, and the national debt grew bigger and bigger (ibid., 92-95).

Prime Minister Mulroney is not alone in the dedication he has shown to the corporate sector. Prime Minister Chretien has pursued international trade relations on the behalf of the corporations back home with a similar missionary zeal. In 1994, Chretien presided over the formation of “Team Canada,” an ensemble of hundreds of top business leaders along with the provincial premiers who, together, were dedicated to expanding trade relations with Asia and Latin America. With Chretien at the helm, Team Canada launched trade junkets to China, Brazil, Chile and Argentina in 1994 and made further excursions abroad to India, Pakistan, Malaysia, and Indonesia in 1995. Chretien, as a tireless supporter of free trade and the global economy, would speak of his trade mission to China with nothing but confidence in a future given over to corporate activity: “I’m not pessimistic about the twenty-first century because you have 1,200,000,000 people in China and they will develop a middle class; they will need to buy all sorts of products and both you and I will be there selling” (quoted in ibid., 50).

In January 1997, Team Canada was off to woo South Korea, the Philippines and Thailand. In all of these trade missions no concern was ever given for the lengthy history of brutal repression represented by many of the visited countries, especially Chile, China, South Korea, and Indonesia. While Team Canada did manage to acquire several billions of dollars worth of contracts, the junkets were paid for straight from the electorate’s pocket, at an estimated cost of many tens of millions of dollars (Clarke, 1997: 99-102).

Perhaps there exists no better example of Chretien’s bald-faced complicity with the corporate sector than that provided by the 1997 APEC summit held in Vancouver, British
Columbia. Of the total cost of $57.4 million to host trade and government dignitaries from all over Asia along with the United States, 67 corporations contributed a mere $9.1 million, leaving the Canadian taxpayer holding the bag for the remaining $48.3 million. To add insult to injury, many of the citizens protesting APEC were stripped of their constitutional right to protest and were abused by the RCMP, on orders of the Prime Minister’s Office. Protestors were, in some cases, arrested before they could protest; others, notably women, were strip-searched after being arrested, and many more were given lavish doses of blinding pepper-spray when they protested a little too vigorously. With charges laid against the RCMP and the PMO for the abuse of constitutional and civil rights, the federal government has had no problem providing several millions of taxpayer dollars for defense lawyers, but cannot seem to find room in the budget for the beleaguered and penniless protesters (Dobbin, 1998: 117).

So it seems that, under free trade, the business of government is to stay out of business, unless it is to pick-up pom poms and form a combined cheerleading team and philanthropic foundation to spur on the corporate sector — as if businesses needed help in conducting business. Would Canadian corporations suddenly find themselves unable to pursue international trade opportunities if Chetien disbanded Team Canada?

Underlying the free-market, corporate libertarian, ideology of globalization are several key beliefs with respect to human nature: humans are held to be rational self-maximizers, meaning we are motivated primarily by a self-interest best expressed through the pursuit of material gain. Actions that yield the greatest material return for the individual or organization are perceived to be the most advantageous to society. In keeping with the ideology of rational self-maximizing humans, competitive behaviour is more rational than cooperative as it is most
compatible with human nature and most likely to benefit all. Thus, society should be organized around the competitive principle, not the cooperative principle, except insofar as we can cooperate to improve our ability to compete (that is, form and adhere to a "social contract"). Individual and societal worth is measured by a capacity to consume at ever higher levels of both quantity and sophistication. Higher levels of consumption stimulate greater economic output and thereby advance the well-being of society.

The Key Players

Transnational corporations (TNCs) and their interminable, often aggressive pursuit of profits, markets and ideological hegemony, are behind much of the prevailing trend (or at least leading the charge) toward a global capitalist society. The degree of economic might represented by today’s TNCs truly beggars belief. The UN trade organization, UNCTAD, estimates there are globally some 40,000 TNCs, defined as companies with headquarters in three or more countries. Together, these 40,000 TNCs control more than two-thirds of all world trade, nearly half of it within their own inter-corporate networks (Martin and Shumann, 1997: 112). Just over two decades ago there were only 7,000 TNCs in operation (Clarke, 1997: 41).

As one might suppose, the distribution of wealth and power is not equal among the world’s 40,000 TNCs. Those outside of the top 500 are relatively small and powerless when compared to the largest corporate giants. For example, while the whole of the world’s 40,000 TNCs control a little more than two-thirds of all world trade, the top 200 (.005%) alone control over
a quarter of world trade. These 200 corporate giants, including such well-known companies as General Motors, Ford, Toyota, Exxon, Shell, IBM, Mitsubishi, Unilever, Nestle, and Sony, posted 1996 combined revenues totaling US$7.1 trillion. This sum is greater than the combined GDPs of the world's 182 least wealthiest nations (of 191 total nations worldwide). When compared with the combined incomes of the bottom four-fifths of humanity, some 4.5 billion souls with a total income of US$3.9 trillion, we can see that the combined annual revenues of just 200 TNCs is nearly twice this amount. By implication, the few thousand individuals at the helms of these 200 TNCs preside over corporate empires with twice the economic clout of 80 percent of the world's people. Meanwhile, these 200 TNCs worldwide employ only 18.8 million people, less than one-third of one percent of the total world population (ibid., 41).

As of 1997, of the world's 100 largest economies, 51 belonged to TNCs. Three years previous, the figure was 47. A corporate conglomerate such as Mitsubishi, the largest of the TNCs, controls an economy that dwarfs that of most nations. Indeed, as an example, the economy of Mitsubishi is more than four times larger than that of Egypt (ibid., 259). The world's 10 largest TNCs together earn revenues greater than the combined GDPs of the world's poorest 100 nations (New Internationalist, 1997:18). In each of seven key industries, five TNCs alone control 50 percent or more of the total global market. These markets are: consumer durables, automotive, airline, aerospace, electronic components, electrical & electronic, and steel. This level of corporate control and consolidation is considered highly monopolistic (Clarke, 1997: 42).

The International Investment Community (IIC), alternatively known as "finance" or
"speculative" capital, is, in its present guise, a relatively recent global player. Wealthy financiers, powerful central banks, stock, bond and commodities markets have all been around for a long time. Today's investment community, however, is operating at a level of economic influence and technological sophistication previously undreamt. Indeed, the IIC today may even wield economic power that rivals that of the entire TNC community. Made possible by recent wholesale deregulation of banking and financial markets, combined with the new rules of free trade and powered by stunning advances in computer and telecommunication technologies that allow for instantaneous worldwide transfers of capital and investment instruments, the IIC together can profoundly destabilize the economies of entire nations or shake the stability of even the largest TNCs in the time it takes to enter a few computer keystrokes. Countries or companies who are not engendering investor faith, who seek to enact or enforce policies that might impinge upon the maximization of profit, can find their currency values rapidly deflated or the value of their stocks and bonds rapidly eroded as investors *en masse* shift their investments to areas that offer more potential gain, or less risk (even if only very marginal). As Barnet and Cavanagh describe it,

> This combination of factors has enabled currency speculators to run wild, moving their immense resources electronically, instantaneously, from country to country, beyond the abilities of any government to control the process. In this cybertech globalized world, money has become free of its place and..., from most connections to its former sources of value: commodities and services. Money itself is the product that money buys and sells (1996: 361).

Incomprehensibly huge amounts of money are transferred from market to market and then back again every day as, for example, international financial gamblers play a nation's currency
against itself or that of another nation or borrow money from one country with low interest rates to buy government bonds of another with high interest rates. It is estimated that as much as US$2 to US$3 trillion daily circulates through the world's financial markets, with US$1.3 to US$2.3 trillion alone passing through the computers of currency traders. Such a figure greatly eclipses the total resources available, to prop up falling currency values for example, to the central banks of national governments around the world, a figure estimated to be about US$640 billion (Clarke, 1997: 59,60).

Very little of this vast sum of circulated money contributes to productivity -- it is almost entirely in the service of speculation. This means that the billions upon billions of profits earned by the IIC are largely drained from the companies and communities who are involved in productive economic engagements. Not only does this weaken the economy, drain savings and increase debt (particularly national debts), it contributes to bloated stock and bond markets riding on the crest of a wave of speculative energy. It was due to the speculative frenzy of the IIC that investor confidence rapidly shifted away from Mexico in 1994, causing the value of its currency to plummet and its economy to disintegrate. The U.S. was generous enough to step in with a US$54 billion bail-out package, made up of taxpayers' dollars of course, which was quickly sucked into the economic black-hole left by the hasty withdrawal of too many bloated investors. As financial analyst and trader Andrew Sarlos argues in his book *Fear, Greed and the End of the Rainbow: Guarding Your Assets in the Coming Bear Market* (1997), the present 15-year trend of speculative frenzy in North America is about to come to a resounding close with a market crash of monumental proportions. Millions of middle class North Americans, for example, wittingly or unwittingly drawn into the speculative financial
frenzy through the Mutual Funds craze, or through investment decisions made on their behalf by pension plan managers, will find their retirement hopes destroyed. This, combined with record levels of debt from the consumer to federal levels, gutted social programs, record high unemployment, low consumer spending, record low levels of saving, constraints on lending, and 15 years of steady transfers of wealth into the hands of the very wealthy, will all combine to both precipitate a market crash and produce a very deep depression.

Ironically, while Keynesian economic policies helped to lead North America out of the Great Depression (albeit in conjunction with a world war) as well as generally flattened out business cycles for several decades, the recent eclipsing of Keynesianism with the unrestrained flow of capital and trade associated with the neoclassical economics central to the corporate libertarian agenda may precipitate another Great Depression to rival the first. At the time of this writing (09/98) we can already see signs of an impending stock market crash as the effects of poor economic performance in Russia, Asia, and Japan reverberates out-of-control throughout world markets. There is increasing talk amongst financial analysts of an impending global depression, a very real possibility that may be precipitated by such talk. The international investment community is a very skittish crowd that is easily spooked.

As a gauge to just how much wealth has been transferred into the hands of the already very wealthy consider that in the US, while there are 36 million people living below the country’s official poverty line, the nation is home to no fewer than 170 billionaires, a figure up from 135 in 1996. Bill Gates, the world’s richest man, doubled his net worth over last years’ from US$18.5 billion to US$39.8 billion, a sum greater than the combined GDP of the whole of Central America. Altogether, as of 1997, there were 424 billionaires worldwide, a total up
sharply from 1992's 274. The combined worth of these 424 billionaires is estimated to be
greater than that of the world's three billion least wealthiest individuals — 424 people control
more wealth than the lower half of the world's population do (Sklar, 1997: 32-37). Naturally,
these vast fortunes associated with the economic pyramid's pinnacle were not created, nor are
they maintained or enhanced, separate from the successes of the global economy. Rather, the
fortunes of these 424 global billionaires represent the degree to which an infinitesimally small
group of the world's total people have benefitted from globalization to the extent to where they
now influence global events in a way grossly disproportionate to their numbers, and in a way
designed to ensure their continued survival as the world's wealthiest.

It would be instructive to pause briefly and take a closer look at the origins of the fortunes
held by some of the world's wealthiest individuals. Bill Gates, as already noted, the world's
wealthiest individual, made his vast fortune at the helm of Microsoft, the world's largest
computer software company. Warren Buffet, the next wealthiest individual, with a 1997 net
worth of US$21.0 billion, is a renowned global investor and star member of the international
investment community. The third wealthiest individual is Paul Allen, co-founder of Microsoft,
with a personal fortune of US$17.0 billion. Lawrence Ellison, head of Oracle, a software
company, comes in fourth with a net worth of US$9.2 billion. In fifth place is Gordon Moore,
founder of Intel, the famous manufacturer of computer chips, with a fortune of US$8.8 billion.
And so on down the list of the wealthiest individuals in the world, all of whom are deeply
intertwined, as one would expect, with the process of economic globalization. And it is no
coincidence that four of five of the wealthiest individuals made their fortunes vis-a-vis the
computer industry, the same industry that has made possible the technological revolution
behind the mobility of capital and the speculative successes of the IIC. What is not revealed by the size of the personal fortunes these billionaires possess is the size of the corporate empires they preside over. While they may possess billions, collectively they control trillions (ibid., 32-37).

The purpose behind this amazing consolidation of wealth and power is, as noted previously, the pursuit and maintenance of endless economic growth. With annual world GDP increasing by 4 percent in recent years (or as high as 10 percent in some rapidly industrializing countries such as China), the principle beneficiaries of globalization can look forward to a global economy roughly twice the size of today’s, in a mere 18-20 years, and triple the present size in around 25 years. As will be discussed in detail later, today’s global economy is pushing, or already exceeding, ecological limits everywhere. An economy two or three times the present size in one generation’s time will undoubtedly have uncontainable and disastrous impacts upon global ecological integrity. It is important to note that a great deal of present economic growth globally is not of the so-called advanced kind -- moving from the dirty, smokestack economy of industrialism to the clean, silicon-based economy of the information age (which is not all that clean anyway). Rather, much of the economic development globally is still devoted to industrialism, albeit getting to it and through it as rapidly as possible as in the case of China, India or Brazil. Wholesale resource extraction, commodification, ever-increasing consumption, and the massive discharge of pollution and waste is still, on the whole, the order-of-the-day.

Globalization -- the consolidation of wealth and power combined with an increase in its mobility to best promote endless economic growth -- is inseparably intertwined with several other expressions of consolidation. Technological, political and, especially, cultural forms of
consolidation all reinforce, and in turn are reinforced by, globalization.

Arguably, it is technological consolidation, in the hands of TNCs, the IIC, and the “advanced” economies in general, that has made the present level of globalization possible. Modern telecommunication, transportation and computerization technologies allow TNCs to maintain far-flung empires, practice new and vastly more profitable forms of production, and generally avoid any limits an individual nation might place on the free-flow of capital. The benefits to the IIC from technological consolidation have already been touched upon. Indeed, technology has conferred to the IIC such an advantage that any company or nation that has chosen to play the game of globalization and strive for a place at the table of greater global economic interdependence can ill-afford displeasing said investors with anything but a total show of economic faith and unswerving allegiance to the dictates of corporate libertarianism.

Political consolidation comes in the form of more and more national governments accepting the maxim of economic growth as progress (and progress definable in only economic terms), and supporting the efforts and interests of TNCs and the IIC accordingly. Huge, regional trade organizations, such as NAFTA, the EU, or APEC as well as trade agreements such as GATT, the WTO or the MAI represent simultaneously the spreading and deepening of political complicity with TNCs and the IIC, as well as the creation of a new level of politics beholden not to the citizenry, but to the corporation or investor. Indeed, the impending MAI (Multilateral Agreement on Investments) has been aptly described by some as a “charter of rights for transnational corporations” (Jackson and Sanger, 1998). By recreating the political landscape into an image more consistent with their interests, transnationals and international
investors are emerging as, *de facto*, a new form of world governance. For example, according to Tony Clarke, the World Trade Organization established in 1994, ostensibly to promote global free trade by working for the removal of all remaining tariff and non-tariff barriers to international investment and trade, really "amounts to a global parliament... dominated by transnational corporate interests." To carry out its mandate of removing barriers to trade, the WTO has been imbued with *legislative* as well as *judicial* powers. In short, says Clarke,

> Under the WTO, a group of unelected trade representatives would, in effect, have the power to override economic, social and environmental policy decisions of nation states and democratic legislatures around the world. What this means is that national laws designed to foster economic justice, democratic participation, worker health and safety, minimum wages, social security, and sustainable use of natural resources could be targeted as barriers to trade and investment and therefore struck down by the WTO (Clarke, 1997: 65).

The consolidation of culture is another aspect (one that I will elaborate on in the next chapter), and perhaps the ultimate *intended* end product, of globalization. By the consolidation of culture it is not meant necessarily that all peoples, in time, will become absolutely indistinguishable from one another, regardless of geography or history. Rather, what is meant is there is ongoing a global project to bring as many peoples as possible into the orbit of the Western culture of material consumption. The hope of globalizers is to encourage more and more people to accept the facilitation of material consumption as being the best possible and primary end toward which a society is organized. What and how one consumes is less important than the fact that they do consume (extensively and excessively), but only so long as they consume what is produced through or in conjunction with TNCs. The definition of
individual success is therefore epitomized as the ability to consume at as high a level as possible, and to consume more tomorrow than today.

In all of this, consolidation of control over the modern media by major TNCs ensures that the message of consumption, and the desirability if not inevitability of globalization, is beamed to as many audiences as possible, without opposition or the nuisance of alternative messages. Many excellent analyses exist on the monopolization of the media.\textsuperscript{7} Undoubtedly, one of the finest example of media analysis is Ben H. Bagdikian's \textit{The Media Monopoly} (5\textsuperscript{th} ed., 1997). In it he observes:

In the last five years, a small number of the country’s largest industrial corporations has acquired more public communications power — including ownership of the news — than any private businesses have ever before possessed in world history. Nothing in earlier history matches this corporate group’s power to penetrate the social landscape. Using both old and new technology, by owning each other’s shares, engaging in joint ventures as partners, and other forms of cooperation, this handful of giants has created what is, in effect, a new communications cartel within the United States (1997: ix).

The modern media is the front-line soldier in opening up the minds and hearts of all the world’s peoples to the promises of a culture of consumption, while blinding them to its perils. The proliferation of televisions is an excellent indicator of the ability of mass marketers to create mass markets; to effectively colonize a population’s mentality. For example, India went from 3 million TVs in 1983 to more than 14 million ten years later. Latin America has built or imported 60 million sets since the early 1950’s. All told, around half of the world’s people have ready access to televisions, and ready access to the stream of marketing messages designed expressly to break down any barriers that may exist to the transformation of a non-consumerist culture to one based primarily on material consumption. In the U.S. the average TV viewer is
exposed to more than three hours of commercials each week, or more than 20,000 in one year (Durning, 1992: 125,126). What kinds of effects would similar levels of viewing, or even one-tenth the level, have on subsistence cultures? For an answer, consider the following quote by Nathan Gardels, editor of the *New Perspectives Quarterly*: “through the likes of Hollywood, Microsoft, and CNN, [the U.S.] also dominates the metaworld of images, icons, and information. Where once there was containment, now there is entertainment. MTV has gone where the CIA could never penetrate” (Gardels, 1997: xi).

In sum, this is global economic consolidation:

The past two decades have seen the most rapid and sweeping institutional transformation in human history. It is a conscious and intentional transformation in search of a new world economic order in which business has no nationality and knows no borders. It is driven by global dreams of vast corporate empires, compliant governments, a globalized consumer mono-culture, and a universal ideological commitment to corporate libertarianism (Korten, 1995: 121).

As will become clear in the following chapter, the consequences of global consolidation, while enriching the few, will ultimately immiserate the many. The effects of untrammeled economic growth on the environment promise to be especially ruinous.
Chapter Two

Disintegration

Unemployment and the Disintegrating Workplace

The areas of social, economic, and especially ecological disintegration that follow in the wake of globalization are numerous. One of the more important areas of social disintegration wrought by globalization is within the workplace. As TNCs in particular improve their mobility and global reach, they can more easily play one locality or workplace off against another. Only those willing to make the greater concessions -- tax abatements, various regulatory exceptions, subsidies, or an absence of unions, minimum wages, or environmental regulations, and so on -- can hope to attract the TNC or the international investor and their promise of employment or investment capital. The workplace or locality that attempts to improve its conditions, or maintain conditions thought by TNCs or investors as too costly, will simply see an exodus of companies and capital encouraged to seek higher returns elsewhere. Nor will this locality easily be able to attract subsequent investment.

As a direct consequence of increased TNC mobility, the availability of secure, well paying
jobs is diminishing in many parts of the industrialized world -- Canada and the U.S. are no exceptions. Under the banner of corporate libertarianism, TNCs have systematically waged a campaign of disintegration, of dis-employment, against many localities and throughout all sectors of the labour market. Anything or anyone is jettisoned in the interest of higher and higher profits, a move quickly applauded by the IIC (and those companies or localities that fail to incessantly seek the highest returns possible are often punished by the same community). New terms for this phenomenon have entered the popular lexicon: downsizing, labour-less growth, re-engineering, re-structuring, labour-shedding, lean production ... All these terms serve as crass euphemisms to mask the terrible toll globalization is exacting from individuals and communities everywhere.

Governments, ostensibly non-profit, service-oriented entities devoted to the common good, have also followed suit with TNCs and adopted their own form of corporate libertarianism. Indeed, it appears that corporate libertarianism has become the law of the land as we see governments at all levels "corporatize" and likewise labour-shed or privatize services with abandon. Increasingly, the same economic calculus assumed by the private sector, maximum efficiency at minimal expense, has been likewise adopted by the public sector. In Canada, for example, Crown Corporations, ostensibly created to provide vital services to the public that the private sector was unable or unwilling to provide (often because of the lack of sufficient profitability) are now expected to show quarterly surpluses or profits just as if they too were actually part of the private sector.

And if the Crown Corporation fails to perform to the standards set by the private sector, the result is often its outright sale to the private sector, resulting in thousands of jobs lost or
reduced in wage, followed by a shrinking tax base. The substantial privatization of Canada Post services, and the consequent loss of thousands of well-paying jobs, is one example. Other Crown Corporations such as CN Rail and Petro-Canada have been privatized in toto, with their new private owners achieving profitability typically by paring back expenses to the bone and replacing most of the well-paid workers with part-timers and minimum wagers. The federal government has privatized most of the country’s airports and much of its air traffic control system. Many provinces have turned a substantial chunk of highway construction and maintenance over to the private sector. Alberta has sold its educational broadcaster to private interests while Ontario is considering a similar move. Alberta and Ontario are considering transferring control over the operation of prisons to the private sector, as well as transferring the administration of welfare payments to a private contractor. The pressure on the federal government to privatize Medicare is intense. Dozens of private clinics are sprouting up all over the country, effectively opening the door to a two-tier medical system and the beginning of wholesale withdrawal by the wealthy from the public system. Liquor control boards throughout Canada, as has already occurred in Alberta, are slated for transference to the private sector. And educational institutes at all levels across Canada, in the face of budget cutbacks, are establishing closer relations with a profit-hungry private sector and their offer of financial help, for a price (Reid, 1997: 42,43).

Due to its new corporatist mentality, by the end of 1998, Canada’s federal government alone will have eliminated 45,000 to 55,000 jobs while having simultaneously endorsed if not actively pursued free market policies that have allowed corporations operating in Canada to eliminate tens of thousands more jobs. This does not include the tens of thousands of
additional jobs that have been lost once the government privatized public services or sold-off Crown assets. Canada's unemployment rate now sits 'officially' at 9 to 10 percent, representing 1.5 million individuals, a figure, however, that seriously underestimates the true level of unemployment. Not taken into account are the approximately 500,000 individuals no longer officially counted as they have dropped from the unemployment rolls out of sheer frustration. Nor does the figure include the tens of thousands more on Welfare or pursuing post-secondary education, and thus out of contention for scarce jobs. Indeed, a present trend among university students is to stretch out their program of study as long as possible to avoid facing bleak job prospects. Canada's official unemployment statistic also does not fully reflect the tens of thousands of high-paying jobs wiped out since the Free Trade Agreement with the US was signed -- jobs that may have been replaced, but typically with work in the low-paying and insecure service sector. There are many thousands more workers employed part-time, but who need full-time jobs along with thousands more seriously under-employed, working well below their education or experience levels. This pattern of under- and unemployment is increasingly found throughout the industrialized world as TNCs en masse relocate to areas that offer lower costs and higher profits. Needless to say, a disintegrating workplace also means the tax base, communities, families, and individual lives likewise disintegrate (Clarke, 1997).

Much of the current rate of employment attrition, beyond the effects of heightened corporate mobility, is attributable to the consolidation of job-killing technologies in the hands of TNCs. While there is a long history of development of labour-saving or -replacing technologies within the industrial workplace, today's work-world throughout all sectors is characterized by an unprecedented application of technologies designed to actually eliminate
as much as possible an operation’s dependency on labour. New levels of scientific management to squeeze maximum productivity from each worker are hooked up with sophisticated systems of automation, roboticization, and computerization, all of which conspire to make the relatively temperamental, unpredictable and comparably inefficient human worker irrelevant to the corporation’s ultimate goal, the maximization of profit. As a result, presently there exists globally the highest levels of un- and under-employment since the Great Depression; some 800 million eligible workers. As Jeremy Rifkin, author of The End of Work (1996), puts it:

In all three key employment sectors -- agriculture, manufacturing, and services -- machines are quickly replacing human labor and promise an economy of near-automated production by the mid decades of the twenty-first century... Even developing nations are facing increasing ‘technological unemployment’ as transnational companies build state-of-the-art, high-tech production facilities, and shed millions of low-wage laborers who can no longer compete with the cost efficiency, quality control, and speed of delivery achieved by automated manufacturing (1996: 109).

The pernicious effects of mass unemployment upon individuals, their families and their communities has been extensively documented. As unemployment increases so does social disintegration, as the lives of individuals and their communities unravel. Increases in overall violence, spousal and child abuse, incarceration rates, premature deaths, alcohol and drug abuse, gambling, suicide, homelessness, divorce rates, and psychological illness are all positively correlated with rising unemployment. Rising unemployment also sets up a chain reaction as people without jobs must withdraw from active participation in the economy, which in turn dampens consumer demand in retail and service sectors, precipitates lay-offs or bankruptcies and discourages private investment, and thereby further increases unemployment. The unemployed cannot contribute to a tax base and instead must often draw from it for their
immediate survival. Fewer taxes paid spells a disintegrating social infrastructure and hence fewer provisions for the increasing numbers of dislocated in a time when such provisions are most necessary. A disintegrating tax base also yields budget constraints, reduced government spending, and typically even more unemployment as governments jettison employees by the thousands to cut costs. On and on the vicious cycle goes as TNCs and investors shift their operations and interests from localities grown highly dependent on outside sources of capital and economic growth, to localities offering the best cost advantage and returns on investment.

In sum, on the subject of unemployment in Canada:

The prospects for major reductions in unemployment in the immediate future are not promising. Conservative ideologues (in the social sciences, right-wing think tanks, and the media) are in the ascendancy. They insist that the sweeping changes of the last twenty or so years are immutable. The increased mobility of capital — the phenomenon of 'globalization' — has created conditions that compel nation-states to restructure their entire institutional frameworks to support capital accumulation and promote competition in global markets. This trend has been exacerbated by new labour-saving technologies — innovations in computers, telecommunications, and other technologies — that firms must adopt if they are to compete and generate rates of profit that justify new investment (Black, 1998: 91).

We can see clearly how the consolidation of wealth and power in the hands of a relatively small, largely unaccountable, and highly unrepresentative coterie of TNCs and international investors can lead to profound social and economic disintegration, as these exclusively profit-oriented entities relentlessly pursue ever higher profits regardless of public expense. Jobs disappear, lives fall to ruin, families collapse, and communities disintegrate wherever the ideology of corporate libertarianism prevails. Worse still, however, are the effects of ecological
disintegration wrought by the endless drive for economic growth and maximized resource throughput that characterizes globalization.

With a high degree of accuracy, it can be claimed that the core motivation of globalization, premised as it is on a foundation of infinite-growth economics, is the maximization of throughput, i.e., the maximization of overall material consumption whereby the imperative is to get as many resources as possible out of the ground (as raw resources), through the economy by way of commodification, industrial modification, and consequent consumption, and back into the ground (as discarded, landfilled waste), all in as short a time as possible and preferably at an ever-accelerating rate. However, as widely documented by scores of researchers, scientists, and activists, this process of maximal throughput is having a profoundly ruinous effect on the planet’s ecological integrity. Crushed under the demands of globalization, the planet’s very life-support system is, without qualification, rapidly disintegrating.

The Rise of the Consumer Culture

Before delving into the litany of ecological ills associated with globalization, it would be instructive to examine the origins and nature of the consumer culture, as it is the engine of global consolidation as much as it is for ecological disintegration. Kenichi Ohmae, in an interview reproduced in *Going Global: Four Entrepreneurs Map the New World Marketplace* (1996), describes from the corporatist’s perspective the overriding importance of creating and exploiting a culture of consumption:

> Then at $10,000 [per capita GNP] it’s such a clear trend that, as a corporation, unless you recognize it, you will both miss opportunities and, ultimately, threaten your own existence... Amazingly, the
consumers in [all] countries all behave the same way once they cross that $10,000 per capita line. Their educational levels, their academic and cultural backgrounds, their lifestyles all become more and more homogeneous. At the $10,000 level, people — wherever they are — have access to the same information, and that information adds further to the degree of homogeneity. People start behaving in very similar ways. Because of this information era, with common knowledge of brands and goods, everyone knows what's in fashion. They start to become global consumers (Taylor and Webber, 1996: 46, 47, emphasis added).

The full intent of TNCs and other proponents of globalization is the creation of a global consumer class made up of people in Ohmae's vaunted "$10,000 club." In effect, this process represents the ongoing "Americanization" of the world as it is the U.S. that is spearheading the globalizer's charge and it is the U.S. that both exemplifies the culture of mass consumption while also being its originator.

Millions of people worldwide are steadily flowing into the mass consumption club, as countries such as China, Brazil, Argentina, Mexico, India, and South Korea rapidly industrialize and develop a middle-class stratum of affluent consumers. This is not to say that entire populations of these countries are benefitting. Rather, in the classic two-tiered fashion, select enclaves of affluence are developing in the midst of a sea of impoverished who are, in many cases, actually falling steadily deeper into the clutches of impoverishment. Economic development in most developing nations is typically erratic and schizophrenic, leading to the elevation of a comparatively tiny group of newly enriched over the vast majority of the still-poor and poorer-still. Nations that are determined to modernize, to develop an affluent consumer base, often pursue this goal with complete abandon, re-channeling public expenditures or promoting industrial programs in ways that benefit the growing middle-class
of consumers, but often harm and take away from the majority of still-poor.

In the creation of consumer cultures, the concomitant polarizing of the world’s population between overconsumers and the absolutely impoverished carries an important and extremely negative side-effect. At present, the world’s middle class, some 60 percent or 3.3 billion of the world’s people, lead sustainable lives that have no serious environmental repercussions. In contrast, the world’s 1.1 to 1.2 billion overconsumers at the top are having a profoundly negative effect, and are responsible for the vast majority of the world’s ecological degradation. However, the world’s 1.2 billion absolutely poor, a group that is steadily growing as developing nations re-channel all their resources into modernizing, also impact the environment to a level disproportionate to their numbers. The absolute poor normally have little choice but to pursue ways of life that are not environmentally sustainable, typically just to survive out the day. Often marginalized onto the poorest lands to begin with, the absolute poor must then resort to slash-and-burn agriculture that damages delicate rain-forests, or they farm slopes too steep to sustain such activity and thereby rapidly deplete the slope’s topsoil. Or the absolute poor will resort to the heedless depletion of what little fuelwood and water resources they possess due to the dictates of immediate survival. Often, the only resource left to the absolute poor is children. Consequently, they will have as many as possible and, when given the often very high child mortality rates they must face, large families are often a necessity in order to provide a reasonable assurance that enough of the children will survive into adulthood to care for their parents. The tendency in the Third World toward overpopulation is often a direct consequence of their widespread impoverishment on the basis of First World wealth and the ensuing maldistribution of the world’s resources to the benefit of the already wealthy.
It is important to realize that the absolute poor are often rendered so due to First World activities: the forced conversion of their best farmland into cashcrop plantations along with their expulsion from that land; their displacement due to IMF or World Bank sponsored mega-projects, such as dams that flood their ancestral lands; their expulsion from traditional lands or from cities in the face of civil war and internal strife, often made possible with Western weapons, as in the recent case of Somalia; the destruction of forests that represent the homelands for thousands of indigenous groups, to feed the export timber market or make way for cattle ranches that provide beef for affluent consumers worldwide; the location by the West of its most toxic industrial facilities, and its ongoing exportation of toxic wastes, which are inevitably dumped on the poorest; all these factors and more result in absolute poverty for hundreds of millions of people worldwide. According to the Worldwatch Institute, at any given time there exists at least 50 million refugees, defined as persons displaced either within their home country, or persons forced to flee abroad in search of asylum. Civil wars, economic turmoil, and environmental pressures are seen as the main factors responsible for the large number of displaced people, a population that promises only to increase in years to come (Brown, Renner and Flavin, 1998: 104).

Present levels of global consumption, due mainly to the appetite of just one-fifth of the world’s population, are proving unsustainable and are having serious environmental consequences. The globalizer’s dream of doubling or even tripling the population of overconsumers, or at least the level of consumption presently enjoyed by the overconsumer class, takes on a decidedly insane tinge when seen in the light of today’s level of environmental disintegration. To raise the level of consumption of the entire world’s population to that
presently enjoyed by the 1.2 billion overconsumers would require, literally, several more planets to plunder resources from and ship wastes to.

Yet overconsumption remains the siren's call, enticing an increasingly fragile world closer and closer toward the rocks of ecological ruin. Consumerism is fast displacing the world's many value systems, traditions, and religions to become the ideological glue that binds together a one world order. According to Jeremy Seabrook:

It is, in fact, a strange kind of transcendence that is being sought in the unquiet, restless model of development which the West now proposes to an eager — and for the most part — welcoming world. If this were not the case, consumerism would not be the fastest-growing cult in the world. For it represents a quasi-religious conversion of the people of the earth from goals of self-reliance and sufficiency into a promise of plenty beyond the dreams of avarice (1997: 12).

However, for all its impact, and for all its dangerous allure, the consumer culture is scarcely four generations old.

The consumer culture has its origins in the United States, and was made possible by the country's rapid development in industrial capacity during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The consumer culture was borne out of the concerted efforts of industrialists and capitalists who, newly in possession of mass production technology, sought to devise sophisticated means to spur on material consumption. At the time, they faced two choices: either produce to the level of total satisfaction of existing demand, or artificially stimulate an increase in demand to fill their new productive potential. Obviously, they chose the latter route.

As sociologist Stuart Ewen describes the process, in his Captains of Industry: Advertising and the Social Roots of the Consumer Culture (1977):

The mechanism of mass production could not function unless markets
became more dynamic, growing horizontally (nationally), vertically (into social classes not previously among the consumers) and ideologically. Now men and women had to be habituated to respond to the demands of the productive machinery... [The modern mass producer] was required to create an ideological bridge across traditional social gaps — region, taste, need, and class — which would narrow prejudices in his favor (1977: 24,25).

The vanguards of mass industry increasingly sought to orchestrate in the American public an habituation to ceaseless consumption, to displace the culture of thrift and self-sufficiency that still held sway. As Ewen states:

Considering the quantitative possibilities of mass production, the question of ‘national markets’ became one of qualitatively changing the nature of the American buying public. In response to the exigencies of the productive system of the twentieth century, excessiveness replaced thrift as a social value. It became imperative to invest the laborer with a financial power and a psychic desire to consume (ibid., 25).

In short, it became imperative to transform the vast majority of the American population into creatures of ceaseless consumption, production, and wastage.

Edward Filene, of the British department store family, was an early proponent of the massification of culture into one given over to consumption. Reflecting on the period ended 1921, Filene observed that “productive machinery was so effective that even more so than before much greater markets were absolutely necessary than those provided by the existing public buying power” (quoted in ibid., 25). In 1929, Christine Frederick, author of Selling Mrs. Consumer, observed: “Consumptionism is the name give to the new doctrine; and it is admitted today to be the greatest idea that America has to give to the world; the idea that workmen and masses be looked upon not simply as workers and producers, but as consumers... Pay them more, sell them more, prosper more is the equation” (quoted in ibid., 23). Harold
Loeb, in his 1935 *National Survey of Potential Product Capacity*, in regards to the “capacity of the nation to produce goods and services,” wrote that “Scientific production [has] promised to make the conventional notion of self-reliant producer/consumer anachronistic” (quoted in ibid., 24). And, as a final example of a proponent of the transformation of America from a land of frugality to one of frivolity, consider the sentiments of retailing analyst Victor Lebow who said, shortly after WW II: “Our enormously productive economy...demands that we make consumption our way of life, that we convert the buying and use of goods into rituals, that we seek our spiritual satisfaction, our ego satisfaction, in consumption... We need things consumed, burned up, worn out, replaced, and discarded at an ever increasing rate” (quoted in Durning, 1992: 21, 22).

As a result of the concerted drive by industrialists and capitalists to spur on mass consumption, yesterday’s thrifty and largely self-sufficient agrarian population was utterly transformed into today’s mass culture of permanently dissatisfied hyper-consumers. All manner of innovations, today commonplace and simply part of the taken-for-granted socio-cultural background, emerged to instigate consumption including: picture windows and the art of display; grand and luxuriant department stores; the prolific use of symbols, colour, glass, and emotional appeals in store displays; the strong linking of material goods with success; the deep association of ‘newness’ with desirability; the acceptability of instant gratification and the invention of consumer credit to fulfill it; and the formation of quasi-scientific disciplines designed to systematically induce consumption, namely, those of sales, marketing, and later public relations.

By the end of the second world war, the transformation of American society to one of mass
consumption appeared to be complete, so complete that in fact America's productive capacity has long-since spilled over its national borders to move-on and massify the rest of the world into a consumer mono-culture.

The Disintegrating Environment

Economic growth, and thereby growth in consumption levels, has been spectacular in recent years. In constant dollars, the global output of goods and services grew from just under US$5 trillion in 1950 to more than US$29 trillion in 1997, a sixfold increase. The growth from 1990 to 1997 alone totaled US$5 trillion, matching the total growth of goods and services recorded from the dawn of civilization to 1950 (Brown et al., 1998: 3). But can this spectacular rate of output continue? According to Lester Brown of the Worldwatch Institute:

As the economy grows, pressures on the Earth's natural systems and resources intensify. From 1950 to 1997, the use of lumber tripled, that of paper increased sixfold, the fish catch increased nearly fivefold, grain consumption nearly tripled, fossil fuel burning nearly quadrupled, and air and water pollutants multiplied severalfold. The unfortunate reality is that the economy continues to expand, but the ecosystem on which it depends does not, creating an increasingly stressed relationship (ibid., 3,4).

As Brown reports, while key economic indicators are consistently positive — investment, trade, production, and consumption indicators are all up within a global economy growing at plus 4 percent yearly — the key environmental indicators are increasingly negative. Says Brown, Forests are shrinking, water tables are falling, soils are eroding, wetlands are disappearing, fisheries are collapsing, rangelands are deteriorating, rivers are running dry, temperatures are rising, coral reefs are dying, and plant and animal species are disappearing. The global economy as now structured cannot continue to expand much longer if the ecosystem on which it depends continues to deteriorate
at the current rate (ibid., 4).

"Growth for the sake of growth," notes renowned environmental philosopher Edward Abbey, "is the ideology of the cancer cell" (quoted in ibid., 4). Just as cancer, if left unchecked, will continue to grow until it destroys its host, so too will the global economy destroy the Earth's ecosystem. Consider the following growth estimates calculated by the award-winning author and ecologist G. Tyler Miller, Jr.:

Based on current exponential increases in population and economic growth (resource consumption), the total stress we are putting on the planet is increasing exponentially at about 5.5% each year. In 1990, the total ecological demand we put on Earth's resources was 448 times larger than in 1880. If present trends continue (which is unlikely), by the year 2000 it will be 776 times as large and by 2020 it will be 2,333 times as large (1992: 22).

An economic system whose projected growth quickly runs into the realm of absurdity in less than two generations is a system in serious need of reconsideration.

A full listing of the litany of ecological ills associated with an expanding global economy is rather like a tour through Dante's Inferno -- bleak and difficult, from which hope is hard-pressed to escape. Global warming, ozone depletion, impending global food shortages, desertification, acid rain, the depletion, salination and toxification of soil, deforestation, groundwater depletion and pollution, diminishing biodiversity, the increasing toxification of life, the triumphant return of once vanquished diseases and the emergence of even more lethal new ones, and so on, are all occurring at an unprecedented level and accelerating rate as globalization urges up the appetite of the global economy. As noted earlier, with the global economy as a whole expanding at four percent per year we can look forward to a doubling of its size, and throughput, within 18 to 20 years, and a tripling within 25 years. Exponential
economic growth is a lethal recipe. Stir into the stew of global ecological disintegration the pressures exerted by 80 million new people annually, (contributing to a potential near-doubling of the world's population to 11 billion by 2050), and the throughput maximization of globalization takes on a decidedly manic pallor. The promise of globalization is to raise as many people as possible to the level of the hyper-consumers in the industrialized nations, a promise that cannot help but contribute to further global ecological disintegration.

I will not here belabour the story of ecological disintegration, but will provide only a few examples. The reader is referred to any of the numerous works available on environmental decline, in particular the excellent resources produced by the Worldwatch Institute. Global warming shows no signs of abating, with the 14 warmest years since record-keeping began in 1866 all occurring since 1979 — with the five warmest since 1990. The warmest year yet was 1997, with 1998 promising to be even warmer still. And, as the intensive industrialization associated with globalization continues (witness Mexico, Brazil, India or China), carbon emissions associated with the burning of fossil fuels and organic matter and leading to higher concentrations of atmospheric carbon dioxide (the main greenhouse gas), promise only to increase. Deforestation too shows no sign of abating, further reinforcing a global warming trend as the necessary carbon dioxide absorbing and temperature regulating trees steadily fall in service to throughput maximization. Nobody knows exactly what to expect under intensified global warming, but prognostications are not good. It is likely that global warming will have calamitous effects, ranging from rising sea levels and inundated coastal areas to salt-water contaminated groundwater, from diminished agricultural output to intensified deforestation, from collapsed ecosystems to further diminished biodiversity. The great
ecological worry is the strong possibility that global warming may trigger a "domino-effect," with each impact from global warming, such as the die-off of some forests, contributing to and reinforcing the process of global warming and in turn contributing to a new round of even worse impacts (Brown et al., 1998).

A second great global ecological concern has to do with agricultural output. Despite a record amount of farmland under cultivation, and a maximum use of chemical inputs, agricultural output, while marginally up in 1997 and 1998 to a record level, is still unable to keep up with world population growth. Agricultural output per capita is on a steady decline. World carryover stocks of grain (the traditional measure of food surplus) have, for the third year running, remained at less than 60 days -- the critical "food security threshold." For global food security, carryover stocks should total at least 120 to 150 days. Less than 60 days means that mere "pipeline" supplies are available. In the advent of a serious ecological crisis or a failed harvest or two, large swathes of the world's population may be less than two months away from mass starvation. This combined with an unprecedented proliferation of conventional and nuclear weaponry, in particular the millions of small arms the US is exporting around the world yearly, leads to very bleak prospects for future global security (Brown et al., 1998).

Pressures on world food supplies only promise to increase, not only with population growth, but with the very mechanics of globalization. Hand-in-hand with globalization comes intensified industrialization, urbanization, and an advanced, diversified economy with higher and higher consumption demands -- all likely to carry deleterious effects for agriculture. Lester Brown of the Worldwatch Institute, observing the spectacular economic growth lately posted by China combined with the country's relatively high population growth and rapidly increasing
dependency on food imports, asks presciently, who will feed the Asian giant? What will a
country with more than 1.1 billion people, nuclear weapons and a massive military, a long
history of imperial aggression, and recent experience with mass starvation do in the face of
widespread and chronic food shortages that have already begun? It is estimated that by the year
2010, China’s food import requirements (its shortfall) will outstrip the whole of the world’s
food exports (which are already spoken for) (Brown et al., 1998).

While there is a record amount of farmland in production, most agricultural areas are being
systematically pushed beyond their limits of sustainability. For example, millions upon millions
of tons of vital topsoil are lost every year, at a rate anywhere from ten to a hundred times its
re-formation. Soil compaction from heavy farm equipment, salination from over-irrigation, or
nutrient depletion from overuse all contribute to a steady loss of agricultural potential. Major
global food shortages and ensuing eruptions of violence are on the immediate horizon.

Globalization is a major culprit in this process, particularly in light of the widespread
domination of farmland by huge agribusiness TNCs and their very cavalier attitude toward
long-term agricultural sustainability versus short-term profitability. Globalizing Western habits
of consumption, for example, has led to the increasing adoption of meat-based (versus grain
based) diets. Livestock are particularly poor food sources as they require huge inputs of land,
water and grain for a relatively small caloric return. Alan Durning places input estimates in the
area of 5 to 10 kilograms of grain per kilogram of meat, as well as 3,000 liters of water, and
the equivalent of 2 liters of gasoline to produce fertilizer and other farm inputs. The cost is
compounded when the land lost to agricultural production is factored in: over one year, one
acre of land can produce 22,000 pounds of potatoes, or 360 pounds of beef. Other costs of
a meat-based diet include the energy spent and pollution generated with the transportation (often over thousands of kilometers) and cold-storage of the meat. But the "sophisticated" meat-based diet of the West is what all developing countries seek to emulate (Durning, 1992).

