

GOING BACK TO NATURE!

A case of the eco-villages concept in theory and its practice in the Netherlands



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MSc Thesis Leisure, Tourism and Environment

Course code: SAL 80433

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ABSTRACT

The concept of eco-villages is growing across the world .However, a lot of debate has raged on about what really this concept entails and what its proponents want to achieve. It is because of the wide interpretation of this concept in both academic and non-academic literature that I set to find out the various discourses about eco-villages. Furthermore, I looked at eco-villages in the Netherlands to examine if they follow a particular discourse and rounded off by identifying reasons which has led to eco-villages in the Netherlands to follow that particular discourse. I used discourse analysis , face to face semi-structured interviews as well as focus group discussions with major stakeholders involved in eco-villages in EVA_Lanxmeer and Dreijn in the Netherlands. I identified the following discourses which are eco-villages as spaces of resistance (anti-globalization and resistance to traditional governance structures) eco-villages as nostalgic deep green/utopia, eco-villages as elitist havens as well as eco-villages as models of sustainability. My analysis of eco-villages in the Netherlands revealed that they follow the sustainability discourse as opposed to resistance, deep green/utopia and elitism. Many reasons can explain why but suffice to say that the Netherlands government at national, provincial and local level has managed to collaborate with eco-villages in a way that has pacified them by accepting eco-villages as an alternative model for sustainable housing. . In addition, the eco-villages themselves have emphasized on inclusion of future residents within the existing design framework as opposed to some eco-villages that start from a premise of exclusion of current structures leading to resistance, elitism and utopian approaches

Key words: sustainability, anti-globalization, resistance, utopia, eco-village, elitism, pacify, exclusion, inclusion

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1: BACKGROUND AND PROBLEM STATEMENT

The world today is facing a lot of problems like climate change; overcrowding, pollution and the breakdown of the community according to Irrgang (2005). By breakdown of community, he means the absence of social ties like interaction between residents who live and share the same space. In his view, this has led to people at individual, household or community level taking local initiatives to try and address these problems

One of the local initiatives that has emerged from ordinary people is the concept of eco-villages. Through the establishment of eco-villages, communities are seeking practical ways of addressing these challenges by taking local initiatives in such areas as energy use, water use, waste disposal, physical construction of buildings and education to mention but a few in an approach that is challenging the conventional development theory and practice particularly in urban areas(Irrgang, 2005)By conventional development theory and practice, he means the construction of residences like skyscrapers and flats that sees residences as an end in themselves and not a means to an end. The current residential buildings ignore the social, ecological, economic and at times spiritual dimensions which human beings need to live a fulfilling lifestyle

The concept of eco-villages has generated a lot of debate among its proponents and opponents alike. There is a wide and diverse understanding and interpretation of what eco-villages are and why they are being established and who is establishing them. It is on this backdrop that the following sections are going to explain the aims and objectives of this thesis

1.2: GOALS

The major goal of this thesis is to look at the various discourses about eco-villages based on both academic and non-academic literature. I will then look at eco-villages in the Netherlands so as to compare them with the global discourses so as to try and explain why the eco-villages in the Netherlands follow a particular discourse

1.3: OBJECTIVES

The following three broad objectives are the fulcrum of this study

- To discuss the various theoretical discourses about eco-villages
- To find out which discourse(s) are more dominant in the Netherlands
- To explain why that/ those discourse(s) are dominant in the Netherlands

1.4 SPECIFIC RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- *What are the various theoretical discourses about eco-villages?*
 - ✓ How do various scholars define eco-villages?
 - ✓ What is the motivation for the establishment of eco-villages?
 - ✓ What are the various views about their emergence and evolution?
 - ✓ How are they characterized in various debates?
- *Which discourses are dominant in the Netherlands?*
 - ✓ What is the motivation for establishing eco-villages in the Netherlands?
 - ✓ Who is involved in the eco-villages?
 - ✓ What are the various views about their emergence and evolution?
 - ✓ What are the characteristics of eco-villages in the Netherlands?

- ✓ How can we define eco-villages in the Netherlands?
 - ✓ Where can the Dutch eco-villages fit within the theoretical discourses?
- *Why are those discourse(s) dominant in the Netherlands.*
 - ✓ Which forces has shaped eco-villages in the Netherlands and how and why?
 - ✓ Which institutions are involved?
 - ✓ How are residents involved?
 - ✓ What is the impact of government policy and other stakeholders in shaping the trajectory of eco-villages in the Netherlands?

1.5: METHODOLOGY

1.5.1 Research Design and Methodological considerations

The research will be descriptive in nature .I firstly did a desktop study of major eco-villages in the world especially in Sweden, Denmark, America, Netherlands and Australia. This gave me an insight into the motivations of eco-villages and how the residents view their choice to live in eco-villages. I then used this information to come out with the major discourses of eco-villages, itself one of my research objectives

According to Hajer (1995:44) discourse must be understood as “a specific ensemble of ideas, concepts and categorizations that are produced, reproduced, and transformed in a particular set of practices and through which meaning is given physical and social realities” By creating new meanings and altering cognitive patterns as well as positionings, he emphasizes, discourse plays a central role in policy. Through discourses, elements from many different domains are combined and that provide actors with a set of symbolic references that suggest a common understanding” (Hajer, 1995: 62).