The steady erosion of the Earth's biodiversity is another very serious problem. There is widespread agreement among environmental scientists that the most direct measure of the planet's health is the status of its biological diversity — defined as the vast complex of species that make up the living world. Because the vast majority of the Earth's species have yet to be catalogued, or even encountered, estimates of the total number of species currently in existence range widely, from 4 million to more than 40 million. So too do estimates of the number of threatened or extinct species. Nonetheless, there does exist a general consensus as to the severity of the problem: at whatever level it is occurring at, the present rate of biodiversity loss is far too high; alarmingly so.

Species' declines and extinctions have always been a part of natural earthly processes. For example, examination of the fossil record for marine invertebrates reveals a natural or "background" rate of extinction in the order of one to three species per year, a rate consistent over millions of years of evolutionary time. In stark contrast, during the present time, even the most conservative estimates of biodiversity loss place the rate at 1000 extinct species per year, a rate hundreds of times higher than the background rate maintained fairly consistently for millions of years. Even the great mass extinctions that befell the dinosaurs occurred at a rate positively glacial when compared to today's extinction rate. According to British ecologist Norman Myers:

The rate from the year 1600 to 1900, roughly one species [driven extinct]
every four years, and the rate during most of the present century, about
one species [lost] per year, are to be compared with a rate of possibly one
per 1000 years during the 'great dying' of the dinosaurs (quoted in
Livingston, 1994: 51).

John A. Livingston, professor emeritus in Environmental Studies at York University and author
of the award-winning *Rogue Primate: An Exploration of Human Domestication* (1994) echoes
the sentiments of Myers’. Livingston points out that the great extinctions of 65, 94, 213, and
248 million years ago all occurred at a rate many, many times slower than today’s rate of
extinction. In comparison to these prehistoric and relatively gentle diebacks, today’s human-
induced extinctions “may legitimately be seen as an ecological holocaust” (ibid., 1).

Estimates of the actual number of species driven into extinction each year vary widely.
Myers provides a figure of at least one major species per hour (ibid., 51) while the Worldwatch
Institute concludes that “a minimum or 140 plant and animal species are condemned to
extinction each day” (Brown et al., 1992: 4). According to ecologist G. Tyler Miller, Jr.:

> An estimated 36,500 species of plants and animals become extinct each year, mostly because of human activities; if deforestation
> (especially of tropical forests), desertification, and destruction of wetlands and coral reefs continues at present rates, at least 500,000
> and perhaps 1 million species will become extinct over the next 20 years (1992: 13).

According to research findings as recently compiled by the Worldwatch Institute, the
number of species still extant and currently under threat is alarming. For birds, 9 percent of all
species are “Nearing Threatened Status”, 7 percent are “Threatened — Vulnerable to
Extinction”, and 4 percent are “Threatened — In Immediate Danger of Extinction.” The
figures for mammals, respectively, are: 14, 14, and 11 percent; reptiles, 6, 12, and 8 percent;
amphibians, 5, 15, and 10 percent; and fish, 5, 21, and 13 percent (Tuxill and Bright, 1998: 41-
58). These rates when compared to the natural "background" rate are truly frightening. Concludes Worldwatch researchers Tuxill and Bright:

The loss of species touches everyone, for no matter where or how we live, biodiversity is the basis for our existence. Earth's endowment of species provides humanity with food, fiber, and many other products and 'natural services' for which there is simply no substitute. Biodiversity underpins our healthcare systems; some 25 percent of drugs prescribed in the United States include chemical compounds derived from wild organisms, and billions of people worldwide rely on plant- and animal-based traditional medicine for their primary health care. Biodiversity provides a wealth of genes essential for maintaining the vigor of our crops and livestock. It provides pollination services, mostly in the form of insects, without which we could not feed ourselves. Frogs, fish, and birds provide natural pest control; mussels and other aquatic organisms cleanse our water supplies; plants and microorganisms create our soils (ibid., 41,42).

However, even these vital and tangible benefits derived from a diverse natural world may represent only the tip of the iceberg. We have only begun to explore and decipher the intricate ecological mechanisms that keep natural communities running smoothly, or away from collapse. As Harvard University biologist E.O. Wilson puts it, we live on an unexplored planet. However, there is a dawning awareness, if not horror, that the complex web of biological and ecological diversity that sustains life on Earth, while strong and quite elastic, is so densely interconnected and interdependent that once one area begins to seriously unravel, others cannot help but follow, in domino-fashion. For example, our continued reliance on chemical-intensive and mechanized agriculture is not only depleting soil but is causing the wholesale demise of those insect, fungal, and bacteria species that create "living" soil in the first place. The drainage and toxification of groundwater reserves combined with acid rain is killing soil well outside of agricultural regions. If the soil dies, so do we.
This chronicling of ecological disintegration in response to human activities could continue at great length. Indeed, many volumes filling many shelves have been compiled to date. However, the preceding should suffice to establish the salience of the argument against the viability of the global economy’s expansion as premised upon the assumptions of infinite-growth economics. The wall of limits will arrive, and very soon, and the task that lies ahead is, at the very least, to both prepare for the crash and convince those leading the charge toward globalization to slow down their Earth-destroying machine and thus lessen the impact.

I will end this chapter with a particularly ominous quote from the Worldwatch Institute’s 1998 Vital Signs: the Environmental Trends that are Shaping Our Future:

The world today is warmer, more crowded, more urban, economically richer, and environmentally poorer than ever before. This past year was one of near-record global economic growth - and of disturbing new signs of environmental stress (Brown, Renner, and Flavin, 1998: 15).

In 1991, the Worldwatch Institute warned that “the global economy is literally destroying the natural systems that support it.” Rather than heeding the warning, they note seven years later, that we have only picked up the pace of economic growth and ecological disintegration (Brown and Ayres, 1998: 13).
Chapter Three

What is to Be Done?

It would appear that, in light of the disintegrative side of globalization, the earth’s peoples now stand collectively - globally - at a crossroads. Increasingly we are faced with an either/or choice: accept the emerging status quo of globalization, that is, of global economic, political, cultural and technological consolidation and homogenization, or turn away from it, reject it whatever the perils, and seek instead to create alternative and/or parallel pathways of social organization toward a world not so precariously balanced on the precipice of global disaster — what dissident-turned-president of Czechoslovakia and famed playwright Vaclav Havel calls a parallel polis.

It is possible that the present process of globalization will not result in a crescendo of catastrophic social, political, economic, and especially ecological collapses worldwide. Globalization may endure and might instead result in the indefinite continuation of our interminable stumbling and lurching from one capitalist-induced crisis to another. We cannot underestimate human ingenuity, particularly in times of crisis. The old maxim, “necessity is the mother of invention,” will likely again prove true with globalization, at least to a point that will
stave off the outright extinction of humankind or a global ecological collapse. Nonetheless, it is not necessary that we finally reach a no-return point of total collapse because of globalization. The mere fact that such a palpable threat exists in the minds of even the most sober, a threat that is being widely discussed by many radicals and conservatives alike, is reason enough to exercise extreme prudence and begin the search for alternatives to globalization.

But the very real possibility of total collapse due to a reaching and exceeding of the earth’s limits everywhere does not begin to prompt a need for the profound reconsideration of globalization when compared to capitalism’s extremely poor track record so far. While capitalism has enjoyed much success with respect to the allocation and distribution of resources, without which many grand projects might not have been possible, its overall record remains dismal. It is a record replete with wars, famine, imperial conquests, genocide, profligate material overconsumption, ongoing support for ruthless dictators, recurrent depressions, pervasive insecurity, staggering disparities of wealth and income, massive military machines, and the wholesale immiseration of hundreds of millions of people. Altogether, these conditions soundly call into question the continued viability (and desirability!) of the globalization-of-capital project.

It is possible, as the proponents of globalization would have us believe, that the present battery of disintegrative effects associated with the global consolidation of capital are merely short-term side effects, destined for amelioration in the wake of rising global economic efficiency, increasing material security, and advancing technological ability.

Perhaps a scientific breakthrough just round the next corner will solve global warming, or a biotechnological solution fresh from the petri dish will remove the threat of world hunger, or
a communication and transportation revolution still in some whiz-kid’s garage will spell a new era of liveable and sustainable cities. Futurists, such as Frank Ogden in *The Last Book You'll Ever Read and Other Lessons from the Future* (1993), paint a rosy picture of a future where technology and human ingenuity has once-and-for-all vanquished the contradictions of capitalism (while leaving the rest of capitalism flourishing). But contrary to the sanguine predictions of capitalists and futurists, it is likely that there are few truly revolutionary technological solutions to the present global problematic in the pipeline. More probably, such solutions will at best amount to too little, too late, or at worst will only deepen the crisis. The history of technological development indicates a tendency of technology (a logic) to stay one-step ahead of its intelligent employ. We are forever attempting to devise new technological means to remedy the ill-effects of yesterday’s revolutionary technology.¹⁰

And, besides, even if the technological fix did manage to stave off the downside of globalization, if only temporarily, it would still be the principal agents of globalization, the consolidators, who would control the fix, and thereby further consolidate their power over the world’s people to stratospheric levels. And what a fragile world we would then inhabit, one highly dependent upon the maintenance of layer-upon-layer of artificial, human-created and hence error-prone technological fixes for the continued sustenance of life on earth.

that some form of global governance is absolutely imperative to manage or mitigate the ill-effects of global capital or global industrialization; some kind of political fix, if you will. While, in the final analysis, it is hard not to disagree with such an observation, that some form of global governance is necessary, the implications of how such an order might come about, what it may exclude, and what it may seek to maintain are still very troubling.

Capitalism, by its very nature and throughout its logic, is necessarily a whirlwind, to invoke Schumpeter, of "creative destruction." Just as a leopard cannot change its spots, capitalism cannot change its logic, whether in operation at a local, national, or global level (while the global level represents capitalism's final reaching of the container's boundaries with any further growth analogous to a "containment breach"). Without the profit imperative and individualism, without ceaseless growth and competition, hierarchicalized relations and consequent pervasive insecurity, and without profligate resource consumption and artificial scarcity, there is no capitalism but rather some other real or imagined social order.

The task before a global body of governance, to once-and-for-all contain the inevitable side-effects of global capitalism, an economic system predicated upon the assumed viability of infinite economic growth in a finite world at a time when these side-effects are rapidly spilling over the dike of containment and when those creating these side-effects are in possession of a degree of earthly power without precedence, appears as little short of Herculean. Obtaining this level of global governance, without first or at least simultaneously creating, if not emerging from, a localized basis for struggle and popular democratic support would be difficult enough. Maintaining such an unelected, mandate-less and thus necessarily undemocratic world government would be difficult enough. Trying to force global capital to emphasize the creative
instead of the destructive and, more or less, stop growing beyond earthly boundaries while simultaneously, if not paradoxically, preserving the global conditions necessary for the continued profitable employment of capital, would assuredly require an authoritarian regime the likes of which the world has never seen. With the formation of a global government, admittedly an attractive if not compelling ideal (for, at least on the surface, who alone would have the power to counteract global capital but a global government? ), would come, ironically, the greatest level of consolidated power yet. A global army, global police force, global security and surveillance network, and a truly absolute and tentacular global administrative-bureaucratic structure would all be required to enforce central dictums and decrees, and to oversee general global compliance. The emergence of a world governing body that is unrooted in the real conditions of real people would be, in theory and effect, the emergence of a world fascist dictatorship.

An alternative new world order that celebrates qualitative development over quantitative growth, that is, sustainability, ecological integrity, diversity, and popular democracy, one that necessarily starts from some notion of localized self-reliance and integrity, will certainly require decision-making (or, more aptly, organizational) bodies at all levels including the global, all nested together into a reasonably cohesive but internally highly differentiated global order. Provisions for total accountability, effective representation, instant recallability, combined with revolving, perhaps mandatory terms, for political representatives drawn widely from the polity and only moderately compensated (to the extent of the demise of the professional politician), would all help to safeguard the general interest, at any level of governance. In this case, however, the level of global governance would not be regarded as ultimate or paramount but
complementary.

Acceptance of such grandiosity, of a paramount global government, is perhaps the result of too many years of exposure to a corporatist ideology that stresses big is better, that emphasizes the ultimate desirability of economies of scale, the resonant need to accumulate wealth and power, the imperative of a maximum growth maxim, or the 'naturalness' of a gradual evolutionary process toward greater complexity as exemplified by a globalized economy or polity. Moreover, our present hunger for a global governing body represents little more than a continuation of our deeply socialized, if not conditioned, deference to authority. From infancy to adulthood, we are socialized to look outside of ourselves for the answers to life's most confusing or perplexing matters: our parents, teachers, religious figures, scientists, experts, academics, bureaucrats, politicians, and corporate masters all reinforce and thrive under this tendency. And what is it but our persistent deference to authority that has aided greatly the formation of a global economy? How many generations of gullibility does globalization represent, with each generation accepting as gospel the promises and prognostications of politicians and economists beholden to capital and capitalists alike? "Patience," they have preached, "prosperity for all is just round the next corner." This deference to authority, the expectation that some Captain of Industry, Revolutionary Leader, Big Man or Hero will save us from ourselves, is a large part of what, ultimately, the community self-reliance movement seeks to excise from humanity.

In short, if any level of a post-globalization world is to be paramount, it is the local level of lived reality, the only level where true human-centred meaning may reside and the only level where genuine accountability may exist.
In order for global governance to work, the same conditions necessary for local governance must abide. The manic, infinite-growth logic of global capital must be overturned and replaced with a sustainable, qualitatively-driven, steady-state economics. Otherwise, to reiterate, even if the dark side of globalization can be blunted, perhaps by a Herculean and ultimately authoritarian concentration of a substantial degree of inter-national cooperation into the formation of a likely to be embattled and tenuous global governing body, the basic, limit-exceeding logic of capitalism will remain. The cyclical, crisis-inducing logic will remain along with the growth imperative, and the vigilance necessary to contain these characteristics while avoiding eventual co-optation, in keeping with the history of capitalism and a long string of co-opted regulatory efforts, would be extreme.

In sum, with respect to the top-down imposition of a global governing body and our continued deference to outside authority to regulate global capital or save the global environment, does this not represent a future little changed from the present? Is this a future that the world's people should look forward to, a future that still requires the placing of our collective fate in the hands of a tiny elite? Is such a future wherein individuals and communities still must stumble and lurch from one insufferable capitalist-induced crisis to another, albeit crises somewhat blunted because of the ministrations of a global government, a future to be welcomed? Is a future wherein people must still collectively hold their breaths in hopes that a solution to the crisis-of-the-moment is imminent, that the crisis will prove manageable and not destroy too many lives or communities or will not finally and fatally trigger a Third World War or a global ecological holocaust, a future that we wish to send forward in time to meet our children and grandchildren? Surely, such an ingenious species as the human animal, the
quintessential creature of maximum mutability that is *homo faber*, after having woven such a rich historical tapestry of innumerable socio-cultural expressions available to draw insight from, can do better than a sick, old, crisis-prone form of social organization that has long overstayed its welcome. How much longer must the planet and her peoples endure the buffeting winds wrought by the ceaseless gale of creative destruction that is capitalism?

No matter, in the short-run, globalization will likely prove to be analogous to the US’s recent trillion-dollar Savings and Loans scandal, with those benefitting the most suffering the least while the public-at-large gets stuck with the bill if or when the whole thing collapses. Ultimately, however, as German sociologist Ulrich Beck has so convincingly argued in his *Risk Society* (1992), no one, no matter how wealthy and powerful, is forever insulated from the fallout wrought by global economic consolidation and associated social and ecological disintegration. There is an element of optimism hidden within the sentiments of Beck for it spells the possibility that many of those presently residing in elite institutions will soon, if they have not already, recognize the dangers of globalization as driven by infinite growth economics, and seek solutions themselves.

In this light, the possibilities for concerted and collective action, the fullest and most positive expression of the re-localization impulse, would not be restricted to the grassroots level — a meeting in the middle will be likely and necessary to craft new forms of social, political, and economic organization that prove sustainable for all levels, from the local to the global. Nonetheless, it is at the grassroots level where the soil for such growth is tilled and seeded, fertilized and nurtured, and wherefrom much of the critical impulse for fundamental social change will grow. After all, it is at this level that the consequences and contradictions of
global capital are felt first and most poignantly.

So, in the meantime, should the planet’s people collectively place their faith in the hands of the global consolidators, in hopes that maybe this time, where they hardly have before, trickle-down economics and technological fixes might work and we will awaken tomorrow in a secure world of plenty? Or should we break free from the globalizer’s spell, shake off our apathy and deference, and begin the arduous task of creating a second world order, one a little less precarious, a lot more internally diverse, and significantly less reliant upon a tremendous gamble of global proportions? Now is the time, from all indications, to begin crafting alternative forms of social organization, social experiments which will each contribute to a growing network of options and a body of wisdom from which the planet’s people may all draw.
Chapter Four

The Roots of Re-Localization


While all of the preceding works, and the many others that have undoubtedly escaped my notice, have assuredly prepared the ground for the emergence and growth of the community
self-reliance movement, those most intimately connected with the movement most often refer to Shumacher’s 1973 *Small is Beautiful* as the original catalyst. Indeed, what Betty Friedan or Simone de Beauvoir means to the feminist movement, or Rachel Carson to the environmental movement, is similar to what Schumacher means to the CS-R movement.

Schumacher was one of the first critical thinkers to seriously question, and propose solutions to, our obsession with infinite-growth economics:

> We find, therefore, that the idea of unlimited growth, more and more until everybody is saturated with wealth, needs to be seriously questioned on two counts: the availability of basic resources and, alternatively or additionally, the capacity of the environment to cope with the degree of interference implied (1974: 24).

Beyond its unsustainability, Schumacher sees within the industrial civilization addicted to infinite-growth economics an inescapable tendency toward violence, over scarce and ever-scarcer resources, and totalitarian control, over a population increasingly given to violent competition over these scarce resources. For Schumacher, so long as industrial civilization remains as such, staying true to the course of endless economic expansion, the long-term prospects for this civilization are bleak at best:

The illusion of unlimited powers, nourished by astonishing scientific and technological achievements, has produced the concurrent illusion of having solved the problem of production. The latter illusion is based on the failure to distinguish between income and capital where this distinction matters most. Every economist and businessman is familiar with the distinction, and applies it conscientiously and with considerable subtlety to all economic affairs — *except where it really matters; namely, the irreplaceable capital which man has not made, but simply found, and without which he can do nothing*...

Far larger is the capital provided by nature and not by man — and we do not even recognise it as such (ibid., 11, emphasis added).

This observation of Schumacher’s refers to the notion that we are eating up the planet’s
resources as fast as we can, while simultaneously overburdening the planet's waste absorption capacity, without regard to the needs of tomorrow, *almost as if we were a business going out of business*. While it is prudent to live off of the interest provided by capital, it is imprudence at its height to live off of the capital itself. The consequences of staying true to this imprudent course will be found in increasing violence, wars, social breakdown, famines, and ecological collapse.

In a relatively sparsely populated world with seemingly endless resources and an undeveloped economy, such as what prevailed in North America during the 16th to 19th Centuries, the maxim of maximum economic growth may have made sense. But in today's heavily populated world wherein the upper limits to the planet's resources and waste absorption capacity are now within sight, and where we have attained a standard of living that could only be characterized as over-developed, maximum economic growth makes little sense. Instead, admonishes Schumacher, we must study the economics of permanence, (otherwise known as steady-state, ecological or Buddhist economics):

> From an economic point of view, the central concept of wisdom is permanence. We must study the economics of permanence. Nothing makes economic sense unless its continuance for a long time can be projected without running into absurdities. There can be 'growth' towards a limited objective, but there cannot be unlimited, generalised growth. It is more than likely, as Gandhi said, that 'Earth provides enough to satisfy every man's need, but not for every man's greed'. Permanence is incompatible with a predatory attitude which rejoices in the fact that 'what were luxuries for our fathers have become necessities for us' (ibid., 26).

Shumacher continues:

> The cultivation and expansion of needs is the antithesis of wisdom. It is also the antithesis of freedom and peace. Every increase of
needs tends to increase one's dependence on outside forces over which one cannot have control, and therefore increases existential fear. Only by a reduction of needs can one promote a genuine reduction in those tensions which are the ultimate causes of strife and war (ibid., 26,27).

While these observations and sentiments of Schumacher's predate the rapid onset and a generalized concern with the implications of globalization, they are no less appropriate today. Presciently, Schumacher saw that the remedy for industrial civilization was to be found in the economics of permanence, as practiced in highly self-sufficient local communities:

As physical resources are everywhere limited, people satisfying their needs by means of a modest use of resources are obviously less likely to be at each other's throats than people depending upon a high rate of use. Equally, people who live in highly self-sufficient local communities are less likely to get involved in large-scale violence than people whose existence depends on world-wide systems of trade. From the point of view of Buddhist economics [of permanence], therefore, production from local resources for local needs is the most rational way of economic life, while dependence on imports from afar and the consequent need to produce for export to unknown and distant peoples is highly uneconomic and justifiable only in exceptional cases and on a small scale (ibid., 48,49).

Needless to say, if Schumacher were still alive today, he would be a staunch opponent of globalization. Indeed, the E.F. Schumacher Society, founded in his memory by Robert Swann and Susan Witt, has carried on where the great economist left off and has arisen as one of the most powerful voices against globalization, and for re-localization. Community self-reliance initiatives the Society has sponsored will be among those examined in the following chapters.

While the works in favour of community development and self-reliance and opposed to the infinite-growth economics that would soon straddle the earth were slow in coming after
Schumacher's 1973 milestone, they would gradually increase in pace to become a veritable outpouring by 1990. For example, taking as the subject "community development" as appearing directly in the book's title, if one checks through a books-in-print database for 1982 through 1997, the following trend is found: 1982 - five books published that year; 1985 - five books; 1988 - ten books; 1991 - twenty books; 1994 - twenty books; 1996 - twenty-seven books; and 1997 - forty-nine books. As a second example, books published as per books-in-print with the main focus being "civil society": 1980 - one book; 1988 - two books; 1990 - three books; 1994 - six books; 1995 - eleven books; 1996 - thirteen books; and 1997 - nineteen books.

Philosopher Charlene Spretnak, during the preparation of her fascinating study of a rapidly globalizing world titled *The Resurgence of the Real: Body, Nature, and Place in A Hypermodern World* (1997), encountered the same trend as evinced above. Spretnak, deeply encouraged and motivated by the emergence of a community self-reliance based trend toward "relocalization" noted that, "the fact that nearly all the books in this volume's bibliography happen to have been published within the last five years indicates that the 1990s are indeed a time of resurgence" (1997: 10).

There is still more evidence, if we open our eyes, to a profound resurgence of interest in the concept and ordering principles of community, and the urgent need to redevelop community as a central force in our lives. Whether this interest is a direct result of the tumultuousness and confusion that is omnipresent with globalization or simply highly correlated, is still a matter of debate. Nonetheless, community has emerged as one of the most salient issues of our day. The stunning successes, according to Canadian political-economist James Laxer in his recent book,
In Search of the New Left (1997), of the populist political Right owe no small debt to their ability to effectively play to our widespread concern regarding the demise or fragmentation of community-life.

Philosopher, clinical psychologist, and rabbi Michael Lerner, in his recent and highly successful treatment of the breakdown of modern life, *The Politics of Meaning: Restoring Hope and Possibility in an Age of Cynicism* (1997), takes a position *vis-a-vis* the successes of the political Right similar to Laxer’s. Starting in 1976, Lerner, along with a group of psychiatrists, psychologists, social workers, family therapists, union activists, and social theorists, set out to better understand the psychodynamics of middle-income working people. In particular they hoped to learn why so many middle-income people were drawn to the political Right.

Over the course of several years, Lerner and colleagues interviewed thousands of people representing a broad cross-section of middle income earners: bus drivers, corporate middle managers, auto workers, teachers, technicians, nurses, college professors, architects, secretaries, scientists, police officers, restaurant workers, engineers, and so on all the way across the middle-income spectrum. What they found surprised them. Rather than being motivated by material self-interest, as the researchers had initially expected, they found quite the opposite:

We found middle-income people deeply unhappy because they hunger to serve the common good and to contribute something with their talents and energies, yet find that their actual work gives them little opportunity to do so. They often turn to demands for more money as a compensation for a life that otherwise feels frustrating and empty. In the Left and among many academics it has been almost a rule of reason to believe that what people *really* care about is
their own material well-being, and that believing anything else is just some kind of populist romanticization. But we uncovered a far deeper desire — the desire to have meaningful work, work that people believe would contribute to some higher purpose than self-advancement (Lerner, 1997: 5,6).

Thus, Lerner and colleagues found that many people in American society, even those relatively well-to-do with reasonably well-paying and interesting jobs, lived lives of quiet desperation riven through with frustration and meaninglessness:

We found thousands of Americans — from every walk of life, ethnic and religious background, political persuasion and lifestyle — filled with lives of pain and self-blame, and turning to the political Right because the Right spoke about the collapse of families, the difficulty of teaching good values to children, the fear of crime, and the absence of spirituality in their lives. The Right seemed to understand their hunger for community and connection (ibid., 7).

Lerner, after several decades of observing and tending to modern society, after having encountered thousands of people from all walks of life living their everyday lives in a state of silent futility, a state of soul-deadening meaninglessness, borne of a society grounded in a “dominant ethos of selfishness and materialism,” concludes:

At the same time that we are caught in cynicism, however, we are desperate for hope. We hunger to be recognized by others, to be cherished for our own sakes and not for what we have accomplished or possess, and to be acknowledged as people who care about something higher and more important than our own self-interest. We hunger also for communities of meaning that can transcend the individualism and selfishness that we see around us and that will provide an ethical and spiritual framework that gives our lives some higher purpose. Some of us find those communities of meaning in a religious or nationalist framework, others in social change movements, still others in the framework of shared intellectual or artistic activity. These arenas may differ from one another in political, religious, or philosophical dogmas, but they all promise something in common to their participants — that our fundamental value as human beings will be recognized and cherished
within this context, and that our desire for connection to a community and to higher meaning for our lives will be nourished (ibid., 4).

The Communitarian movement, particularly in the US, has also become a powerful force and is another indication of a resurgence of interest in community life. A great deal of the recent interest in Communitarianism is due in particular to professor Amitai Etzioni's 1993 bestseller, *The Spirit of Community: The Reinvention of American Society*. Indeed, professor Etzioni's book is not the only recent work on community to reach bestseller status. Robert M. Bellah's 1985 contribution to communitarianism, *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life*, (now in its 2nd edition), is based on five years of exhaustive research in various American communities wherein Bellah and his team of researchers sought to understand "the conflict between our fierce individualism and our urgent need for community and commitment to one another." *Habits of the Heart*, as well as attaining bestseller status has also become a landmark of popular sociology. Its 1991 follow-up, *The Good Society*, has also attained bestseller status.

The area of popular fiction is not without its works extolling the virtues of community. One of the fastest growing areas of the fiction market is within the fantasy fiction genre and is exemplified by the books of Jean M. Auel. Her four-part, epic scale, "Earth's Children" series, set in the paleolithic era, chronicles in compelling fashion the search for community undertaken by Ayla, Auel's central protagonist. Auel's series, which began with the 1984 *The Clan of the Cave Bear*, and was followed by *The Valley of Horses*, *The Mammoth Hunters*, and *The Plains of Passage*, has become renowned for its tireless attention to detail and its as-accurate-as-possible recreations of the paleolithic world, particularly in its description of community life.
The fact that all four of Auel's books have become International Bestsellers, have been translated into dozens of languages, and have been, in some cases, reprinted more than 50 times, is not arbitrary. Nor is the fact that Auel's books sparked an outpouring of similar bestselling books, effectively heralding a new genre of fantasy fiction, all concerned with representations and recreations of ancient modes of life as they pertained to community.12

While the great hunger for works by Auel and others in her genre may be feeding a nostalgic, overly-romanticized, urge to return to a utopian past, one that is certainly impossible for the future, this hunger is not arbitrary and is representative of a significant trend in modern society. I trust that I am not alone in submitting the conclusion that Auel speaks most clearly, as do the works of Etzioni, Bellah and Lerner, to a growing need in modern society for a revitalization of community, at a time when it is most lacking.

Canadian pollster and sociologist, Angus Reid, has also found substantial evidence to support the existence of a drive toward community revitalization. In his recent book, Shakedown: How the New Economy is Changing Our Lives (1997), Reid distills 25 years of research on Canadian society and reports the existence of a renewed commitment among Canadians to forming and sustaining relationships. "In a world in which the permanence of just about every other relationship can't be taken for granted, family and friends seem to matter more than ever," notes Reid (1997: 31). While family and friends cannot be considered synonymous with community, a trend toward stronger familial and affiliational ties can be considered as precursory to revitalized communities. Reid continues:

The Canadian household is showing signs of a new stability. After years of focus on personal independence, today stronger family ties and a greater respect for interdependence seem to
be returning. The divorce rate is down. More young people —
and old people — are living at home. The home is becoming the
hub that it hasn’t been for decades. Not only are more people
living there, more people are working there. That reverses a
trend that began a century ago when people started to leave the
farms for more urban settings (ibid., 225).

Whether the trend observed by Reid toward greater family and relational interdependence
represents a retreatist attitude, as in the popularized tendency to ‘cocoon’ in isolation from a
stressful world, or alternatively represents a trend toward re-establishing the foundational
elements of community, is still an open question. Reid concludes, however, in favour of a trend
toward greater community:

So what does this all add up to? At one extreme we have become
such an individualistic society that according to Robert Putnam even
the number of people showing up at bowling alleys on their own
has increased. Yet the isolation and loneliness that figured in the
works of sociologists such as David Reisman (The Lonely Crowd)
in the 1950s is giving way to a greater sense of community. It may
be that individuality has peaked among some demographic sectors
and that the overall trend is actually toward more togetherness.
Evidence from the Angus Reid Group’s Family Study series
certainly points in this direction (ibid., 250).

Numerous writers and activists, on the strength of their own analyses of globalization, are
in agreement with Reid and are calling loudly for just such a movement toward greater
community, toward a greater sense of interdependence, as the necessary place to begin
overcoming the disintegrative effects of the global economy.

David Korten, graduate of Stanford Business School, past professor at Harvard Business
School and once senior advisor for USAID, has subsequently recanted his mainstream
economics position and donned the cloak of radical politics. In his most recent book, When
Corporations Rule the World (1995), Korten urgently proposes an “agenda for change” based
on “an awakened civil society.” Korten observes:

We are now coming to see that economic globalization has come at a heavy price. In the name of modernity we are creating dysfunctional societies that are breeding pathological behavior — violence, extreme competitiveness, suicide, drug abuse, greed, and environmental degradation — at every hand. Such behavior is an inevitable consequence when a society fails to meet the needs of its members for social bonding, trust, affection, and a shared sacred meaning (1995: 261).

Korten regards globalization as largely a matter of choice and devoid of historical necessity or inevitability. As it stands now, globalization has been chosen by those who wield the bulk of global economic power, who have, hegemonically, successfully convinced much of the world of their right to do so, and who are restricted to seeing the world in very narrow economic terms as refracted through the lens of corporate libertarianism. But, admonishes Korten, alternatives to the globalizer’s narrowness of vision do exist, “and those who view the world through the lens of the human interest have both the right and power to choose them” (ibid., 262). He continues:

Healthy societies depend on healthy, empowered local communities that build caring relationships among people and help us connect to a particular piece of the living earth with which our lives are intertwined. Such societies must be built through local-level action, household by household and community by community... To correct the deep dysfunction [of globalization], we must shed the illusions of our collective cultural trance, reclaim the power we have yielded to failing institutions, take back responsibility for our lives, and reweave the basic fabric of caring families and communities to create places for people and other living things (ibid., 262, emphasis added).

The challenge facing those who wish a world different from the New World Order of globalization, who wish to enact an “agenda for change” is, according to Korten, a challenge of re-rooting social reality into the permanence of place, of rebuilding a shattered civil society.
The local, and each individual as grounded in a locality, must serve as the locus of control over our collective destiny, supplanting the ambiguity of place, the impermanence and primacy of the short-term, and the profound lack of accountability that are the inevitable consequences of globalization.

Prescriptively, Korten maintains that:

A globalized economic system has an inherent bias in favor of the large, the global, the competitive, the resource-extractive, and the short-term. Our challenge is to create a global system that is biased toward the small, the local, the cooperative, the resource-conserving, and the long-term — one that empowers people to create a good living in balance with nature. The goal is not to wall each community off from the world but rather to create zones of local accountability and responsibility within which people can reclaim the power that is rightly theirs to manage their economies in the common interest (Ibid., 270).

Korten is by far not alone in prescribing a need to emphasize the local over the global as a potential antidote to the disintegrative effects of globalization. Indeed, Korten belongs to a veritable chorus of voices crying out against the excesses of globalization — and against the ironic myopia of the globalizer’s vision. As revealed by the title of a recent collection of essays, *The Case Against the Global Economy and For a Turn Toward the Local* (1996), the editors of this book, Jerry Mander and Edward Goldsmith, along with their many contributors, clearly place the preferred locus of control over our collective reality away from the boardrooms of globe-trotting TNCs or in the hard-drives of money-hungry international investors, and in the hands of the people where they live. To counter globalization, a project of “relocalization”, in the CS-R sense is, they claim, urgently required. As Mander points out in his introductory contribution to the collection of essays, “although it is still difficult for most people in industrial
countries to accept, a better answer than economic globalization is to go in the direction of revitalized, local, diversified, and at least partially self-sufficient smaller economies” (1996:17).

Mander, Goldsmith and their contributors call for a program of relocalization on the basis of their observations that:

By now it should be clear that the expansion of the global economy directly leads to a corresponding contraction of the local economies that it largely replaces. This inevitably marginalizes and renders obsolete a large segment of the populations of both the industrial and the so-called developing countries. At the same time, it devastates the natural world, homogenizes cultures, and destroys communities, depriving their members of any semblance of control over their own lives. This process must be brought to a halt — even if, from today’s grim perspective, this may seem difficult to achieve (ibid., 390).

They continue:

Until recently, the vast bulk of humanity relied upon the local economy for its livelihood. Today’s problems will eventually be solved by recognizing that local production for local consumption — using local resources, under the guidance and control of local communities, and reflecting local and regional cultures and traditions within the limits of nature — is a far more successful definition than the currently promoted, clearly utopian, globally centralized, expansionist model. Local economies are far more likely to produce stable and satisfied communities and to protect nature than any system based on a theoretically constant expansion of production and consumption and the eternal movement of commodities across thousands of miles of land and sea (ibid., 391).

Paul Ekins, economist, Research Director of the Right Livelihood Award (the “Alternative Nobel Prize”) and author of the recent book, *A New World Order: Grassroots Movements for Global Change* (1992), takes a position vis-a-vis globalization compatible with that of Korten, Mander, and Goldsmith. Speaking on the subject of the global economy and the global spread
of a culture of consumption, Ekins observes:

The minority who resist the consumerist carrot are treated to the competitive stick of enforced economic participation. The resources and social structures that give independence or relief from the market are ruthlessly assaulted or sequestered; families and communities are ruptured; and water and biomass expropriated, not in the name of oppression but with the justification of economic efficiency and wealth creation. In a bizarre and profoundly irrational piece of sophistry, it is often claimed that those who are impoverished and immiserised by the forces of 'development' are actually (or will be imminently) its beneficiaries through some 'trickle down' process whereby some portions of the resources taken from them will be returned in more modern form... It is clear that such claims are a cruel deception for the majority of people to whom they relate (1992: 205).

For Ekins, the necessary antidote for the poison of globalization must come in the form of the "democratisation of development." The developmental fate of the world's peoples, and more precisely the determination of just what constitutes development and who 'deserves' it, must no longer remain in the hands of a tiny coterie of global elites determined to create a world order in their own highly unrepresentative and narrow image. Rather, according to Ekins,

[The] intrinsic value of traditional knowledge is augmented by the growing realisation that such knowledge is in fact the only possible basis for anything that might go by the name of 'development.' This development is a far cry from the industrial monolith with its monetary aggregates... It is development in the sense of achievement of human potential, of enhancing capability, of increasing control over the human circumstances of daily life while maintaining a healthy symbiosis with the natural processes which sustain it. Such a development can only start from what people know already. From this foundation their knowledge can, of course, be extended and enriched, by the scientific and other insights of experts, among others, but it will only remain effective knowledge for as long as it is rooted in the culture and experience of those who are developing (ibid., 207,208, emphasis added).

Robert Theobald, long-time speaker, consultant and writer on economic and social change issues, and author of over 25 books, comes out strongly in favour of the local over the global

Theobald observes that human beings have achieved too high a degree of success with respect to the dominant form of primarily economistic social organization. Our success is now to the extent that we are altering far too rapidly the conditions in which we live; we have become far too efficient at producing and consuming and stimulating economic growth. As he states:

> Success can also be a collective burden when it changes the conditions in which we live and alters the goals we aim to achieve... When this happens, new cultural patterns must emerge if severe breakdowns are to be avoided. Fortunately, we now know the directions in which we must move: the required success criteria for the twenty-first century are ecological integrity, effective decision-making, and social cohesion. These are progressively replacing current commitments to maximum economic growth, compulsive consumption, and international competition (Theobald, 1997: 3).

Theobald stresses that change in our success criteria, away from the exclusively economistic, must necessarily occur from the bottom-up, from the personal, group and community level, and not from the top-down ranks of bureaucrats, politicians, corporate executives, investors, policy advisors, and other members of the, to use Michael Albert’s term, “coordinator class.” Says Theobald,

> People can no longer leave socio-cultural, as well as economic, decisions to a few controllers, while themselves concentrating on a range of personal problems from the search for shelter to a good vacation spot. Whatever our standard of living or our habitual associations, we now need to admit that each of us must be concerned with the total situation of our society (ibid., 48).

But fundamental social change, away from the prevailing economistic success criteria, will not come through the actions of people in isolation from one another: “It is now in our self-
interest to work together to preserve and enhance our quality of life. The primary challenge that confronts us is to discover the skills we need to think and act collaboratively” (ibid., 62). In other words, organize, form social movements, confront those who would forestall fundamental social change, and encourage the formation of more inclusive and accountable institutions and social arrangements, locally, nationally, and globally.

However, cautions Theobald, it is very important, insofar as possible, that the emergent, people-based, locally-oriented social movements that are advocating a re-defined success criterion avoid engendering the entrenchment of ideological polar opposites, an “us versus them” mentality, with respect to prevailing elite institutions. Instead, great effort and attention should be devoted to the forging of a common-ground between local-based struggles and elite institutions, a task Theobald admits likely to be extremely challenging.

Fortunately, the recent shifts and “greening-up” of World Bank and International Monetary Fund policy rhetoric and the United States’ 1995 President’s Council on Sustainable Development and its fifteen policy recommendations both point to the emergence of opportunities, at least, for common-ground undertakings and understandings. More positive still is the rash of defecting, disaffected, elites into positions strongly critical of globalization and strongly in favour of local self-reliance. David Korten, former USAID official, is one such example. Other disaffected elites might include economist Herman Daly, former World Bank advisor, attorney Michael Shuman, long-time contributor to The Washington Post, The Nation, and The New York Times, John Mc Claughry, former White House advisor and state senator, and Hugh Segal, prominent Progressive Conservative and one-time director of the Prime Minister’s Office and author of the recent book, Beyond Greed: A Traditional Conservative Confronts
Neoconservative Excess (1997). While far from united in their views, these disaffected elites nonetheless are united in their opposition to globalization and their acceptance of "relocalization" as a sound alternative. Furthermore, insofar as university professors can be considered elites, as in members of elite institutions and thus elements of the "coordinator class," accordingly, the list of elites critical of globalization and sympathetic toward local self-reliance is very, very large. One thing is clear, many institutional elites, whether disaffected or otherwise, are potentially very important contributors to the anti-globalization, community self-reliance movement.

Another important, and elite, contributor to the global versus the local debate is Canadian political-economist and York University professor, James Laxer. In his recent book, In Search of the New Left: Canadian Politics After the Neoconservative Assault (1997), Laxer attempts to resituate and revive a role for the Canadian political Left in a world dominated by the Right and the global economy and in a time when unions and the labour movement are in decline and socialism as a political-economic strategy has been soundly discredited. Laxer places his analytical emphasis on the systematic disintegration of the Canadian working class, and the associated disintegration of working class families and communities, as impelled by global capital's bottom-line, growth-oriented, economic imperatives. Laxer observes:

There is no question that the new capitalism has an anorexic managerial style. The managers who are in vogue, like fashion models, are the minimalists. The paradox of the high-energy high-productivity capitalism of our age is that it creates unprecedented wealth for a small minority and stagnating incomes and pervasive insecurity for the majority (1997: 63).

Laxer continues in his observations:
Today we are in the midst of a vast transformation of capitalism. The mould of societal relationships set in the postwar decades has been decisively broken in a global offensive by business. Those who are propelling capitalism along its new course — corporate executives, investors, fund managers, bankers — want the market to make ever more of society’s decisions, and are determined to strip away the decision-making power of democratically elected governments. Private decision makers are using their control of capital to subordinate everyone else to their will, determining in the process whether regions prosper or decay and people work or are unemployed (ibid., 190,191).

It is obvious to Laxer that there is something fundamentally wrong with such an inordinate imbalance of power between global economic elites on the one hand and local workplaces and their surrounding communities on the other. This is a condition that must not go unchallenged, and nurturing such a counter-globalization challenge should be the task of a resituated and revived political Left.

In the light of the disintegrative effects of the global economy upon the social environment, Laxer distinguishes the existence of two distinct societies: “Throughout the industrialized world, two societies coexist with one another, or to put it more accurately, two societies coexist, one within the other. The values of the two societies are discordant, and the rising conflict between them points the way toward social transformation” (ibid., 184).

The first of the two societies, one highly visible and familiar to all, Laxer calls the “dominant decision-making order.” Riven through with corporate libertarian values, this order is almost wholly market-driven and growth-oriented, and is populated both by large corporations and investors as well as governments imbued with corporatist values. As Laxer maintains, these dominant decision-making bodies “have developed a characteristic, if remarkable, tunnel vision, which allows them to focus on what they regard as important and to shut out all else...
Economic return or cost-effectiveness is not the main thing according to this mindset, it is the only thing” (ibid., 184).

For this dominant decision-making order, this distinct society, a devoutly economistic criteria is the only basis upon which a society may be organized — everything must be subsumed to the imperatives of economic growth. Given their prevailing power, the values of this society are presently ascendant and largely determine the beat of the drum we all must march to. As a consequence, in the corporate and corporatized sectors, decisions are taken with a ruthless eye to the bottom line: labour-shedding, downsizing, re-engineering, restructuring, labour-less growth, all this and more forms the marching orders of the day, while individuals lives fall to ruin and families and communities disintegrate. Claims Laxer:

The problem is not with the rules, but with the game — a game that reduces economic decisions, and the treatment of the vast majority of the population, to a dreary and inexorable utilitarianism. Jobs, lives and communities are treated as though they are nothing more than the byproducts of the system, mere means toward the satisfaction of ends that lie elsewhere. And those ends are never in doubt. They are the maximization of profit for company shareholders and the assurance of skyrocketing levels of remuneration for high-level executives, the only pertinent issue being how best this can be achieved. Even decisions with apparently human overtones — to treat employees with consideration, to solicit their input, to show concern for the environment, to contribute to charity and the arts — are seen as means toward the same end (ibid., 187).

Fortunately, the story does not end here with unmitigated social disintegration wrought by the dominant decision-making order. There also coexists within the society just described a second distinct and rapidly emerging society not given to the tunnel vision and dismal economistic utilitarianism of the dominant order. While it is difficult for most to see, this second society is in actuality all around us and requires the removal of the ideological blinders we have
donned in service of the market and its overlords. As Laxer maintains, "this other society is made up of communities based in every region of the country that have formed around churches, trade unions, schools, cultural bodies, associations of various kinds, and sporting and recreational societies. The values system within these communities is vastly at odds with the global, market-driven economy of the late twentieth-century" (ibid., 188). This second society exists, says Laxer, in accordance with a different ethic,

a human-centred ethic, whose end is the personal development and fulfillment of a group of people. What clearly distinguishes this moral system from that which prevails in business or in the major decision-making of the state is that within it, human beings are ends in themselves rather than the means to some other end (ibid., 189).

In short, the second distinct society identified by Laxer challenges the very logic of globalization in that it places the focus upon the qualitative development of meaning in situ, within the lives, families and communities that make up a healthy civil society. This is in sharp contrast to the dictates of global capital, with its obsessive focus upon the quantitative pursuit of economic growth, and the subversion of all else to service this goal.

Laxer concludes that it is the proper role of the New Left to join in with the promotion of this second, community-based society and give up dreams of the construction of a seamless socialist utopia. Populist, right-wing political parties and personalities, such as Preston Manning and the Reform Party or Newt Gingrich's version of Republicanism, as well as right-wing Christian fundamentalists have obtained their current level of success partly because of their initiative in speaking to people in terms they understand: appealing to their sense of lost or disintegrating community, unraveling family life, and general uncertainty in a world of bewildering global change and challenge. Concerns relevant to community and family should
not be the exclusive province of the political and religious Right. Indeed, according to Laxer, this is exactly where the Left belongs.

We could continue to great length in presenting and quoting liberally from the works of many more thinkers who have recently come forward to challenge the hegemony of globalization with a re-newed vision that emphasizes the local over the global, and that calls for a reorientation of the basic directions of social reality toward re-localization in order to challenge the dis-integrative effects of global consolidation. Each of these thinkers has chosen to use a different term to identify the counter-globalization movement they envision. Korten calls it "an awakened civil society," Mander and Goldsmith refer to it as a process of "relocalization," and Ekins regards it as a project of "democratizing development." Theobald terms the process the formation of "new communities," while Laxer perceives the existence of "two distinct societies," one beholden to globalization, the other to re-localization. Others not directly addressed here in this proposal, such as Jeremy Brecher and Tim Costello, refer to their grassroots-level project as "globalization-from-below" (versus the "globalization-from-above" represented by TNCs). Charlene Spretnak sees it as a project toward a state of "ecological post-modernism" and Michael Lerner perceives the project in terms of a pursuit for a "politics of meaning." Ross V.G. Dobson refers to the re-localization project as "re-rooting the economy," Roy Morrison speaks of the creation of an "ecological democracy," and Michael Albert argues for the creation of a system of "participatory economics."

There are many thinkers representing the community self-reliance movement, all of whom deserve acknowledgment, at least to better establish the existence of a sizeable theoretical community from which I am drawing, and to which I am contributing. These important

Lest the reader conclude that the community self-reliance movement is an imaginary figment, one simply occupying the top of the anti-globalization crowd’s wish list, there are plenty of empirical referents available to establish the veracity of just such a movement. Over the course
of the next few chapters we will examine many of these referents. First, however, in the next chapter, a theoretical digression is necessary before a review can begin of the myriad local struggles and strategies that comprise the community self-reliance movement. This digression is concerned with two things: first, obtaining and detailing a working understanding of just what “community self-reliance” is, and second, outlining the conceptual tools necessary to distinguish the contemporary community self-reliance movement as a social movement.
Chapter Five

A Little Theory for Clarity’s Sake

The Concept of Community Self-Reliance

One of the leading theoretical proponents of community self-reliance today is Michael H. Shuman. Attorney, co-director of the Institute for Policy Studies, co-founder of the Center for Innovative Diplomacy, and author of five books on the subject of sustainable communities, Shuman has emerged as a powerful voice speaking out against the ravages of unfettered global capital and in favour of a return to community-based control over the economy. Shuman is author of the recent book, Going Local: Creating Self-Reliant Communities in a Global Age (1998), and it is to him and his work that I owe the greatest debt. It is his term and conceptualization of “community self-reliance” that I have adopted for general usage herein.

Shuman begins his analysis with a mounting concern over the widespread destruction of families, communities, and ecosystems he has observed at the hands of those most committed to free trade, economic growth, and modernization — the three pillars of globalization. In particular, Shuman is alarmed at the unprecedented degree of mobility capital now commands, an ability that has conferred on TNCs and investors a virtually irresistible advantage over those
tied to time and place. As Shuman observes:

The growing power and will of corporations to move without notice or warning has presented many communities with a terrible dilemma: Either cut wages and benefits, gut environmental standards, and offer tax breaks to attract and retain corporations, or become a ghost town. Almost every U.S. town or city has learned that capital flight is not just a hypothetical danger (1998: 9).

In the U.S., according to research conducted by Barry Bluestone of the University of Massachusetts, the 1970s saw from 32 million to 38 million workers displaced due to corporate decisions to move to other states or overseas. For most of these displaced, their jobs were recovered, but usually not without serious pay cuts or lower-quality work. No matter the outcome, the agony of unemployment, the despair and uncertainty it brings to families, and the erosive effect it has on communities cannot be compensated for. Not as lucky, however, are the 43 million workers that lost their jobs between 1979 and 1995, due to capital’s growing mobility, according to U.S. Department of Labor statistics — jobs that have never, in very many cases, been replaced (ibid., 9).

The costs of unemployment to both individual and societal health can be staggering. When taken into account, the damages wrought by excessive capital mobility fall outside of the bounds of the anti-social and fully into the realm of the pathological. Indeed, capital mobility leading to chronic unemployment can be seen as one of the greatest diseases to afflict the modern world. A famous study was conducted by Dr. Harvey Brenner of Johns Hopkins University wherein he analyzed U.S. unemployment data from between 1940 and 1973 and found that, over a six-year period, each one percentage increase in unemployment was correlated with the following: 3,300 more state-prison incarcerations, 4,000 more mental-hospital admissions, 500 additional deaths
from cirrhosis of the liver, 650 more homicides, 920 more suicides, and an additional 37,000 premature deaths (ibid., 13).

Given, at present, the prodigious tendency of TNCs and corporatized governments to labour-shed, down-size, re-engineer, re-structure and generally labour-less grow their way to higher profits or budget surpluses, combined with the extraordinary mobility capital now commands, the ravages of chronic unemployment have become all too familiar. Indeed, in many parts of the industrialized world, including Canada and the U.S., the maintenance of a certain rate of unemployment has become government policy — an economistic fait accompli. This rate of unemployment, the brainchild of neo-classical economics, is known as NAIRU, or Non-Accelerating Inflation Rate of Unemployment. It is held, mainly by mainstream economists, corporatized politicians, and corporate executives of course, that there exists a “natural” rate of unemployment that must be achieved to ensure low inflation and national well-being. This rate is in the range of 5 to 6 percent in the U.S., and around 10 percent in Canada. The logic underlying NAIRU is the observation that with full employment labour also has access to considerable bargaining power, which translates into higher wages, a falling rate of profit, and inflation (which also spells diminished returns for the wealthy on their investments). Low unemployment also severely impedes the mobility of capital, that is, the ability of capitalists to employ their capital wherever and however they wish, in the pursuit of a maximum rate of return and in indifference to loyalties of place. Secure communities or cities, with low unemployment, lack the motivation of insecurity wrought by high unemployment; it is difficult to play secure communities off against each other in search of ever-higher returns. Needless to say, the suffering induced by capital’s extreme mobility combined with a high rate of unemployment-by-
official-decree has had profound consequences for the health of individuals and their communities (ibid., 16).

The command over the economy that capital mobility confers on corporations and investors is now so powerful that communities, cities, and states or provinces are reduced to falling all over themselves — and competing viciously amongst themselves — to lure in outside investment and the promise of employment. It is almost as if many communities have transformed themselves into modern-day versions of Polynesian cargo cults, making prodigious offerings in hopes that the great god of material wealth will return and shower them with abundance. As Shuman notes, “Public authorities have convinced themselves that modest investments in new firms will generate huge benefits in the form of greater consumer expenditures, new ancillary business, and increased tax revenues” (ibid., 9). However, concludes Shuman, the modest investments are no longer so modest, and the huge benefits are anything but huge.

In 1988, Bloomington, Illinois tried to induce Diamond Star Motors, a joint venture between Mitsubishi and Chrysler, to locate its new automobile assembly plant within the city. The final cost of convincing Diamond Star Motors to locate amounted to US$276 million in aid and tax breaks from the state, and another US$10 million worth of land and US$20 million in local tax abatements from the city, for an average of almost US$28,000 per new job. A few years previous, in 1985, Kentucky gave similar incentives to Toyota, as did Tennessee to General Motors Saturn. In 1986, it would cost Indiana US$50,000 per job to convince Subaru-Isuzu to open a plant in Lafayette. By the 1990s the cost per job had skyrocketed. Alabama paid between US$150,000 and US$200,000 per job to entice Mercedes-Benz, and Kentucky agreed
to dole out US$350,000 per job to secure Canadian steelmakers Dofasco, Inc. and Co-Steel, Inc. In 1992, BMW successfully played off South Carolina and Nebraska as possible locations for a new assembly plant that would produce 2,000 jobs. Nebraska offered a US$100 million package; South Carolina countered with a package worth US$150 million and won the deal. The fact that South Carolina has a long history of low wages and hostility toward unions helped clinch the deal — BMW ultimately paid its South Carolina workers US$10 per hour, US$7 less than the U.S. average and US$13 per hour less than earned by the average German auto-worker (ibid., 9,10).

As Shuman concludes on the subject of capital mobility:

> In the new global economy, any community that attempts to hold onto a corporation may have to pay a steep price. Notwithstanding the subsidies and tax abatements that fleece the local treasury, it must cope with the deterioration of the local quality of life, as unions are busted and pollution laws are suspended to keep jobs in town (ibid., 13).

Clearly for Shuman, what is necessary to counter capital's excessive mobility and profoundly pathological disregard for the well-being of people and their communities, is a return to a world premised upon a foundation of community self-reliance. Returning principal control of the economy to the localized level of the community, and effectively removing the globalized level of capital from the equation is, admits Shuman, no small task. The resistance of entrenched interests promises to be fierce, if not brutal, but it is a necessary task anyway, and a task presently well underway.

As Shuman notes, an observation borne out in my own studies, while there exists very many examples of community self-reliance in action, there yet exists a great deal of disconnection —
or general invisibility — between these various expressions of self-reliance that make up the CS-R movement. This is despite a remarkable consistency of intent between these movements, particularly with respect to the pursuit of radical democracy. Indeed, Shuman identified no fewer than 80 different areas and issues spanning a broad spectrum of interests, from corporate boycotts to credit unions and from flexible manufacturing networks to permaculture, that in some important way fed into the community self-reliance movement. It is almost as if some kind of “Hundredth Monkey” phenomenon — a crossing of some critical threshold of the collective unconscious — was at work. Shuman, reflecting on this situation, introduces his book with a quote by the renowned philosopher-farmer, Wendell Berry: “The real work of planet-saving will be small, humble, and humbling, and (insofar as it involves love) pleasing and rewarding. Its jobs will be too many to count, too many to report, too many to be publicly noticed or rewarded, too small to make anyone rich or famous.” Indeed, such an underground process characterizes the CS-R movement, a process sometimes referred to as the “earthworm effect.” Without a swarm of earthworms silently and beyond immediate notice tilling the soil, there is ultimately no life-giving soil available. Perhaps it is true, to invoke the thinking of the great anthropologist Margaret Mead, that small groups of thoughtful, committed citizens are indeed changing the world — quietly but conscientiously — and in this case they are doing it with strategies bent on community self-reliance.

With the aid of Shuman’s work we shall attempt to arrive at a workable conceptualization of community self-reliance, what it should look like, and what it should set out to do. Shuman admits that the term “self-reliance” is an awkward one with a very mixed history. The word “self” immediately brings to mind an individualistic, atomized, antisocial frame of reference. The
The concept of "self-reliance" has been seized and partially discredited by many groups, not the least being libertarian conservatives seeking a rationalization for the wholesale dismantling of the welfare state and much of government altogether. Other groups have invoked the concept of self-reliance to define their goals, from the rural militias and survivalists in the U.S. to the Reverend Louis Farrakhan, who advocates a new, self-reliant black nationalist community.

"But," according to Shuman,

self-reliance, appearing initially in the Bible and given a distinctly American spin by Henry David Thoreau, also has many positive connotations. It suggests personal responsibility, respect for others, and harmony with nature. And the addition of the word 'community' to self-reliance underscores that the ultimate objective is a social and caring one..., all people within a community should be enabled and empowered (ibid., 46).

Accordingly, self-reliance, especially when combined with community, does not imply some kind of devoutly libertarian mode of existence, one involving traipsing off to the backwoods of British Columbia to live out a hermetic life of isolation and rugged individualism — a carving of one's existence piecemeal from a harsh and unforgiving natural world. Rather, self-reliance as used here is a relational term: self-reliant as a community in relation to other communities, and especially as in relation to the global economy. Healthy self-reliance requires strong, interdependent relations — no man or woman is an island — but stresses the need for these relations to be, first and foremost, immediate and localized.

A functioning global interdependency as primary, say between economic trading blocs such as NAFTA, the EU, or APEC, is both impractical and likely, in the long-run, impossible. This is currently evident in economic problems in one area spilling over into all other areas, and consequently affecting millions of people who have no real interest or say in the global economy,
by reverberating uncontrollably throughout an improperly interdependent global economic system. In this way, problems within the Asian economies, turbulence in the Japanese stock market, a floundering Russian economy, or a lack of international investor confidence in the Canadian dollar, can all have profound effects on the realities of communities and the lives of individuals otherwise completely disconnected from these far-flung events.

Truly responsible and accountable relations of interdependency go far beyond the simple integration of macro-economic and political institutions, TNCs and national governments, for example, under the World Trade Organization’s regulatory (or anti-regulatory) umbrella, with the global citizenry in subservient tow. Rather, authentic relations of interdependency that uphold democratic values require citizens to be drawn into the orbit of a commonly shared reality and do not thrive among people, nations, or organizations separated by vast differences, whether geographical, ideological, or socio-economic. Nor do relations of interdependency thrive among people socialized, or indoctrinated, into atomistic submission and deference to authority; the pervasive belief that the individual matters little and is largely incapable of making a difference in society so he or she should just as well spend their time pursuing pleasure and avoiding pain, while eschewing opportunities to organize and mobilize with others and against those who have determined their narrow existence. For interdependent relations to function for the sake of a general good, they need to emerge from the “bottom-up,” from the ranks of people determined to improve their own lives by helping to improve the lives of others — radical democracy in a nutshell. In order for sound judgements to be made, so that real interdependency may work, those making primary decisions must also live in close contact with the consequences of their decisions — whether physically or through strong mechanisms of
accountability. Otherwise, the corporate CEO has little incentive to do anything other than improve the bottom-line, perhaps by laying off thousands of workers, shutting down small town economies, over-consuming irreplaceable natural resources, or fouling the environment. The CEO is not authentically interdependent and does not have to suffer the consequences of his or her decisions.

The concept of community self-reliance refers directly to a much needed radicalization of democracy wherein primary decision-making powers regarding the disposition of resources, the allocation of labour, and the organization and administration of social reality — insofar as reasonable — remain in the possession of those most affected. This principle of radical democracy is known as “subsidiarity” which, according to Shuman,

implies a pragmatic relationship among different levels of government. Subsidiarity posits that power should always be exercised at the level closest to the people affected by a decision. At the community level, decisions can be tailored to special local circumstances. If mistakes are made, they usually can be easily corrected. The closer those affected by decisions are to the decisionmakers, the more likely the decisions will be efficient, fair, democratic, sensitive, creative, and disaster-proof...

Subsidiarity is simply a preference that political participation and policy-making proceed first and foremost at the local level; if local action proves inadequate for whatever reasons, then — and only then — move to a higher level (ibid., 125, 126).

Subsidiarity may be a little messy, and quite cumbersome for getting anything done in a hurry, but its slowness is also its greatest virtue. Subsidiarity requires that decisions be made very carefully, with maximum input and prolonged consideration, and thereby increases the odds that the decision will be sound — generally beneficial — and not the product of despotic whims. Subsidiarity is compatible with the proper pace of radical democracy, a pace that is by definition
slow enough to allow for the maximum involvement of the citizenry concerned. Those who wish to see their demands enacted as soon as possible, corporate executives or senior politicians for example, do not practice subsidiarity or radical democracy since both act as impediments to their interest.

Insofar as community self-reliance stresses the need for appropriate relations of interdependency and radically democratic relations of subsidiarity, it does not lend itself to a state of wholesale isolationism, of complete self-reliance and consequent disconnection from surrounding communities, national bodies, or other large organizations such as universities or responsible corporations. Subsidiarity requires that the interests of many levels be taken into account, and heeded, before decisions can be made, so long as those most affected have the most say. Community self-reliance properly defined refers to a determined severing of the bonds of dependency that keep people and their communities highly vulnerable to forces outside their community, and outside their control — TNCs and their supranational system of rulership, international investors, centralized and central banks, various centralized governments, unelected bureaucrats, the mass media, and so on. The basic intent of community self-reliance is to enable individuals and their communities to not only survive but to thrive, regardless of external inputs, or their absence. As the self-reliant community seeks to connect-up with other communities (a process beginning to take shape and known as “interlocalism”) or with organizations such as responsible corporations, they may do so from a position of strength and assurance, not vulnerability and weakness. The self-sufficient community will meet others standing tall, not crawling on its hands and knees beseeching the powers-that-be for a few more economic crumbs.
John Galtung, a leading advocate of the CS-R movement and a long-time peace activist from Norway, regards community self-reliance as containing three important strands. First and fundamentally is the importance of minimizing dependence on others. As noted earlier, insofar as a community can achieve full employment or otherwise provide for the basic needs of its members without relying unduly on other communities, it builds a basis of strength, and will, as a consequence, be less vulnerable to decisions and disasters outside its control. Moreover, to echo Shumacher, a strong, self-reliant community will have less cause to meddle in the affairs of its neighbours. To quote ecologist Kirkpatrick Sale:

[A] self-sufficient town cannot be the victim of corporate-directed plant closings, or a truckers' strike, or an Arab oil boycott or California droughts; it does not have to maintain lengthy and tenuous supply lines of any kind, nor pay the shippers and jobbers and the middlemen who are clustered along them; it does not have to bow to always rising prices set by distant A&Ps and GMs and GTEs in disregard of what the local farmer is in fact growing or the local shop producing; and ultimately it does not have to sway in the winds of the hurricanes of boom and bust as regularly generated, as it were, offshore by distant and uncontrollable economic forces (quoted in ibid., 47).

Self-reliance, like democracy, is an open-ended process that requires constant nurturing to uphold. As with true democracy, self-reliance is not an eventual goal that, once reached, allows us to sit back and relax. Self-reliance is a never-ending process that, again like democracy, only exists when it is practiced. But it is the courage to engage this process, and all its diverse challenges, that ultimately pays off with greater individual and community strength and integrity. "Minimizing dependence on others," says Shuman, "also means maximizing on all kinds of challenges, whether intellectual, technological, or social" (ibid., 47). Advises Galtung:

[P]roduce what you need using your own resources, internalising the
challenges this involves, growing with the challenges, neither giving the most challenging tasks (positive externalities) to somebody else on whom you become dependent, nor exporting negative externalities to somebody else to whom you do damage and who may become dependent on you... The justification for so doing is clear: we will enjoy the positive externalities, rather than giving them away, and at the same time will be responsible ourselves for the negative externalities... We can fight the negative consequences ourselves, the distance between cause and effect being a short one (quoted in ibid., 47).

By seeking self-reliance, a community also necessarily seeks a diverse reality, Galtung’s second key strand of the self-reliant community. By refusing to organize a community’s reality around one or two large factories, or around the extraction, production, and exportation of a few key resources or goods, the community does not fall into the role of a narrowly defined specialist — as in the community overly devoted to the auto industry or an arms manufacturer, or to logging, coal mining or fishing. A self-reliant community, instead, must engage in a great variety of activities to maintain its health and relative independence. This is not to say that everyone in the community will do the same things; areas of expertise will develop and be encouraged to do so. Nor is this to say that every self-reliant community needs to recreate the wheel, so to speak, and set-up production facilities for everything it requires. An automobile plant for every community would hardly make sense and in such cases a regionally located plant, preferably co-operatively run, supporting and in turn supported by a sufficient number of otherwise self-sufficient communities, would make greater sense. Self-sufficiency does not imply an inability to organize large-scale enterprises. Some economies of scale are useful, so long as tempered by the dictates of real needs compatible with an economics of permanence, rather than artificially induced wants compatible with an economics of infinite growth.
To survive and thrive as a community of self-reliance, the community will need to become the generalist, rather than the specialist, and even though its individual members will exercise differing capacities, aptitudes and expertises they will need to involve themselves in more aspects of lived reality than mere wage-labour, likewise becoming generalists. With a greater interest in the community's well-being will come the need for greater participation, particularly with respect to the utilization and allocation of resources, the administration of daily reality, the maintenance of relationships with other communities and organizations, and the crafting of long-term goals. A common purpose cannot emerge, or exist for very long, without generalized participation. But, as in ecology, with diversity comes greater strength and collective integrity, an enhanced ability to weather the encroachments of outside influences. Diversity, observes Sale, “makes a place expand instead of contract, create instead of borrow, use instead of discard: just as a man [sic] left on his own, thrust on his own devices, develops strengths and uncovers inner resources and becomes the fuller for it, so too a community” (quoted in ibid., 48).

The third strand, or virtue in this case, of a healthy, self-reliant community, according to Galtung, is the absence of “externalities.” An externality, as drawn from economics, is a cost not reflected in the price of a good, a cost that is instead generalized or otherwise passed on to others who are not directly profiting or even benefitting from the sale of the good. The infinite growth economics of globalization is frequently condemned for externalizing far too many costs, whether in the form of air pollution, acid rain, soil depletion, global warming, or the heedless consumption of non-renewable natural resources. TNCs, for example, are well-positioned to avoid the true costs of their activities and generally pass on — externalize —
whatever costs they can and thereby improve profitability while harming people and the environment. In contrast, by definition, according to Shuman,

A self-reliant community makes sure that external costs are imposed only on itself. A guaranteed way to ensure a car does not pollute is to stick the exhaust pipe into the passenger section. Similarly, a community committed to self-reliance will be mindful not to foul its own nest. Self-reliance therefore is a tool for ecological protection and restoration (ibid., 49).

A major objection to the concept of community self-reliance is the observation that there exists many complex products or services that communities cannot manufacture or provide on their own. Insofar as such goods will remain necessary in an economy of permanence, their unavailability could pose problems for the would-be self-reliant community. However, as Shuman argues,

The goal of a self-reliant community... is not to create a Robinson Crusoe economy in which no resources, people, or goods enter or leave. A self-reliant community simply should seek to increase control over its own economy as far as is practicable. It should try to encourage local investment in community corporations, and local consumption of goods made or service delivered by them. These community corporations, in turn, should be encouraged to hire local workers and use local inputs for production. This strategy maximizes the number of dollars that circulate within the community, which in turn pumps up its level of employment, business, income, and wealth (ibid., 49).

This concept, of localizing production and consumption “as far as is practicable”, is vital to community self-reliance. It refers to a process of “maximizing the economic multiplier effect,” whereby a dollar, once introduced to the local economy, stays in and circulates through this economy for as long as possible. The local consumer spends his or her dollar preferably on the goods and services of a local producer or service-provider, who in turn purchases inputs from
other local suppliers. Before the dollar finally leaves the local economy to purchase something locally unavailable it may have been spent and re-spent five, ten, or more times.

This attempt to maximize the multiplier effect stands in stark contrast to today’s local economies that are export-led and import-dependent. In this case, the dollar earned typically comes from outside the community through those purchasing exports or from those who work outside of the community and bring their earnings in. Typically the dollar is spent on goods from other outsiders by way of imports, whether food items that have traveled an average of 2200 kilometres or manufactured goods from the other side of the world. The dollar is spent in local, but not locally owned, Walmarts, Costcos, or Safeways, or on rent to an absentee landlord, or on a mortgage held by a non-local bank. All this serves the same purpose: engenders extreme dependency on outsiders to buy our exports, provide us employment, sell us imports or other non-local goods and services; all to the effect of greatly reducing self-reliance.

Thus, in today’s local economies beholden to the agents of economic growth, a dollar earned might circulate once or twice before it leaves the community to increase the wealth of someone with no other interest in the community in question. This process places the community and its members on a treadmill of dependency whereby they must, into perpetuity, secure a steady and positive flow of capital from sources external to the community, either as wages or as revenue for resources depleted and sold-off. As Shuman notes, “A community in which money flows out quickly and never returns, slowly bleeds to death. The primary virtue of import substitution, community corporations, and local investment is that these strategies increase the likelihood of the economic multiplier’s staying at home” (ibid., 50).
In 1978, the Institute for Local Self-Reliance (ILSR)\(^4\) published a noted study on “economic leakage.” In this study, “Planning for Energy Self-Reliance: The Case of the District of Columbia,” the ILSR painstakingly tracked the flow of energy related dollars through the District’s urban economy. Like most major metropolitan centres, D.C. is highly dependent on energy sources that are centralized and located outside of the area. The ILSR found that a full 85 cents of every energy dollar left the community, leading the Institute to conclude that, if greater self-reliance was to be achieved, the energy-related leakage had to be staunched. Energy self-sufficiency, by way of solar, wind, or photovoltaics combined with conservation measures and reduced automobile dependency (as in place of work and home being in much closer proximity to one another) should be one of the top investment priorities of the would-be self-sufficient community.

A second ILSR study, this time conducted in 1980 in the Baltimore metropolitan area, tracked the dollar flows of a neighbourhood MacDonald’s. During the period under analysis, US$750,000 was spent in the restaurant, of which almost two-thirds immediately left not only the immediate neighbourhood but the entire metropolitan area. The ILSR concluded in this now classic study that contrary to conventional wisdom every time a fast-food restaurant opened it displaced local options, and the number of jobs in the local economy actually declined. If a community is to obtain relative self-reliance it must promote and protect an economic multiplier effect, a process only impeded by the leakage of energy or fast-food dollars.\(^5\)

Still, the local community determined to increase its level of self-reliance may encounter serious difficulties when it seeks goods or services from providers outside of the community. If the community does not maintain a sufficient level of trade with outsiders, either by selling
exports, leaving the community for employment elsewhere, or allowing in outside employers such as MacDonald's or Wal Mart and in effect earn the "foreign exchange" necessary to conduct transactions, it will be effectively locked out of national or international markets and thus unable to secure goods and services it cannot provide itself. In a world where community self-reliance initiatives are few and far between, this problem of too little "foreign exchange" could prove insurmountable -- either causing the community to withdraw into complete isolationism and thereby neutralizing it, particularly its potential to lead by example, or prompting it to maintain unsustainable levels of exportation and over-reliance on outside sources of employment, and thereby undermining much of its self-reliance.

However, the self-reliant community may be able to mitigate the problem of constrained "foreign exchange" through intensified local production and consumption, the creation of an economy of permanence that stresses voluntary simplicity, the cooperative usage of resources such as automobiles or farm equipment, the manufacture or careful acquisition of goods designed not to wear out or fall into obsolescence prematurely, the utilization of local sources of energy such as solar or wind, and the reliance on appropriate technologies, such as the bicycle for transportation and livestock for fertilizer. As well, the self-reliant community can seek out similar communities with which to engage in barter, a practice common among the community supported agriculture movement, for example. Or, the community can create local forms of currency, both to sustain the local economy and to preserve the fewer incoming dollars for outside transactions. Finally, the community can concentrate on creating a wealth of sustainable industries that might draw in outside dollars as well, such as eco-tourism, the development of a world-class industry in something like bicycle manufacturing or the production of solar energy.
technology, or the production of specialty items such as honey or organic vegetables.

However, as the CS-R movement continues to grow and the economy continues its inevitable transition from one of infinite growth to one of permanence, the opportunities for a denser network of relations between individual self-reliant communities will also grow, and thereby obviate the centrality of “foreign exchange” and neo-classical economics. Such a situation, of a growing CS-R movement, is the basis of Havel’s *parallel polis*, or of world-system theorist Samir Amin’s (1990) concept of “de-linking.” Amin’s concept refers to the conscious, determined and concerted pursuit of alternative pathways of existence despite the protestations of the dominant order, and the eventual interweaving and densification of these pathways, until they displace the dominant order. At the heart of the CS-R movement is the courage to act in quiet and non-violent defiance of established norms and expectations on the assumption that if we wish a reality to become, we must act as if it already is, and only in this way will it ever be.

**Community Self-Reliance as a Social Movement**

Contemporary analyses of social movements are motivated to a large extent by the increasing significance of movements that depart from the traditional Marxist conception of a labour movement in opposition to the capitalist class. The rise of the New Left during the 1960s, impelled as it was by new social movements less concerned with issues of class and more motivated by issues of racial discrimination, gender-based inequities, imperial aggression (as in the Vietnam war), the violation of students’ rights, or the despoilation of the environment, also spelt a new era of social movement theorizing. This development departed from traditional modes of movement analysis wherein, according to Alan Scott, “Class movements were
assumed to be the paradigm of social movements in general. Actually existing movements were to be judged counter-factually in terms of their proximity, or lack of it, to class movements” (1990: 2). For the traditional social movement theorist, social movements that broke from the class-based ideal, that did not serve the purpose of elevating the class consciousness of the proletariat, were of little use in mobilizing real challenges to the capitalist mode of production. At best, such non-class social movements were a puzzling diversion from the important work of class-based struggle and into some ephemeral realm of protest, e.g., gender or the environment. At worst, these movements were a colossal waste of precious organizational energy, a veritable theft from revolutionary planning, that amounted to little more than a display of false consciousness.

Soon enough, however, traditional social movement theorizing would give way to the growing recognition that these upstart non-class social movements, soon to be known as New Social Movements (NSMs), were legitimate and powerful sources of challenge and protest in their own right. Society was no longer to be perceived as characterized by one major, class-based cleavage between the proletariat on the one side, and the bourgeoisie on the other. Rather, contemporary society was riven through with relations of conflict arrayed around numerous fault-lines: between men and women, blacks and whites, First World and the Third World, or between Man and the environment, urban dwellers and rural folk, political radicals and mainstream liberals and conservatives. Rather than there being one site of antagonism, the factory floor, there were now multiple sites, from the suburban home to the schoolyard, from the inner city to the family farm.

The new social movement would have to be re-theorized, away from its degree of proximity
to the standard working class movement, and toward a recognition of its own peculiar challenge to the strictures and structures of power. Thus, in this light, Scott has defined a social movement as:

a collective actor constituted by individuals who understand themselves to have common interests and, for at least some significant part of their social existence, a common identity. Social movements are distinguished from other collective actors, such as political parties and pressure groups, in that they have mass mobilization, or the threat of mobilization, as their prime source of social sanction, and hence power. They are further distinguished from other collectivities, such as voluntary associations or clubs, in being chiefly concerned to defend or change society, or the relative position of the group in society (1990: 6).

Following Scott, contemporary social movements can take a wide variety of forms beyond an identification with the working class or the pursuit of class-based politics. However, departing from Scott, it is no longer theoretically sufficient to view social movements as necessarily “constituted by individuals who understand themselves to have common interests.” This understanding implies too great an internal cohesiveness, a commonly embraced unity of intent, and does not adequately capture the reality of NSMs as frequently possessing many diverse segments, some in sync, others in conflict, but in total representing a generalizable and identifiable critical tendency. Feminists certainly do not agree on every single issue, such as abortion, pornography, the value of motherhood or the family, and comprising the feminist movement are many strains of feminist activism often sharply at odds with or completely oblivious to one another. Nonetheless, we can contain the diversity of often contradictory expressions that make-up feminism by acknowledging the movement as determined to challenge a society that has traditionally treated men as the preferred gender — this is feminism’s
overriding critical tendency, despite the inability of many feminists to identify with factions of the movement too far outside of their own.

A similar internal and conflict-ridden diversity characterizes the environmental movement: deep ecologists, social ecologists, shallow ecologists, Greenpeacers, eco-feminists, Greens, conservationists, anti-industrialists, Earth Firsters, green economists, New Age Gaian, and so on. While all environmentalists might agree that human disregard for the environment has gone on long enough, they certainly are not in agreement about what needs to be done in this respect. Social ecologists have been in strong disagreement with deep ecologists, who have in turn maligned shallow ecologists as being, well, shallow. Many environmentalists have had problems with aggressive Earth Firsters, and others have criticized Greenpeace for abandoning its grassroots identity and institutionalizing into an entity that greatly resembles the corporate or political creatures it is supposed to challenge. Nevertheless, the environmental movement still possesses an identifiable critical tendency.

To help us better understand the nature of new social movements, and provide for a better understanding of the CS-R movement, it is perhaps best to turn to the work of Alberto Melucci, particularly his *Challenging Codes: Collective Action in the Information Age* (1996). After all, it is Melucci who is responsible for coining the term “new social movements” and it is he who stands among the leaders of this theoretical shift.

For Melucci, contemporary social movements are highly complex phenomena that resist reduction to the level of a unified whole presumably armed with an identifiable unity of intent or a singular agenda (say, the alleviation of the oppression of workers by capitalists). Rather,
new social movements are more accurately seen as “systems of action, complex networks among the different levels and meanings of social action” (Melucci, 1996: 4). Thus, according to Melucci, NSMs normally contain great internal diversity, and possess a variegated structure, rather than a presumed and identifiable cohesive homogeneity borne through a pre-existing common identity, purpose, or enemy.

For traditional social movement theorists, this pre-existing common identity, purpose, or recognition of a common enemy was held simply to be in need of awakening, and less in need of actual creation or ongoing maintenance, as in the pre-existing potential for “class consciousness” in the labour movement sense. Once imbued with class consciousness, for example, and transformed from a class-in-itself, to a class-for-itself, the workers of the world would naturally unite around the labour movement banner and form one large class-based oppositional movement against the excesses and contradictions of capitalism. The task was to trigger this latent consciousness connecting all workers and the rest would take care of itself.

Current understandings of contemporary circumstances surrounding globalization and the struggles associated with it reveal a much more complicated and problematic reality facing social movements, one that departs significantly from the comfort sought or solutions available in the arms of an *a priori* basis for movement unity. Accordingly, as Melucci puts it, what characterizes a new social movement is its “segmented, reticular, multi-faceted structure”:

This structure has been confirmed by later developments even if the actors and issues have changed over time. A movement consists of diversified and autonomous units which devote a large part of their available resources to the construction and maintenance of internal solidarity. A communication and exchange network keeps
the separate, quasi-autonomous cells in contact with each other. Information, individuals, and patterns of behaviour circulate through this network, passing from one unit to another, and bringing a degree of homogeneity to the whole. Leadership is not concentrated but diffuse, and it restricts itself to specific goals... [This state] makes it extremely difficult to actually specify the collective actor [movement]. Contemporary movements [thus] resemble an amorphous nebula of indistinct shape and with variable density (ibid., 113,114).

Yet, despite the “segmented, reticular, multi-faceted structure” of new social movements, it is still possible to distinguish the movement, to abstract it, from its surrounding socio-cultural context. NSMs, beyond simply indicating crisis exists within the prevailing social system, exist as signs. According to Melucci,

Movements are a sign; they are not merely an outcome of the crisis, the last throes of a passing society. They signal a deep transformation in the logic and the processes that guide complex societies. Like the prophets, the movements ‘speak before’: they announce what is taking shape even before its direction and content has become clear. Contemporary movements are prophets of the present. What they possess is not the force of the apparatus but the power of the word. They announce the commencement of change; not, however, a change in the distant future but one that is already a presence. They force the power out into the open and give it a shape and a face. They speak a language that seems to be entirely their own, but they say something that transcends their particularity and speaks to us all (ibid., 1).

This Meluccian understanding of new social movement phenomena goes a long way in aiding our understanding of the community self-reliance movement. However, it does not go far enough. The CS-R movement, while containing the many elements associated with NSMs as described by both Scott and Melucci, also goes a step further and really amounts to being a social movement of new social movements — a movement of movements, for shorthand’s sake. The community self-reliance movement in actuality represents a coalescence of movements and as such has a composite character, with each constituent movement, such as the community
supported agriculture movement or the community economic development movement clearly possessing a "segmented, reticular, multi-faceted structure" of its own. The various movements that comprise the overarching CS-R movement obviously never started out with a common identity, or any knowledge whatsoever of other CS-R related movements. Urban agriculturalists do not necessarily naturally identify with co-housers or with advocates of community currencies. Neither do members of the workers' co-operative movement necessarily have anything immediate in common with the community land trust movement or with the intentional community movement. Nevertheless, all these disparate movements dovetail, as all definitionally, either intentionally or by default, encourage community self-reliance and thereby oppose the logic of globalization. It is as if each constituent movement within the CS-R movement represents a spoke in a wheel, with each inevitably meeting at the hub of community self-reliance.

The CS-R movement also draws in members from many other new social movements, such as environmentalists, feminists, Native rights activists, New Age spiritualists, and so on. It is almost as if the composite structure of the CS-R movement acts as a clearing house for social movement activity that is all simultaneously, but in highly diverse fashion and originating from a multiplicity of conventional NSMs, recognizing globalization as a common enemy and mobilizing against it with whatever social movement resources are close at hand. Thus feminists prefer community economic development strategies that improve their independence vis-a-vis the globalized economy. New Age spiritualists gravitate toward the intentional community movement, which best allows them to live and lead by example while pursuing meaning over money. Environmentalists, placing a particular premium on land and natural processes, are thus
attracted to the community supported agriculture movement with its emphasis on organic or biodynamic farming methods. Or they gravitate toward the community land trust movement in hopes of preserving land for sustainable uses or as wildlife refuges. Urban political radicals often favour the co-housing movement for the cabal-like environment it can offer. And those steeped in labour movement politics often find themselves attracted to the workers' co-operative movement or to community development corporations.

Because globalization effectively impacts all levels and all areas of society, from the affluent to the impoverished, the developed and so-called developing worlds, the environment, the workplace, traditional and indigenous cultures, men and women, the young and old, all political persuasions, it cannot be counteracted in a piece-meal, single issue fashion typical of the traditional working class movement and even the earlier NSMs. The anti-nuclear movement, for example, if content to deal with only the immediate threat posed by the proliferation of nuclear technology, will restrict itself to dealing simply with a symptom of a profoundly dysfunctional global system of corporate libertarian-inspired economic expansion. On the other hand, an anti-nuclear movement that perceives itself as a part of a much broader social movement — one encompassing environmentalists concerned with the dangers posed by radioactive waste, proponents of appropriate technology, social justice advocates opposed to the discriminatory siting of nuclear facilities, and those heavily critical of Western forms of development, as well as those who represent neighbourhood associations seeking the closure of nuclear reactors among other dangerous large-scale projects, or those blocking the entry of nuclear-powered warships into their harbours, and so on — this movement ceases to be an individual, single-issue movement and is instead effectively integrated, and woven into the fabric
of a much larger social movement.

The community self-reliance movement, as a composite movement that brings together a variety of new social movements, thus represents an ever-shifting, kaleidoscopic pattern of interconnected collective action and struggle against the equally ever-shifting expressions of oppression or dis-empowerment that characterize globalization. Perhaps the CS-R movement better represents a kind of widespread, grassroots level, societal awakening toward the dangers posed by globalization, an awakening that requires above all else the concerted action of all activists from wherever they reside with whatever resources lay close at hand, and all as committed to the integrity of localized struggle against globalized challenges. There are many ways to build the pathways toward community self-reliance, the task at hand, as exemplified by the CS-R movement, is simply to begin doing it wherever you are and with whomever you are with.

Now in possession of a conceptual understanding of community self-reliance, a theoretical orientation as to how the CS-R movement relates to new social movement theory, and the benefits of a substantial literature review of the many thinkers advocating some kind of re-localizational response to global consolidation and disintegration, we are ready to move on into a direct examination of some of the individual movements and expressions that make-up the composite CS-R movement. In seeking to provide adequate detail, or a reasonable cross-section of the local self-reliance movement, it is especially difficult to choose a place to begin. Its expressions are so diverse, the structure of the movements within the movement so “segmented, reticular, and multi-faceted,” its nature so amorphous and nebulous, that it seems anyplace is
as good a place as any to start.

However, the purpose of the following exposition of the community self-reliance movement goes beyond that of simple description. Sometimes made explicit, other times left implicit, the following presentation of the CS-R movement will indicate how each expression constitutes itself as, in Melucci’s term, a “sign,” as signaling “a deep transformation in the logic and the processes that guide complex societies” as they exist today under the aegis of globalization. Fundamentally, it is their opposition to the expansionary logic of globalization with its propensity toward consolidation, giantism, centralization and its community-crushing effects, that ties together the diverse elements that comprise the community self-reliance movement and distinguish it from the surrounding socio-cultural context.

This concept of community self-reliance is in keeping with the economic philosophy of John Maynard Keynes when he said (although with respect to individual nations, not communities), in opposition to greater global economic integration:

> We do not wish, therefore, to be at the mercy of world forces working out or trying to work out some uniform equilibrium according to the ideal principles, if they can still be called such, of *laissez faire* capitalism... We wish — for the time being at least and so long as the present transitional experimental phase endures — to be our own masters... We all need to be as free as possible of interference from economic changes elsewhere in order to make our own favorite experiments towards the ideal social republic of the future (quoted in Bowles and Gintis, 1986: 89,90).

As utopian or hopelessly idealistic the above musing on the meaning and desirability of autonomy may sound to the ears of some, this desire is not nearly as utopian as the expectation that a form of social organization which systematically privileges the few over the many while simultaneously widening the gap between them, and that relies on infinite economic growth and
resource throughput in a world with finite limitations, will endure into perpetuity. When, not if, this utopian system of infinite growth collapses, what will remain or rise in its place to carry on?

Furthermore, few who represent the movement for community self-reliance underestimate the barriers to its widespread realization. It is no understatement to say that virtually everything about today's global capitalist order exists in fundamental opposition to the aims of the community self-reliance movement. Dependency, isolation, insecurity, vulnerability, perpetual dissatisfaction, all walk hand-in-hand with global capitalism. However, perhaps the greater the disharmonies produced by global capitalism are, the greater is the impetus for a fundamental shift toward a new form of social organization.

It is toward an examination of several of the very many expressions of community self-reliance presently ongoing that this study now turns. These expressions may be early indications of a new form of social organization, or at least they may offer hints as to where sustainable human relations, vital to the long-term survival of the human species, are to be found. While these expressions do overlap and are typically multi-dimensional, they tend to cluster around certain key sectors of society: the economy, the provision of necessities such as food, land and housing, or around the crafting of a new polity. This is not to imply that the various ongoing community self-reliance initiatives do not interest themselves in other sectors; it is, however, meant to imply that most CS-R initiatives begin from or are grounded in a particular emphasis. Thus, most co-operatives start by seeking to democratize the economy, as do community currency schemes. Community supported agriculture is, obviously, first and foremost concerned
about food, while community land trusts emphasize land, and co-housing projects emphasize housing. Other initiatives are more political, such as the decentralized and radically democratic political program formulated by Frank Bryan and John Mc Claughry in the *Vermont Papers: Recreating Democracy on a Human Scale* (1989), and examined in detail in Chapter Nine.

In the next chapter, I start with an examination of the CS-R movement as grounded in the search for a democratized economy, as represented by the activities of the constituent Community Economic Development (CED) movement.
Chapter Six

Community Economic Development

C. Douglas Lummis, in Radical Democracy (1996) views the corporate economy, the main body of the “industrial republic,” as inherently undemocratic in terms of its tendency to inequitably distribute wealth and decision-making power, and anti-democratic, in terms of its tendency to regulate quite closely the activities of most people each day and thus push political activity to the peripheries of life. The corporate economy holds a massive degree of control over the lives of workers and their families, along with the communities beholden to corporations as providers of employment, investment, and general economic security.

For most people, the option to work or not to work is scarcely an option at all. To not work, typically, is to ensure oneself considerable poverty along with a bleak future. For those with dependents, to not work is no option at all and in fact for these people the loss of their job normally spells a major crisis. The spectre of unemployment is a powerful force in the lives of most. And when unemployment remains high, or the availability of well-paying jobs remains low,
few people will entertain risking their jobs with political agitation or unionization. By placing employment as central and vital to the individual’s well-being, and by placing control over employment opportunities in the hands of a select few imbued with corporate libertarian values, docility and compliance is assured from the people, while democratic action is foreclosed.

And even for those who may desire to pursue a greater degree of political activity, the world of work and its heavy demands often interferes. For most people, working full-time, commuting to and from the workplace, and recovering from the ordeal, leaves precious little time to attend to personal concerns much less pursue political activities. Even the most dedicated political activists often must restrict their activities to weekends and holidays, usually to the neglect of friends and family. As Lummis points out, “This scarcity of people with unmanaged time is one of the reasons that...those rare moments when the polity undergoes a change of state into the democratic mode do not last long” (1996: 135). Soon after the revolution or transformation, the demands of the workplace begin again to take precedence and “business-as-usual” creeps back into daily affairs. Before long, most people are back on the corporate economy’s interminable treadmill while political activity falls away. This is why, for Lummis, “If democracy is to mean that the people rule, they must rule in all bodies into which society is organized. Democracy will continue to have very little staying power until the democratic movement has succeeded in establishing a democratic civil society and, in particular, in democratizing the world of work” (ibid., 141,142).

Accordingly, if community self-reliance is to become a reality, the world of work as controlled by the corporate economy will have to be democratized and thus removed from corporate control. Such a task, of democratizing the world of work by restoring control over
a local economy to local inhabitants, is the primary goal driving the Community Economic Development (CED) movement.

An Overview

The CED movement contains a wide range of expressions and strategies, nearly to the extent where it alone could be considered a composite social movement. In the very least, the movement is especially "segmented, reticular, and multi-faceted", consisting as it does of many diverse initiatives, and fits well with Melucci's criteria for a NSM.

Initiatives that come under the CED umbrella include: community development corporations, flexible manufacturing networks, community loan funds, credit unions and non-profit banks, barter networks, non-profit businesses, relief and mutual aid societies, and buyers' clubs. Among the more important of the CED initiatives, and reviewed herein, are marketing, consumers' and workers' cooperatives and community currency schemes including the proliferating Local Employment and Trade Systems (LETS). There are many other CED expressions and strategies, and innumerable overlapping or in-between variations, but the preceding list should sufficiently convey a sense of the diversity inherent to the movement, as well as point the direction for future research.

Eric Shragge, professor of social policy and community organization at the School of Social Work, McGill University, is a long-time advocate of the CED movement. He most recently edited a collection of papers on the CED phenomenon titled Community Economic Development: In Search of Empowerment (1997) in which he introduces CED as:

a response to the crisis of work and social provision. Our society is
living the paradox of wealth being created with less and less labour, while the state has no idea of what to do with the surplus population. The technological changes in the production process, and capital’s search for cheaper labour within a globalized economy, take place at the same time as governments at all levels and of all political stripes cut and reorganize State services. The resulting poverty and social problems call out for new approaches. CED is part of this search (1997: viii).

While Shragge holds reservations regarding the potential of the CED movement to affect social change, “whether or not CED can be an effective means of confronting the consequences of globalization and the related problems of unemployment, poverty and social decay”, he nonetheless regards the movement “as a contributor to a wider social movement for economic and social justice” (ibid., ix). Insofar as CED initiatives have chased after small business development as if it were the only way forward, as in the case of many government-sponsored community development corporations and cooperatives who have entered into state-sponsored and criticism-blunting partnerships, fundamental social change is largely foreclosed and business-as-usual is maintained. Shragge regards such initiatives as inadequate, they fail to represent the transformational potential of the CED movement. “CED must be a force for social change that challenges the current situation of unemployment and precarious work,” he says. “The challenges that CED can bring are the creation of a new type of economic development that does not put profit, growth, and environmental destruction over social and individual needs, but sees itself as an alternative to the private market while using it” (ibid., ix).

While various CED initiatives have been employed for many years — cooperatives go back to the mid-nineteenth century, for example — the movement as a whole is still largely an incipient phenomenon whose development closely parallels that of globalization. As such, the
movement has yet to realize its full potential, to coalesce into a broader front of opposition while simultaneously linking up other CS-R movements. Shragge worries that the movement may yet fall prey to the co-optive influences of the State and private sector to become simply a more cost-effective means of stimulating local economic development. "Reflection is crucial at this stage in the development of CED," cautions Shragge. He continues:

CED should not merely serve as a local business strategy but also, and more importantly, as a means of intervention that can address both economic and social needs. Approaches that link the social with the economic implicitly suggest that the role of CED is to build both economic alternatives and a voice for the local community to be able to have greater control over wider economic and social processes... The concrete needs of the local community must shape local practice. At the same time, a process of building a longer-term vision of a type of democratically controlled local economy must be part of this process (ibid., x).

For Shragge, the CED movement will remain transformationally limited, be rendered stillborn, if it is not able to establish linkages with wider social struggles. According to Shragge, CED "does not have the capacity to replace the job loss of the current period, or the power to either appropriate or to redistribute income or wealth, or to establish macroeconomic policy." Accordingly, "there are limits to what can be done in the community sector by itself. Without links to a wider political-social movement and an alternative vision for economic and social development, the CED movement will be limited" (ibid., ix).

In some ways Shragge is absolutely correct about the potential impotence of the CED movement; in other ways he sells the movement short. As appears to be common throughout the overarching community self-reliance movement, many of the individual constituent movements have yet to fully realize the extent to which they contribute to a 'broad front of struggle' or a 'wider field of opposition.' It may be that the CS-R movement is just shy of
reaching a critical threshold of collective awareness, at which point its constituent movements will ‘wake-up’ to a significant collective potential. Whether it realizes it or not, the CED movement is already embedded within the matrix of a wider social, political, and economic movement — a composite movement steadily gathering momentum toward greater community self-reliance, as premised upon and directed toward the ideal of radical democracy.

Nevertheless, unguarded optimism regarding the transformational potential of the CED movement must be tempered with the realization that Shragge’s reservations regarding the potential of CED may apply more aptly to the CS-R movement itself. Unless the CS-R movement can overcome its fractured nature, bring together on the basis of a shared awareness or some unity of intent its many constituent movements, particularly in recognition of its furtherance of a centuries old project toward a radical democracy, the liberatory potential of the movement will remain limited. In short, unless the CS-R movement can transcend its overriding and admittedly vital local orientation and form extra-local associations or coalitions, or link-up with transformationally-minded transnational social movements, the movement is destined to remain as a series of isolated and idiosyncratic reactions (and thus limited) to the dominant order.

Still, in terms of far-reaching and fundamental social change, the appropriate place to begin the struggle — the point of oppositional exegesis — is from within the lifeworld of the everyday, the place where we each make and live our lives. Globalization is all about colonizing the lifeworld, all about turning once vibrant and densely interconnected communities into suburban ‘bedroom facilities’ for the nightly storage of compliant producers, consumers, and discarders. In the wake of a globalizing consumer culture, communities disintegrate into
moorage sites for otherwise disconnected and free-floating individuals given over to transience. The lifeworld, by definition locally oriented, must be reclaimed — de-colonized — first and foremost. In this struggle, really a restoration of the democratic principle of self-governance or the right to self-determination, individuals may regain the resources and relearn the modes of thought necessary to take the struggle to the next level, which is re-creation of the polity. Until then, individuals and nascent or waning communities alike must struggle for liberation where they are with what resources are at hand. To this end, the CED movement offers tremendous potential.

Indeed, at their best, CED initiatives rejoin a larger historical stream of opposition to capital with deep roots in working class struggles. According to Shragge:

CED offers examples of the creation of new forms of production and ownership that can be seen as part of a larger historical tradition of a ‘third sector’ of the economy: one that is neither owned nor controlled by the private sector or the State. It fits into a tradition that has been referred to as the ‘social economy.’ Examples that fit into this category include cooperative enterprises, mutualist associations, and consumer cooperatives. Historically, these types of economic organizations were created by working class people in their communities as a form of solidarity, as a way of creating some control over production and consumption. CED organizations have initiated projects that fit into this sector; often non-profit organizations whose goal is to provide a socially useful product or service. Innovations in decision-making and forms of ownership create democratic process (ibid., x).

If the observations of Lummis, regarding the restoration of popular control over the economy and world of work as prerequisite to the maintenance and extension of a radical democratic project, are to be taken seriously, then the CED movement may hold more potential then recognized by Shragge. For Lummis, regaining control over the local economy is not concerned so much with acquiring the resources necessary for a sustained struggle. Rather,
obviating the present lack of control over the local economy and the world of work, given this sphere's overwhelming importance in the daily lives of most people, is the very basis for a sustainable project of radical democracy. If a sphere has to be chosen as preeminent to the project of "delinking," as in Amin, or in the crafting of a parallel polis, as in Havel, it is the sphere encompassing the local economy. Restoring control of the local economy via the creation of a delinked and parallel third sector of the economy is undoubtedly fundamental to the greater success of the CS-R movement. In effect, the CED movement is the fuel for the CS-R movement, without which the goal of community self-reliance may never be reached.

To this end, of restoring to a community local control over local economic resources, CED practitioners Richard Nutter and Michael McKnight define the movement thusly:

[CED is] a strategy for dealing with the problems of poor people, powerless people, and underdeveloped communities. As an intervention strategy in an underdeveloped community, CED does not seek to make the existing conditions in the community more bearable. Instead, CED seeks to change the structure of the community and build permanent institutions within a community. As a result, the community begins to play a more active role vis-a-vis the institutions outside the community, and the residents of the community become more active in the control of the community's resources (1994: 95).

CED researcher and advocate Greg Macleod defines the CED movement as "...a cooperative attempt by local people to take control of the socioeconomic destiny of the community... to respond to local needs as community members perceive them" (quoted in Shragge, 1997: 12). Burt Galaway and Joe Hudson, editors of the reader Community Economic Development: Perspectives on Research and Policy (1994) introduce CED as having been applied to a wide range of problem areas including: social alienation; social and economic stagnation of marginalized neighbourhoods; inability of communities to regenerate and sustain themselves; a
need to revitalize the local economy; unemployment; economic crises in communities such as mill closures or a depleted resource base; environmental degradation; and capital leakage (1994: xx).

Shragge places the practice of CED squarely in the context of globalization. He regards the movement as representing the actions of those populations for whom the market and the Welfare State have failed to provide:

CED is, more than anything else, a response to the failure of our advanced capitalist system to meet the basic needs of an increasingly large part of the population through the market, supplemented by Welfare State provisions. The market has not only produced extended periods of unemployment, precarious low-wage jobs, and total exclusion for many from the labour market, but as a consequence, has marginalized a large population politically and socially... These conditions are inherent in the type of economic system that puts the quest for profit over the needs of people, concentrates economic and political power so that the voices who represent those excluded and promote alternative visions rarely receive a hearing. [In sum] global economic forces and the internation-alization of the economy have had devastating consequences for community life (1997: 7).

This discussion turns next to a brief examination of two of the more important expressions of CED: cooperatives and community currency schemes

Cooperatives

There is a tendency amongst those on the Left, and particularly amongst those opposed to economic globalization, to totalize business as being The Enemy. This tendency, however, needlessly conflates too may forms of economic enterprise: modest sole proprietorships and individual entrepreneurs are lumped together with the likes of General Motors and Microsoft. Admittedly, it is not unusual for even the smallest business or humblest entrepreneur to identify
ideologically with corporate libertarianism, perhaps believing that this represents the correct attitude to internalize if economic success is to be achieved. However, for a community to regain control over its economy, such will require not the destruction of economic enterprises or the absolution of the market, but their re-making. Businesses may still contribute to the vitality of a community, a position that presupposes the continued existence of a marketplace, particularly if restructured to serve specific ends as defined by the community, ends that transcend the pursuit of profit or the ceaseless accumulation of wealth and power. One such economic enterprise that may contribute substantially to the creation of community self-reliance is the cooperative.

The member-owned and/or member-operated enterprise — the cooperative — is an important model for decentralized economic development at the heart of the CED movement. Cooperatives can take on any of several forms, and are directed toward a variety of ends. For example, the National Center for Economic and Security Alternatives estimates there to be more than 47,000 cooperatives in the U.S., with 4,000 operating as consumer co-ops, 6,500 housing co-ops, 12,600 credit unions, 1,200 rural cooperative utilities, 115 telecommunications and cable co-ops, and more than 100 cooperative insurance companies (Shuman, 1998: 86).

Recent estimates of cooperative activity in Canada reveal that, by 1990, there were nearly 7,000 financial (e.g., credit unions and insurance co-ops) and non-financial cooperative corporations with a total membership exceeding 21 million people (many people belong to several co-ops, thus the apparently high number). Twelve million people belong to at least one cooperative corporation, and the total assets of the enterprises combined exceed $106 billion. The most recent available data as compiled by Ottawa’s Co-operatives Secretariat places the
number of non-financial (only) Canadian cooperatives at 5,627 as of 1996. Total membership of these co-ops is a little more than 4.8 million individuals, with a combined annual volume of business totaling $27.8 billion, assets of $15.1 billion, and an employment base of 70,000 people. In comparison to 1995, 215 new cooperatives were reported, while total membership had increased by 6 percent, revenues by 12 percent, and assets by 7 percent. During recent years, there has been a strong trend in favour of increased cooperative activity. Overall, these Canadian cooperatives range from the absolutely diminutive, with many owned and managed by fewer than ten people, to the very large, such as Canada's agrifood cooperatives, four of which are among the 100 largest corporations in Canada (Saskatchewan Wheat Pool, Federated Co-operatives, Cooperative federee de Quebec, and Alberta Wheat Pool) (Quarter, 1992: 15).

Although cooperatives come in many sizes and pursue a variety of aims and ends, they all share the same underlying structure: all are voluntary associations of people providing a service to themselves and each person that uses a cooperative is also a member, in the very least entitled to one vote at general meetings. In some instances, the membership of the cooperative is small, and corresponds directly with the actual workers who run and manage the enterprise. In other instances, the cooperative is very large, as in the case of the Alberta Wheat Pool or VanCity Credit Union, and services many members. In these cases, the membership is empowered to elect a board of directors who are invested with legal responsibility for the corporation. In turn, the board may hire management and employees to actually run the cooperative. The management is typically tightly controlled by the board, who in turn are directly accountable to the membership, often to the point of being subject to immediate dismissal if they act in a manner that contravenes the desires of the membership or the spirit of the cooperative.
Members join the large cooperative by purchasing membership shares (analogous to a fee) which does not, in this case, grant the member a legal claim on the assets of the enterprise, nor is any one member allowed more than one vote. The cooperative movement seeks very directly to restrict control over assets or decision-making power so as to ensure power cannot pool and develop a consequent irresistibility. In fact, the cooperative movement gained much of its strength during the Great Depression and was organized largely as a means to challenge the domination of concentrated capital. Thus, as a consequence, the large cooperatives especially do not permit concentrated ownership of the corporation’s assets and legally the enterprise belongs equally to the entire membership with no single individual allowed disproportionate control. Moreover, unlike those private-sector enterprises with conventional shareholders and the payout of dividends, the cooperative generally does not recognize profits and instead any earnings in excess of operating expenses are seen as “surplus earnings” and are usually retained by the cooperative to strengthen the enterprise financially or to improve its services.

The very structure of cooperatives has tended to make them unattractive to outside investors. This situation has usually worked to the cooperative’s advantage. For example, the cooperative is not a publicly owned entity in the sense of its ownership being distributed in the form of shares that are owned primarily by wealthy individuals scattered throughout a tight-knit investment community. As such, a cooperative does not bear a fiduciary obligation to generate profit, and hence dividends, as above all other concerns, for the sake of wealthy shareholders. Nor can the cooperative witness a plummeting in the value of its shares (and in its future ability to raise capital via the stock market) because of decisions made that do not enhance profitability (while enhancing, for example, workers’ well-being or environmental responsibility).
Nor is the cooperative vulnerable to takeover via a leveraged buyout (LBO), a phenomenon that raged during the 1980s but is still far from over, and one that saw the destruction of thousands of companies, the loss of hundreds of thousands of jobs, and the disintegration of countless communities. LBOs are effective against publicly owned companies whereby "corporate raiders," after having identified a company with a surplus of assets, a high wage structure, a full pension plan, or some other indicator of financial health or responsibility, strategically buy up the share's of the targeted company (usually with borrowed money) until a commanding proportion is acquired. With the diffused ownership characteristic of public corporations, control over a company could often be secured with less than 20 percent of the total shares extant. Once having secured control, the corporate raider will gut the company, often by selling off divisions or assets, closing down marginally productive operations, reducing wage levels, laying off thousands of workers, or raiding pension funds. The raider will then pay off the loan incurred to leverage the buy-out, in effect using the targeted companies financial health as a weapon against it. Corporate libertarians have applauded LBOs as being an effective way of ensuring the transformation of 'fat, lazy' companies into 'lean, mean' companies. Since companies are expected to devote all of their resources to the realization of profit and the facilitation of growth, LBOs are seen by some as an effective wake-up call for those companies given over to softer, more humanitarian pursuits, such as loyalty to workers and their communities.

The only enterprises that are able to avoid falling prey to a LBO are those publicly-owned corporations run so marginally as to be unattractive to a raider, those that already have ownership sufficiently concentrated in the hands of a few major shareholders, or those
companies that are privately-owned and thus unconnected with the stock market. As a consequence, the typical defense against the LBO is to concentrate further in the hands of fewer and fewer people control over the corporations that dominate the economy. Alternatively, decentralized ownership of the enterprise, as in the cooperative, combined with an absence of the fiduciary obligation to realize profits, also offers excellent protection against the demands of investors and the threat of an LBO. The very structure of the cooperative, especially when combined with a fully accountable system for decision-making, offers a reasonable antidote to the massive unaccountability and irresponsibility often associated with concentrated capital. The cooperative is very much in keeping with the steady-state economy's goal of qualitative development versus the present economy's goal of infinite quantitative growth.

One down-side of the cooperative's tendency to present an economic face unattractive to investors is the consequent inability on the part of cooperatives to attract the investment capital often necessary to ensure survival against those enterprises not so restricted. Some cooperatives are seeking to overcome this limitation, as detailed by Susan Meeker-Lowry in *Invested in the Common Good* (1995), and are working to create a financial network devoted toward socially and environmentally responsible investing. Such investments would realize smaller returns, but would offer investors the peace-of-mind of supporting enterprises that seek to enhance the security and well-being of communities or preserve environmental integrity, instead of supporting corporations that peddle cigarettes to children, build weapons' systems for the military, or level ancient rainforests to feed export markets.

Another strategy cooperatives are employing to ensure their growing competitiveness with the private sector dates back to England's Rochdale Pioneers of 1844, founders of the first
modern co-op, and pertains to a principle of international cooperation between cooperatives. This principle was enshrined in the International Cooperative Alliance of 1966 which requires, to the extent practicable, that all member cooperatives work with each other and actively aid all types of cooperatives to get started and develop (Quarter, 1992: 16,17).

Although cooperatives all tend to share a similar organizational structure, they do take on a number of different forms, particularly with respect to their membership-base, and there also are a variety of ends toward which cooperatives are devoted.

One basic form is the “marketing cooperative,” which emerged during the latter half of the nineteenth century as stimulated by Canada’s long-standing rural tradition toward mutual aid (otherwise known as the tradition of community self-reliance central to the agrarian economy). Marketing co-ops were first formed by farmers in order to control the marketing of their products or, latterly, to enable the purchase of (affordable) necessary supplies. The basic aim of the marketing co-op was to ensure farmers a fair price for their produce, basically by avoiding a one-to-one relationship by the farmer with a wholesale buyer (usually a large and powerful corporation). The marketing co-op was designed to provide the farmers with a collective front and a strong voice, and hence greater bargaining power against wholesale buyers notorious for seeking advantage over individual farmers (ibid., 18).

Today, in Canada, farm-marketing cooperatives have become powerful corporations that now account for about 40 percent of total farm cash receipts. Seven of the ten largest agrifood corporations in Canada are cooperatives. Among the better known farm-marketing co-ops are the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool, the Alberta Wheat Pool, Agopur in Quebec, Fraser Valley Milk
Producers, B.C. Packers, Scotsburn, and Norfolk Fruit Growers. As of 1989, total membership in Canada's farm-marketing co-ops was 188,914, with 23,000 employees and $8.7 billion in yearly transactions. By 1996, the yearly volume of business conducted by farm-marketing co-ops had mushroomed to $15.5 billion. More importantly, Canada's history of marketing cooperatives in the agricultural sector has helped it to retain a relatively vibrant rural economy, unlike our neighbour to the north which has seen the widespread destruction of its agrarian economy in favour of the concentrated capital of agribusinesses (ibid., 18).

A spin-off of the farm-marketing cooperative is the hundreds of cooperatively owned and managed farmers' markets that have sprung-up all over Canada. These markets are particularly useful for restoring local control over local resources. Farmers who are no longer compelled to produce cash crops for export markets are free to turn their attention toward producing, organically and sustainably, a wider diversity of crops for local consumption.

Fish-marketing cooperatives have also proliferated, with 61 in operation by 1989, the largest being Prince Rupert's Fisherman's Co-op. That year, these cooperatives posted transactions totaling $184.9 million. However, they have not fared as well as farm-marketing co-ops, and actually posted a decline to 58 co-ops with combined revenues of $149.5 million, as of 1996. While not nearly as successful as farm-marketing cooperatives, fishing cooperatives have helped save a number of communities on both the Atlantic and Pacific coasts from total extinction.

Another variation of the marketing cooperative is the artisan co-op, pioneered by Inuit in the Northwest Territories and the Cree and Inuit of northern Quebec, and mobilized as a response to the poor prices paid for arts and crafts by wholesalers. The artisan cooperative provides craftspeople with the means to market their own products, thereby helping to ensure a fairer
A second basic form of cooperative is the "consumer" or "user" cooperative. There are many kinds of consumer co-ops that provide a wide range of products and services to their members: farm supplies, food retailing and wholesaling, daycare, healthcare, housing, financial services, and even burial services. At the local level, consumer co-ops vary in size and sophistication and range from small buying clubs to large supermarket organizations and wholesale outlets.

The Canadian consumer co-op, as with marketing the co-op, has its roots in mid-nineteenth century rural-based society, and early expressions ranged from mutual insurance organizations founded by farmers to cooperative stores established in mining communities. Later, during the early twentieth century, farms, in conjunction with marketing cooperatives, also formed consumer co-ops to ensure its farm members affordable access to necessary supplies (often by pooling resources to obtain a better price). Since then, these farm-supply consumer cooperatives have burgeoned into major corporations supplying farmers a full range of products, from animal feed, seeds and fertilizers through to petroleum, building materials and machinery. By 1989, there were 207 farm-supply consumer cooperatives in Canada, with 305,000 members and $2.1 billion in yearly transactions (ibid., 20).

All told, in Canada as of 1996, there were more than 8,000 consumer cooperatives offering a wide range of goods and services. Combined sales totaled $6.8 billion, with food products accounting for 52 percent of this total.

Perhaps the best known Canadian consumer cooperative is Co-op Atlantic, based in
Moncton, New Brunswick. Co-op Atlantic is devoted to providing its members with a wide range of products, both wholesale and retail and including housing, as well as providing marketing services and thus overlaps with the first form of cooperative discussed above. Co-op Atlantic is also, and perhaps best known as, a cooperative of cooperatives and as such is an exemplar of the Canadian CED movement and thus warrants closer attention.

According to Stewart Perry and Mike Lewis, authors of *Reinventing the Local Economy* (1994) and directors of the Vernon, B.C. based Centre for Community Enterprise:

Any consideration of CED ought to include, at least in Canada, some attention to the role played by co-operatives which, beginning in the time of the Great Depression, embodied important community initiatives to redress local economic problems. Co-op Atlantic is a very special illustration of the potential influence that co-operative development at the community level can have. Although it actually began in the 1920s as an organization limited to offering marketing services for members of a single industry — livestock growers — it gradually expanded to become a co-operative of co-operatives, providing many different services for a wide range of different types of co-ops (retail, housing, farming, and worker-owned co-ops) in many communities throughout the entire Atlantic Canada region (1994: 75).

Co-op Atlantic is an exemplary mutual aid organization devoted to enhancing self-reliance at the community level and as such can be seen as a particularly important actor within the CS-R movement. As a cooperative of cooperatives, Co-op Atlantic is known as a “second-tier” or “second-order” co-op and thus represents an umbrella organization devoted to nurturing community economic development along lines of relative self-reliance.

Formed in 1927 to extend marketing services to livestock growers, Co-op Atlantic expanded into consumer goods as of 1944, acting as a wholesaler to the many retail consumer co-ops that had emerged in the Atlantic region during the Depression. Each retail consumer co-op soon
became a member of Co-op Atlantic and, as combined with the original livestock growers, a combined marketing and consumer co-op was the result. During the 1950s, Co-op Atlantic expanded again to become a major feed manufacturer, thereby offering greater service to its livestock growers. At the same time, as the Co-op continued to expand, taking on more and more individual cooperatives, it also began to provide extensive services to its members, such as technical management expertise. Co-op Atlantic has begun the transformation from an organizational structure housing many cooperatives, to an out and out advocate of the cooperative movement.

By the early 1990s, Co-op Atlantic had grown to include 165 member co-ops who together boasted $450 million in annual revenues. By 1996, membership stood at 168 co-ops, with combined sales of $1.1 billion. Today, the Co-op concerns itself with providing to its many retail members such goods as groceries, gasoline and other petroleum products, hardware, dry goods, farm supplies, and animal feed. The Co-op also builds and manages cooperative and non-profit housing as well as provides its members with a wide variety of technical assistance and training programs (ibid., 76,77).

While content for more than 60 years to provide its member co-ops with marketing services, consumer goods, and support services, Co-op Atlantic recently decided to mobilize as a force devoted to expanding economic democracy throughout Canada. During the late 1980s, concerned both about the economic future of Canada and its own survival in the face of the far-reaching implications of free trade and a rapidly neoliberalizing Canadian government, Co-op Atlantic decided to go on the offensive and formulated a critical perspective steeped in radical political economic analysis. Co-op Atlantic, after intensive analysis which included the
commissioning of an economic study, concluded that the Canadian Welfare State took the form of a dependency pattern which actually undermined the self-reliance of cooperatives (as well as communities) and the ethos of mutual aid they sought to promote. This corrosive dependency pattern, especially acute in the Atlantic region, promised only to deepen as Canada restructured politically and economically along corporate libertarian (neoliberal) lines and especially as it sought greater integration into the global economy.

Early on, Co-op Atlantic identified the ironic contradiction inherent in the Welfare State during an era of globalization: increased demand (dependency upon) on the State combined with its steadily eroding provisions (e.g., reduced transfer payments, stricter controls over eligibility). Additionally, another threat identified by the Co-op would result from the unprecedented vigorous promotion of the consumer culture (associated with a growing global economy) combined with spreading impoverishment and the rapid encroachment of such retail giants as Walmart and Cosco. As economically beleaguered people are increasingly compelled to seek the absolute best buy for their dollar, consumer cooperatives in particular will be hard pressed to compete against the invading retail giants. If getting the most for the least is the goal of individuals, rather than the maintenance of local autonomy and community self-reliance, then cooperatives may soon face an uphill battle just to survive (ibid., 78).

Accordingly, in recognition of these impending challenges, during the Co-op’s 1990 general meeting, “Resolution 11” was passed to establish a committee to examine and re-formulate Co-op Atlantic’s mission statement. It was the task of the committee to consult widely among its members in order to generate a strategy for redirection. Specifically, the task was to formulate a strategy that would recognize and extend as a key role of the Co-op the creation of
"interlocked networks of co-operatives to counter the erosion of our democratic society"
(quoted in ibid., 79). As Perry and Lewis state:

What makes Co-op Atlantic particularly significant is the fact that its governing assembly recently adopted a far-ranging program of development to be built upon local councils of co-operating co-ops (including co-ops not directly affiliated with Co-op Atlantic, such as credit unions). An explicit aim of this program is to strengthen local economies, especially by linking local co-ops in a mutually supportive system which in turn is linked to the co-op system throughout the region. This mechanism is expected to help local co-ops, their communities, and the regional co-op system respond effectively to the new trends and conditions of a global economy. The initiative stresses, of course, a particular social structure (the co-operative organization) and its democratic ideology as a tool for building local economies. The individual localities are the community base for the co-op councils, but the structures through which a locality exercises its interests are the local co-ops which individually or collectively in the council pursue a variety of social as well as economic objectives (ibid., 75).

With the passing of “Resolution 11,” the question became how might the creation of “interlocked networks of co-operatives” be made real? To this end, the members of Co-op Atlantic adopted six general objectives or strategies for mobilization:

1. Promoting integrated co-op development through the creation of practical business links and the investment of capital to promote these links.

2. Facilitating new and growing co-ops in several ways. First, the proliferation of local co-op councils to identify local opportunities for the development of co-ops (e.g., the identification of local businesses ripe for worker takeover, and the facilitation of such takeovers). Second, the establishment of regional mechanisms to provide co-ops with ongoing technical assistance. Third, the systematic employment of the Co-op Atlantic’s considerable purchasing and lending powers to facilitate the creation of local co-ops of all kinds.
(3) The emphasis of *capital formation* by accumulating or arranging investment capital for co-ops, particularly by stressing its importance throughout the growing co-operative coalition. In essence, a unification of intent around the matter of start-up capital necessary for each new co-operative enterprise.

(4) *Strengthening stakeholder control* by refining ownership and representation techniques, and by identifying (and including) the range of presently excluded stakeholders (such as the employees in some of the retail co-ops) or under-represented members (such as women members among directors).

(5) *Assuming greater responsibility for environmental impacts* chiefly by insisting that there be throughout all cooperatives' operations a harmony with natural processes. All cooperatives will have their operations systematically and rigorously reviewed and on the basis of developed programs and policies, and all negative impacts on the environment will be minimized. As well, Co-op Atlantic will regularly lobby the government for the enactment of environmentally protective standards that would allow environmentally sensitive businesses the room to compete with those not currently given to environmental sensitivity.

(6) *Promoting cooperativism internally* through a process of greater member education. In particular democratic ownership and decision-making features are to be enhanced to further the involvement of more members. The cooperative is to be seen as a laboratory for the hands-on creation of greater democracy (ibid., 81,82).

Since the formulation and adoption of the above six strategies/objectives, the Co-op has made significant strides in achieving their realization. For example, by 1994, 16 new regional cooperative councils had been assembled, 12 of which were quite active. The Atlantic Co-
operative Development Fund was created, and by 1994 it had attracted $575,000 in investment capital. As well, a handful of new co-ops had been nurtured into existence, although not as many as had been hoped for, and a number of initiatives designed to raise public and member awareness had been successfully implemented. However, it is still too early in the implementation phase of Resolution 11 to tell whether or not Co-op Atlantic’s attempt at mobilization will be successful. Nonetheless, Co-op Atlantic does represent a particularly important strand in the overarching CS-R movement and their activities will merit close attention in the years to come (ibid., 79-85).

The third and final form of cooperative examined here is the “worker cooperative.” Of all the co-ops examined, this form embodies the highest realization of democratic decision-making and diffused ownership. Many of the other forms of cooperatives tend to exclude their employees from meaningful participation in the enterprise beyond the roles dictated by member-sanctioned management. While Co-op Atlantic is seeking to ameliorate this tendency toward exclusion by integrating employees as stakeholders, the fact remains that most co-ops, especially the larger ones, utilize fairly conventional and hierarchical managerial structures that are a questionable attribute of an organization presumably dedicated to the furtherance of economic democracy. One form of cooperative does seek to overcome this limitation by actually integrating the members into the organization as employees, owners, and managers. In this case, the membership base directly corresponds to those who actually run the enterprise, and the service they provide themselves with often takes the form of secure and meaningful employment which allows for maximum participation.

While worker cooperatives in many ways stand as a radical challenge to the more
conventional co-ops (much less to conventional businesses), they are unfortunately still very few in number. In Canada, as of 1989, there were about 300 worker cooperatives with 6,410 members and $233 million in revenues (Quarter, 1992: 27). By 1996, the number of workers' cooperatives is estimated to have about doubled. The Co-operative Secretariat notes that growth in workers' co-ops has been very robust over the last decade. They provide 1996 data on only 244 workers' cooperatives (there are many others who chose not to report) who together represented 15,371 members, $516 million in revenue, and $275 million in assets. Interestingly, about 60 percent of these worker cooperatives are located in Quebec where the provincial government has taken an active hand in encouraging their development (Quarter, 1992: 27). The Secretariat sums up workers' cooperatives as:

examples of people employing themselves in a productive manner.
The rapidly rising interest in workers' co-operatives reflects the tremendous need for jobs and the increasing interest of better educated and more politically conscious people to have more control over their jobs and, consequently, their lives and communities (Co-operative Secretariat, 1996: 3,4).

Canada has yet to capitalize fully on the potential of the worker cooperative. Elsewhere in the world, a more pro-active stance toward the worker co-op has been taken. For example, the city of Bologna in Italy, through the ministrations of the local Democratic Party of the Left (formerly the Communist Party), has effectively pursued over the course of the last 25 years a decentralized vision of economic development that charts a course through the two extremes of economic centralization represented by State socialism on the one end, and corporate capitalism on the other. Bologna's Democratic Party believed that the key to transforming the local economy was not to combat business, but to remake it. As a result, today, in the Emilia-
Romagna region (where Bologna is located) there are more than 1,800 worker cooperatives comprised of 60,000 members (Shuman, 1998: 84).

Many of these worker-run and -managed enterprises manufacture and export high-tech products that compete very successfully internationally. So successful is the Emilia-Romagna region that this once impoverished agricultural backwater has been transformed into the fastest growing region in Italy, and boasts the tenth highest per capital income among the 122 official regions in the entire European Community (ibid., 84).

The Democratic Party's successful experimentation with worker cooperatives is pointed to by many advocates of CED and CS-R alike as providing positive proof that worker-owned and managed enterprises can compete, and thrive, and that to do so does not necessarily require the economy-of-scale argued by corporate libertarians as vital to global competitiveness.

This Italian experience with a system of workers' cooperatives should not be embraced uncritically, however. While the cooperatives have contributed substantially to local economic health, they have done so largely by pursuing an export-led strategy instead of one given to import-substitution and are hence highly dependent upon both continued access to global markets and expanding economies. Still, the experiment has effectively refuted the corporate libertarian logic of global economic expansion, which stresses the primacy of TNCs, along with their massive, regional trading blocs such as NAFTA, as the only economic entities capable of generating the economies-of-scale vital to global competitiveness. In Italy, small, flexible cooperatives overseen by well-paid worker-owners and working cooperatively with others within the matrix of a flexible manufacturing network are able to hold their own within the global marketplace.
Community Currencies

Community, local, or regional currency schemes are seen by CED activists as a catalyst for sustainable regional economies as well as being a radical departure from mainstream economic ministrations and toward greater community self-reliance. More and more, communities are learning that to tie their fate to distant and centralized economic institutions is to court local economic strangulation. In particular, the banking systems in both the U.S. and Canada, overseen respectively by the Federal Reserve Board and the Bank of Canada, are intensely centralized institutions given over to national concerns, not local, as determined by monitoring the economic winds in financial centers such as New York or Toronto. As a consequence, decisions made and actions taken by the centralized banking institution often greatly influence the rate of flow of hard currency or investment capital through local or regional economies with little regard for the actual strengths, weaknesses or needs of these economies.

For example, the Bank of Canada’s ongoing and over a decade old obsession with combating inflation by propping up interest rates whenever unemployment threatens to fall below a certain level (around 9 percent), an allegedly dangerous situation thought to improve the bargaining power of labour, drive up wages, and inflate the consumer price index, is a practice that has had dire consequences for many communities. Inflation tends to threaten the wealthy, who acquire their fortunes through interest on investments. Those who work for a living are not nearly so troubled by moderate inflation until, that is, the Bank of Canada decides to eliminate its influence by moderating economic growth with high interest rates, a decision which ensures 1.5 million unemployed and a reduced ability on the part of most people to borrow money to launch or expand a business or otherwise stimulate their local economy. This is one way the centralized
banking institution controls the flow of capital throughout even the most distant or peripheral local economies.

Another more direct manner of influence exercised by central banks is the privilege of deciding how much "liquidity" the economy requires at any given time. The Bank of Canada does this in part by taking the lead in setting interest rates, which in turn greatly affects the ability of banks to issues loans and thus inject capital into the economy. But the Bank of Canada plays a more direct role by determining how much hard currency, and thus potential purchasing power, is in circulation at any given time. Note that the amount of hard currency in circulation is always a tiny fraction of the total wealth in the country (and even a small fraction of the total amount of wealth on deposit in any major bank). Sometimes inflation, or other economic vagaries, can outstrip or outrun the available supply of hard currency, with the typical result being its outflow from peripheral communities and into centralized institutions.

If there is too little hard currency in circulation, a situation that can take many weeks or months to notice and correct, it can flow out of the local economy faster than it arrives as people give it over to the local branch of a centralized bank, or over to absentee landlords and non-local chain stores such as Safeway or Walmart. For the simple lack of the hard currency we have all grown dependent upon, a local economy can grind to a halt for want of the economic oil to grease the gears of its productive machinery. Such a situation usually occurs in conjunction with generalized high unemployment combined with a mill closure or two, an eroded local resource base, and the increasing dominance of external actors vying for local dollars (and killing the local economy's multiplier effect). Gradually, local people find themselves less and less able to engage in transactions with fellow community members — pay for a hair-cut, babysitting
service, local produce, for example — because they do not have sufficient hard currency to facilitate the transaction, although they still have the need and the desire to engage in exchange.

It is to the end of ensuring the vitality of a local economy regardless of far-away decisions made by centralized institutions, and regardless of the rate of flow of hard currency, that community currency schemes are directed. Robert Swann and Susan Witt, founders of the E.F. Schumacher Society in Great Barrington, Massachusetts and long-time advocates of community self-reliance, approach the community currency scheme as an important element of an integrated strategy toward greater local independence. They say:

This predicament [of centralized control over the economy] calls for a reorganization of economic institutions so that they will be responsive to local and regional needs and conditions. These new institutions would decentralize the control of land, natural resources, industry, and financing to serve the people living in an area in an equitable way. We need to create an infrastructure that encourages local production for local needs. Community land trusts, worker-owned and worker-managed businesses, nonprofit local banks, and regional currencies are some of the tools for building strong regional economies (Swann and Witt, 1997: 123,124).

Because we have all learned to assume that federal currencies are the only permissible form of currency, creating regional currencies to facilitate community self-reliance is perhaps the least understood of the tools advocated by Swann and Witt. But regional currencies, while being perfectly legal, are also vital to local autonomy and relative independence. As Thomas Greco, Jr., author of New Money for Healthy Communities notes:

the proper kind of money used in the right circumstances is a liberating tool that can allow the fuller expression of human creativity... Money has not lived up to its potential as a liberator because it has been perverted by the monopolization of its creation and by politically
manipulating its distribution — which makes it available to the favored few and scarce for everyone else (quoted in Meeker-Lowry, 1996: 447).

Greco identifies three ways in which conventional, centrally-issued and controlled money malfunctions: i) there is never enough of it; ii) it tends to be inappropriately allocated at its source to ensure the bulk goes to those who already have plenty; and iii) it facilitates the systematic redirection of wealth from the poor to the rich. The symptoms of a "polluted" or "malfunctioning" money supply are, according to Meeker-Lowry, all too familiar: inflation, unemployment, bankruptcies, foreclosures, increasing indebtedness, homelessness, and a widening gap between the rich and poor. For example, in the U.S., in part because of a malfunctioning money supply, the wealthiest one percent of households own nearly 40 percent of the nation's wealth while the top 20 percent account for more than 80 percent (ibid., 447).

Much of the present level of poverty and unemployment, and the associated level of idleness, is attributable to a lack of hard currency available to a community to finance projects or pay workers. There is no shortage of environmental mess to clean up, urban blight to remedy, elderly to care for, children to teach, civic associations to build, or talents to realize. Typically, the will to tackle such projects is not lacking. It is only the money to make it happen that is absent. Poverty and unemployment are seldom attributable to an ability or desire to engage in meaningful work.

Fortunately, there is a growing trend throughout the industrialized world toward the resurrection of community or regionally-based currencies to address the deprivations often associated with a community's overdependency on a steady inflow of capital from external agencies to keep alive its economy. When this inflow lessens or dries up, the consequences for
the community are usually dire, as scores of resource dependent towns have recently learned.

Susan Meeker-Lowry reflects on the trend toward community currencies in the U.S.:

In many communities around the country, people are taking control by creating their own currency. This is completely legal and, as organizers are finding, often very empowering. The move toward local currency is not only motivated by the desire to bridge the gap between what we earn and what we need to survive financially (although this plays a role, of course). It is also seen as a community-building tool (1996: 447).

In the U.S., prior to the Federal Reserve Act of 1913, which mandated a central banking system and a federal currency scheme, community currencies proliferated. Whereas the new federal currency of the time was based on a gold standard, community currencies were based on everything from lumber, corn and land — whatever had a particular significance to local people. During the Great Depression, scrip was often issued and exchanged for goods and services in communities that were experiencing a shortage of federal dollars. For example, there was wooden money issued in Tenino, Washington; cardboard money in Raymond, Washington (complete with a picture of a big oyster on the back); and corn-backed money was issued in Clear Lake, Iowa. Various forms of scrip were used to pay teachers in Wildwood, New Jersey, and to make the payroll in Philadelphia as well as in numerous other towns and cities across the U.S. Scrip was issued by state governments, school districts, merchants, business associations, various agencies, and even individuals, wherever the supply of federal dollars had dwindled during the Depression era. By 1933, notes Barbara Brandt, author of Whole Life Economics: Revaluing Daily Life (1995), an estimated one million Americans in 300 communities were using some kind of local currency scheme to keep alive their local economy (1995: 167).

Since the Great Depression, there is no time more favourable to the launching of community
currency schemes than the present. The accelerating disintegrative effects of global economic consolidation — the destruction of farm-based rural communities due to the onslaught of agribusinesses; the depletion of natural resource bases and the closing down of their host towns; the increasing trend toward urbanization and the emptying of small towns; or the trend toward greater local penetration by corporate outsiders, such as Walmart and Costco, and the resultant leakage of capital — have left many communities, towns and neighbourhoods short of hard currency and ready for the formation of their own currencies.

As well, the trend in recent years is toward a greater intangibility or abstractness with respect to hard currency (which is thus getting “softer”). People are growing accustomed, for example, to completing transactions without even touching a cent of hard currency, by way of credit or debit cards and automatic deposits. Federal currencies in the U.S. are no longer backed by gold and in fact, almost all national currencies worldwide are backed by little more than a widespread faith that such faith will remain widespread. History is littered with reminders of the hyper-inflation or capital flight that can result when this faith breaks down (as in post WW I Austria and Germany, or Brazil, Argentina and Peru more recently, or Mexico in 1995 and Russia at present). A few communities are starting to question whether or not this faith in national currencies is not perhaps misplaced (or at least over-emphasized) and are starting to explore why we have not placed at least an equivalent faith in their fellow community members to uphold a local currency. Such a currency would not replace the national currency, but would exist side-by-side to pick up the slack when the inflow of federal dollars is too slow or inappropriate. In sum, according to Meeker-Lowry, “community currency is a tool that can help revitalize local economies by encouraging wealth to stay within a community rather than flowing
For illustrative purposes, I turn now to two examples of community currency schemes.

In 1982, the Southern Berkshire town of Great Barrington, Massachusetts, home of the E.F. Schumacher society, set out to establish an organizational base for a system of local currency. A nonprofit organization called SHARE (Self-Help Association for a Regional Economy) was incorporated, with an open membership and a board elected directly from it. SHARE remained affiliated with the E.F. Schumacher Society, and both Robert Swann and Susan Witt, founding members of the Society, have been instrumental in SHARE’s success.

SHARE began (and continues) as a micro-loan initiative, providing productive loans (versus consumer loans) to individuals unable to obtain credit from conventional sources (often because they do not need to borrow enough to make it worth the bank’s while). Upon joining SHARE, members would open a savings account in the First National Bank of the Berkshires (a nonprofit, community-controlled bank), and these accounts are used by SHARE to collateralize micro-loans to qualified individuals. Thus were low interest loans (usually 3 percent, the cost of servicing a loan) made available to local residents seeking to upgrade or expand their businesses, or launch new ones. Of the many dozens of loans made, the payback record has been 100 percent (Swann and Witt, 1997: 127).

But SHARE has sought to facilitate local production for local needs by going one step further than micro-loans. The association has also encouraged the successful employment of scrip by local merchants or farmers as a means alternative to loans for raising needed capital. Thus, when Frank Tortoriello, owner of a popular deli on Main Street, needed to move his shop to a new location (due to a doubling of his rent) and after the bank had turned down his loan
request, SHARE encouraged him to issue scrip. Tortoriello did so and issued ten-dollar notes for eight dollars, and succeeded in raising the US$5000 he needed in thirty days. His “Deli Dollars” redeemable at his new location, started showing up all over town and were in many cases exchanged many times among the townspeople before being presented to Tortoriello for final redemption.

Other businesses, with SHARE’s help, followed suit and issued their own scrip. Both of the town’s farm markets came together and issued scrip, particularly to raise the capital necessary to survive the New England winters. The result was the Berkshire Farm Preserve Notes, redeemable at either farm market and cleared through SHARE itself. The local dry goods store issued the Monterey General Store Notes, and a local Japanese food restaurant issued its Kintaro Notes. The success of these early experiments with scrip inspired the Southern Berkshire Chamber of Commerce to issue scrip redeemable in the stores of the more than 70 participating merchants.

Overall, the effect of SHARE’s experimentation with local currency schemes has been to strengthen the local economy while building greater community trust and cohesion. Susan Witt sums up the experiment as part of a larger strategy to eventually strengthen regional economies:

Basically, we’re looking to find the way in which wealth generated in the region can be kept in the region. Our local banks, which did a very good job of that in the past, have now been bought up by larger and larger holding companies. So the deposits, the earnings, of rural regions and inner cities become like the wealth generated in the Third World areas: it tends to all flow out into a few central, international urban centers. A regional currency is ultimately the way that communities can regain independence and begin to unplug [delink] from the federal system: to take back their rights to generate their own regional currencies. As our area of Great Barrington gets used to exchanging Berkshire Farm Preserve Notes and Deli-Dollars, we hope it will be the beginning of a

Another community currency initiative, one that has engendered wide-spread emulation, is known as LETS. Created in 1983 to help revive, and sustain, flagging local economies by complementing conventional currency, LETS combines barter-exchange with a locally-based currency. This innovative CED strategy/initiative, known alternatively as Local Exchange Trading Systems, Local Economic Trading Systems, or Local Employment Trading Systems, is the creation of Michael Linton. Linton, in response to a serious decline in the economic health of his home community, Courtenay B.C. situated in the Comox Valley on Vancouver Island, sought to craft a strategy that would contribute to the development of a sustainable, community-based and -controlled economy. Since then, LETS has spread widely.

The LETS concept is simple: interested community members join their local system (where available), pay a small administrative fee (usually no more than $25), then seek connections with other participants looking to acquire or exchange goods and services. A central registry is kept, updated frequently, listing all members along with what they seek, or what they have to offer. The goods and services exchanged range quite widely and have included such things as: childcare, carpentry, free-range eggs, reflexology, lawn mowing, computer services and advice, massage, language lessons, unused possessions, transportation, and so on. The goods and services offered are limited only by the resource base and imagination of the participating community. Each transaction is assigned a value by the participants, typically measured in LETS “green dollars” that correspond with the national currency on a one to one basis. After each transaction, the corresponding debit and credit is sent to a central, computerized registry
(Linton, a computer programmer, has distributed the software widely at minimal cost, although
LETS can be easily enough managed without computer technology). The recipient in the
exchange either uses up existing green dollars in their account, or goes into debt with the
promise of repayment through a subsequent exchange. The exchanger receives a credit of green
dollars to their account which they may use to offset an existing debt, or to acquire goods or
services through an exchange with another member. “LETS is designed to help those who may
be cash-poor but talent-rich” (Lazaruk, 1997: M4-5).

LETS stresses individual initiative, full participation, and member autonomy coupled with
collective accountability. For example, members may seek to exchange their goods and services
with other members for a combination of green dollars and federal dollars (up to a suggested
50/50 split). Details pertaining to members, their accounts, and completed transactions are
available to all members. Those whose intentions are less than honest are quickly weeded out
through group pressure. The system itself is maintained through the recovery of administrative
costs in internal currency from member’s accounts on a cost-of-service basis. Occasional
charges payable in federal dollars may also be exacted.

The conceptual basis for LETS stems from Linton’s initial observations regarding community
economic health. Most conventional community economies are heavily dependent on outside
sources of revenue, be it through locally-based corporations or the government. If, for any
reason (recession, corporate re-structuring, resource depletion, etc.) the flow of currency into
a community is restricted, there inevitably follows general business decline, unemployment,
poverty, and social unrest. However, as researcher Sidonie Seron (1995: 10) points out, Linton
based his system on the observation:
that the quantity of goods or services people were willing
to trade was in no way dependent upon the disposable
amount of money. In many situations there were enough
skills and items available but the people simply lacked a
means of exchange, hence the idea of supplementing
money in order to help local communities towards a
sustainable economy, thus reducing social and environ-
mental problems.

Central to Linton’s system is the problematical nature of the relationship between the
conventional economy and local communities. He says, bluntly, “I believe we don’t have
communit[ies] because of the corrosive effects of commercial money.” A guiding purpose
behind LETS is to encourage the maintenance of a local economy by keeping its resources in
the community. Says Linton, “The context of conventional community and money is like a
leaking bucket. Money comes in, dribbles through the bucket, pisses out of the bottom. Within
that bucket, we’re all scrambling for our share before it goes. With LETS, we’re plugging the
hole” (Linton, as quoted by Davies, 1997: 4). Vancouver LETS participant Gil Yaron expresses
sentiments similar to Linton’s: “I believe in creating locally sustainable economies that also give
back to the communities as opposed to sending the profits outside to unknown shareholders of
large multinational corporations” (as quoted by Lazaruk, 1997: M5).

It would be misleading to say that LETS has enjoyed enormous success. Many individual
initiatives have failed or continue to struggle along with low interest or activity. However, the
system has at least enjoyed steadily increasing interest and adoption. There are dozens
throughout Canada, with the largest being Toronto’s with an estimated 750-800 members
(Lazaruk, 1997: M5). Globally, there exist an estimated 1000 separate LETS, more than 400
alone in Great Britain (covering more than 20,000 members) where the system has yielded
excellent results. Australia also supports many LETS, including the single largest with more than 2000 members. Other countries hosting the system include the U.S.A., New Zealand, Norway, Spain, Poland, and France. New systems are now making their way into the Third World; there are already a handful in Africa (Seron, 1995).

SHARE and LETS by no means represent the only community currency initiatives to have emerged in recent years. These initiatives are, however, reasonably representative of the direction the community economic development movement is moving with respect to matters of community self-reliance. So too are cooperatives, particularly through the impressive efforts of the Co-op Atlantic. There are many, many more initiatives and strategies that comprise the CED movement, which in turn go to support greater community self-reliance. In real terms, cooperatives and community currency schemes, as important as they are, represent only the tip of the CED iceberg.

This study turns now to an examination of two other CS-R movements, Community Supported Agriculture and Community Land Trusts, and their bids to increase local autonomy by restoring the control of food and land to local people.
Chapter Seven

Food and Land

A community is capable of self-reliance largely to the degree that it is able to obtain and maintain free access to food (i.e. agricultural potential), and land (to live or grow food on). To deprive a community of access and control over these vital areas, food and land, is to seriously cripple the community and render it vulnerable to and highly dependent upon outside forces.

Today, the community that lacks secure access to or control over the basics of self-reliance is dependent upon, among others, agribusinesses and chain supermarkets for the provision of food that is often overly expensive, wastefully produced, over-processed and full of chemicals, transported needlessly and wastefully over great distances, frequently of dubious quality, and typically laden with toxic residue. Or the dependent community is beholden to mortgage-lenders, property management companies, and absentee landlords for the provision of land. The community is also vulnerable to the activities of real-estate speculators and investors, who drive up the value of property, remove it from local control, gentrify it out of reach of the average income, and artificially inflate property tax burdens to ruinous levels, all for the regard of money
and the disregard of the local community. Worst of all, the ongoing dependency on agents external to the community for the provision of food and land results in the consequent loss of control over the local economy as it is bled dry to pay outsiders for what should be locally owned and controlled.

The importance of food and land to a community's capacity for self-reliance has a long history in North America. In 1785, Thomas Jefferson, in a letter to John Jay, wrote: “we have now lands enough to employ an infinite number of people in their cultivation. Cultivators of the earth are the most valuable citizens. They are the most vigorous, the most independent, the most virtuous, and they are tied to their country, and wedded to its liberty and interests, by the most lasting bonds” (quoted in Kemmis, 1990: 20). Jefferson, along with many early republican thinkers, saw a strong connection between civic virtue and the agrarian way of life. Only people connected directly with, in control of, the means and methods for their survival, and who by necessity were connected with others similarly situated to form a state of mutual responsibility vital to the agrarian economy, only these people were capable of true self-governance. And only those capable of self-government were truly safe repositories for the virtue that made authentic citizenship possible. Community is the product of people brought together through the bonds of necessity; sever those bonds, and community dies. Once community dies, people no longer are compelled to care for anyone but themselves and are increasingly given over to actions that benefit no one but themselves, or even directly harm others.

In no way am I advocating a wholesale return to the agrarian way of life characteristic of our immediate ancestors; such a way of life is today beyond feasibility anyway, especially given the realities of most people living in cities. Nevertheless, the degree to which the vast majority of
people in modern society has surrendered any and all control over the basis for their continued survival, food and land especially, is not a healthy option either. With world food supplies frequently dipping below 50 days, it would take comparatively little to push many areas into widespread food shortages. A few poor harvests, a major drought, combined with steadily mounting pressures on the available food stocks, could easily trigger a host of famines worldwide. The population of any major city in the North, as profoundly disconnected as they are from the means and ability to produce food for themselves if necessary, is nor more than two weeks away from mass starvation; about how long the food stocks privately held or warehoused would hold out if nothing was available from outside. Where is the integrity of community self-reliance to be seen in an angry and seething mass of two or three million urbanites suddenly on the move in search of food? In the modern city, we have all grown accustomed to a steady and uninterrupted stream of food supplies; thousands of truckloads, rail cars, and cargo ships all disgorge their contents every day to provide us with the necessities of life. What if that stream was to cease, or was reduced to a trickle?

As with many of the examples of community self-reliance we have covered, or have yet to cover, the highest probability for their success is to be found outside of the city, through a return to smaller towns more connected with the land and away from the building of huge urban centres and metropolitan corridors that are as close to natural processes as a theme park in a shopping mall. The very nature of the city seems to oppose the formation of community, particularly when the cities serve primarily to concentrate people for purposes of mass consumption, mass production, and mass administration. Most cities, by definition, contain a population density that serves to compel people to avoid others as much as possible, to cocoon
away from a harsh and competitive world in their separate apartments or detached dwellings. After negotiating through a seething mass of humanity everyday, fighting through traffic, waiting in line after line, or competing for scarce resources such as clients and customers, employment, or mates, most city-dwellers are left with no interest whatsoever in creating communities of self-reliance.

Short of a wholesale resuscitation of the agrarian way of life, there are many strategies that a community can utilize to regain and maintain its rightful control over food and land, and in the process, achieve a higher degree of self-reliance. One of the largest CS-R movements represents a concerted effort to do just that, secure control over the basics for survival. This movement is the Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) movement, which includes numerous variations such as buying clubs, urban agriculture, and is closely aligned with the Community Land Trust (CLT) movement. Most of the strategies are better suited to the small town, but some are applicable to the urban environment, particularly neighbourhood associations and similar forms of arrangement.

Community Supported Agriculture

Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) is a particularly important strand in the web of community self-reliance. It contains a wide variety of initiatives that have emerged in an attempt to counter our growing dependency on huge agribusinesses, massive corporations who are gobbling up farmland at an alarming rate and thereby destroying rural communities while effectively determining what you and I may eat. These corporations may also, with widespread global food shortages looming on the horizon, effectively decide who may eat.
The CSA movement recognizes that fundamental to community self-reliance is control over one's source of food and the land upon which it is grown. The reliance upon outside sources for the uninterrupted and affordable provision of food is a sure recipe for heightened dependency and vulnerability, if not disaster, as it is for the destruction of the bonds of shared necessity that create community. In the words of Wendell Berry, "Community's not a sentiment. It has to do with necessity — with people needing each other. If you allow the larger industrial system to remove the pattern of needs that is the force holding people together, than you lose the community" (quoted in Kittredge, 1996: 253).

The steady erosion of locally owned and family-run small farms, and the consequent loss of control over agricultural land and secure sources of wholesome food, is a well-established trend. Farmer and philosopher Wendell Berry has observed this trend for many years with growing alarm, and has spoken of it with great eloquence in his modern classic of environmentalism, The Unsettling of America: Culture and Agriculture ([1977] 1996). Berry, ten years later, reflected back to the period of 1974 to 1977 when he wrote the first edition of The Unsettling of America, and saw only a general worsening of the trend toward agribusiness control of agricultural resources. In the preface to the second, 1986, edition of his classic work he lamented:

That the situation was not good — for farms or farmers or rural communities or nature or the general public — was even then evident to any experienced observer who would turn aside from the preconceptions of 'agribusiness' and look at the marks of deterioration that were plainly visible. And now, almost a decade later, it is evident to everyone that, at least for farmers and rural communities, the situation is catastrophic: Farmers are losing their farms, some are killing themselves, some in the madness of despair are killing other people, and rural economy and rural life are gravely stricken (1996: vii).
Berry continues:

But this is not just a financial crisis for country people. Critical questions are being asked of our whole society: Are we, or are we not, going to take proper care of our land, our country? And do we, or do we not, believe in a democratic distribution of usable property? At present, these questions are being answered in the negative. Our soil erosion rates are worse now than during the years of the Dust Bowl. In the arid lands of the West, we are overusing and wasting the supplies of water. Toxic pollution from agricultural chemicals is a growing problem. We are closer every day to the final destruction of private ownership not only of small family farms, but of small usable properties of all kinds (ibid., viii).

Berry, revisiting *The Unsettling of America* in 1995 for preparation of the third edition, could only add that the trend toward the destruction of the small family farm, rural communities, and the land itself he first observed in the mid 1970’s, a trend that had grown worse in the decade following, has grown still worse and shows no sign of abatement. In Berry’s words, “In *The Unsettling of America* I argue that industrial agriculture and the assumptions on which it rests are wrong, root and branch; I argue that this kind of agriculture grows out of the worst of human history and the worst of human nature... The enormous productivity of industrial agriculture cannot be denied, but neither can its enormous ecological, economic, and human costs, which are bound eventually to damage its productivity” (ibid., 229,230).

In Chapter Two we discussed the rise of the consumer culture, a process begun scarcely four generations ago, to eventually displace self-reliant communities as the primary guiding force in our lives. The agrarian world of frugality and relative autonomy existed then as a major barrier to the realization of a society directed toward the ends of mass production, mass consumption, and mass wastage. In 1900, for the United States, 22.9 million people, nearly 40 percent of the population, lived on farms that provided the bedrock for an agrarian form of social organization
that stood counter to everything global capital stands for today. Millions more lived in the thousands of small towns that served, and in turn, were served by the agrarian economy. By 1980, a mere three generations hence, there remained no more than 6.5 million Americans living on farms — 2.7 percent of the U.S. population. By 1990, the figure had fallen to 4.75 million people, or 1.1 percent of the U.S. population. And the populations in the many small, agrarian-dependent towns have declined similarly as people once relatively self-sufficient were steadily forced away from the land to fill the cities in search of wage-labour. The U.S. Census Bureau, as of 1993, decided it would no longer count the number of citizens living on farms; the number had fallen so low. However, in 1994, the U.S. Department of Agriculture reported that the nation was losing an average of 23,000 farms each year (Groh and McFadden, 1997: 60,61).

The destruction of North America’s agrarian economy is a process reminiscent of England’s Enclosure Movement in the age leading up to industrialism, when the centuries old relationship of feudalism, based on a supposedly divine reciprocity between the serf and lord that at least guaranteed the less fortunate access to the land, was torn asunder by a nobility in search of private profit. The land was “enclosed,” typically to make way for the husbandry of sheep whose wool was valuable to England’s booming textiles industry. The serfs, profoundly dislocated, faced no choice but to fill the burgeoning cities in search of wage-labour, or starve to death in the attempt, which many did. By the early to mid 19th century, these serfs had become the early proletariat and, as they were trapped in the cities with no options otherwise, they were preyed upon mercilessly by the capitalists of the day. This is the time that saw the origin of “wage-slavery.”

The very same process at work in England during the 17th to 19th centuries, the destruction
of a subsistence economy, as scant as it was, has been well underway in the so-called developing world for much of the 20th century. As part of a process called "structural adjustment," poor nations, in order to secure development loans from the IMF, World Bank or other Western lenders, are compelled to restructure their society to better meet the requirements of an export-led economy, and to begin the transformation of their culture from one of subsistence toward one based on profligate consumption. In this process, many rural people are displaced, either to make way for intensive mega-projects such as huge dams or deforestation projects, or because they were occupying good farmland that has been converted to cash crops for export, or because capitalists, usually foreign, require pools of cheap and malleable labour and as a consequence many rural people are forced into the cities and into specially constructed export-processing zones to meet this need. As well, both the elites in the developed and developing nations recognize the barrier subsistence economies represent to the development of a consumer culture, and they generally will do anything possible to destroy the traditional bonds of community self-reliance in hopes of forcing people off the land, into the cities, and into a servitude to endless material want. People, once denied gratification in relationships, are more likely to seek gratification in things.22

Similarly, in North America, the self-sufficiency of the agrarian economy has presented an impediment to maximized economic growth and the development of economies-of-scale. In 1967, a report commissioned by President Johnson concluded that the country's biggest farm problem was a surplus of farmers: "...the technological advances in agriculture have so greatly reduced the need for manpower that too many people are trying to live on a national farm income wholly inadequate for them." Farm people were to be encouraged to find "better
opportunities,” away from their farms and preferably in the cities (quoted in Berry, 1996: vi).

During the mid-1970s, Earl L. Butz, then U.S. Secretary of Agriculture, would frequently extol the virtues of an agricultural sector dominated by mass industry: “True agripower is the capacity of less than 5 percent of America’s population to feed itself and the remaining 95 percent with enough food left over to meet market demands of other nations and still provide food assistance for poor people throughout the world”, Butz said. Or, “the real measure of [agricultural strength] is productivity, combined with processing and marketing efficiency.” And, according to Butz,

Years ago, farm operations were highly diversified, but today, farmers are concentrating on fewer and much larger crop or livestock enterprises. Now, many one- or two-enterprise farms exist where there were formerly three to five enterprises. And with the spread of sophisticated machinery, farm sizes have expanded as their numbers have declined — stretching from an average 195 acres in the 1940’s to about 390 acres in the 1970’s.

Finally, and more ominously, Butz claimed: “It is evident that U.S. agripower is a major force in the world’s exchange of goods and services. Agripower is, unquestionably, an even greater force than petropower in man’s survival in the future. Man can and has survived without petroleum, but he cannot live without food” (quoted in ibid., 34,35).

The “necessary” restructuring of the U.S.’s agricultural sector to match the imperatives of mass industry was obviously not lost on Butz. Nor has it been lost on President Clinton who, in 1995, told an audience of “farmers and agricultural organization leaders” in Billings, Montana, that the American farm population is “dramatically lower, obviously, than it was a generation ago. And that was inevitable because of the increasing productivity of agriculture” (quoted in ibid., 232). But the inevitable “increasing productivity of agriculture” or the necessity of
ensuring of U.S. "agripower" has come at a staggering cost. Beyond the massive displacement and wholesale destruction of entire rural populations, indicating untold depths of human misery, and beyond the massively deleterious effects modern agriculture has on the environment and on the health of people, the industrialization of agriculture has conferred enormous if not penultimate power to a tiny handful of massive TNCs.

While the erosion of a farm-based population has torn asunder the North American fabric of community self-reliance, it has benefitted the interests of industrial agriculture tremendously. In keeping with globalization's trend toward greater consolidation, the USDA reports that fully 85 percent of the nation's agricultural output is accounted for by less than 15 percent of the nation's farms, and 50 percent is accounted for by less than 4 percent. Large, input-intensive, chemically-dependent, mono-cultural agribusiness concerns now produce the bulk of our food and effectively command our allegiance. Today, farms and farmers bear such names as Agricetus, Nanotronics, Metabolix, Monsanto, Millennium Pharmaceuticals, Genomyx, Calgene, Cargil, Dow Chemicals, Genetech, Unilever, Archer-Daniels, Midland, and RJR Nabisco (Groh and McFadden, 1997: 65).

The Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) movement is an incipient, but very important and rapidly growing, counter-tendency against the continued commodification and environmental degradation of farmland, and against the continued inculcation of a widespread food-dependency. CSAs, in various forms, have a longer history in Europe and Japan, from where the strategy was brought to North America in the mid 1980's. In Japan, the practice is referred to as "farming with a face on it," and in Europe, it is referred to as "subscription
farming.” In North America, Community Supported Agriculture has become the preferred term for a movement that has seen the two operations of 1987 become 400 by 1994, and more than 1000 by 1997, supporting as many as 100,000 households (ibid., xvi).

Daniel Imhoff, a long-time student of CSA, describes the movement thusly:

As the move toward anonymous agrigiants and supermarket conglomerates continues to accelerate, Community Supported Agriculture has emerged as a viable model for local food production. The concept is simple. Farmers and consumers join together to create markets for reasonably priced, pesticide-free, seasonal foods. In a community-supported farm, the consumer pays a share in early spring to meet the farmer’s operating expenses for the upcoming season... Consumers enrolling in a CSA do far more than purchase food from a known producer. By paying in advance, they allow the farmer to raise interest-free operating capital... And because there are no guarantees that any or all crops will succeed, they share the financial burden (1996: 426,427).

CSA has proven itself as an excellent means to assist local, often family-owned farms to survive, particularly in the face of the highly competitive, large-scale agribusiness whose economy-of-scale is nearly impossible for the small farm to successfully compete against. The small farm, with no other market but the cash-crop market, is typically run into the ground as it attempts to compete anyway, soon exhausted of operating capital, pushed into default on its loans, foreclosed on by the bank, and sold-off to an agribusiness. From the perspective of economic progress or efficiency, this loss is seen as a plus — one more uncompetitive farmer driven out of business. But from the perspective of community self-reliance and the democratic distribution of agricultural land and the means of production, the small farm’s demise is a tragedy. The CSA movement stands as a wedge between the forces of economic centralization and the interests of community self-reliance and represents an attempt to halt the disintegration
of the agrarian economy and the rural environment. As Jered Lawson, advocate and CSA practitioner, observes:

The driving force in agricultural change has been, and will likely continue to be, that the people in power around the agricultural sectors of the economy will want to continue to push toward the centralization and globalization of farm commodities. In contrast, CSA is steadily creating a new constituency of active citizens who are trying to re-democratize the food system through the CSA partnership (quoted in Groh and McFadden, 1997: 86).

German agronomist Trauger Groh stands at the forefront of North America’s CSA movement. He is co-author, along with independent journalist Steven McFadden, of the widely successful Farms of Tomorrow Revisited: Community Supported Farms — Farm Supported Communities (2nd ed., 1997), a book that has come to be regarded as the essential manual and blueprint for the CSA movement. Since 1986, Groh has actively participated in the formation and ongoing maintenance of one of the two original North American CSAs, The Temple-Wilton Community Farm (which we shall look at in some detail later). He thus brings considerable experience to bear when he observes:

Immense social, economic, and legal obstacles lie in the way of structuring our farms in new ways, and restructuring generally and specifically our relation to this earth. However, those who examine the situation will recognize that the crisis of our food includes deteriorating quality as well as insufficient availability for many millions of humans. Realizing this crisis, and the general degeneration of our natural environment, and seeing also the education crisis and the moral insanity of our time, we have not much choice. We must re-establish our relationship to the basic sources of our livelihood; we can do this best through helping to create the farms of tomorrow and bringing ourselves into a new relationship to them (ibid., 31).

While there exists many variations within and between individual CSAs, one thing they all share is the common identity of a “joint venture” between local consumers and a local farmer
to produce food in a manner that is outside of the bounds of industrial agriculture. In most cases, the consumers purchase “shares” early in the year, and become “shareholders” in the upcoming harvest. Different sizes of shares are typically available so anyone, from the single individual to the large family, can participate. The farm’s supporting community of shareholders, accordingly, provides the farmer with the operating capital (interest-free) necessary for the upcoming year as well as a ready market for all he or she can produce. In turn, the farmer provides the skill and the land, and the community as a whole benefits by obtaining access to wholesome, organic food normally at a cost below chain supermarkets, and they help ensure the continued survival of a local farmer and their retention of a measure of self-reliance. Together, farmer and shareholders assume the risks of a poor harvest, a prospect that often enough will once-and-for-all kill the small farmer, but they also share in the benefits of bumper harvests as well (Kittredge, 1996).

The cost of shares varies, but is typically in the neighbourhood of US$500 to US$900 per year, for which the shareholder will receive around a bushel of produce a week for 30 to 35 weeks, and sometimes longer depending upon the area’s growing conditions or the farmer’s ability to cold-store surplus produce. Often, the quantity received per week is enough to provide a family of four with half of their weekly food requirements. Most CSAs concentrate on growing vegetables and fruit as their primary products. Some will add herbs, fresh flowers, eggs, butter, honey, bread, jams, vinegars, and other farm-processed foods to their offerings, again depending upon the area in which the farm is located, or the resources it has at hand. The typical community supported farm is around five to ten acres in size, although they are as large as 100 acres supporting 700 families, and supports around 75 families with as much as half of
their yearly food requirements, at a cost well below agribusiness supplied supermarkets and at a level of quality scarcely available anymore. Needless to say, community farms seldom go begging for takers; long waiting lists are today more the norm and only the shortage of available, or affordable, land holds back the movement (ibid., 1996).

Many CSAs go beyond encouraging a degree of community self-reliance between local farmers and local consumers. They also instill a greater sense of community in many other ways: through regular meetings to plan for the upcoming season or to take care of budgetary concerns; weekly get-togethers between shareholders to pick-up that week's share; participation by members at planting or harvest time; popular "u-pick" crops, such as strawberries and raspberries, that bring together many of the shareholders; the active participation of shareholders' children in daily farm tasks; and regular festivals to celebrate the harvest just past, or the one upcoming.

Beyond the obvious benefits of enhanced community and increased self-reliance, Trauger Groh perceives three other main benefits provided by the community supported farm. In his words:

When we speak about the need for healthy farm organisms, we think first of our food supply and then we think of the farm as part of our natural world, shaping the environment in positive or negative ways. Rarely do we have in mind the great contribution that living on farms and working in nature gives to our inner soul development and to the shaping of our social faculties. Yet all these considerations are essential elements of agriculture, and of the farms of tomorrow (Groh and McFadden, 1997: 3).

The first main benefit is healthy food, or clean food, clean meaning free of any synthetic substances that may have been added during growing, processing, or preserving. Most of the
food available to people today is saturated with toxic chemicals, whether preservatives, insecticides, fungicides, herbicides, synthetic colours, or artificial hormones and antibiotics. And much of this food, while mildly to strongly toxic to the human body, also lacks significant food value. Industrial agriculture is less concerned over producing food rich in nutritional value as it is in producing food that is uniform in size, colour and shape, and is readily transportable over great distances without spoiling. All too often, only a few varieties of fruits and vegetables, often heavily hybridized, meet these requirements, typically to the sacrifice of nutritional content and diversity of choice.

Community supported farms, in contrast, concentrate on producing food of the highest nutritional content, starting with an emphasis on organic farming techniques. These farms are also able to grow a much broader range of produce, including dozens of varieties deemed unsuitable by industrial agriculture and all but lost to the modern palate. And produce that is allowed to naturally ripen and is consumed immediately after picking can contain as much as ten times the nutritional value as produce picked prematurely, allowed to ripen (because it has been hybridized to do so) during shipping, and consumed weeks or even months after it was picked. As Groh puts it, “The profit motivation does not lead to quality food production.” He continues:

Nearly all manipulation with food — additives, radiation, and conservation methods — serve not the purpose of quality, but rather the purpose of distribution over long distances, shelf-life, and a pleasing appearance. Contrary to what might be right for many industrial products, the production, processing, distribution, and consumption of food favors quality when it is done locally. At the same time, this is the most economic approach to food because it saves transportation and preservation costs. The community supported farm systems of the future will proceed in this way, that is, producing for the local community, which includes the
closest cities. Here households will connect themselves with local farms directly or via trusted agents so that they can support a system of production that aims primarily at quality rather than profit (ibid., 5,6).

A second important benefit of CSA is the preservation of a healthy environment, something that is not possible so long as agricultural activity is concentrated in the hands of input-intensive agribusinesses. Under their control, modern industrial agriculture, at the cumulative level, has become the single most environmentally destructive of all human endeavours short of all-out war. Says Groh, “we can see contemporary industrial farms as one of the great destroyers of the environment. The vast ground water pollution of our days, the extreme poison of topsoil, these are just some of the consequences of modern, profit-oriented farm systems” (ibid., 6).

As detailed by Steven McFadden, the list of environmental abuses directly attributable to industrial agriculture is very lengthy. For example, according to the World Resources Institute, since World War II, more than three billion acres of land (an area the size of China and India combined) has been severely degraded mostly due to chemical fertilization, high-tech cultivation techniques, and livestock overgrazing. Meanwhile, every year, corporate farms apply to croplands an estimated 850 million pounds of pesticides and herbicides, along with 22 billion pounds of petrochemical-based fertilizer, much of which poisons water supplies, toxifies the soil, embeds and bio-magnifies in the food chain, and renders the food we eat harmful to our health. As of 1996, according to the *Food & Water Journal*, every year sees an average of 10,000 pesticide-related cancer deaths in the U.S. alone (ibid., 61-63).

Industrial agriculture is also responsible for the rapid depletion of the world’s topsoil, at an estimated rate ten times greater than its reformation. The world’s freshwater supplies are being
depleted faster than their replenishment everywhere industrial agriculture has taken hold. And industrial agriculture, with its emphasis on mono-cultural plantations and a very narrow use of (often laboratory created) plant varieties is contributing to the wholesale loss of bio-diversity and has in many cases arrested the natural, evolutionary development of natural seed varieties that occurred through their repeated use. In many cases, especially with grains and rice, a tiny handful of “green revolution” inspired varieties, those designed to work only with chemical inputs, has replaced the hundreds or even thousands of varieties developed by local farmers over centuries of cultivation (ibid., 61-63).

Community supported farms, as vociferously opposed to industrial agriculture, seek instead to: protect the soil against intensive use, erosion, and from the poisonous effects of chemical inputs; protect the water from pollution, from depletion, and from siltation due to soil erosion; protect the air from poisonous emissions; protect natural plants and wild animals from decimation or extinction due to the encroachments of unsustainable “mega-farms”; protect the many thousands of laboriously cultivated plants and domesticated animals from degeneration and exploitative management, especially bio-engineering; and protect the landscape from the monotony and sterility associated with industrial agriculture (ibid., 6,7).

Community supported farms preserve environmental health in other ways as well. They go a long way to reduce the massive waste stream associated with modern food production. Agribusiness produced food, for example, travels an average of 2200 kilometers before finally reaching the dinner table. In comparison, the farthest a CSA product has ever traveled is estimated at no more than a few hundred kilometers, and is usually no more than a few. Normally, CSA produce goes from harvest to table packaged in reusable bags or cartons, which
thereby eliminates the thousands of tons of cans, bottles, foil envelopes, aluminum and styrofoam trays, plastic wrap, and glossy packages that go to land-fill each year. And in the industrial farm system, fully one-quarter of the food produced never makes it to the table due to spoilage during transportation or in the grocer’s bins. CSAs produce very little waste, as the produce is harvested then immediately delivered or picked up. And anything that does spoil, instead of disappearing into the black hole of a landfill, is put right back into the farm as animal feed, or composted into fertilizer (Imhoff, 1996: 429).

Groh’s third important benefit of community supported farms concerns nothing less than the “education of humanity.” The list of educational virtues associated with community farming is lengthy, virtues all but completely lost in a world dominated by mass industry. Today’s child is more apt to believe their milk comes from the supermarket, and is made in the same way their soda pop is, rather than believe it came from something as strange as a living, breathing animal. The task of tomorrow’s farms is to reverse the trend toward a society completely removed from the land, and completely ignorant of natural processes. “That task,” according to Groh, “is the education of humanity through active work in nature, specifically nature that is formed into healthy, self-supporting, ecologically sound farm organisms” (Groh and McFadden, 1997: 7).

As opposed to the ignorance or irreverence toward natural processes living in an urban environment tends to produce, community farms of tomorrow will help restore reverence and raise awareness. From this will grow a renewed appreciation concerning the natural daily and seasonal rhythms of life, in contrast to the bland, rhythm-less reality common to the city. And from the farm there comes a greater humility, a readiness to do what needs doing without complaint — feeding and cleaning the animals, caring for and harvesting the crops, or tackling
any of the numerous tasks important to the daily operation of a farm. The demands of the farm are tangible, are embedded within a meaningful context, and are hence often more satisfying and pleasurable than many of the demands modern living places on people, and especially on children.

The community farm of tomorrow teaches a deep feeling for the self-evident fact that you cannot harvest what you have not planted. To receive, it is first necessary to give. The farm teaches a reverence for natural processes, teaches the understanding that in reality it is nature that produces on the farm, not the farmer. In order to work at its best, farming is a cooperative venture between an appropriately reverent farmer and the natural processes of the earth. The farm teaches an appreciation of continuity, between past generations and the present, and between the present generation and those still to come. Clearing land, draining the swamp, picking out stones, planting trees, all go toward benefitting the future as much if not more than the present. But, at its best, the farm of tomorrow teaches, according to Groh:

A modest lifestyle adapted to what nature locally, with the help of farmers, can give. When we are in touch with the capacities and limitations of nature, this awareness spills over into other dimensions of life and helps establish balance. By contrast, in the United States where relatively few people are in contact with farms or nature, there is a feeling that everything is possible if there is enough money. The result of this attitude is a nation that consumes 50 percent [sic, the real figure is about 35 percent] of the world's resources, and is choking on its own waste as the landfills overflow. The farms of tomorrow can naturally instruct humanity in a lifestyle that is not only more modest, but also more satisfying (ibid., 8).

While the community supported farm seeks to teach others, to lead by example, about the virtues of community co-operation, relative self-reliance, voluntary simplicity, and a reverence for the natural, it also stands as a beacon of alternative economics. Explains Groh:
the community farm movement embodies elements of a new associative economy that is fundamentally different from the ruling market economy. Associative economy means that all participants in the economic process try to listen to the needs of all other partners in the process. The active farmers listen to the needs of the member families. The member families listen to the needs of the farmers. One community farm associated with the other community farms in a bioregion listens to the needs of the others. On this basis they proceed (ibid., 34).

Groh observes that the ruling market economy is driven by self-interest at every turn. Under the current system, producers attempt to produce at the lowest possible cost, and try to sell at the highest possible price, regardless of the real needs of their customers. Nor is the source of their livelihood given any regard, beyond being a simple means to the end of increased wealth; agricultural land is regarded for what it can produce, not for what it needs to remain healthy. Presumably, according to ruling market ideology, if each individual ruthlessly pursues their self-interest, the greatest good and the optimal allocation of resources shall result. Through a single-minded pursuit of maximum gain, I will pay the least possible to my suppliers for goods bought, and I will obtain the most possible for goods sold. In this way, the market mechanism of supply and demand will ensure there exists an optimal allocational balance between the activities of buyers and sellers.

However, in the real world, market relations are seldom so tidy and clear-cut. Many abuses of market mechanisms instead exist, such as the use of coercion and persuasion by the powerful against the less powerful, the co-optation of governments and regulatory bodies by the powerful to further their narrow interests, the monopolization of markets to circumvent supply and demand, the seeking of gain by disregarding workers or the environment, the stimulation of artificial demand and useless consumption vis-a-vis a mass media devoted to this end, and so
Those who practice associative economics reproach the failings of the ruling market economy by practicing the opposite: instead of competing against, they associate and co-operate with. Instead of overwhelming or overcoming the buyer or seller, and thereby obtaining the best return, they strive to learn the real needs of their partners, and seek out the best ways to meet those needs. Rather than starting from self-interest as the point of departure for economic behaviour, they take from the needs of their partners the motivation for economic action. To engage in business, according to associative economics, is to seek the win-win situation wherein all parties involved have their needs recognized and fulfilled. As such, associative economics emphasizes mutual aid, trust in human goodness, and the belief that these practices, rather than the aggressive individualism associated with the dominant economy, will lead to the greatest welfare of all involved. Associative economics recognizes that the health of one's partners is vital to one's own health; one cannot thrive if their partner fails to survive.

As Groh says, in keeping with the challenge the social movement normally presents mainstream society, "Associative economy is a complete contradiction of the ideology of the market economy as it is sold today as the all-healing method for the woes of humanity. By developing associative practices in the community farm movement we introduce a new, important and necessary element to the whole economy." Groh continues, in contrast to the dominant economy, "This attitude — putting people at the heart of one's efforts — is the basis of the associative economy" (ibid., 35).

A quick, mental inventory of the values associated with modern life, and especially as with globalization, reveals just how fundamentally the values and benefits of the CSA movement
stand in contrast. The CSA movement builds back into lived reality a sense of place, of permanence, of community as borne from shared necessity, to replace the loss of community and the general ambiguity of place that characterizes the modern city. It seeks to cast off the shackles of dependency and strives for greater community self-reliance, while stressing the value of simplicity and frugality; values as opposed to the culture of consumption as are possible to find. And the movement regards the earth, and all of its natural processes, with a renewed sense of reverence, a reverence necessary to protect the environment from further damage and even to begin to repair some of the damage inflicted through the rapacious arrogance and profound irreverence of mass industry. In these ways, and in many others, the CSA movement stands completely at odds with the defining or guiding logic of the modern industrialized world.

For an example of the alternative values and goals of the CSA movement in practice, we turn now to an examination of The Temple-Wilton Community Farm. From its inception, the founders of The Community Farm, as it is more commonly known, have striven to cast it as a model that other farms and communities would do well to study. To live and lead by example is an important value held by many community farmers; those associated with The Community Farm are no exception. As Community Farm apprentice Martin Novom explains it, “our goal is not just to raise food, but also to raise consciousness... We don’t have all the answers, but we do have some of the questions. How are we going to continue to have sustainable farming? How do we save not just the soil, but also the farmer? Corporate agriculture is not the answer” (ibid., 105).

The dream of Temple-Wilton Community Farm began to take shape in January of 1986,
when Trauger Groh, recently arrived in Wilton, New Hampshire from a community farm in Germany, met up with farmer Lincoln Geiger and several other families who together shared an interest in community farming. Interest in the concept was keen, and after overcoming many social, economic, and legal impediments, Groh, Geiger, and 35 families managed to pool their resources, and create a community land base suitable for farming. As Geiger explains it, “many people don’t want to use the land they have, but they would like to see it farmed. They make their land available so that farmers without land can care for it in their name. Under such an arrangement no one gets rich, but then again, no one goes hungry” (ibid., 106).

The families involved were so to varying degrees: most continued their lives much as before, but with a renewed interest in their local community and fellow members by supporting The Community Farm financially and in shared decision-making. Several of the families had provided land, without which the project would have failed, and there is always at least three or four apprentices from the community serving on The Community Farm at any given time.

At the start of the first growing season in 1987, Groh and Geiger estimated their upcoming years’ expenses in detail, including the costs of seeds, salaries, tractor repairs, diesel fuel, bailing twine, and so forth, and presented the budget to all of the families of the farm. It was left to them to work out among themselves how much each family would contribute, on the basis of what was thought affordable and appropriate given individual factors such as income, family size, or prior contribution. Together, the families pledged US$51,500, just shy of the US$53,000 budget submitted. However, this gave The Community Farm the start it needed: community support, available land, an assured market, and no need to take out an expensive operating loan.
To create a land base for their community enterprise, a land trust (a strategy detailed later) was formed that combined 200 acres total of forest, pasture, and field as drawn from three independently owned farms: Echo Farms in Temple, The Temple Road Farm in West Wilton, and Plowshares Farm in Greenfield. Together, they are The Temple-Wilton Community Farm. A fourth farm, The Four Corners Farm, joined subsequently to provide grazing land for cattle. The membership has also expanded, from the 35 original families in 1987 to 110 (the maximum the farm can sustain) families as of 1997, with the average family share settling to US$90 per month. According to Anthony Graham, present manager of vegetable production and the farm store:

What has happened through the 1990s is a period of steady growth. We went very quickly from thirty-five members our first year to fifty the second, then to sixty-five and on into the eighties. Since then we have grown in steady increments to 110 member households. The limiting factor for us has not been the desire to grow more food to feed more people, not a lack of people wanting to join (we always have a waiting list), but rather the amount of land we have (ibid., 114).

Interestingly, The Community Farm has no more land under cultivation than it did in 1990: just five acres, with another 60 acres given to pasture for thirty head of cattle, and extra space here and there for some laying hens, a flock of sheep, a few goats, and several pigs, geese, and ducks. The animals are raised less for their meat, and more for the provision of fresh milk, cheese, yoghurt, butter, and eggs and for their contribution to the farm’s organic vitality via their natural fertilizer. Older animals are, however, occasionally and humanely slaughtered for their meat. Altogether, The Community Farm produces a wide variety of products: carrots, beets, onions, parsnips, rutabagas, turnips, lettuce, spinach, chard, Oriental greens, kale, cabbage, broccoli, cauliflower, leeks, celery, tomatoes, peppers, potatoes, squashes, apples, cider,
blueberries, flowers, herbs, along with the animal products mentioned above. They also barter with another New England community farm for grain.

All the goods are available to the farm members in the farm store, which is stocked twice a week year round with products from the farm. Anything that is storable long-term goes into the root cellar — carrots, beets, parsnips, turnips, rutabagas, celery, potatoes, onions and cabbages — to provide families with produce throughout the year. Milk, yoghurt, butter, cream cheese, and eggs are also available year round, as is bread baked fresh by one of the farm families (the Plowshare Bakery). The supporting families are free to visit as they wish and take what they need. Remarkably, there is always enough to go around — no one abuses the privilege — with each family obtaining as much as half of their weekly food requirements from The Community Farm. Comparative calculations done by The Community Farm, as against the prices for a similar range and quantity of goods from the local supermarket or natural foods store, consistently places them under, by as much as 25 percent.

The aims and guiding principles that define The Temple-Wilton Community Farm are also worth considering. At its inception, Groh, Geiger, and the original families set out their intentions, defined their underlying concepts, and generated three aims and seven principles of co-operation that together would guide their actions. “The community farm... was born out of their intention to unite their efforts and their land into one organism in order to serve the local community with biodynamically grown food” (ibid., 107,108).

They established the following concepts: “Landholders” who have given the members of The Community Farm the right of agricultural use of all their land, farm buildings, farm animals, and farm machinery, with the exception of their homes and personal gardens. The right is given free
of charge, except for due compensation made for all costs of the property: land taxes, depreciation, insurance, and repairs. And “Farmers,” who have assumed the right of use of the above-mentioned property, carry the obligation to use the property sustainably and responsibly. All members of the community, as shareholders in The Community Farm, become farmers. They either enact their right directly, by actually planning and doing the farm work, or by empowering those who have the time and skills to farm in their name. Those members who do the actual farming, whether principally or as apprentices, are called “Active Farmers.” All members are equally responsible for the proper disposition of the farm’s resources, a condition that ensures a general level of interest and involvement.

The Aims of The Community Farm cut across three dimensions: spiritual, legal, and economic. Spiritually, The Community Farm aims to do the following:

To make life on Earth possible ever again and every year anew in such a way that both the individual and humankind at large can live towards their spiritual destiny. To make the land use and working of the land a way of self-education in the sense that a better understanding of nature can lead to a better understanding of humankind. To create the farm organism in a way that the above becomes possible and that it is made available in a therapeutic way to those who suffer from damages created by civilization and from other handicaps that need special care (ibid., 108).

The Community Farm’s legal aims are to make access to farm land free for as many people as possible, while creating forms of cooperation that exclude direct employment and any form of “wage-slavery.” Roles that require an inequitable distribution of power, such as between employer and employee, are to be avoided. And The Community Farm’s economic aims include the desire to develop a natural farm organism that would, if properly nurtured, reproduce itself better and better and become more diversified so to provide the community with a reliable
source of primary food into perpetuity. This would be done biodynamically, with the help of the forces of nature intrinsic to the “farm organism” along with considerable human attention paid to these forces, so that it would be less and less necessary to introduce into the farm organism substances and energy from outside. And, finally, individual profit through farming is not an economic aim. In short, The Community Farm is seeking the widest distribution of the means for self-sufficiency and sustainability.

The members of The Community Farm agreed on seven principles of co-operation: i) everyone is individually fully responsible for his or her actions and their consequences. If he or she intends to act in a way that may affect the farm or other members, he or she must in timely fashion declare his or her intentions; ii) if the individual is to incur expenses for his or her initiatives, approval from the others must be sought; iii) every farmer who spends money must keep books and records of such expenditures, and is accountable to the community for their spending; iv) any farmer may leave whenever they wish, so long as they have paid their part of the annual cost; v) every farmer gives to all other farmers the right to substitute for him or her if tasks undertaken are not completed; vi) it is understood that the goal is to minimize the amount of goods and services that are brought into the farm from outside. The least desirable thing purchased from outside is human labour; and vii) all farmers agree to take care that they spend enough time on observation, planning, and communication.

Under these arrangements and according to their seven principles of co-operation The Community Farm has not merely survived, it has thrived. A few major setbacks have befallen the farm, all of which they were able to take in stride. In 1988, a drought severely affected that year’s harvest, leaving barely enough to make it through the winter until the next harvest. Many
of the shareholders, while theoretically committed to the farm through thick and thin, withdrew their support, leaving the farm deeply in the red. At the same time, in October of 1988, the members of the community faced the loss to fire of a newly built school. With the school disaster and the poor harvest in the back of their minds, the membership of the farm came up US$13,000 short on the US$68,000 budget requirement. But The Community Farm muddled through by closing ranks and worked together to overcome the crisis.

Later, in 1994, the farm faced another crisis when one of the participating landholders abruptly decided to withdraw from the arrangement, prompting the loss of fields that had been biodynamically worked for 15 years and causing much relocation anxiety. These fields, that had been worked biodynamically to a high level of sustainable productivity, represented an enormous investment of time and energy and were consequently a great loss to the farm.

The Temple-Wilton Community Farm, along with many other CSAs, has chosen to practice bio-dynamic agriculture. Biodynamic farming, as devoutly a post-materialist practice as is possible to find, goes one step beyond organic farming and regards the farm as an organism complete with its own natural rhythms, cycles, and processes that, if learnt properly and attuned to, will result in the greatest use of the land into perpetuity. Biodynamic farming does not allow intensive inputs from outside, especially synthetic or chemical, and relies instead on what is locally produced. For example, fertilizer from the farm's own organic matter, manure from the farm's livestock population, and herbal preparations also derived from the farm, are all carefully blended together and then mixed into the farm's soil. Insects or disease usually indicate some aspect of the farm is out of balance. Once the balance is restored, typically the insects or diseases disappear, or lose their effect against healthy plants grown in healthy soil. A cardinal
rule of biodynamic farming is to never take from the farm more than is given back.

Biodynamic farming is, at its core, a spiritual connection with the land. The biodynamic farmer does not perceive his or her consciousness as exactly separate from the life-forces and processes that make-up the environment. In the terms of spiritual idealism, the universe is perceived as being both consciousness and the manifestation of consciousness. Ultimately, consciousness does not proceed from matter, as the Western philosophy of materialism holds, but instead matter proceeds from consciousness, which can take infinite forms and exist on innumerable levels. The farmer seeks to learn the farm's nature — its greater consciousness — so he or she may, in effect, merge his or her consciousness with the land. In effect, the farmer's consciousness becomes a current or eddy within a greater body of consciousness that is the land flowing within a still greater body that is the bioregion, and so on ad infinitum. The biodynamic farmer develops a very close and intimate familiarity with the farmland so that he or she may literally feel what the land needs. The farmer will, in Gaian terms, approach the farm as a homeostatic organism, capable of self-regulation or astonishing growth. Approached thusly, a small piece of farmland can possess amazing generative and re-generative potential.

As flaky or New Age the concept of biodynamic farming may sound to those steeped in Western orthodoxy, it does possess many adherents within the CSA movement and many if not most community farms practice it to some level. Biodynamic farming has a long history of successful use in Asia and India, and is quite compatible with many eastern religions, Taoism and Buddhism in particular. Those who use it swear by it for its amazing productivity.

The often stunning productivity of biodynamic farming goes a long way to explain why The
Temple-Wilton Community Farm has attracted so much attention. Literally thousands of visitors have come to The Community Farm since its beginning in 1987, both to see community farming in action, and to witness biodynamic farming for themselves. Trauger Groh, in response to the interest in community farming and biodynamic techniques, has formed two associations, The Biodynamic Farmers of the Northeast and the Biodynamic Association of America. Groh is well known in the international agricultural community and is in constant demand as a lecturer here and abroad. In particular, there has been considerable interest paid his work from people in Russia, South Korea, and Japan.

Members of The Community Farm, on the basis of the interest paid their endeavour and the rapid proliferation of similar operations, see great potential ahead for the CSA movement. Says Anthony Graham:

As far as the larger context of CSA goes, I would say that we are reaching more and more people. Over time folks move on from this community to live elsewhere, and they carry the message and sometimes the initiative and the will to start other CSAs. The whole thing is poised at a point where it can really grow, especially as people become alarmed at the growing mergers and alliances between seed and chemical producers. As more people become aware, they will turn toward CSA for sustenance (quoted in ibid., 117).

Lincoln Geiger also feels strongly about the potential of the CSA movement:

I realize that the CSA movement is growing very quickly. It’s an idea of a reality that is very attainable today. Right now as far as the potential of CSA goes, I think the sky’s the limit. There are many people wanting food, and there are many people wanting to grow food. CSA is a great medium to do that, for people to meet, both from the farmer’s and the consumer’s side. We have lost our way with nature, being a very urbanized culture. CSA makes a clear linkage back to nature for many people. You have some connection, some roots set down where the food comes from. It means a lot (quoted in ibid., 118).
As Trauger Groh points out, given the rapidly growing interest in CSA, the only real barrier facing the movement is access to land. The Community Land Trust (CLT) movement has arisen in part to meet this need, a movement we shall examine shortly. In the meantime, as an indication of the growing maturity of the CSA movement, several of its variations and innovations will be examined next.

Community farm coalitions are beginning to form, and such co-operative arrangements, considered the “next level” of CSA, are central to transforming regional food systems and to the success of the CSA movement as a whole. According to Marcia Ostrom, Ph.D. candidate in Environmental Studies at the University of Wisconsin and an active advocate of the CSA concept:

Collaboration at the farm-to-farm level enables community supported farms to develop and exchange practical knowledge and information with each other, coordinate public outreach, pool material resources, and develop support systems for new or struggling farmers. This is also an important arena in which various perspectives, values, ideas and philosophies about CSA can be presented and negotiated, resulting in the creation of larger shared visions and new ideas for bringing about social change (Ostrom, 1997: 87).

Coalition building within a “segmented, reticular, and multi-faceted” social movement is an important sign of a movement’s growing maturity, and a portent of its ability to affect social change. A fully mobilized movement can have a significant impact on the dominant culture; witness the successes of the feminist and environmental movements. Says Ostrom, “Only by cultivating coalitions with one another and with other types of farms and community organizations, can community supported farms begin to develop the kinds of support structures which offer a foundation for creating and sustaining a new form of agriculture” (ibid., 87).
To date, two coalitions have emerged to play an important leadership role in the movement, particularly in the American Upper Midwest where CSA is particularly well advanced. Formed in 1992, the Madison Area Community Supported Agriculture Coalition (MACSAC) includes sixteen community supported farms and serves as an informational clearing-house and mobilizational agent for Wisconsin-based community activists, aspiring CSA farmers, and other interested parties. The second coalition is The Minnesota-Western Wisconsin Community Farm Association (MWCFA), founded in 1993, and currently supporting twenty-six CSAs along with a host of interested parties.

Both coalitions have been particularly active with public outreach and have sponsored a wide variety of events about CSA targeted at the general public to provide information and gather support. General interest lectures, open-houses, study circles, organic food fairs, and even cooking classes have all been used to increase public awareness. The coalitions have also been active in CSA-based outreach programs throughout the Midwest and even into other areas of North America, in an attempt to share knowledge and information among CSAs still struggling to survive, or to encourage other farms and communities to give the concept a try.

By increasing the general awareness among other CSAs that they are not alone and have places to go when help is needed, the sense of isolation that pervaded the movement in the early years is dispelled while the potential for the movement as a whole is greatly strengthened.

With respect to the considerable variation there exists within the CSA movement, Charles Beedy, Executive Director of the Biodynamics Association, points out:

the CSA movement is the vehicle which allows the greatest number of people to associate themselves with agriculture. Shareholders come from a wide range of ages, and races, occupations, and economic brackets. In
that sense, CSA is the epitome of democracy. We are still at the beginning of the exploration and discovery of the many forms that this movement can assume in expressing itself in both economic and social terms... CSA continues to be a movement which resists a single definition. No 'how to' book can narrowly define what it is, or what it can be. It meets various people's needs. It can work in urban situations, or even in rural situations where you don't have great population density. And yet it can still be a CSA (Groh and McFadden, 1997: 202).

Because, at least ideally, community spirit and radical democracy pervade the CSA, and because each CSA is a carefully designed response against particular circumstances, the variety of CSAs is potentially limitless. One interesting variation is known as "Congregation Supported Agriculture" wherein community farming has taken hold among an already community-minded religious congregation. Churches are an obvious candidate for CSA: beyond the pre-existing congregational community, the church often has access to property suitable for farming, either among its own holdings or in the possession of congregational members, along with access to storage or distribution facilities such as a church hall. And the church may also use the community farm as a means of acquiring food for donation to shelters and food banks, instead of running food drives or sending out a cheque.

The National Catholic Rural Life Conference has surveyed the CSA movement and found that dozens of its congregations and religious communities around North America have taken up community farming. "Deep within the ecological crisis," they write, "is a spiritual crisis, at the heart of which lies the spiritual error of excessive materialism." The Conference goes on to report that many of its Catholic communities are learning how to live within the limits and possibilities peculiar to their place and circumstances. "Several religious congregations have established some kind of land-based center for purposes of education, demonstration, and
outreach... They clearly have a public role beyond that of change agent within the religious order, for they also act as a moral force for just and sustainable living in their regions" (quoted in ibid., 204).

Corporation Supported Agriculture is another variation that has seen a few community farms link up with a business to provide the employees with fresh food. As the workplace is often the closest thing to community many people know today, it appears logical to encourage a company and its employees to support a community farm.

One such example is Patagonia, Inc., a California-based company that manufactures and sells outdoor clothing and sports equipment. It has formed an innovative relationship with Fairfield Gardens, a CSA near Santa Barbara. Every year, Patagonia distributes one percent of its profits among 200 to 300 different grassroots environmental programs, a figure of about US$1.5 million. Fairfield Gardens benefits from a share in this largesse, as well as from the direct participation of many of Patagonia's employees as shareholders in the community farm.

Nonetheless, despite the support from the company, little sense of community has been fostered, with most of the shareholders treating the concept as an innovative marketing strategy providing organic food they would have bought at the local specialty store anyway (ibid., 205,206).

In a fashion similar to Patagonia, several colleges and universities have also become involved in CSAs. Dartmouth College is one notable example, having formed the Dartmouth Organic Farm in Hanover, New Hampshire, three miles from the main campus. The concept of a college-supported CSA originated in an Environmental Studies class in 1991, and was slowly developed until its first year of operation in 1996. The farm provides organic produce for
Dartmouth’s dining service, for the Hanover Inn, and also for the college’s Moosilauke Ravine Lodge. It also provides produce for the college’s staff and student-body that is sold through an on-campus produce stand.

Dartmouth’s community farm was funded with US$30,000 dollars in its first year. By the second year, only US$18,000 was required and in 1999, its third year, it is estimated that only US$8000 will be required. Thereafter, the farm is expected to be self-supporting through revenues from shares, produce sales, and a few outside donations.

Dartmouth has gone a long way to incorporate the farm into its curriculum. In keeping with its long-standing commitment to environmental education and student interest in environmental issues, many students have had the opportunity to involve themselves in the farm’s operation. The college has formed an inter-disciplinary program which lends itself to working with the farm and has, for example, attempted to foster student interest in ecology and natural history through the development of practical gardening skills (ibid., 206,207).

A variety of other CSA arrangements exist. Some have involved themselves with food banks and homeless shelters, sometimes providing the homeless with an opportunity to exchange labour for food and at the same time develop valuable and practical skills that may be transferrable to an urban community plot or rooftop garden project. Other CSAs have incorporated the handicapped into the operation, a co-operative venture that has had excellent results for all those involved. Schools and schoolchildren have similarly been involved in community farms, again to the benefit of all involved. Barter networks are also developing between various CSAs, allowing individual farms to trade for goods they cannot produce, and thereby bringing greater variety to their membership.
Other variations taking hold include neighbourhood gardens in urban centers, usually set-up by the members of a housing co-operative, and run along lines similar to the CSA. The city of Victoria, British Columbia has several lot-size urban gardens underway serving local residents through several farmers’ markets. Other, more hybridized, variations on the CSA theme are developing in urban areas. In Vancouver, British Columbia, for example, there has been a recent flourish of activity and interest in home-delivered organic produce that typically originates from the several small organic farms that ring the city. Four years ago there was one company offering home-delivery of locally grown organic produce. Today, there are 19. The oldest, Organics To You, currently serves 2500 households per week, in a market that is growing by 30 percent per year. The many benefits claimed by the home-delivery operators include the provision of fresh, organic produce at a price comparable to organic foodstores, the support of local, environmentally responsible producers, and the reduction of traffic as one propane-powered delivery van takes the place of hundreds of cars going to and from the grocery stores. The typical $33 basket of unpackaged and unprocessed food, thereby saving the environment from a little more unnecessary waste, contains enough food for half the average family’s weekly food requirements. Several other home-delivery services, such as Small Potatoes, also offer packaged organic foods and beverages, such as locally baked bread, micro-brewery beers, or wines from BC’s wine-producing region.

Finally, on the theme of CSA variations, several community farms have used their established membership base to form buying clubs, enabling the group to make bulk purchases from other farms, local producers, or wholesalers and thereby save 30 to 40 percent on a wide range of regularly used kitchen, household, or small business supplies while supporting preferred
Community Land Trusts

The Community Land Trust (CLT) movement is distinct from the CSA movement, but plays an important and supportive role. As Groh has strongly advocated for many years, land trusts must be developed to democratize the ownership and access to productive land. Indeed, the single greatest impediment blocking the wholesale growth of the CSA movement is the general unavailability of good farmland; most of it is in the holdings of large agribusinesses, or has had its value artificially driven-up due to the activities of land speculators. Or, the farmland has had its productive potential so degraded due to modern industrial agriculture techniques that it has become effectively useless to anyone. As Groh says:

The land has to be liberated out of the insight and actions of citizens who recognize the essential need for ‘free’ land. Specifically, local land suitable for agriculture must be gradually protected by land trusts. To do this, every piece of farmland has to be purchased for the last time, and then, out of the free initiative of local people, be placed into forms of trust that will protect it from ever again being mortgaged or sold for the sake of private profit...
The US has a growing land trust movement. These trusts take land into their legal embrace so that it can serve the two basic needs of humanity — ecologically sound farming systems and affordable, non-speculative housing — in a way that excludes profiteering (ibid., 17).

In 1949, Aldo Leopald wrote his A Sand County Almanac, a work that has endured to become one of the greatest articulations of ecological philosophy ever written. Leopald held a passionate respect for the land and was instrumental in crafting a new land ethic that called for a radical overhauling of the established system of land ownership. Leopald believed that if we are to foster a culture of love and respect for the land, then land would have to be removed from
the marketplace. As Leopold said, "We abuse the land because we regard it as a commodity belonging to us. When we see land as a community to which we belong, we may begin to use it with love and respect" (quoted in Witt and Swann, 1996: 244). Since 1980, a movement to reform land ownership in line with the ideals of Leopald has been taking shape in North America. This is the Community Land Trust movement and it has emerged as an important contributor to the future possibilities for self-reliant communities.

Robert Swann is founder of the Institute for Community Economics and is currently President of the E.F. Schumacher Society. In 1980, he began the transformation of his vision for a radical revision of land ownership into reality by forming The Community Land Trust in the Southern Berkshires, located in the town of South Egremont, Massachusetts. Swann’s CLT was only the second example of this revolutionary land tenure system to form in North America, but the one that would effectively set the ball in motion for the CLT movement. The first was the prototypical New Communities Land Trust in Albany, Georgia, formed in the mid-1960's by Swann and Slater King (a cousin of Martin Luther King, Jr.). The purpose of the New Communities Land Trust was to make available into perpetuity the 5000 acres of farmland held by the trust to African-American farmers otherwise denied secure access to farmland. This first land trust is still in existence but it lacked the influence or power of example possessed by Swann’s second CLT.

Inspired in part by Leopald (it would be hard to find anyone in the CS-R movement not inspired by Leopald), and by the successful employment of the CLT concept he observed in Tanzania, India, and especially Israel, Swann has tirelessly promoted his vision of land reform, a vision that carries with it a distinctly radical democratic air.
The community land trust concept is simple. As defined by Susan Witt (Executive Director of the E.F. Schumacher Society) and Robert Swann:

A community land trust is a not-for-profit organization with membership open to any resident of the geographical region where it is located. Its purpose is to create a democratic institution to hold land and to retain the use-value of the land for the benefit of the community. The effect of a CLT is to provide affordable access to land for housing, farming, small businesses, and civic projects. This effect can be achieved when a significant portion of the land in an area is held by a CLT (1996: 246).

From Swann's original two CLTs as of 1980, the movement had grown to approximately 65 trusts in the U.S. by the late 1980's, and to 120 by the early 1990's. Current figures are unavailable but from all accounts, the number of CLTs today is more than double the early 1990's figure (Groh and McFadden, 1997: 234). For example, Witt and Swann estimate that, as of 1996, there are "hundreds of community land trusts... now operational, with many others in the planning stage" (1996: 246). Overall, those associated closely with the CLT movement indicate a strong and rapidly growing interest in radical land reform, so much so that the growth of interest has swamped the resources of the few organizations devoted to the cause: The Trust for Public Land out of San Francisco, The American Farmland Trust out of Washington, DC, Robert Swann's Institute for Community Economics, or Trauger Groh's Cadmus Corporation, along with a handful of others.

Once established, the CLT system has also enjoyed considerable success in Tanzania, India, and especially Israel, where 95 percent of the total land available is held by a CLT, the Jewish National Fund. The JNF has a century-long history of leasing land to individuals, co-operatives, and to intentional communities such as kibbutzim (Witt and Swann, 1996: 246). It is expected that, given time, and given the strong and daily growing interest that already exists, the CLT
land tenure system will become a powerful presence in North America — and an especially powerful ally for all manner of community self-reliance initiatives, not just CSAs.

In operation, the typical CLT acquires land by gift or outright purchase and then develops a comprehensive land-use plan for each parcel acquired. In association with residents of the region, the CLT identifies which portions of the land should remain forever wild, and which portions should support low-impact development that might include recreational space, managed woodlots for local industry, secure farmlands for the region, affordable housing for low-income residents, or affordable office space for community friendly businesses or non-profits. Overall, the guiding rationale of the CLT is to foster healthy ecosystems, community self-reliance, and an appropriate social use of the land (ibid., 247).

Once the CLT and the residents of the region have established a compatible and sustainable mix of land-uses — conservation, recreation, housing, farming, and regionally-based, small-scale industries — the land is made available for lease to interested parties, but only for the purposes generally agreed upon. The lease, which typically runs 99 years, is inheritable and automatically renewable, so long as the use of the land has remained within the original (or re-negotiated) terms. The leaseholder owns the buildings and any improvements to the land, but not the land itself. If the leaseholder wishes to sell his or her interest (usually only after a minimum period of five or six years has elapsed since taking on the lease), he or she may do so but is restricted to selling their buildings and improvements, and at current replacement cost only. Speculation and profiteering is explicitly disallowed. As Witt and Swann note:

The resale restriction ensures that the land will never again be capitalized and will provide affordable access to land for future generations. The land-use plans ensure that the resource base is
maintained and enriched, not depleted. Thus, the community land trust lease is a tool for meeting social and ecological objectives... This means holding land not only to protect it from overdevelopment but also to guarantee that the best land is preserved as farmland and that ecologically sensitive areas are not destroyed in the rush to develop (ibid., 247).

One especially important side-effect of CLTs is the freeing up of valuable investment capital by allowing a region to untie its capital from the land. According to Witt and Swann:

When a region unties its capital from the land, it creates new investment capital. That capital in turn can activate the imaginative and entrepreneurial skills of the community, generating new local businesses that will produce goods and services once imported from other regions... [CLTs defuse] the ever-present possibility of selling land at a big gain and then leaving the area [which tends to] erode the commitment to community and place that is the last safeguard of our shared inheritance: the rivers, lakes, fields, forests, and wild lands. The CLT concept... offers a practiced way to take land off the market and place it in a system of trusteeship on a region-by-region basis (ibid., 245).

In sum, the CLT movement is a particularly important and versatile movement within the greater CS-R movement. CLTs lend themselves to a broad range of community self-reliance initiatives, such as the co-housing and intentional communities movements examined in the following chapter, and have been particularly instrumental in enabling CSAs to gain and maintain access to scare farmland. These two CS-R movements, CLTs and CSAs, will likely continue to grow together, each supporting the other in mutually beneficial manners. While many existing CLTs have enabled the formation of a CSA or two, so too have many CSAs, newly in possession of diverse land holdings, aided in the formation or expansion of a CLT. The Temple-Wilton Community Farm has given over its 200 acre holding to the safekeeping of a CLT, which has then been able to ensure the conservation of ecologically sensitive parts of the
holding, and the freeing up of another small portion for the provision of low-income housing.

Many of the key defining characteristics of the CS-R movement are present in CLTs. Not only do CLTs profoundly challenge and subvert the ruling logic of globalization — particularly its penchant for the commodification of anything and everything — they also place localized control over resources as paramount; the very essence of community self-reliance. CLTs, as do CSAs, clearly exhibit a complete withdrawal from the imperatives of infinite growth economics, seeking instead the qualitative development of sustainable land-use practices. The attention to ecological integrity is apparent within CLTs, as is the interest in upholding a democratic framework in deciding on appropriate land uses. Post-material values are a little less obvious, but insofar as capital untied from the land can go toward human development, say in the form of a greater, community-wide emphasis on education, the arts, civic projects, or spiritual development, post-material values are evident as an important aspect of the CLT movement.

In this chapter, we have examined two of the more important strains of community self-reliance, Community Supported Agriculture and Community Land Trusts. Both recognize that control over land and food is absolutely essential to the maintenance of relative self-reliance, and for the strengthening of the shared bonds of necessity that help to make community possible. In the next chapter we will examine the community self-reliance movement from the perspective of the “home” as a search for ways in which we may organize “where we live” to improve both our sense of community and our means for improved self-reliance. This aspect of the CS-R movement is represented best by the Intentional Community movement.
Chapter Eight

Re-making Home

Intentional Communities

The Intentional Community movement is, much like the CED movement, a particularly internally diverse movement that befits Melucci’s definition of a NSM — segmented, reticular, and multi-faceted. Of all the individual movements that comprise the community self-reliance movement, the intentional community movement is perhaps the exemplar. Of all the movements, it is the one most devoted to the highest realization of community in a world of atomized individuals, and to self-reliance in a world of profound dependency upon centralized political, economic, and socio-cultural institutions. Unlike the other CS-R movements examined in this study, the multi-faceted CED movement in Chapter Six, the devoutly anti-agribusiness CSA movement and the radical land reform CLT movement described in the last chapter, and the radically democratic alternative polity in the following chapter, intentional communities possess the lowest level of articulated opposition against globalization or economic consolidation. However, their strong example of community self-reliance via their courageous devotion to leading and living by example, tends to make up for their silence. In this respect, the intentional community movement is elevated to the status of one of the most potent
community self-reliance movements under the CS-R banner.

Intentional communities are very flexible creatures, unafraid to borrow strategies and techniques from other social movements and from a rich history of alternative communities that have come and gone, or that still flourish today. The Amish as much as the utopian Oneidas, the Israeli kibbutzes, or the Mormons have informed the development of many intentional communities. As well, deeply pervading many intentional communities is a strong spirituality as drawn from the New Age movement, or a deep religious sensibility as drawn from many traditional Christian or Eastern bodies of thought. Most intentional communities convey a profound sense of reverence for the earth, and in this way frequently blend into the environmentalist movement. Other communities are motivated by an overriding sense of social justice, and as such find natural allies in the feminist, working class, and native rights movements.

On a more practical level, many intentional communities combine multiple strategies of self-reliance, co-housing with urban agriculture with an in-house worker's co-operative, for example. And many intentional communities, excepting perhaps some with a spiritual or religious orientation and a central charismatic leader, strive to uphold the ordering principles of radical democracy: dispersed decision-making, the full involvement of all members, and the avoidance of hierarchical social arrangements of any kind. Tasks may still be assigned, or responsibilities assumed, but no one task or responsibility, typically, possesses a status above any other; all members make equally valuable contributions.

Definitions of the intentional community abound. One of the best definitions comes from Susan Berlin, former Social Policy Planner for the City of Toronto and author of Ways We Live:
Berlin defines intentional communities as “communities that are drawn together not only to provide better housing, or to protect the environment, or to offer companionship in old age, but because community is perceived as a value in its own right” (1997: 27). Berlin recognizes that today, in our overly individualized, compartmentalized, atomized world — especially as evinced by the modern city — many people are so far removed from a sense of community they have trouble even conceiving of how community so profoundly shaped and defined the lives of their immediate ancestors only a few short generations ago, ancestors who are in many cases still alive.

Yet, observes Berlin, despite its veritable absence, community is on the rebound — more and more people are feeling its absence and lamenting its loss and are striving to regain a sense of belonging and shared meaning. Says Berlin, “the idea of community provides a focus for viewing life in our end-of-the-century culture — a way to understand the search for belonging for meaning, for fulfilment in a confusing, challenging, and constantly changing world” (ibid., 1).

The intentional community movement leads the search for a sense of belonging and collective meaning for a rapidly growing number of people. Often characterized by a religious sense of mission, or a secular desire to lead and live by example, intentional communities represent, for many, a beacon of hope in a world darkened by crass individualism or overshadowed by centralized authority. As Berlin describes intentional communities:

Often (but not always) intentional communities are formed on a religious basis, and with a belief that the community exists because of something larger than itself: its relationship with God. Non-religious intentional communities also operate with an overriding sense of mission; in their case, members believe that the process
of creating community teaches participants (and ultimately the outside world) how human beings should live. In intentional communities, members are seen as having individual lives, but also as partaking in a collective life which provides *contextual meaning* for the often bewildering vagaries of daily existence (ibid., 27).

The theme of leading and living by example, or providing others with the inspiration to experiment in alternative modes of living, is a theme found throughout the diversity of movements that combine to form the CS-R movement. As is obvious in the above description of Berlin’s, this theme is not absent in the intentional community movement.

The desire and courage, if not the imperative, to lead and live by example is a motivation possessing a long history dating back at least to the teachings of Jesus. It is found throughout Buddhist philosophy, and in the teachings of many others including Lao Tzu, Gandhi, Tolstoy, Kropotkin, Emerson, Thoreau, Hawthorne, Morris and up to the present-day, in the work of Paulo Freire, Paul Goodman, E.F. Schumacher, Vandana Shiva and Noam Chomsky, to mention only a few of very many. Leading and living by example has a long history of subversiveness, of flagrant disregard toward the self-serving dictates and decrees of centralized authority. The basic premise of leading and living by example is the observation that authority tends to wither away in the heat cast by the good example, in the unmistakable glare that reflects from those people who have overcome their meekness and deference to authority and who are unafraid to show others what is possible despite what authority has told them otherwise. People are capable of self-governance to a remarkable level and do not need centralized authorities determining their lives for them. But compliance and deference, the surrendering of autonomy, are seductive forces and, for some, intoxicating (witness the strong populism traditionally undergirding fascism). Those who strive to lead and live by example have always struggled against this
reality. With respect to the intentional community movement, merely risking to posit alternatives to the dominant order places them squarely in the camp of the subversive and radical.

Geoph Kozeny, of the Community Catalyst Project in San Francisco and long-time intentional community practitioner, has visited and researched more than 250 intentional communities scattered across North America. Kozeny, along with Berlin, places the increase of interest in intentional communities in a context of growing concern over “the loss of community” in a time when its presence is more important than ever. Kozeny defines the intentional community as:

a group of people who have chosen to live together with a common purpose, working cooperatively to create a lifestyle that reflects their shared core values. The people may live together on a piece of rural land, in a suburban home, or in an urban neighbourhood, and they may share a single residence or live in a cluster of dwellings (1996: 18).

Kozeny continues:

This definition spans a wide variety of groups, including (but not limited to) communes, student co-operatives, land co-ops, co-housing groups, monasteries and ashrams, and farming collectives. Although quite diverse in philosophy and lifestyle, each of these groups places a high priority on fostering a sense of community — a feeling of belonging and mutual support that is increasingly hard to find in mainstream Western society (ibid., 18).

Because of the great diversity within the movement, and because of how rapidly it is growing, determining the actual number of individual intentional communities presently in existence is very difficult. Kozeny, on the basis of his extensive research can only estimate that there are “literally thousands of groups, with hundreds of thousands of members, that live in intentional communities” (ibid., 18).
The Fellowship for Intentional Community, based in Rutledge, Missouri, is producer of the widely recognized and consulted guide to intentional communities, the *Communities Directory: A Guide to Cooperative Living* (2nd ed., 1996). The *Directory* itself includes almost 600 individual communities, with most located in North America and 50 more abroad. As a further guide to the interest extant in intentional communities, consider that the first edition of the *Directory*, published in 1992, sold over 18,000 copies in four years. As of 1996, the Fellowship claimed to be “in the midst of the biggest wave of inquiries about community and announcements of new starts in 20 years” (1996: 8). As well, according to the Fellowship, intentional communities throughout North America are reporting an overwhelming level of interest by individuals in participating, so much so that most intentional communities are operating at or beyond capacity. In particular, the western halves of Virginia and North Carolina, the southern portions of Minnesota and Wisconsin, southern Arizona around Tucson, and all parts of Colorado are experiencing a dramatic surge of interest in intentional community living.

The Fellowship also reports an all-time high in network building between intentional communities, especially as supported by the “informational clearing-house” activities of the Fellowship itself. As they say:

> From a network perspective, one of the most exciting shifts in the movement has been the increased willingness of groups in struggle — whether new or established — to ask for outside help. There used to be a stubborn ‘by golly we can solve all our problems’ attitude, or even an ‘it doesn’t really count unless we do it alone’ mind-set. Groups today though, are looking around for additional thinking. Especially on topics like consensus and other forms of inclusive decision-making, group conflict, organizational structure, and community building (ibid., 5).
Furthermore, points out the Fellowship, given the self-reinforcing nature of networking, a host of resources have emerged to satisfy the demand: more than a dozen consultants, up from zero in 1992, are affiliated with the Fellowship; a magazine supporting the movement, called *Communities*, has recently been revived, and quite successfully so; and numerous how-to guides and analyses of the intentional community movement have been published in recent years, up from the tiny handful that existed prior to 1992.

As an aside, social movement theory recognizes the growth of networks, the intentional building of internal cohesiveness and the sharing of resources, as being an important indicator of a movement’s growing success, and future likelihood of greater success. Individual struggles that seek to confront alone some aspect or expression of entrenched power or privilege are typically easily quashed or just ignored. An oppositional front of one is not likely to enjoy much success. In contrast, the individual struggles that begin to recognize both a common identity and enemy are able to form dense networks and coalitions that lend their struggle the air of a concerted movement representing a solid front of opposition that becomes difficult to neutralize and impossible to ignore. The social movement that displays increased networking is typically the social movement that has passed through an immature stage of incipient fragility, characterized by little internal cohesiveness and many isolated struggles, and has grown into maturity as evinced by a greater self-awareness and a desire to join with others in the struggle. That this stage of maturity has been reached bodes well for the future of the intentional community movement.

In seeking to define the highly internally diverse intentional community movement, it is helpful to identify the few common characteristics that help unify individual communities. As
Kozeny notes:

Although many contemporary community visions emphasize the creation of neighborhood and/or extended family ties, their philosophic roots are amazingly diverse. The range includes Christians, Quakers, and followers of Eastern religions, to '60s dropouts, anarchists, psychologists, artists, back-to-the-land survivalists — and the list goes on. The scope of their primary values is equally as broad, including ecology, equality, appropriate technology, self-sufficiency, right livelihood, humanist psychology, creativity, spirituality, meditation, yoga, and the pursuit of global peace (1996: 19).

Yet, despite the diversity, threads of commonality running throughout the movement are identifiable.

Probably the most common source of inspiration for launching an intentional community is found in spirituality or religion, regardless of the specific sect or form. For example, many of North America's leading centres for the study of meditation, yoga, and the teachings of spiritual masters from the Far East, have been established by intentional communities. Often, these communities are called “ashrams.” Later, I will examine one such spiritual intentional community, the Ananda Village (Kozeny, 1996: 19).

Among secular intentional communities, the inspiration is often found in the drive to create a new social and economic order, one that stands as an example to others and is a replicable model that may lead to the peaceful and ecological salvation of the planet. Very high ideals often pervade intentional communities. The co-housing form of intentional community which I will examine fits well into this category.

There are a minority of secular and spiritual intentional communities who instead opt for withdrawal into isolation, seeking a life free from modern complications and crises, and a life of self-sufficiency, simplicity, and serenity. Some of these communities have taken on the form
of back-to-the-land survivalists while others appear more as monasteries.

Most intentional communities, whether spiritual or otherwise, share a deep-felt concern about home, family, and neighbourhood along with a profound desire to resurrect community as the basic form of social organization. Community, for them, is the crucible that best enables individuals to realize their highest potential, a state typically defined as the ability to live and lead by example, to treat others in the same manner one wishes to be treated, and to give more than is taken away and thereby further improve the health of one’s community and of one’s greater world. In this sense, a healthy community is perceived to be a synergistic process wherein the whole is greater than the sum of its parts; a healthy community can encourage individual potential to heights almost unthinkable in mainstream Western culture, and a healthy community is a powerful example to those beyond the community.

There are also dozens of intentional communities, alarmed by the precipitous drop in the quality of public education, as measured by high student/teacher ratios, falling literacy rates, escalating incidences of violence among students, an epidemic of dropouts, and the persistence of a bland, de-humanizing curriculum, that have formed around the intent to provide their children with a whole new form of integrated education. According to Kozeny, intentional communities comprise a sizeable chunk of the membership of the National Coalition of Alternative Community Schools. Other, rural-based intentional communities have formed in order to pursue homeschooling without fear of legal pressure from zealous officials. These alternative forms of schooling typically involve the many activities of daily living and community-building as pedagogical material and seek to integrate the everyday world with the world of books. Many of these alternative approaches are proving remarkably successful and
are producing extremely well-educated and well-rounded youngsters.

One especially common thread running throughout the intentional community movement is a deep concern for the environment. According to Kozeny, fully 90 percent of the more than 250 intentional communities he visited expressed an ecological consciousness. A wide diversity of earth-friendly practices can be found amongst intentional communities. Almost all of them practice recycling, composting, and voluntary simplicity (consuming to necessity, not desire). "Many," says Kozeny,

serve as model environments or teaching centers for sustainable agriculture and appropriate technology, and feature such concepts as permaculture, organic gardening, grey water systems, solar and wind power, and passive solar home design. Eco-Home, a small shared household in Los Angeles, is an inspiring model of how to live ecologically in an urban environment. ‘The Farm,’ a large cooperative community in rural Tennessee, has launched a wide range of environmentally focused projects, including the development of advanced radiation detection equipment; a solar electronics company; a solar car company; the Natural Rights Center (an environmental law project); and a publishing company that specializes in books about environmental issues, vegetarian cooking, natural health care, midwifery, Native Americans, children’s stories, and pesticide-free gardening (ibid., 20,21).

The intentional community movement has, it seems, come of age. In particular, it has overcome its legacy from the late 1960's, which saw develop a wave of utopian communes influenced by the antiwar movement, the sexual revolution, rock music, drug experimentation, and the popularization of Eastern mysticism. These communes sprang-up to create loose communities based on sexual liberation, born-again Christianity, and everything in-between. Most of these communes collapsed soon after their inception — communities based on everyone dropping out to do their own thing tended to lack the structure and staying power necessary to
keep the dishes done, much less create a unifying vision, long-term goals, or the financial wherewithal to sustain the endeavour. Nevertheless, according to Kozeny, of the many thousands of communes that typified the 1960's, hundreds have survived into the 1990's, having re-evaluated, re-structured, and matured over the years (ibid., 21).

In sum, the intentional community movement is fundamentally about social experimentation. Each and every “segment” of the movement, in one way or another, contributes something to a growing stock of knowledge and experience on alternative forms of social organization. As this stock grows it is made more available to others who may feel the same sense of isolation and meaninglessness that compelled many of those now in the intentional community movement to intentionally set-out and create community to begin with.

Probably the most commonly accepted definition of a social movement is its existence as a “change agent”; its purpose is to promote change, normally as against established interests who seek to protect and extend their privilege. As such, social movements call into question the defining or organizing logic of the present, and posit alternatives for the recreation of tomorrow. Clearly, whether directly articulated or not, intentional communities stand as every bit the agent of change.

We turn now to a detailed examination of two examples of intentional communities: first, the co-housing phenomenon, a form of intentional community that has the widest application, is most readily available to urban dwellers, and could be said to represent the basic unit of intentional community organization. Second, we shall examine the Ananda World-Brotherhood Village, a spiritually based intentional community that has endured since 1968. Following these two detailed examples, several more will be provided in brief to flesh out the considerable
diversity of expression that exists within the movement.

Co-Housing

At the forefront of the shared living trend that runs through the intentional community movement stands the co-housing concept. Co-housing arrangements attempt to combine the best of communal living with the preservation of individual space and privacy. As such, they are particularly popular among those new to the intentional community movement who are looking for an appropriate place to begin participating that does not entail too abrupt a transition from the highly individualistic form of living typical of the city, to a form of community-oriented living almost its polar opposite. Accordingly, co-housing is particularly popular amongst urban-dwellers because its transitional character does not push those steeped in an especially individualistic environment too far and too fast into the arms of renewed community and decreased individuality. As co-houser Jon Greer puts it, “With our common meals, common chores and intentional plan to interact, co-housing gives us the framework to break down the barriers. It is an ingeniously gentle way to prod people of different backgrounds and ages to get to know and trust each other” (quote in Shaffer and Anundsen, 1993: 158).

Co-housing is also an appropriate form for low-income housing to take, and as such it has been a popular strategy employed by community land trusts and other social service agencies for the provision of low-impact, environmentally friendly, and socially just forms of housing. Co-housing projects are typically the embodiment of voluntary simplicity, with each person or family provided their own toned down private quarters while those facilities necessary for common use, such as kitchen, living room, workshop, office space, garden, storage space, laundry, guest rooms, and children’s playroom are provided centrally and are free for anyone
to use. In this way, the massive and expensive redundancy of facilities built into today's average home, with each having one of everything that often goes unused, is avoided. Resources are thereby conserved and the cost per unit is brought down to a level more accessible.

As well, co-housing complexes are usually of much higher density than the typical suburb design, especially the land-hungry sprawl of single-family, detached homes, and thus have lower impact on the environment. "Single-family living is more costly — socially, environmentally, emotionally, and in dollar — than shared living community," says Ken Norwood, planner-architect and founder of the Shared Living Resource Center in Berkeley. He continues:

For example, a small family living by itself in a suburban house requires a disproportionate amount of water and sewer lines, paved streets and land. Solar energy usually isn't cost-effective for one family. With no opportunity for buying in bulk, the family uses an excessive amount of packaging, which generates a lot of waste, creating an increased demand for landfill and depletion of the ozone layer. And the family is over-dependent on the automobile, which is the prime source of excessive energy and fuel consumption as well as a key contributor to poor air quality (quoted in ibid., 155).

It is because of these (and other) inadequacies of modern housing that interest in alternative forms of housing has grown in recent years. For example, Lifetrends, an analysis of social trends for the near future, reported that programs to encourage shared housing increased by 800 percent between 1981 and 1988. The concept of co-housing can be perceived as a response to the growing need for more inclusive and integrated forms of housing that emphasize community while not overriding the needs of the individual (ibid., 156).

Co-housing originated in Denmark about 25 years ago, where today there are more than 200 successful examples in operation. The concept was imported to North America in 1988 by
Kathryn McCamant and Charles Durrett, a wife/husband architect team who had investigated several successful co-housing communities along with a wide variety of other alternative living arrangements. They were most impressed with co-housing and upon their return home to California, they formed The CoHousing Company to promote their vision of the ideal type of community. Their 1988 book, *CoHousing: A Contemporary Approach to Housing Ourselves* (subsequently revised and expanded in 1994) has since become the blueprint for the co-housing movement.

The first North American co-housing project to get off the ground did so in 1991. Known as the Muir Commons group, its 66 participants (44 adults and 22 children) settled in Davis, California, a medium-sized town in an agricultural valley. The project was used by developers, in conjunction with the group, to fulfil the town’s affordable housing requirement and consequently its cost per unit was low for the area: US$96,000 to US$110,000.

The project consists of 26 duplexes, triplexes, and fourplexes clustered together on three acres around informal meeting places along a main pedestrian path. Located centrally is a 3600-square-foot common house that contains communal facilities frequently used by the co-housing community to build a sense of mutual belonging. Dances and gatherings are common, along with communal dinners, and a large front porch is a favorite gathering place for the community. The Muir Commons also boasts an impressive 3700-square-foot vegetable garden, actively under cultivation year-round, from which the community derives a substantial portion of their food requirements. Peach, cherry, apricot, pear and plum trees are also intelligently incorporated within the complex’s grounds; the community places a high value on “edible landscaping.” The buildings that make-up the Muir Commons have been clustered to minimize
their impact on the surrounding environment. As a consequence, a substantial portion of the Commons three acres has been left wooded. A comparable suburban neighbourhood for 26 homes, in contrast, requires more than seven acres, is riven through with roads, extensive sewage and electrical lines, retains no wild space, and cannot boast the shared facilities of the Commons, such as the common house or the shared garden (ibid., 153-169).

Since the inception of Muir Commons, as the inaugural North American co-housing community, many more have formed. The concept boasts amazing flexibility, and is at home in rural, suburban and urban settings alike. One of the earliest co-housing projects, known as the Doyle Street co-housing community in Emeryville, California, was the first to locate in an urban neighbourhood. This project was put together by co-housing founders, Kathryn McCamant and Charles Durrett, who acquired an abandoned factory and added a second-story to the original 8000-square-foot building that allowed for twelve condominium units with lofts and a 2000-square-foot common area complete with kitchen and fireplace. Five plots in a community garden two blocks away completed the project. It was, however, not cheap, and reflects the tastes of affluent middle-class professionals: Doyle Street residents each contributed from US$135,000 to US$250,000. A greater expression of voluntary simplicity would have reduced the cost significantly (ibid.).

Other co-housing communities have sprung-up throughout California, Washington State, Colorado, Massachusetts, and in the provinces of Quebec, Ontario, and British Columbia. By 1994, there were 150 co-housing projects either already running, or in the planning stages. Exact figures are unavailable, but estimates usually run in the several hundreds (Hertzman, 1996: 57-60).
According to Ellen Hertzman, Project Coordinator with The CoHousing Company, the enterprise formed by McCamant and Durrett in 1988 to offer architectural design services and consultation on all aspects of co-housing development, the contradictions of modern living have prompted a need for new forms of living. As she says, co-housing:

 evolved as a direct response to the common needs felt by a varied group of individuals: the need for responsive housing that provides privacy while at the same time facilitating community interaction and cooperation. Dramatic demographic and economic changes are taking place in our society, and most of us are feeling the effects of those trends on our own lives. Common values that people once took for granted — family, community, and a sense of belonging — must now be actively sought out. Contemporary households are characterized by smaller families, women working outside the home, single parents, elderly, and singles living alone. These smaller households face a child-care crisis, social isolation, and a chronic time crunch, in part because their housing no longer suits them. At the same time, increasing mobility has displaced many Americans from the extended families that have traditionally provided close social and economic support. Many people find themselves mis-housed, ill-housed, or even unhoused because of the lack of appropriate options (ibid., 57).

Co-housing seeks to overcome these limitations and contradictions of modern living, particularly as found in the city, by creating new forms of accessible and affordable living that emphasize community and restore the bonds of shared necessity that make community possible. For example, regardless of the particular form a co-housing project may take, one thing they all share in common is a central kitchen facility and common eating area. Encouraging individual members to take a fair share of the responsibility in meal preparation and join in for common mealtimes are two ways to create community. Most co-housing communities also seek a relatively high level of community self-reliance, often through the collective tending of community vegetable gardens, the provision of childcare and homeschooling, the caring for
elders, or the formation of in-house co-operative enterprises for the provision of income. All of these endeavours strengthen the bonds of shared necessity, and thus go a long way toward the formation of both community and relative self-reliance.

But more than anything else, the decision-making structure that characterizes the co-housing project, one that emphasizes the full participation of all members from the initial planning stage through to actually living together, helps to ensure the formation of community. A distinctive feature of co-housing is the degree of control those initiating the project take over the entire project itself, even if the would-be co-housing community is comprised of low-income families mobilized to secure affordable housing of their own. Says Susan Meeker-Lowry, author of *Invested in the Common Good* (1995):

> Co-housing is an effort to rebuild the lost structures of community and reweave a social fabric to create neighborhoods that are people-friendly and Earth-sensible. Instead of letting banks and land developers plan residential communities, the residents-to-be actually come together themselves to design their neighborhood and physical environment. The way we build our space around us effects our social and cultural life. If we look to traditional cultures we see interrelated buildings. Co-housing is about rethinking how we build in our space (1995: 161).

Another benefit of the typical co-housing project, beyond the benefits of a living arrangement arrived at by group consensus, and not attributable to the priorities of a developer or the housing formula of a bureaucrat, is the emphasis on creating space for people, not automobiles. Many projects are built in such a way as to cluster around central common areas, with automobiles restricted to the periphery. Pedestrian walkways, more green space, central courtyards, and a much slower pace is the result, helping to form still more community. And by helping to reduce the community’s dependency on the automobile, more time, energy, and resources, combined
with a greater sense of independence, are freed up to create relationships with others. Co-housing communities emphasize the pooling of resources, and automobiles are no exception. Shared ownership, responsibilities and costs combined with fewer trips to the grocery store and the ability to buy goods in bulk, along with car-pooling for those who work elsewhere, all help reduce the co-housing community's automobile dependence. These factors, when combined with the desire of many co-housers to spend more time within their community instead of, in loneliness, searching the city for companionship and stimulation, all go a long way to reducing the number of automobiles the community owns, while also reducing the number of hours any member must spend behind the wheel.

Indeed, a few co-housing communities have achieved a very high level of self-reliance, having employed appropriate technologies such as solar energy and rain water collectors, utilized garden space advantageously for the provision of food, obviated the need for expensive childcare, reduced their dependency on automobiles very significantly, assumed a lifestyle of voluntary simplicity and thus reduced consumption dramatically, and even ensured the generation of income by starting an in-house enterprise or two, such as bicycle repair, consultancy, advocacy work, childcare, publishing, tutoring and teaching, or working via the Internet.

There are, however, several negative aspects to the co-housing concept, particularly when in practice. The emphasis on a high level of initiative, from dealing with architects and builders to bankers and city officials, tends to select out those lacking significant powers of persuasion and articulation. As a result, co-housing is most effectively pursued by white, middle-class professionals who are well-equipped to pursue their objectives. Even when co-housing is made
available to low-income families, as a much needed means to enable them to actually own their own homes, they often require substantial assistance in articulating their desires and cutting through the thicket of red-tape often associated with the initial planning phase of any major project. This subversion of the do-it-yourself nature of co-housing somewhat undermines its participatory emphasis and severs a few of the bonds of necessity that make for community in the first place. And, while all experiences here and in Denmark have shown that a diverse community of co-housing members works best, (one that represents a variety of socio-economic, educational, ethnic, and age-based backgrounds), in practice the communities tend to quickly homogenize as they move through the planning stages and into actual construction. Here again they often become primarily white, middle-class, and professional. Or, when diversity is maintained, people unused to consensus or otherwise high participatory forms of decision-making are too easily swayed by the most persuasive of the group, the result sometimes being a “tyranny of the articulate.” Other co-housing projects often include an unequal level of financial commitment by some of the members, resulting in others in the project owing them money (as rent-to-own), in turn producing power imbalances and an erosion of the equality originally sought. It is often the case that one or two people with plenty of “vision,” and even more money will be instrumental in getting a co-housing project up and running. No matter their level of charity and humanity, money always finds a way to get in-between harmonious human relations.

Still, despite the bugs and potential pitfalls of co-housing, there exist few better ways for the would-be community member to go out and intentionally create community, particularly a form of community well-suited to the urban environment, and a form that can provide for a
considerable level of relative self-reliance. As Carolyn R. Shaffer and Kristin Anundsen, authors of *Creating Community Anywhere: Finding Support and Connection in a Fragmented World* (1993) state: “co-housing requires the highest level of group skills of any of the shared housing types we have found. It also provides the greatest amount of self-determination” (1993: 159).

**The Ananda Village**

One of the oldest and most successful intentional communities in North America is the Ananda World-Brotherhood Village, located in the Sierra Nevada foothills of northern California. Founded in 1968 by J. Donald Walters, the Ananda Village has since grown to include several branch communities in North America as well as one near Assisi, Italy. Total membership as of 1996 was nearly 500 individuals, with the majority residing in the first community in California.

The Ananda Village was founded on communitarian principles taught by the great Indian master, Paramahansa Yogananda, as interpreted by Walters, a disciple of Yogananda since 1948. The goal of Walters in founding the Ananda Village was to help fulfil Yogananda’s mission to the West: “To spread a spirit of brotherhood among all peoples, and to aid in establishing, in many countries, self-sustaining world-brotherhood colonies for plain living and high thinking” (quoted in Walters, 1994: 13).

The concept of “self-sustaining world-brotherhood colonies” was core to the teachings of Yogananda, and central to the aim of Walters with the Ananda Village. The great master repeatedly and urgently spoke of the colonies as central to the social pattern that must soon
emerge to aid humankind in surviving the great and violent upheavals sure to come. According to Yogananda:

The day will come when this idea will spread through the world like wildfire. Gather together, those of you who share high ideals. Pool your resources. Buy land in the country. A simple life will bring you inner freedom. Harmony with nature will give you a happiness known to few city dwellers. In the company of other truth seekers it will be easier for you to meditate and think of God. What is the need for all the luxury with which people surround themselves? Most of what they have they are paying for on the installment plan. Their debts are a source of unending worry to them. Even people whose luxuries have been paid for are not free. Attachment makes them slaves. They consider themselves freer for their possessions and don’t see how their possessions in turn have possessed them! (quoted in ibid., 15,16).

As humankind continues down the darkened path of greed and materialism, their prospects for a hopeful future are slim. “The time is short,” he would often say. “You have no idea of the sufferings that await mankind. In addition to wars there will be a depression the likes of which has not been known in a very long time. Money will not be worth the paper it is printed on. Millions will die” (quoted in ibid., 17).

In North America, Yogananda’s self-sustaining world-brotherhood of colonies has become synonymous with intentional communities, and his concept in practice can be found throughout the community self-reliance movement. Many expressions of the CS-R movement, the Ananda Village and most intentional communities especially, have embodied, whether intentionally or otherwise, the teachings of Yogananda. Voluntary simplicity, co-operative and contemplative living, the pooling of resources, life lived in the country, an attempt to harmonize with nature, and the drive to free oneself from being possessed by one’s possessions, are all qualities commonly found within intentional communities and throughout the CS-R movement as a
whole. And, while many secular communities choose not to express their concerns in prophetic terms, their worry for the future of humankind and for the planet's ecological integrity is very real and not without a substantial basis.

Walters, observing the trends of the present, reflects on the need for intentional communities such as the Ananda Village as a response to the growing tendency toward consolidation. “No one needs,” he says, “a sociologist to tell him that the trend of this twentieth century is toward consolidation. Small businesses, unable to compete with the large corporations, become swallowed up by them. Large corporations, again, merge with others, in time to become vast industrial empires” (ibid., 20). Society, for Walters, is moving inexorably toward a centralization or consolidation of power. Population pressures, environmental crises, and the long-standing interests of the economy-of-scale and organizational efficiency are bringing people together tighter and tighter under the control of consolidated powers. Enforced uniformity will be the ultimate result, as centralized authorities coalesce into a one-world government determined to maintain order in a world increasingly given to disorder (ibid., 20,21).

But for those who have the courage and the strength, another path is open. Walters believes the point must come in modern social evolution when people, instead of submitting placidly to the dictates of centralized authority, must rise up individually to reassert their worth as human beings and regain their power for self-determination. For Walters, this alternative “lies in a recognition of the fact that the mainspring of mature action is the inner man, not an outer order” (ibid., 22, emphasis in original). Walters continues:

To imagine that systems can be anything more than a convenience has been man's mistake. Systems are not an end in themselves. They cannot inspire men to perfection. At best, they may prevent a few people from
behaving too outrageously. The more society becomes centralized in its power, the greater the need for individuals to seek their values (as opposed to their outer convenience) within themselves. For man is more than a cog in the social wheel. The systems he adopts are supposed in some way to benefit him, individually, and not merely to serve the good of some separate entity, unrelated to any of its members, called 'society.' To speak of society, as some writers have done, as an 'organism,' is misleading. From within ourselves come our inspiration, our understanding, our love and happiness. All that we experience outside ourselves depends upon our inner capacity for experience. Man is a source of light, not a mirror (ibid., 22,23, emphasis in original).

For Walters the true well-spring of greater harmony is found in the individual given over to the pursuit of self-realization, not in the libertarian or individualistic sense common to Western culture, but in a manner that recognizes each individual’s intrinsic inseparableness from all other individuals and from God itself. Harmony is not to be found in the impositional overlaying of a social system to determine for the individual his or her reality. We must overcome our preoccupation for and deference to outward systems of authority and re-instate the individual and his or her self-realization as the real key to the efficacy of any system. Says Walters, “The result cannot but benefit man in his political, economic, and social institutions as well. For life is harmonious outward when men have inner harmony. And nothing brings outward disharmony when men live inwardly in disharmony” (ibid., 24,25).

It is to this end the Ananda Village is devoted -- freeing the individual from the constraints of massified society, from the ironic sense of isolation and the crass individualism that arises from individuals when they are forced to live their lives in accordance with the dictates and decrees of authorities outside themselves while crushed together with a multitude of similarly disempowered. Under such circumstances, as increasingly found in today’s cities and as induced by the consolidational tendencies of globalization, the individual is psychically broken away from
his or her intrinsic inseparability with all others for no other reason than to survive the psychic assault. As Walters explains:

A person who devotes himself to the development of an inner awareness is in a vastly better position than one who, his very self-respect assaulted by competing hordes, has all he can do to maintain a little sense of his own identity... It would seem that the average city dweller's technique for preserving his own sanity is to isolate himself from the world around him, and from his fellow man. Stranded and alone on the tiny island of his ego, is it any wonder that he complains of feeling alienated? Without self-respect, how can there be a proper respect for others? Without self-awareness, how can there be a sensitivity to the needs of others? The well-springs of charity must flow from the inner man. They cannot reach him by a process of invasion (ibid., 26, 27).

Accordingly, for Walters, to seek the removal of oneself from such a stifling and alienating social environment, even to seek refuge in the country or in the arms of an isolated intentional community or spiritual retreat, in no way implies a rejection of one's social responsibilities. Under the sway of massified society, the individual has scant hope but to succumb to the soul-crushing forces of the centralized system. Only in his or her removal from massified society is the opportunity for authentic self-realization to be found. As Walters says, "To 'hie [hasten] away' to the country, then, need in no way imply a rejection of one's social responsibilities. It can become, rather, the beginning of a sincere assumption of responsibility, not only for oneself, but, by extension, toward society at large" (ibid., 27).

These, then, are the ideals that the Ananda Village has grown around, and thrived on, for the past three decades. The members of the Village are dedicated to a life of high ideals and simple living, and seek to share their teachings and way of life through The Expanding Light Retreat, open to all interested parties. Members of the Ananda Village also frequently venture forth on tours and pilgrimages, and often teach in urban teaching centers or in meditation groups. The
Ananda Village embraces 750 acres of woods and meadows, owned collectively by the community. Members support themselves in a variety of manners not restricted to teaching, including farming and a variety of small-scale community enterprises. A small, alternative school, called “the how to live” school, is open to children from both within and without the community, and many members find work there (Fellowship for Intentional Community, 1996:214).

Voluntary cooperation is the norm for group activities. The Village seeks a mood of friendship and harmony, together with a cheerful spirit of service to God. While there exists in the Village a great deal of emphasis on communal activity, there also exists a corresponding respect for individuals and their privacy. Each individual is accorded the necessary freedom to learn and grow at their own pace. A balance is sought between spiritual guidance and self-motivation (ibid., 214).

As Walters concludes:

Rome and Carthage, fighting each other to their mutual destruction, set an example for the ages of the uselessness of selfish greed. Better than ten negative examples, however, is one positive solution. What of a community that views others, not as competitors, nor as strangers, but as friends? Such a community, even if removed from the vortices of civilization, could be a more forceful influence for good than a dozen institutions that are more ‘involved,’ but also more submerged, in urban insanities (1994: 38).

A Few More Examples

The foregoing should suffice to provide a picture of both the secular intentional community, as in the co-housing project, and the spiritual intentional community, as in the Ananda Village. While each may have different ways of expressing community, it is, after all, “community” that both set out to create. A few more examples follow, mainly for the sake of illustrating the variety
of intentional communities presently in existence. Illustrations will be brief.

**Acorn** is a thriving new intentional community formed in 1993 and, as of 1996, consisted of 20 adults and one child ranging in age from one year to 68 years. Acorn is seeking ways of living that are cooperative, caring, and ecologically sustainable. They are building a community that embraces feminism, multiculturalism, freedom of sexual and gender orientations, and spiritual growth. The community puts most of its energy into improving interpersonal communications and exploring nontraditional relationships. Decision-making by consensus is the established norm.

Acorn is situated on a 72 acre holding in Mineral, Virginia. The land is commonly held property and includes an oak woodlot, 25 acres of prime farmland, and 20 acres of rich bottomland. The community is housed in a large, multi-purpose residence and community center that was built by its members. Acorn’s money and resources are held in common. Some of the members work on a co-operative venture with another intentional community, Twin Oaks, producing tofu and hammocks. Others are hard at work developing ventures specific to Acorn, such as the hosting of workshops on permaculture and other progressive topics. The community also produces crafts for resale. As well, some of the members have chosen to maintain careers outside of the community.

The community is also striving for a higher degree of self-sufficiency and is hard at work harvesting sustainably the woodlot and bringing under cultivation their 25 acres of farmland. As they have embraced voluntary simplicity, their needs have been greatly reduced, further increasing their self-sufficiency. As well, almost all daily tasks, from building to auto repair, are within their range, making for a highly self-reliant community (Fellowship for Intentional Community, 1996:}
Alpha Farm in Deadwood, Oregon is a close-knit extended-family style of intentional community on 280 acres in the Coast Range. Established in 1972, the community has 14 adults and five children. "Consensus," they say, "our decision-making process, is also a metaphor for the ideal world we seek to create here — and so help create in the larger world" (quoted in ibid., 214). The community seeks to honour and respect the spirit in all people and in nature. They strive to nurture harmony within themselves, among all people, and with the Earth, and to integrate all of life into a balanced whole.

The Alpha Farm community supports itself through work on the farm, in community-owned businesses (a cafe bookstore, contract mail delivery, and construction), and with freelance professional work. They also offer regular workshops on consensus and community facilitation several times yearly. All income and resources are held in common, and their disposition is determined on the basis of consensus. Their living arrangements are on the co-housing model, with private rooms for each individual or couple and common living space and facilities for all to share (ibid., 214).

Arden Village, in Wilmington, Delaware, is an intentional community founded in 1900 by social reformers Frank Stephens (a sculptor) and Will Price (an architect) in effort to create a society based on Henry George’s single tax economics and William Morris’ arts and crafts philosophy. Today, the community has 550 residents, made up of 410 adults and 140 children, who share 162 acres of land. All residential land is held in a community land trust for which leaseholders pay one property tax (as determined by an elected assessor) and own their own homes. The have employed a town meeting form of government that is a model of direct
democracy. Many of the residents practice organic gardening, and the use of appropriate
technologies such as solar is common. There is also a thriving arts and crafts tradition, with more
than 40 professional artists living in the community, which enjoys a steady stream of visitors
(ibid., 216, 217).

CEEDS is an intentional community located near 100 Mile House in British Columbia.
Formed in 1974, its 15 adult members have striven for maximum self-reliance. CEEDS is an
acronym for the Community Enhancement & Economic Development Society, and it regards
itself as the “seeds” of a movement to change the disastrous present-day methods of industrial
agriculture. Most of the members are in their thirties and have strong ties with the hippie back-
to-the-land movement. They say, “We are ecologists deeply concerned with and actively
working in the defense of Mother Nature” (quoted in ibid., 226).

Through their renting and operating of four small farms in the South Cariboo, including the
maintenance of a 25 member community supported agriculture operation, CEEDS has obtained
a very high degree of self-reliance. Along with organic vegetables and fruit, they raise and breed
cattle, pigs, workhorses, sheep, goats, a variety of poultry, and honey bees. After meeting their
own needs, and those of their CSA members, the surplus produce is sold at a farmers’ market.

The community has undertaken a number of instructional projects, including a “sheep project”
to prove that sheep are a viable alternative to herbicide spraying, horse logging, and the
preservation of rare breeds of plants and animals. The community also runs an apprentice
program for its labour-intensive organic farming methods and regularly takes in street people,
particularly Native Canadian, and provides them with skills for increased self-reliance. Their
long-term goal is to establish more CEEDS operations throughout the province (ibid., 226).
One final example out of the hundreds I could have chosen is the Community Alternatives Co-op located in Vancouver, British Columbia. Founded in 1977, the community is comprised of 43 members aged three to 69. They live in a cooperatively run and owned housing complex and pursue a variety of alternative projects. For example, they are interested in working on/toward alternate family groupings, community-scale economics, forms of meaningful employment, appropriate technology, consensus decision-making, and collective social action.

The community provides for itself partly through a co-operatively run restaurant, a gourmet garnish and salad company, and a retail/wholesale muffin business which trains mentally disabled people. The community has also set-up a second communal housing co-operative in their neighbourhood. And, in conjunction with the Community Alternatives Society, they own a 10-acre organic farm one hour outside of the city (ibid., 232).

In sum, the foregoing should suffice to establish the veracity of the intentional community movement, and to establish it as a definite constituent movement within the overarching community self-reliance movement. We turn next to an examination of a proposed model for an alternative, de-centralized, and radically democratic political system.
Chapter Nine

The Alternative, De-Centralist Polity

Once enough communities of self-reliance emerge to take back decisive control over local economies, the provision of food and housing, and the disposition of land, the question of political organization naturally arises. How can those who have shaken off the shackles of subject-hood, by reclaiming democracy as rightfully theirs and becoming anew citizens, safeguard the continuance of their freedom? The community self-reliance movement, at heart concerned with the furtherance of the historical project toward a radical democracy, is accordingly a political creature and must concern itself with the creation of a sustainable, decentralized, citizen-based, accountable, and defensible political order.

For a model of what this alternative political order might look like we turn to the work of Frank Bryan and John McClaughry, authors of the acclaimed book, *The Vermont Papers: Recreating Democracy on a Human Scale* (1989). Both long-time residents of Vermont, Bryan is a professor of political science at the University of Vermont and has lectured widely on the subject of community self-reliance and the radicalization of democracy. McClaughry, a former White House policy advisor and state senator, is presently a founding member of the Schumacher
Society and president of both the Ethan Allen Institute and the Institute for Liberty and Community in Vermont.

*The Vermont Papers* is widely regarded as one of the most cogent applications of Schumacherian thought to the problem of American politics. However, in so saying, I am in no way implying that the political order prescribed by Bryan and McClaughry is the ‘right’ decentralist model for every locality determined to restore a radicalized democracy and achieve relative self-reliance. Alternative polities are still very much in the realm of the hypothetical. Nevertheless, just as the myriad expressions that make-up the community self-reliance movement constitute individual experiments taking place within a grander social laboratory, so too does the alternative polity as detailed by Bryan and McClaughry. While their model is particularly suited to the conditions of Vermont, it is up to each locality to find the right mix for their own needs, drawing from each experiment what is most useful and foregoing the rest. That said, the proposal of Bryan and McClaughry is especially well thought-out and appears to have fairly general applicability and thus is presented in detail here.

Bryan and McClaughry open their book with the following observation:

For all its inspiring success, the American dream still lies beyond our reach. America stands as a beacon of liberty, democracy, and community. But that tradition is under challenge from the forces of centralized power. Those forces have never wholly succeeded, but neither have they been decisively repelled. That task still lies ahead. The little green-clad state of Vermont may well become the place to show America how liberty, democracy, and community can be restored (1989:1).

Vermont is, according to Bryan and McClaughry, the ideal place to start this restoration project, this radicalization of democracy. Bypassed by the urban-industrial revolution, Vermont still possesses intact many of its community-based, small town traditions that emphasize self-
reliance and direct democracy. Vermont also possesses a long history of antipathy if not outright hostility toward anything centralized, particularly politics and economics. This is not to say that Vermont has not also succumbed to many of the centrist forces the rest of the industrialized world has. It has, however, successfully avoided complete conversion, if not subversion, to the culture of consumption I spoke of in Chapter Two. Vermont’s proclivity, once a short while ago widespread, toward thriftiness and agrarian self-sufficiency — values as opposed to globalization as they are to the culture of consumption — may have been dulled during the last century, but it has not disappeared.

With Vermont, the opportunity exists to leapfrog from the pre-urban-industrial age and into the 21st century to create a truly human-scale political order. Yet Vermont, despite having avoided much of the densification, massification, and exaltation of the material associated with urban-industrialism, is not a hopeless, unsophisticated back-water. Vermont is, in actuality, a long way down the road toward an economics of permanence with a long history of favouring qualitative development over quantitative growth. Vermont has always prized cutting edge technology, in its ‘appropriate’ guise, and, note Bryan and McClaughry, “Vermonters [have] adopted new technologies as fast as circumstances allowed and created their own at a rate far faster than their tiny population would predict” (1989:27). For example, Vermont has a very well-developed high-tech sector and has consistently scored among the top five U.S. states with respect to the percentage of its workforce employed in high-tech industries. Vermont is also normally among the top five states for the average SAT scores of its high-school graduates, as it is with respect to the percentage of its adult population with post-secondary education. “Hard living in the cold encourages the habit of ‘working smart’ that Vermonters have always known”
While a centralized political order may have made sense in a time of low technological sophistication (though it unfortunately always ‘makes sense’ in a time of mass production, mass consumption, mass mobilization, and mass manipulation), today’s technologies, particularly information and communication related as in the Internet, make possible if not preferable a decentralized political order. Real-time communication between an assembly of citizens and their representative participating in an important regional assembly elsewhere, is now possible. For Bryan and McClaughry, the fullest use of new information and communication technologies is important to the fullest expression of decentralized politics, a challenge Vermont could easily rise to. By the fullest expression, however, Bryan and McClaughry absolutely do not mean replacing expressions of democracy with some kind of pseudo-, Internet based, virtual democracy, as in the Radical Right’s version of electronic town-halls. New information and communication technologies will enhance, not replace, democratic procedures and insofar as the technology is an important feature of an enhanced democracy, it will be available to everyone.

There are other reasons why Vermont is the ideal setting for a grand experiment in radical democracy. Not only its rich, small town history, but its size makes Vermont eminently governable according to radically democratic ideals. With a little more than half a million people scattered over an area about twice the size of Connecticut, Vermont is, according to Bryan and McClaughry,

still small enough to meet the concept of a manageable polity. Vermont can’t save the world, but it can save itself and by its example show America how to get its democracy back. Working things out in a small place first is far preferable to banging one’s head against the wall in a larger system. Vermont matters most because it is small, not in spite
of it (ibid., 4).

In sum, Vermont offers perhaps the best hope of launching a radical democracy, one that will set sail to provide inspiration and hope to not just other Americans, but to everyone throughout the industrialized world — in the eyes of the dominant decision-making order, Vermont may prove to be the dreaded threat of a good example.

Staunch advocates of such radically democratic values as self-reliance, tolerance, community aid, diversity, and liberty, Bryan and McClaughry see Vermont as the cradle for a new, 21st century democracy. They state:

> Our values are libertarian in the face of authority, decentralist in the face of giantism, and communal among our townspeople. We were country when country wasn't cool. We were serious about town meeting democracy when town meetings were considered anachronisms. Most of all we want to bring power home from centralized institutions and distribute it widely among the people (ibid., 5,6).

A more perfect elucidation of radical democracy we would be hard-pressed to find. Bryan and McClaughry call for nothing less than radical, fundamental change: “Democracy is too precious, and the forces aligned against it too powerful, for timid measures” (ibid., 5). In the words of Ernest Callanbach, “If democracy is such a good idea, the time has come to try it” (quoted in ibid., 5).

Bryan and McClaughry place the origins of their thinking in the seminal work of James Harrington, whose masterpiece, *The Commonwealth of Oceana*, was published in England in 1656. Harrington gave force to a political philosophy sometimes known as “classical republicanism,” and more commonly referred to as “civic humanism.”

The basic premise of “civic humanism is the affirmation that the good and virtuous society
is one in which all individuals have the opportunity to develop their powers and talents toward a self-fulfillment which benefits all” (ibid., 20). It is called “humanism” not to scorn religious values, but to emphasize the growth and development of people in the here and now. While civic humanism does not seek to prepare people for the after-life or some such notion of eternity, spiritual and religious pursuits are still regarded as potentially valuable paths toward a healthy self-fulfillment that simultaneously improves the whole. It is called “civic” because it looks to the civic arena, the civil society, the neighbourhood, the precinct, the municipality, the polis, or the township as the preferred locus of virtuous activity. Virtuous activity is done with other people and for other people as much as for oneself. In fact, according to civic humanism, virtue exists only in relationship with other people and the truest form of self-fulfillment is the highest expression of virtue.

Civic humanism is presented by Bryan and McClaughry as a political philosophy ideal for maintaining the condition of radical democracy. It rests on a foundation comprised of three pillars. The first pillar concerns autonomy:

It is essential that each individual, to be truly human and lead a life of virtue, must take part in public life as a fully autonomous being. Autonomy, and thus virtue, rests upon a material foundation. Each person should possess and control the means of his or her sustenance, a principle which underlies the institution of privately owned property (ibid., 20).

It is important to note that for civic humanism, “autonomy” does not refer to individualism, in the atomistic sense of ‘me first, and only me.’ Autonomy in this case refers to a condition of healthy inter-dependency with one’s fellow citizens, a concept central to the community self-reliance movement. And civic humanism is not barbaric in its expectation of autonomy or else. People are nurtured through childhood into autonomy, and physical dependency, as in the very
young, very old, or disabled, does not undermine or even concern autonomy. It just means that all people at one time or another need to be cared for and being cared for, and caring for others is a basic right and expectation of citizenship.

For civic humanism, the institution of privately owned property must not be confused with the devoutly libertarian desire to possess as much wealth or property as one likes, and to dispose of this wealth or property in any manner one chooses. Rather, for civic humanism, there should be no great aggregations of wealth, nor should there be grinding property. There should instead exist a very wide distribution of property and thus power, so that the majority of men and women in society can enjoy some independent means — a degree of autonomy — and hence freedom from servitude to an economic superior.

The accumulation of property and thus the accumulation of power, much less the construction of a family dynasty through inheritance or a transnational corporate empire, is absolutely anathema to civic humanism. Great concentrations of private wealth in the hands of a select few, or under the control of unaccountable corporations or centralized governments stand in direct violation of civic humanism. Some concentrations are necessary, such as in the hands of an accountable government or a public institution such as a hospital or university — but only when tempered with necessity, controlled by accountability, and for the greater good.

A civic humanist order, for example, would seek to resurrect the corporate charter, the original basis from which the modern corporate entity emerged. Corporations may only be formed for the public good and only after lengthy, democratic deliberation. They would exist to undertake a task or provide a service otherwise unavailable, but one deemed necessary. The chartered corporation would be subject to review, held completely accountable, could be
dissolved according to the will of the people, and would not be permitted to either own other corporations or exist indefinitely. Its use as a wealth-generating machine would be strictly forbidden, denying any single individual the opportunity presently abused by the likes of a Bill Gates, Philip Knight, or Conrad Black to shape reality into their preferred image.

Instead, for civic humanism, property encompasses that which is vital to the sustenance of life, and thus the maintenance of autonomy: productive land, housing, tools of trade and the means of production, property that carries with it "a sense of place, of continuity, of preservation, of improvement, of personal sovereignty, of sufficiency without excess" (ibid., 20). Limited or community-based forms of ownership, such as land trusts, co-operatives, and co-housing projects, are all perfectly compatible with civic humanism. But concentrated ownership, as in a socialist government, is to be avoided (while select Crown corporations may be justifiable). In sum, with respect to the ownership of private property, civic humanism casts the preferred individual as a "freeholder" who stands roughly equal to all others, and is thus the only individual most empowered to participate in the good and virtuous society.

The second pillar of civic humanism, already alluded to earlier, is the proposition that human virtue cannot be attained without participation in civic life. The individual, as the repository of virtue, cannot obtain, exercise or maintain this virtue without a devotion to advancing the common good through participating in the public process, a distinctly democratic ideal. "Therefore," say Bryan and Mc Claughry, "if virtue is to pervade society, as many public decisions as possible must be made by the broadest range of citizens possible, and they must be made at a level as close as possible to citizens' daily experience" (ibid., 21). In Bryan and Mc Claughry we hear echoes of Shuman and his insistence on subsidiarity as the preferred criterion for
effective decision-making in a community given to self-reliance and determined to uphold radical democracy.

Obviously, civic humanism is not a philosophy that once implemented would allow for rapid decision-making, bureaucratic efficiency, or any centralized exercise of power. Instead, it is a recipe for ensuring that the sometimes frustrating snail’s pace of democracy prevails, a pace inimical to the interests of those determined to bring about rapid change or mobilize resources (usually human) en masse. It is also a means to maintain safety from the massive blunders and venality such interests often create or represent.

The third pillar of civic humanism, one perhaps alien if not abhorrent to the Canadian way of thinking (excepting perhaps many rural areas), is the requirement for the maintenance of a strong, local militia. As best exemplified by the modern Swiss model, a civic humanist order requires, as a condition of citizenship freely accepted, the participation of at least every able-bodied male in the militia to protect the democracy from invasion or subversion. This is perhaps an anachronistic expectation given the extraordinarily superior force of arms modern central authorities can bring to bear, but the remarkable success of Switzerland in avoiding invasion or occupation might stand as a mute testament to the concept’s continued salience. 27 The ability of Vermont to have so long resisted the loss of its independence to total absorption into a United States addicted to centralized power, also owes no small debt to its adherence to the concept of a strong, local militia. Bryan and McClaughry recount many episodes, historical and contemporary, of state or federal authorities, along with corporate officials, who retreated in their attempts to impose central authority or the profit maxim when faced with communities very prepared and determined to defend their autonomy.
The maintenance of a strong, local militia in no way implies the creation of a professional standing army or the use of universal conscription. According to Bryan and McClaughry:

It should be pointed out that there is a world of difference between a people’s army, in which service is a duty freely accepted along with citizenship, and a professional standing army, which uses the power of the state to force hapless youths to serve or go to jail. The civic humanists viewed this latter force as no more than a tool of tyranny, supporting itself by plunder and, as the instrument of rapacious kings, threatening the liberties of the people of its own country (ibid., 21).

Nor does the maintenance of a strong, local militia indicate any warlike or offensive tendencies. Live and let live is a central civic humanist creed, along with a strong reverence for diversity. However, the maintenance of a strong, local militia may be the only way to safeguard radical democracy once achieved. Civic humanism regards those in power, and determined to defend or extend their power, very dimly and with great suspicion. The centralized powers of the United States, for example, have militarily invaded or interfered in the affairs of others more than 300 times in the past 200 years, not including the decimation of the once robust Indian Nations. For the civic humanist, as for Bryan and McClaughry, if one is truly serious about attaining democracy than one has to count on some level of aggressive reprisal or interference from the powers-that-be. At the least, the existence of a determined militia and a committed citizenry serves as a powerful deterrent to power-hungry centrist: any attempt to divest the community ordered according to civic humanist principles of its democratic freedom may be akin to attacking a hornet’s nest — decidedly uncomfortable.

In sum, according to Bryan and McClaughry, “this civic-humanist view of the virtuous society, built around the growing, enterprising, achieving, contributory individual as freeholder,
warrior, and citizen, carried with it, though implicitly, a strong bias toward preserving the life of
the small community and cooperating with fellow citizens at the local level to create workable,
human-scale institutions of civic betterment” (ibid., 22). Civic humanism is about the creation
and nurturance of “a society of little places where people can see themselves in their government
and their government in them” (ibid., 26).

In their presentation of a civically humanist, decentralist, radically democratic political order,
Bryan and McClaughry make three claims:

The first is that real democracy is too precious to give up. The second
is that communications technology increases the potential for revitalized
democracy. The third is that representational democracy, as *democracy*
depends on the existence of a vital direct democracy (ibid., 82).

Bryan and McClaughry bemoan the fact that real democracy has been so far eroded that now
representational democracy sits in its place, and is accepted by many and cynically promoted by
others as the highest and best expression of democracy possible. Representational democracy,
as it exists today, is better seen as a tool of expediency for the unwieldly “giantism” that is
corrupting our political institutions. With giantism, there is a compulsion to centralize and
standardize decision-making to best manage large populations, particularly at a distance, and with
giantism there comes the tendency to dehumanize or objectify individual citizens; reduce them
to subjects to impersonally manage or manipulate.

Overcoming giantism requires the creation of governments of human-scale, governments that
can safeguard democracy by placing it in the context of communal liberty. To thwart giantism
and rebuke the forces of centralism tirelessly at work to undermine true democracy, Bryan and
McClaughry propose the creation of *shire*, defined as "new units of general-purpose local government to which most of the powers of the state will be devolved and through which our people can express their most heartfelt political ideals" (ibid., 83).

The concept of the shire is drawn from the Old English traditions that informed much of the development of Vermont and its surrounding New England neighbours. In England, a shire is roughly equivalent to a county, with one crucial difference. Whereas in the U.S. system the counties of a state are subordinate and beholden to the state, which is in turn subordinate to the nation, in the shire system, with a few exceptions, the shire itself is the preferred locus of control.

As Bryan and McClaughry describe it:

> Most important though, in history and in literature, the shire's image is of unions of small villages cast in the context of the earth itself — land, water, and the local peculiarities of place which bespeak character and culture, distinctiveness and delineation. When one thinks of 'shire', one thinks of them in multiplicity, in constant interaction and creative turmoil. One thinks of the variety on which all art, letters, and science ultimately depend. The shire evokes the sense of communal liberty and environmental consciousness that is essential to the preservation of democracy (ibid., 86).

Most importantly, the shire stands opposed to giantism by reducing the size of the government, literally the body to be governed, by increasing the number of independently governed bodies through a process of political decentralization and the diffusion of responsibilities. The appropriate, critical size, of the new shires will be found and maintained by integrating seven principles of democratic governance.

First, a truly democratic government must never sacrifice the interests or needs of local citizens for the sake of efficiency. The exclusive use of representative democracy, massive bureaucratic machines, centralized control of the bulk of the powers of taxation, are all examples
of present political features incompatible with the shire system. “All too often,” point out Bryan and McClaughry, “when democratic control conflicts with the plans for administrative efficiency, democracy is automatically precluded” (ibid., 83). Instead, the bottom line must always remain the democratic process. When the political body governed reaches a size that sees the rise of a tendency toward sacrificing the interest of some for the sake of overall efficiency, then the body has grown too large for the needs of democracy.

Second, without losing sight of the above prerequisite, the size of the political body must be permitted to float free and seek its own optimal level. “At present it is encouraged (and often forced) upward but never downward,” note Bryan and McClaughry. They continue, “The question, is a locality big enough to provide a welfare system, must read, is the unit small enough to provide the human context without which attempts to care for the needy shrivel and die on the bureaucratic vine of depersonalization?” (Ibid., 83).

Third, there are crucial differences between representative and direct forms of democracy. Representative systems, to be authentic, depend on the involvement of a citizenry well-versed in the principles of citizenship, a requirement presently left unfulfilled. These principles of citizenry can only be learned in the context of human-scale institutions and thus small direct democracies are a pre-requisite for an authentic, properly functional, representative democracy. Both are needed, not one without the other.

Fourth, doing democracy is the only sure way to learn democracy. There is no other way to ensure democracy “other than to give people total power to control some of the things that affect their lives — from beginning to end — in a government of human scale. Bits and pieces of democracy won’t do” (ibid., 84).
Fifth, those policies that rely on human factors for the proper understanding of their formulation and implementation ought to be carried out by human-scale governments. Welfare provisions or educational services are good examples. In contrast, the more planet-based a policy is, those that deal with the environment or matters that affect a large area, the more they are the province of a centralized (larger though still highly accountable) level of government.

Sixth, the tendency to subdivide policy-making bodies into a bewildering horde of one-purpose bodies, such as individual school boards, solid-waste authorities, planning commissions, etc., should be avoided and reversed. A multiplicity of bodies “governing over jurisdictions that are seldom coterminous forces people to seek out influence in a puzzling web. Citizen fatigue and then despair sets in. Democracy is lost to the tyranny of complexity and obfuscation” (ibid., 84). The atomization of policy into camouflaged enclaves jealously guarded by an entrenched interest group is incompatible with human-scale politics. “The size of jurisdictions must be reduced to the point where the linkages between, say, highways and schools become understandable and manageable. Policy will be the better for it. Democracy cannot survive without it” (ibid., 84).

Finally, caution Bryan and Mc Claughry, “administrative decentralization on a function-by-function basis is worse than none at all. Unless democratic processes accompany decentralization, we are left with the worst possible situation, no democracy and lots of complexity” (ibid., 84). Compounding complexity while avoiding a concomitant increase in democracy is a familiar tactic used by centralists to divide and conquer local communities.

While increasing the number of relatively independent governing bodies by creating a system of shires, the shires are not designed as more government between the towns and the all-powerful
state. "On the contrary," explain Bryan and McClaughry, "the proposed shires will be independent polities, accountable directly to their own people, governed by a body elected by the people, having their own independent resource base adequate to their needs" (ibid., 86). Shires will represent not more government, but the same amount of government more equitably distributed. "We want more democracy in the government, not more government in the democracy." Such an equitable distribution, Bryan and McClaughry estimate, would require the central state governments to shrink to about one-quarter their current size; so too with the Federal government if the shire-system were to catch on nation-wide. Authority for those laws that require uniformity, for those regarding civil rights and liberties, the environment, or corporate behaviour, for example, will continue to reside at the centre. The disposition of services, spending powers, and taxation will devolve to the new shire governments. In this way, claim Bryan and McClaughry, "the localities will no longer be creatures of the state. The state will be the creature of its localities" (ibid., 85,86).

The actual division of responsibilities between shire governments, and those belonging to sub-shire units, whether towns, incorporated villages, neighbourhood districts, or whatever else that works, will be left to the people of the shire to determine. The state's role will be restricted to ensuring that due process is followed by the shires in making decisions and distributing responsibilities. As the shire system evolves and expands, leaving the particularities to each shire will ensure that a wide spectrum of variation in shire structure emerges. As Bryan and McClaughry put it, "The shires will be laboratories for experimentation, where substance (policy) and process (democracy) will work out a natural balance" (ibid., 87).

Estimating the appropriate size and space covered by each shire, in keeping with the seven
democratic principles outlined earlier, presents special difficulties. In today’s world of giantism and urbanization, “small” often refers to districts or towns still 25,000 people in size. For direct democracy to work, 25,000 people is much too large a size for a sub-shire unit, but it may be a good size for the shire itself. In order for the shire system to work at a time when large populations and heavy densities prevail, as already noted, a two-tier framework that combines representative democracy with direct democracy is, in the very least, necessary. Still, the shire system, combining as it does both representative and direct expressions of democracy would likely work best in an area with a relatively dispersed population, such as Vermont with 245 of 246 of its towns having less than 25,000 people and 120 having less than 1000. At the same time, Vermont’s population is not so widely dispersed that great gulfs separate town from town. The shire system requires face-to-face democracy in each sub-shire to empower a representative system between each sub-shire and forming the shire itself, and in turn allowing the formation of a federation of shires in control of the state. Thus a shire system might not work as well in an area of particularly low population density, such as the northern regions of Canada, or of especially high population density, such as New York City. The limitations of the city, given that they are where most of us reside, will be discussed more fully in the final section of this chapter.

With respect to the necessary fusion of direct with representative democracy, Bryan and McClaughry propose a two-tier framework as follows:

(1) the towns, where direct (town meeting) forms of decision-making will be used, and (2) the shires, which features a representational system. Building the shires from the bottom up by combining towns will provide them with a foundation of strong communities. But the shires are also kept small enough to create a clear bond between
citizen and legislator and relieve the tension of representation stretched beyond reason (ibid., 88).

Accordingly, for the shire system to be effective, direct democracy and representative democracy must fuse, which still leaves unanswered the optimal size for both to work together properly. This question of optimal size has a long history of debate stretching back to the Greeks. It was Aristotle who observed that the size of a polity should not be so great that its inhabitants cannot know each other’s characters.

Many contemporary thinkers have batted around the ball of optimal size. Kirkpatrick Sale place the optimal population for purposes of direct democracy at 500 citizens. Political scientist Robert Dahl observes in his Dilemmas of a Pluralist Democracy: “A unit with a citizen body larger than a thousand, let us say, will drastically reduce opportunities for effective participation and individual influence” (quoted in ibid., 89). Benjamin Barber, in his influential book, Strong Democracy, calls for a national system of neighbourhood assemblies which would “include no fewer than five thousand citizens and certainly no more than twenty-five thousand” (quoted in ibid., 89). Douglas Yates, author of Neighborhood Democracy, settles on a figure of no more than a few hundred citizens, and Joseph Zimmerman, advocate of town-meeting democracy and professor at State University of New York, places the upper limit of a self-governing population at 8,000 to 10,000 citizens.

Bryan and McClaughry, upon reviewing the record of what happened in hundreds of Vermont town meetings between 1969 and 1989, and after finding a strong consistent relationship between size and participation, have determined the optimal size for direct democracy to work to be in the 500 to 2,500 citizens range. And the closer toward 500, the more optimal the democratic
unit. Thus, the units, be they towns, neighbourhoods, or some other similar arrangement that make up the shires, should be less than 2,500 people in size.

The size of each shire will be largely dependent on the geography and population density of the area in question. Bryan and McClaughry propose a much higher population for urban shires, say, around 50,000 citizens divided into around 100 direct-democratic units of approximately 500 each. For rural shires, where reasonable walking or driving distance should be a guiding criterion for shire size, an optimal size may be in the area of 10,000 people. In the case of Vermont, such a shire would likely contain from five to ten sub-shires, by way of incorporated villages and small towns, and thereby give each sub-shire reasonable weight within the shire. In other cases, such as the larger town of Rutland with a population of 20,000, it could be split into two shires following natural lines of division, or kept intact as one shire, depending upon the will of the people living there, so long as its sub-shire units, neighbourhoods in this case, were small enough to facilitate direct democracy.

Once the optimal sizes for sub-shires and shires has been achieved, determining the distribution of power between the sub-shires, the shires, and the state or province (as the federation of shires), aside from being largely left up to the people concerned, should follow the democratic principle of subsidiarity. To wit: those policies that most directly affect people are most appropriately decentralized down to the level most affected. Policies that most directly affect larger areas of the planet are most appropriately centralized up to the level most coincident. As Bryan and McClaughry explain:

If we can build the 'complicated and dutiful' relationships of true human interaction back into governance, most of our problems in these areas will shrink to manageable size. Thus the power of the
state government as the protector of the environment and guarantor of basic civil rights and liberties should be preserved. But the shires should be the repository of authority in matters in which success or failure depend on face-to-face interaction of human beings (ibid., 95).

There is a need for a state presence in those concerns which transcend local boundaries, as in the case of transportation, disease control, information gathering or dissemination, the administration of state-wide institutions such as a major university or hospital, technical assistance, and shire-federal relationships. Still, even in these areas there should exist a substantial shift of power to the shires, wherever possible. Even if all levels of law making were shared between the state and shire, the administration and interpretation of policy would normally occur at the shire level. For example, while it would be a crime to pollute rivers statewide, it would be up to the shire in which the crime occurred to mete out appropriate punishment, so long as they brought the offending activity to a halt. Shires downstream might also seek reparation, a matter that would have to be dealt with, perhaps, at the state-level.

In practice, however, most shires would determine most of their own laws and policies democratically, including how best to implement and enforce these policies. The state, and other shires would offer general guidelines and expectations, and on some counts could override an individual shire’s decisions, but maximum autonomy would be the goal. It is hoped that the face-to-face provision of services, the enforcement of shire-wide rules, or the community’s own response to crime, would be more effective then the same coming from an impersonal, distant, and centralized authority. Those rules that pertain to state-wide environmental concerns, or to civil rights and liberties and the concerns of due process, will still be locally upheld and subject to reasonable local interpretation, but because they also bear wider concern, the input of other
shires or the state itself may be necessary. In the area of formulating and upholding various localized or state-wide laws and policies, Bryan and McClaughry see a particularly important role for new information and communication technologies in ensuring the smooth coordination of the various levels of governance concerned.

Accordingly, the autonomy of each shire and sub-shire will not be absolute. Bryan and McClaughry concede that democracy, while absolutely necessary, is also risky business. For example, if one or two sub-shires were to be seduced by the immediate benefits offered to accept the location of a nuclear power plant or chemical waste dump, the respective shires to which these units belonged would be expected to step in and say no. If this failed, or if an entire shire sought a line of action incompatible with the collective good, then the entire state-based federation and the state government itself would move to veto the decision. Furthermore, decisions of this nature would never be left up to the individual sub-shire or the shire itself in the first place. According to Bryan and McClaughry,

In these cases the progress that comes through the trial and error of experimentation of a multiplicity of units making decisions over time, that consciousness raising that would occur, an invigorated global awareness, and a heightened sense of citizenhood in each town, must be sacrificed because the impact of a mistake by one unit would come crashing down on the entire region (ibid., 97).

Nevertheless, any overriding of the democratically achieved decisions of a sub-shire or shire would not occur easily and not without great deliberation or regret. On the other hand, if, for example, a town or two decided to implement a totally creationist curriculum, heated debate may surround the decision, but it would stand as their decision to make. When the effects of a decision are localized, as in this case, then autonomy must prevail. Parents who live in other
towns or shires may like the idea and move to the town offering the creationist curriculum. Other parents not so enamored might choose to send their children to another school, move to another town, or practice home-schooling. The above represents a process that is a little messy and certainly lacks the consistency or uniformity we have come to expect with bureaucratic efficiency. But it is a process that ensures that democracy, as much as possible, prevails. And it leads inexorably to a diversity of outcomes, a diversity of cultural ways and means, and arguably, it is diversity that ensures the long-term survival of communities and human happiness since it broadens the base of human experience that we all may draw insight from, thus improving our ability to successfully meet what challenges may come.

The desire to ensure a diversity of outcomes is as central to the shire-system as it is to the philosophy of civic humanism, and diversity is considered by both to be the mainstay of democratic health. The concept of diversity is derived from nature, from the observation that ecological diversity is vital to the long-term health of the environment. There exists within each ecosystem enough diversity, from the individual organism, through the individual species, and into whole populations, and including the diversity of rivers, lakes, mountains, valleys, forests and grasslands, to best ensure that the ecosystem contains enough elasticity, enough variability, to respond successfully to whatever challenge or crisis befalls the ecosystem. To reduce the diversity, contract the elasticity, as is currently evident in mono-cultural tree plantations or agricultural practices succumbing wholesale to pest or disease outbreaks, is to consequently reduce the survivability of the ecosystem. The situation within human societies is similar, a condition that radical democracy in whatever form seeks to avoid.

importance of diversity in human affairs. For Johnson, the many values of diversity include "a fundamental advantage for survival: It contributes to stability, to the ongoing continuity of life and the avoidance of devastating breakdown." Johnson continues: "diversity means that no part of a system is so dominant that its collapse would be a catastrophe for all... Diversity also allows change to occur smoothly since individuals can shift to modestly different ways without making big, risky changes, to experiment with greater safety, and thus encourage it" (quoted in ibid., 98).

And a radical democracy, premised as it is on significant local autonomy, will ensure a diversity of outcomes, undoubtedly some better than others, but all the product of those most affected. It is absurd to think that this potential for ambiguity and unpredictability is thus inferior to centralized and standardized forms of decision-making which seek universal fairness; the same outcome for all. Typically, under conditions of human-scale decision-making, while a diversity of decisions and a diversity of outcomes are possible, great care is exercised in the choice of which course to take, particularly when it is one's children or community health that is at stake. As Bryan and McClaughry say, "We are less apt to do harm to each other under conditions of localism than we are to the planet, because we care more about ourselves." For them, "It confounds reason and usurps all sense of instinct to argue that there is any mechanism which is apt to treat children more humanely than a close-knit community of parents and neighbors" (ibid., 98).

To insist that radically democratic communities, lacking centralized guidelines, dictates, or decrees, are unable to manage their affairs effectively, that they will become hopelessly lost in a tangle of diversity, is to infantilize them and insist they are too ignorant to govern their own affairs and that the whole democratic project should therefore be scrapped. This argument has
been used repeatedly to deny First Nations’ peoples the freedom to govern their own affairs, presumably because of their likelihood of making mistakes (or more likely because they will succeed and undermine centrist power). Beyond the infantilizing arrogance of centrists, however, is the tendency to forget that massive harm can be done by centralized institutions. Indeed, the few slip-ups, errors in judgement, and decision-making mistakes inevitably mixed in with the diversity of outcomes expected under a radically democratic system pale when compared to our present system of centralized control. As Bryan and McClaughry argue:

In fact decisions made by the institutions of adversarial, representative liberalism are almost always wrong, by definition. Compromise, which is essential to centralized decision making in a complex society, may work, but policies produced by compromise in mass societies are seldom correct. Moreover when adversarial, compromising liberalism breaks down, centralized decisions can end up deep on the down side of their intended goal of an acceptable mediocrity. When this happens everyone (not just a local district or two) is harmed. Centrists often wrongly assume that the choice is between a system that always works perfectly (and consistently produces mediocrity) and a system that can work very well and very badly. We concede that local decisions can be very bad. But so too can centrist decisions. When centrist decisions are good, they are average; and when they are bad, they are horrid (ibid., 99).

And again we run into the basic premise of radical democracy: people should be left alone to govern their own affairs, to make their own mistakes and achieve their own successes, and to thereby gather the wisdom of experience which will aid them in their pursuits, and will allow them to contribute maximally to the common good. This is not to say that if aid is necessary and requested that it should not be freely given. Indeed, it should. However, aid should not be imposed from above, and it should be offered unconditionally and only when requested.

Bryan and McClaughry go to great pains to detail the mechanics of the shire-system; detail
unnecessary to reproduce here. They spell out the appropriate ratio of representatives to citizens (1 per 200 citizens), methods for their election and length of term served, the majorities required in votes (usually 75 percent), methods for voting and vote counting (proportional rather than first-past-the-post), and the forms and responsibilities the various levels of representative government may take, from shire to state. They also spell out in great detail the form the shire judicial system may take, the means whereby the work of democracy could be distributed, the new form the state legislator might take on, and how shire democracy may be financed. Bryan and McCaughry also detail the means and methods for ensuring an educated citizenry, for the provision of Welfare and other important services, and for ensuring that the relationship of the shire to the land and the overall natural environment is sustainable.

In their proposal for the formation of an alternative polity, Bryan and McCaughry appear to have left 'no stone unturned.' Their treatment is thorough and plausible and fits especially well with the overall aims of the community self-reliance movement. A few modifications here, a few adaptations there, and an alternative polity with widespread applicability could be the result. However, its applicability to the modern city is limited. Indeed, the city carries significant limitations for most expressions of community self-reliance, including the shire system. Dealing with the anti-community, atomizing and individualizing effects of the city will pose great challenges to any bids for a radical democracy. For there exists in the city the most curious of ironies: something that brings so many people physically together does so in a manner that existentially keeps them apart.

While radical democracy and the shire-system is not wholly incompatible with the modern city, (especially smaller cities such as Portland, Oregon or Boulder, Colorado), and could have
limited effect at the level of neighbourhoods, districts and municipalities, the city is so much the embodiment of giantism that it possesses an enormous inertia away from the interests of community self-reliance and political decentralization. The modern city is very much at the centre of globalized power and hence a great deal of energy is required simply to sustain small-scale alternatives in the city, such as housing or food cooperatives, subscription farms or co-housing projects. Cities, in many ways the antithesis of community and especially self-reliance, are particularly difficult places to begin the construction of alternative pathways.

This does not mean that those confined to cities should give up in despair; they should just more discriminately choose their strategy for fostering communities of greater self-reliance. Choosing to pursue a program of community self-reliance by first creating a shire-system as an alternative polity for one’s city is rather like jumping into the deep-end of a swimming pool without benefit of swimming lessons. Urban dwellers might choose instead to support local, organic farmers, form food and housing co-operatives or co-housing projects, buy locally produced goods, reduce levels of consumption and practice greater sharing with one’s neighbours, practice urban agriculture, take a heavy interest in municipal politics, bicycle or use public transit, join a local credit union, or form a workers’ co-operative. Which strategies are appropriate and most likely to lead to success for city-dwellers in contrast to rural-folks is an important question.

Heavily populated cities, and especially the trend toward megalopolis urban corridors, are a problem for the shire system as much as they stand in contrast to the needs of communities, families, individual health, and the preservation of the environment. Cities, as places where high production meets high consumption, are notorious for destroying the bonds of relative self-
reliance that have held people together for centuries, as well as instigating the wholesale
dependency of city-folk on the surrounding country-side for the provision of the resources
necessary to sustain their large appetites.

Cities are often characterized as vortexes, sucking in massive quantities of resources from
outside without giving anything back — except for water and air pollution, acid rain, the
encroachments of ever-more urban sprawl, and mountains of garbage. Bio-regionalists
characterize this urban tendency as an “ecological footprint” and they ask, “how large a footprint,
or impact, does the city have on the environment beyond its actual physical size?” Typically, a
geographic area five to ten times the actual area occupied by the city is required to sustain the
city. And cities, beyond eroding the bonds of community, also serve to concentrate wastes and
pollution to a degree especially dangerous to the environment and human health. Wastes and
pollution accumulate in the city at a rate far higher than the available local environment can
absorb or disperse. Cities are thus difficult places in which to pursue greater autonomy, self-
reliance, or democratic freedom.

It is expected that the radicalization of democracy — the furtherance of the principles of
community self-reliance and the concomitant creation of an economics of permanence — would
also see a reversal of the present trend toward urbanization. If giantism in economics and politics
gives way to decentralization, it is reasonable to expect the same will happen with urbanization,
as all three are mutually interdependent. The country-side would fill-up again and small towns,
family farms, and relatively self-reliant communities would again flourish. This is not to say that
cities would disappear, but that they would lose their grip over modern society as the only way
to organize large populations. And the cities that remain would also develop higher levels of self-
reliance, not to mention community, especially if the older pre-automobile forms of urbanization that stressed a multitude of relatively self-reliant neighbourhoods or districts were to return.29

Today’s cities, reflecting as they do the imperatives of centralization — economic, political, and cultural — have emerged more than anything else as means toward the end of economic growth. People are concentrated and contained, brought together to facilitate mass production and mass consumption, especially by removing them from the land and destroying their bonds of self-reliance, a process called “structural adjustment” in the Third World. Urbanized populations are also more expediently managed — politically and bureaucratically. And urbanized populations are more readily transformed into cultures of consumption, being more amenable and available to the persuasions of the mass media, and lacking any real degree of autonomy. Concepts like relative poverty, status hierarchy, or consumer insecurity really only have effect on people densely packed together. The person who lives in a relatively self-sufficient small town or sub-shire unit would probably care a great deal less than most people do today about keeping up with the Jones's or adhering slavishly to the latest fashion or consumption trends.

No matter, if the shire system has limited applicability to modern cities, as much of the community self-reliance movement does (though there are still many things the urban dweller can do to improve their autonomy and diminish their dependence), this fact should not stop people from trying it where it might work best. Towns, or small cities, and states or provinces with similar densities to Vermont, would all offer greater possibilities for success than would a city like Toronto or New York. The community self-reliance movement, as much as the creation of a shire-system, is largely about leading and living by example, showing others what can be done in hopes that they too will be emboldened and seek radical change. At this point, bold strategies
with a low probability of success are less preferable to modest strategies with a higher probability of success. Accordingly, the co-housing project or workers’ cooperative is probably a better place to begin crafting community self-reliance for the urban-dweller. Diving headfirst into creating an alternative polity in an environment that discourages getting to know one’s neighbours is a sure recipe for failure. In the long run, it is hoped, things will change as things change; the revolution, so to speak, will not happen overnight but will step-by-step evolve into being. It is thus important to choose one’s steps carefully.
Conclusion

Over the course of this study I have tried to do several things. First and foremost it was my intention to establish the existence of a phenomenon that might be called the Community Self-Reliance movement. While the CS-R movement has not named itself as such, its ubiquitousness is undeniable.

Second, I have attempted to situate the CS-R movement in the context of globalization, more specifically, position it as a response to economic consolidation and ecological disintegration. I was not hard-pressed to unearth and provide examples of individual movements or expressions from within the CS-R movement that very much saw their role as one of opposing globalization, nor was there any difficulty in finding scores of advocates for some kind of “re-localization” response to globalization. As much as possible, throughout this study, I have let CS-R advocates and activists ‘speak for themselves.’ This was the most effective way I could think of to show that those involved with the CS-R movement see themselves very much as both agents of change and opponents to globalization.

Third, I have attempted to substantiate the validity of expanding on how new social movements are recognized or conceptualized, at least in the case of the CS-R movement, by
adding a “composite” dimension to social movement analysis. This may be the weakest link in
the preceding study for it still leaves unaddressed the question of where a social movement leaves
off and a larger social trend begins. Possibly, the community self-reliance movement is better
conceptualized as a collection of new social movements that together represent a broad social
trend toward the restoration of a radical democracy, or the reassertion of a social order grounded
in community self-determination or self-governance. Composite social movement versus social
trend? Either way it makes little difference, for the social phenomenon exists and is worthy of
further research.

In the very least, I do not believe there remains any doubt as to the status of each of the
constituent movements that comprise the CS-R movement as being new social movements in the
Meluccian sense. Clearly, for example, the CED, CSA, or intentional community movements all
exist as “systems of action” or “complex networks.” Each of these movements do contain a
“segmented, reticular, [and] multi-faceted structure” made up of “diversified and autonomous
units.” And clearly, they all exist as signs, frequently intentionally and self-consciously so, “that
signal a deep transformation in the logic and the processes that guide complex societies.”
Whether straddling the economic, political, or socio-cultural sectors, each movement clearly
questions the dominant society’s tendency toward massification, centralization, or global
consolidation and posits instead a model based on self-determination toward self-reliance. In
place of the atomization and individualization rampant in today’s society, each movement
emphasizes some form of co-operative or community-based social organization. And in the face
of infinite growth economics and the massive ecological degradation that follows, each
movement expresses a disposition toward an economics of permanence and a tendency toward
ecological sensitivity. Not every movement, and especially not every individual expression or strategy, expressed these counter-values equally, but all appear to do so to some degree.

Accordingly, from the preceding study, we can formulate, in the Weberian sense, an ideal type to correspond with a hypothetical constituent movement in the greater community self-reliance movement. This ideal type may concern itself with either the economic, political, or socio-cultural sectors, or any combination of the three, or all three (as was sometimes seen with intentional communities).

The ideal type is always opposed to the fragmentation of the modern world: the demise of traditional community associations, the erosion of the family, and rise of the atomized and alienated individual. Thus community is the first and always present value — community in the sense of a shared organizational reality and normative structure that is largely of the community's making, and from which the community members together derive a sense of greater meaning and belonging.

The ideal type is always opposed to the loss of autonomy and the rise of deference and dependence that characterizes the modern world. Without straying too far into the territory of the rugged individual, the ideal type includes an emphasis on relative self-reliance, on the ability of individuals and their communities to look to themselves first for the solutions to their problems, in stark contrast to most people today who habitually look to others, whether governments, investors, employers, scientists, experts, shopping malls, television, or idealized relationship for the solutions to their problems. Self-reliance is the realization of the personal integrity and strength to act independently, and when combined with an overriding desire for
community, it can make for the greatest contribution to the strongest community. Our present tendency toward dependence and deference results in a population very easily manipulated and persuaded into roles ultimately contrary to our better interests.

The ideal type will always include, by definition, a preference for radical democracy, defined as power held by the people on the behalf of the people. Consequently, the ideal type favours decentralized forms of economic, political, and social organization for, in order for radical democracy to work, the greatest level of direct involvement by the bulk of society is necessary. This is a slow, labour-intensive, and directly face-to-face requirement, but the best safeguard for democracy is democracy practiced on the ground by everyone. Democracy given over to representatives (exclusively) is no longer democracy. At best it is rule by proxy, at worst it is rule by an oligarchy. Radical democracy requires that everyone, as a duty and condition of citizenship, actually practice democracy throughout their day-to-day affairs.

The ideal type opposes the present blind acceptance of infinite growth economics. Instead, an economics of permanence or a steady-state economy is the preference. The economy must not grow beyond the bounds of sustainability within the global ecosystem that supports it. Qualitative development by way of regeneration and ongoing improvement is preferable to a model of infinite quantitative growth seemingly incapable of changing short of the system’s collapse. Becoming better or more effective is preferable to simply getting more.

The ideal type, following along with an economics of permanence, will always contain a reverence for the environment and will seek to achieve and maintain a state of ecological integrity. This means that all human activities must be in accordance with the environment’s needs or limits. Those activities that are sustainable are acceptable, those that degrade the
environment beyond its regenerative capacities are not. Human beings must no longer regard themselves as being apart from natural processes and instead must learn to regard themselves as being a part of natural processes. We are not separate, or above, but of. We must behave like wise stewards, not plundering pirates.

And, finally, the ideal type will emphasize post-material values to replace today’s crass materialism and insatiable drive for more and more. Post-materialism recognizes that the things truly worth considering lie not in the realm of the material so much as they lie in the realm of the relational, familial, or spiritual. Post-materialism stresses the pursuit of meaning, not the pursuit of more material wealth.

In sum, the ideal type is concerned with building communities of relative self-reliance within a framework of radical democracy and steady-state economics. The ideal type is devoted to living in harmony with the natural world, and is interested more in the pursuit of meaning over the pursuit of material gain.

With this study I am in no way suggesting that the community self-reliance movement (or social trend) represents a “knight in shining armour” that will save us from ourselves, or more specifically, from the evils and perils of globalization. Rather, the CS-R movement is one area of aggregated opposition to globalization that must link-up and build coalitions with other social movements and popular struggles. The values that are represented by the CS-R movement, as elucidated in the ideal type, are probably, to a very great extent, generally transferable to many other movements. Indeed, a broad reading of social movement literature reveals that these values are moving toward a general acceptance as The Values that must replace globalization.
What distinguishes the community self-reliance movement from say the environmental movement or the New Age movement is the order of priority given these values. Environmentalists prioritize ecological integrity, New Agers prioritize the post-material, while the CS-R movement, obviously, prioritizes community and self-reliance. But all are part of the same struggle toward a reality free from the self-serving determinations of the powerful and in favour of the self-determining actions of the empowered.

The immediate future for the CS-R movement should be toward developing a greater awareness of itself, toward strengthening its internal unity and overcoming its tendency to divide along sectoral lines — that is, a tendency to focus primarily if not exclusively on the economy, or the provision of secure housing, or the securing of control over land and food. Some of the individual expressions making up the CS-R movement have begun to do this, as we saw with several intentional communities and with community land trusts. However, the recognition of a common identity within and between the various CS-R movements has only barely begun. The greater the awareness of common purpose, the greater the possibility for concerted action. Perhaps, as Lummis has suggested, this common purpose should be identified as the historical project of a radicalized democracy, with each movement providing a strand in a widening web.

The CS-R movement is a great supporter of appropriate forms or uses of technology. Small-scale or low impact technologies, those that improve an individual or community’s ability to obtain self-reliance, such as a small tractor, solar collectors, photovoltaics, and bicycles, are acceptable — appropriate — forms of technology. Large-scale, or high impact technologies, those that impair an individual or community’s ability to maintain self-reliance, such as labour-
replacing machinery, centralized power grids, extremely complex equipment, or prolific automobiles, are to be avoided. Some technologies, however, fall somewhere in between. The new information and communication technologies as exemplified by the Internet are good examples of these middle-ground technologies.

In their final chapter on the alternative polity, Bryan and McClaughry placed a great deal of faith on the democracy enhancing potential of the new information and communication technologies. By their nature, they allow for a very high degree of decentralized decision-making and as such, for Bryan and McClaughry, are very important to the future of a decentralized and radically democratic political order. These technologies, the Internet in particular, if used appropriately, may hold a great deal of potential for the CS-R movement and its future development and increased unification along with its linking up with other radically democratic social movements.

Indeed, there already exists a tremendous amount of activity by activists on the Internet. Very early on in the development of the Internet, activists were quick to seize on its informational, organizational, and mobilizational possibilities. All manner of activist organizations, from Amnesty International to Greenpeace, from a wide selection of Green Parties to non-governmental organizations (NGOs) of all stripe, to radical publishing houses, anarchist cells, and libertarian socialists, have all established a formidable presence on the Internet.

And a very sizeable number of CS-R related organizations have also set-up shop on the Internet and thus may help bring about a critical threshold of awareness within the movement. Scattered throughout the cyberspace of the Internet are literally hundreds of organizations attempting to promote community self-reliance and mobilize opposition to globalization as well
as many more individual CS-R expressions attempting to share their successes and thereby raise
the consciousness of others. A few examples of Internet-based CS-R related organizations drawn from
the many that exist includes: the Institute for Economic Democracy (at www.slonet.org/~ied); the Community Economic Development Centre (at www.sfu.ca/cedc); the Institute for Local Self-Reliance (at www.ilsr.org); the Fellowship for Intentional Community (at www.ic.org); the FoodFirst Information and Action Network (at www.foodfirst.org); and
Community Supported Agriculture of North America (at www.umass.edu/umext/CSA).

A significant contribution to the informational and mobilizational potential of the Internet is
a function known as “hyper-text.” This function refers to the ability of those hosting websites
to include in the texts that comprise their sites select highlighted terms. Clicking on this highlighted term will offer the user a list of websites that provide more information on this term, or will take the user directly to a separate site directly related to this term. As well, an organization can include in their website a list of hyper-texted links to the sites of other similar organizations. Clicking on the organization’s name will take the user directly to its respective website. This hyper-text function dramatically improves the potential of any Internet-based activist organization to connect up interested parties with other similar organizations as well as situate the organization into a larger framework of struggle. To illustrate, the Institute for Local Self-Reliance provides hyper-text links to the websites of 91 other CS-R related organizations including: the American Local Power Project; the Center for Civic Networking; the Center for Livable Communities; Going Local; the International Forum on Globalization; the E.F. Schumacher Society; the University of Wisconsin Center for Cooperatives; the Global Recycling Network; and the Renewable Fuels Association.
Individual CS-R related initiatives are also well represented on the Internet. For example, instructing the Internet search engine Altavista to locate websites related to Community Supported Agriculture resulted in 1254 hits. In this manner, the interested party could connect up with and learn about hundreds of different CSA initiatives such as the Prairieland CSA, the Be Wise Ranch, Blue Heron Farm, Brigit Croft Farm, or the Sauk Mountain Farm. Instructing Altavista to search the Internet for websites related to cooperatives resulted in 45,210 hits including: Cenex Harvest States Cooperatives; the Iowa Institute for Cooperatives; Co-op Atlantic; the Electric Cooperatives of South Carolina; the Mondragon Cooperatives; the Federation of Southern Cooperatives; and the Montana Agricultural Cooperative.

Used wisely, the Internet may afford CS-R activists with the best means possible to connect up with other similarly dedicated activists, and to broaden the movement by seeking out alliances with natural allies, such as environmentalists, Native Rights activists, Green Parties, ecofeminists, libertarians, socialists, or New Age spiritualists, all of whom are well represented on the Internet.

Perhaps the greatest virtue of the Internet is its transborder potential — its ability to rise above national boundaries and establish global relations. The recent ability of the Zapatista rebels in Chiapas Mexico to use the Internet with great effect to inform a global audience of their plight, to garner widespread support, and to keep a spotlight trained on Mexican authorities, provides a showcase example of the Internet’s transborder informational and mobilizational potential.

In sum, the Internet provides perhaps the best opportunity for the CS-R movement to stimulate an increased awareness of itself and to hasten the reaching of a critical threshold of mobilization. As well, the Internet allows the CS-R movement to situate itself in the context of
greater radical democratic struggle and thereby begin the process of forming alliances and coalitions toward the broadening of a counter-globalization front.

While the communicative potential of the Internet requires careful study of its advantages and detriments to 'progressive' mobilizations, the focus of this study has been on the emergence of a social trend or composite movement toward greater community self-reliance. The remedial possibilities and salubrious appeal of the promoted life-styles and ideology of the CS-R movement is apparent, but further study is called for in several areas to clarify the long-term feasibility of the localized movements and their congruence with a global order.

First, a great deal more empirical research is required to determine the extent of the CS-R movement. My hope with this study is to open the door further to such research, to alert other sociologists or students of social movement activity that there may exist both a social movement, and a qualitative shift in social movement form (i.e., toward composite), that warrants greater analysis. Indeed, if the terrain covered and the expressions taken by the overarching CS-R movement is as extensive and varied as this study suggests, the opportunities for research, particularly more direct forms such as participant-observation or ethnographic, are enormous. As well, the opportunities for sociologists (particularly those steeped in some kind of critical theory and thus desirous to encourage fundamental social change) to explore a deeper relationship with social movements and thus with praxis are also enormous. What contributions can the theoretical formulations of sociologists make to the practical realities of CS-R activists?

An important component of this empirical research into the CS-R movement should be an analysis of the real uses and potentials the Internet represents, as seen from the perspective of CS-R activists. How are they employing the new information and communication technologies,
and to what effect? How might an understanding of the possibility of a newly emergent form of social movement — the composite movement — be informed by an analysis of the actual employment of new information and communication technologies? What kind of transborder or transnational movement possibilities are opened up by these new technologies?

A second area that calls for greater research concerns the policy possibilities and implications associated with the CS-R movement. Can governments, as they presently exist at any level, effectively play a role in encouraging community self-reliance? As we have seen in the case of Bologna, Italy and its governing Party of the Democratic Left, or as in the case of the Canadian province of Quebec, a local government can very successfully encourage the development of such CS-R related initiatives as workers' cooperatives. However, especially in the case of CED initiatives, Eric Shragge has articulated deep misgivings in the ability of any CED initiative that receives government help or sponsorship to truly encourage community self-reliance. Rather, according to Shragge, the typical result of government-backed CED initiatives is the emergence of a mildly innovative form of economic development along otherwise conventional lines; the development of community is usually lost. Accordingly, a key research question may seek to determine whether or not present forms of government, as centralized and bureaucratized entities whose role is the administration of massified society, are even compatible with bids for community self-reliance. As a corollary to this question, inquiry should be devoted to formulating further what form a political structure that is receptive to community self-reliance might take. What policies might this new form then pursue?

As well, there is the very real concern that the greater the success enjoyed by CS-R initiatives, the stronger the argument corporate libertarians (and neo-liberals), with their penchant for a
minimalist government, will have toward eliminating all social programs or social provisions currently supported by the State. Indeed, starting with Thatcher, the encouragement of the ideals of individual responsibility and community self-reliance has been used by neo-liberals as a rationalization to dismantle social programs and cut people adrift by the tens of thousands to face particularly insecure futures. The potential of the CS-R movement to be a victim of its own success, to encourage even further the Draconian tendencies of neo-liberals everywhere, is a research area that desperately requires further attention.

It should be stressed that community self-reliance initiatives seldom seek to eradicate government (just decentralize it). Rather, starting from a position of localized and relative autonomy and integrity, CS-R initiatives generally seek to encourage the creation of a social order that is more just and more able to care for the needs of its members. Such an order will still require the services of governments, systems of taxation, and the maintenance of social programs. The end, however, to which governments are directed will need to change radically. Instead of being directed toward the elite-favouring maintenance of infinite economic growth and the subversion of all interests to this goal, a government given over to the aims of the CS-R movement would seek the qualitative maximization of the common good. For example, such a governing structure would, at the most local level possible, ensure that all of its citizens had the whole of their basic needs met. Those unable to provide for themselves would be provided for anyway, with the hope that by ensuring the satisfaction of everyone’s basic needs, their opportunities for self-realization or self-actualization, and thus their ability to contribute back to their communities, are maximized. In short, people, and the realization of their highest potential, would be the focus and ordering principle of the CS-R influenced society, and the role of
governments everywhere and at any level would be to facilitate this goal.

This brings me to the identification of a final research area. Following the lead of such radical and alternative economists as E. F. Schumacher and Herman Daly, what form might the society that is given over to an economics of permanence or a steady-state economy take? If the goal is to be the pursuit of *qualitative development* as opposed to the prevailing drive toward maximal *quantitative growth*, what will such a society look like and how might it make the transition? How will the market be organized, if it is retained at all? How will individual initiative, inventiveness, and entrepreneurialism continue to be encouraged in the absence of an overriding profit motive? How will large capital-intensive projects, such as universities or hospitals, be permitted? To what extent will the individual acquisition of wealth be permitted? How will a balance be struck between a localized level of relative self-reliance and concomitant autonomy, with the requirements of an overarching, regional system of organization (say, a federation) to provide such things as an interconnected transportation and communication infrastructure or a healthcare system? Finally, what real obstacles, such as an entrenched system of authority and a dominant decision-making order very unlikely to relinquish voluntarily power, lie in the way of the realization of a social order given over to a radicalized democracy?

Just because the task ahead, to bring into realization the centuries-old historical project toward a truly democratic order, appears formidable, does not provide sufficient reason to not try. Had it not been for the agitations of centuries of activists, the possibility of even conceiving of launching a radically democratic challenge to the status quo would not exist today. Each generation of activists has challenged a little more and pushed back a little further, the prerogatives of the powerful.
Perhaps we can conceptualize globalization in *dialectical* terms. The capitalist order, representing the *thesis*, has extended its reach and influence to the highest level possible — the global. In so doing, the capitalist order has sown the seeds of its own destruction by releasing the contradictions inherent to its expansionary and creatively-destructive logic, those of widespread and rapidly deepening social and ecological disintegration. In the process of globalizing, capital, having also extended to the global level its disintegrative internal contradictions, has thus encouraged the formation of its *antithesis*. The antithesis we can see in the myriad expressions of re-localization, whether a revival of Islamic Fundamentalism, the proliferation of gated communities in the U.S., or the growing impulse toward community self-reliance. Once the thesis of globalized capitalism can no longer absorb or deflect the antithetical challenges wrought by its own internal contradictions (e.g., infinite growth in a finite environment, increasing polarization of the rich and poor), a period of breakdown followed by transition to a new order must ensue. This new order, known as the *synthesis*, seeks to combine the best of the old order (the thesis) with the lessons learned through the challenges of the antithesis. As is apparent through a reading of the intentions of those in the front line of the CS-R movement, contributing directly to the form the synthesis shall take is of high priority.

The evidence, with regard to globalization, that some kind of dialectical process is presently underway, and that the contradictions are nearing their fullest, particularly as evinced by the arrival of serious ecological limits to further economic growth, is compelling. If, as I suspect, a profound transformation is imminent, in keeping with the dialectical process, toward a new mode of social organization that overcomes the globalized contradictions of capital, then the opportunities to rush the ordering principles of radical democracy into the breach are historically
without precedent. The opportunity available to the community self-reliance movement to join up with all other movements who at heart are devoted to the realization of a radical democracy — environmentalists, feminists, social justice, Native Rights, anti-development, and so on — and take a decisive role in shaping the order to come is enormous. If we survive the globalization of capital, it may then be possible to entrench the globalization of democracy.
End Notes

1. None of this is to say that we should not consume material goods. We are, after all, material beings with material wants and needs. The thought exercise here is meant to prompt in the reader a kind of psychological sifting: how many aspects of their taken-for-granted daily reality revolve around material consumption, and how much of this consumption is necessary for the maintenance of needs rather than for the maintenance of insatiable wants?

2. The figure of 1.1 to 1.2 billion, or one-fifth, is provided by Alan Durning in How Much is Enough?: The Consumer Society and the Future of the Earth (1992). Durning breaks the world’s population down into three consumer classes: At the top is the overconsuming one-fifth, each of whom possess an annual income in excess of US$7500. Most of these overconsumers live in North America, Western Europe, Japan, Australia, with others in Hong Kong, Singapore, and the oil sheikdoms of the Middle East. This group, at the aggregate level, is most responsible for the present rapid rate of environmental decline, as well as the state of absolute poverty endured by the world’s poorest.

There follows a middle class or sustainer class that is comprised of 60 percent of the world’s population, or approximately 3.3 billion individuals. These individuals earn annually from US$700 to US$7500 and live mostly in China, Latin America, East Asia, and Eastern Europe. India, for example, is rapidly expanding its own middle class of about 200 million, many of whom now possess incomes and consuming power at the top-end of the world’s middle, sustainer class, or the bottom-end of the overconsumer class. Nations that seek to industrialize and become “advanced” often seek to first create a core of middle-class and above overconsumers to spur on investment, ideologically defend the culture of consumption to the rest of their people, and provide models for others to emulate — in effect, install a status hierarchy which we are all too familiar with here.

At the bottom of the consumer pyramid is the world’s poorest one-fifth, again 1.1 to 1.2 billion individuals, who earn less than US$700 annually. Many of these people are absolutely impoverished and their everyday existence is tenuous and perilous. Many earn less than US$1 per day, and must expend 70 percent of that on food. Life for this group is unnecessarily harsh and if it were not for a highly disproportionate death rate (due largely to heavy infant mortality), this group would be expanding fairly rapidly.

Others more inclined toward economic pragmatism, such as corporate libertarian Kenichi Ohmae, perceive the world’s affluent or consumer class to contain approximately 700 to 800 million individuals, all those whose annual income exceeds US$10,000. This group is known as the “$10,000 club.” For a revealing interview with Ohmae, see William C. Taylor and Alan M. Webber, Going Global: Four Entrepreneurs Map the New World Marketplace (1996). Also see Ohmae’s The Borderless World: Power and Strategy in the Interlinked Economy (1991).
3. This is not to say that we must return to some kind of dreary, labour-intensive, subsistence form of existence. Many people in the world’s middle class lead very full and enriching lives and do not suffer from great want. Many ecological thinkers, from Amory Lovins to E.F. Schumacher, Kirkpatrick Sale and Herman Daly, point out that an economy devoted toward permanence, and not endless material consumption, would place the emphasis on qualitative development, not quantitative growth. The opportunities for sustained material comfort are argued to be actually greater than that currently enjoyed by even most of the world’s overconsumers. Resources would not be devoted to getting more, but to getting the very best possible, thereby allowing for greater emphasis on the development of community, healthy individuality, spirituality, and so on. Accordingly, even with existing technology, and especially with the aid of sophisticated yet appropriate forms of technology, tools, or clothing, or modes of transportation could all be built to standards many, many times higher than today’s (which are designed around the idea of built-in obsolescence).

In a recent study by Amory Lovins, L. Hunter Lovins, and Ernst von Weizsacker, entitled *Factor 4: Doubling Wealth, Halving Resource Use*, the authors detail how we can live twice as well using half as much just by simply exercising more efficiency and creating less waste.

4. An *economics of permanence*, as associated with the work of E.F. Schumacher, whom we shall look at in greater detail later, or a *steady-state economy*, as associated with the work of Herman Daly, are basically interchangeable concepts. Both are almost self-explanatory and refer to an economics that is no longer beholden to sustaining growth, as in the title of Daly’s seminal work, *Beyond Growth: the Economics of Sustainable Development* (1996).

A crucial blindspot of conventional, neo-classical economics, according to Schumacher and Daly, is its inability to recognize the environment as anything but a convenient source of raw materials and a handy place to dump expended resources. In effect, the environment is regarded as a sub-system of the macro-economy, a very dangerous illusion according to Schumacher and Daly. According to Daly, steady-state economics or the economics of permanence is based on:

the preanalytic vision that the macroeconomy is not the whole, but itself a subsystem of a larger finite and non-growing ecosystem, and consequently that the macroeconomy too has an optimal scale. A necessary requirement for this optimal scale is that the economy’s *throughput* — the flow beginning with raw material inputs, followed by their conversion into commodities, and finally into waste outputs — be within the regenerative and absorptive capacities of the ecosystem. The whole idea of sustainable development is that the economic subsystem must not grow beyond the scale at which it can be permanently sustained or supported by the containing ecosystem (1996: 27,28).

Daly continues:
Sustainable development...necessarily means a radical shift from a growth economy and all it entails to a steady-state economy (SSE), certainly in the North, and eventually in the South as well. Growth...refers to an increase in the physical scale of the matter/energy throughput that sustains the economic activities of production and consumption of commodities. In an SSE the aggregate throughput is constant, though its allocation among competing uses is free to vary in response to the market. Throughput begins with depletion and ends with pollution. Growth is quantitative increase in the physical scale of throughput. Qualitative improvement in the use made of a given scale of throughput, resulting either from improved technical knowledge or from a deeper understanding of purpose, is called 'development.' An SSE therefore can develop, but cannot grow, just as the planet earth, of which it is a subsystem, can develop without growing. The steady state is by no means static. There is continuous renewal by death and birth, depreciation and production, as well as qualitative improvement in the stocks of both people and artifacts (ibid., 31).

In sum, the aim of a steady-state economics is to replace neo-classical, infinite-growth economics — the heart of globalization. The planet earth can no longer afford an economics that emphasizes endless quantitative growth, given the existence of finite resources and waste absorption capacities. The emphasis now must be on the pursuit of qualitative development, making the best of what limitations exist while not exceeding these limits. As we shall see in the course of this study, many of the strategies that comprise the CS-R movement oppose globalization on the basis of its flawed central logic — infinite growth — and posit alternatives more in keeping with an economics of permanence, or a steady-state economy.

5. Lummis is Professor in the International and Cultural Studies Department of Tsuda College in Tokyo, Japan. Aside from Radical Democracy (1996), he is the author of twelve other books on political theory, all published in Japan. Radical Democracy was winner of a 1996 Critics' Choice Award from the American Educational Studies Association.


The five works, with respect to globalization, that I am most indebted to for stimulating my interest in and approach to the subject of this study are: Tony Clarke, Silent Coup: Confronting the Big Business Takeover of Canada (1997); Paul Ekins, A New World Order: Grassroots Movements for Global Change (1992); David Korten, When Corporations Rule the World (1995); Jerry Mander and Edward Goldsmith, editors, The Case Against the Global Economy and For A Turn Toward the Local (1996); and R. S. Ratner, “Many Davids, One Goliath”, in William K. Carroll, editor, Organizing Dissent: Contemporary Social Movements in Theory and Practice (2nd ed., 1997).


8. On the exploitation of the poorest of the poor, consider the following quote. It was from an internal memorandum leaked from the World Bank, dated December 12, 1991. It was from the pen of then World Bank chief economist, Lawrence Summers, a Harvard economist of considerable reputation. At present, Summers is Undersecretary of State for Trade in the Clinton Administration. He wrote:

Just between you and me, shouldn't the World Bank be encouraging more migration of the dirty industries to the LDC's (Lesser-Developed Countries)? I can think of three reasons:

(1) The measurement of costs of health-impairing pollution depends on the foregone earnings from increased morbidity and mortality. From this point of view a given amount of health-impairing pollution should be done in the country with the lowest cost, which will be the country with the lowest wages. I think the economic logic behind dumping a load of toxic waste in the lowest-wage country is impeccable and we should face up to that.

(2) The costs of pollution are likely to be non-linear as the initial increments of pollution probably have very low cost. I've always thought that under-populated countries in Africa are vastly under-polluted; their (air pollution) is probably vastly inefficiently low compared to Los Angeles or Mexico City. Only the lamentable facts
that so much pollution is generated by non-tradable industries (transport, electrical generation) and that the unit transport costs of solid waste are so high prevent world welfare-enhancing trade in air pollution and waste.

(3) The demand for a clean environment for aesthetic and health reasons is likely to have very high income elasticity. The concern over an agent that causes a one in a million change in the odds of prostate cancer is obviously going to be much higher in a country where people survive to get prostate cancer than in a country where under-5 mortality is 200 per thousand. Also, much of the concern over industrial atmosphere discharge is about visibility of particulates. These discharges may have little direct health impact. Clearly trade in goods that embody aesthetic pollution concerns could be welfare enhancing. While production is mobile the consumption of pretty air is non-tradable (quoted in Harvey, 1996: 65,66).

While Summers did claim responsibility for the memo, he claimed it was a satirical tool to raise awareness amongst his colleagues whose own arguments could be expressed in this fashion. If Summer’s story is true, this raises serious questions about the entire World Bank.


For insight into the specific role TNCs are playing in the destruction of the environment, two works are particularly noteworthy: Joshua Karliner, *The Corporate Planet: Ecology and Politics in the Age of Globalization* (1997) and Brian Tokar, *Earth For Sale: Reclaiming Ecology in the Age of Corporate Greenwash* (1997).

access their website, go to <www.agr.ca/policy/coop/accueil.html>

20. Typically, scrip takes the form of paper currency or tokens issued in times of fiscal emergency as a temporary substitute for federal or national currency that is absent or in particularly short supply.

21. For more on this story, see Freidrich Engels, *The Conditions of the Working-Class in England*, first published in 1845. Engels observed that, during the early years of the 19th century in England,

> Everything was made subordinate to one end, but that end of the utmost importance to the manufacturing capitalist: the cheapening of all new produce, and especially of the means of living of the working-class; the reduction of the cost of raw material, and the keeping down — if not as yet the bringing down — of wages... Every obstacle to industrial production was mercilessly removed (1973:32).

The City of Manchester became an important centre for industry, and many of the people who were denied their rightful access to the land their ancestors had farmed for centuries poured into the City. Between 1801 and 1850, Manchester saw an increase in its population from 70,000 to more than 300,000 people.

22. There are many excellent books on the subject of the "mal-development" of the developing world (known alternatively as the South, the Third World, Least Developed Countries, underdeveloped, and undeveloped). In all cases, these nations, mostly found in Africa, Asia, and Latin America, are seen as profoundly inferior to the so-called advanced, industrial nations. Development typically means undergoing a process of accelerated modernization so that the underdeveloped nation can become an advanced, industrial nation as quickly as possible. Typically, elites on both sides of the development fence will attempt to make this happen with ruthless abandon and single-minded determination. The consequences for the developing nation’s people, and its environment, are often ruinous. For more on this topic, see: Jonathan Crush, editor, *Power of Development* (1995); Kevin Danaher, editor, *50 Years is Enough: The Case Against the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund* (1994); Susan George, *A Fate Worse Than Debt* (1989), *How the Other Half Dies: The Real Reasons for World Hunger* (1991), and *Ill Fares the Land: Essays on Food, Hunger and Power* (1990); Susan George and Fabrizio Sabelli, *Faith and Credit: The World Bank's Secular Empire* (1994); Wolfgang Sachs, editor, *The Development Dictionary: A Guide to Knowledge as Power* (1992); and Vandana Shiva, *Staying Alive: Women, Ecology, and Development* (1991).

24. For a fascinating look at a rich tapestry of alternative communities, see William M. Kephart and William W. Zellner, *Extraordinary Groups: An Examination of Unconventional Lifestyles* (4th ed., 1991). In this work, Kephart and Zellner examine the intriguing lifestyles of the Old Order Amish, the Oneida Community, Gypsies, Shakers, the Hasidim, the Father Divine Movement, Mormons, and Jehovah’s Witnesses. A fifth edition has since been published that includes a few new groups.

A second examination of alternative communities is that of Andrew Scott, *The Promise of Paradise: Utopian Communities in B.C.* (1997). British Columbia has a rich history of experimentation in alternative forms of living. Scott examines several, including William Duncan’s native colony, Metlakatla, the Norwegian Colonies of Hagensborg and Quatsino, the Danish Cape Scott Colony, the Doukhobors, and the Aquarian Foundation of Brother XII.

25. A notable example would be the intentional community recently destroyed by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms and the Federal Bureau of Investigation in Waco, Texas. Known as the “Branch Davidians,” an off-shoot of the Seventh Day Adventist Church, this community practiced communal living arrangements and centered much of their activity around the preachings of David Koresh, the group’s charismatic leader who had been groomed by community elders to act as a conduit for the teachings of God. This group was particularly uninterested in practicing radically democratic decision-making, delving into New Age spirituality, expressing an environmental consciousness, or exploring issues of social justice, concerns that motivate many other intentional communities. Rather, they were particularly keen, based on a literal interpretation of key sections of the Bible, on preparing for Armageddon, and preparing to survive it.

Contrary to mediatized sentiments, the Branch Davidians were harmless and posed no threat to anyone. For a truly horrifying look at official U.S. intolerance for alternative ways of life, obtain the award-winning documentary, *Waco: The Rules of Engagement*. The lengths to which the BATF and later the FBI went to destroy the “cult,” as revealed by “unauthorized” video footage and the interception of radio transmissions, and by the proceedings of the inquiries and hearings following the alleged mass suicide of the Branch Davidians, is literally blood-chilling.

What occurred to the Branch Davidians should give anyone seeking to construct alternative ways of life serious reason to pause. The United States, in particular, does not exactly possess a sterling record with respect to an appreciation for alternative ways of living that depart from the American way. Many native Americans, Nicaraguans, Cubans, or Vietnamese could vouch for the validity of that statement.

26. One must forgive the constant reference to “him” or “man” in Walter’s writings. Most were originally published in 1968.

27. The rugged topography, plenitude of defensible passes, and inhospitable weather, much like the conditions that prevail in Vermont, might also have something to do with Switzerland’s defensive success. Switzerland’s collusion with the Nazis during World War II, and its present role as a safe haven for illicit wealth have also helped protect its
autonomy.

28. For more on the “ecological footprint” model, see Mathis Wackernagel and William Rees, Our Ecological Footprint: Reducing Human Impact on the Earth (1996). This book is part of The New Catalyst Bioregional Series and published by New Society Publishers, P.O. Box 189, Gabriola Island, B.C., Canada, V0R 1X0. Other titles in this excellent series include: Putting Power in its Place: Create Community Control!, Living with the Land: Communities Restoring the Earth; and Circles of Strength: Community Alternatives to Alienation.

29. For more on the theme of liveable cities, see Murray Bookchin, The Limits of the City (1986) and Urbanization without Cities: the Rise and Decline of Citizenship (1992).