The adoption of policy instruments implied by a certain story-line and the need of actors to refer to this story-line to legitimize their arguments are seen as indications of discursive hegemony. As Hajer (1995: 59) points out, the struggle for discursive hegemony, in which actors try to secure support for their interpretation of reality, is determined by three factors: (1) credibility, (2) acceptability, and (3) trust. Credibility does not only depend on the plausibility of the argument, but also on the authority of the authors. Acceptability implies that the position is considered as attractive or necessary. Trust leads to the suppression of doubts and can be derived, for example, by referring to the procedure by which a definition of reality was reached.

This thus shows that discourses group people with certain ideas about a concept together and they use that underlying idea as a metaphor to support and justify their actions. This is very useful to eco-villages because from the available literature or websites of eco-villages, there are various motivations and justifications of these eco-villages

Discourse analysis is important because concepts can be analyzed in many ways given the wide array of theories and policy models 'out there (Marsh and Stoker, 2002) Van den Brink and Metze (2006) argue that recently, discourse theory has become popular. This trend is related to the so-called 'argumentative turn' in the social and political sciences (Fischer, 2003). This shift has been also happening in other disciplines like tourism where it has been labeled, "the critical turn" in tourism studies (Ateljevic, Harris, Wilson, & Collins, 2005) Whereas rational choice and institutional approaches have been very dominant in these disciplines, their materialist, (post)positivist, interest-based and resource-oriented foundations have been criticized by many (Arts, B. & Buizer, M, 2008)

As an alternative, discourse theory has emerged, also in the sub-discipline of policy analysis (Elands and Wiersum, 2001) Fischer (2003) argues that discourse analysis offers a (more) ideational, constructivist or interpretive perspective both on scientific research as well as on social practices. The basic assumption is that history

and humans are not so much 'driven' by objective interests, rational calculations, social norms or overt power struggles, but by knowledge production and (collective) interpretations of the world (Arts,B.& Buizer,M, 2008)

I then carried out case studies by visiting EVA_Laxmeer in Culemborg, I interviewed stakeholders involved in the envisioned Dreijn Eco-village in Wageningen as well as 2 focus group discussions with the Initiative Dreijn and Wageningen environmental Platform (WEP) I finally interviewed stakeholders involved in the planning of this proposed eco-village namely WUR, Municipality of Wageningen, Housing Association.

A case study has been defined as “a detailed examination of an event (or series of related events) which the analyst believes exhibits (or exhibit) the operation of some identified general theoretical principle” (Mitchell, 1983:192). On the other hand, Yin (2002) argues that a case study can be described as an empirical inquiry that investigates a phenomenon in its real life context.

In this research I used both ideas of a case study to gain insight into the concept of eco-villages so that I can be able to conceptually analyze them in the context of existing literature. I used a variety of data collection methods like literature review, face to face interviews, focus group discussions, transact walks etc, thus enabling me to use data triangulation so as to refine and purify my understanding of the eco-village concept because triangulation added rigor, breadth and depth to studies (Jennings, 1999:29)

1.5.2 Why use Qualitative Methods?

According to Fischetti (2008) qualitative methods are best-suited to exploring the interactions between individual people and the larger structures that influence their lives. Thus this approach enabled mi to be visible in the research process

Winchester (2005:5) states that one of the two questions that can be answered with qualitative methods is: "what is the shape of societal structures and by what processes are they constructed, maintained, legitimized, and resisted?" Qualitative methods aided my search to understand the degree to which eco-villages can be understood in the broader context of societal structures. These societal structures differ, in my view from one nation to another and carrying out such a study in the Netherlands helped me understand these complex societal structures and how they have given birth to this concept of eco-villages.

As Winchester (2005) explains, the academic examination of the interactions between human agency/behavior and broad scale structures, processes and dynamics, is best pursued using qualitative methods. Further, qualitative methods are particularly well suited to investigating resistance to large-scale structures, processes, and dynamics. Winchester (2005:5) states that one of the two questions that can be answered with qualitative methods is: "what is the shape of societal structures and by what processes are they constructed, maintained, legitimized, and resisted?" (Winchester 2005:5)

1.5.3 Validity and reliability issues

Although Scrimshaw (1990) posits that "qualitative methods are acknowledged to be accurate in terms of validity, while quantitative methods are considered to be better in terms of reliability or replicability" (p.89), I adopt only qualitative methods. Reliability in this qualitative approach shall therefore be taken care of by data triangulation

1.5.4 Ethical Considerations

I explained the objectives of the research to all interviewees. With regards to confidentiality, I told them that although I can omit their names, if they do not like it, the research is for academic purposes and will be read by staff and maybe future students of Wageningen University and has the possibility of being published. I also

informed the participants that I intend to use and make reference to their ideas and comments to write the report to fulfill the requirements for my MLE degree. From this explanation, I requested for the participants' consent and permission.

1.6 Sampling procedure

1.6.1 Selection of study units

I chose 2 eco-villages in the Netherlands for my study. These are EVA_Lanxmeer and the Dreijn.

I chose this mix because EVA_Lanxmeer is regarded in literature as one of the most successful eco-villages in the Netherlands if not the world according to the Global Eco-village Network (2005). I also chose Dreijn Eco-village which is still in the planning phase. This was important because it helped me meet various stakeholders involved in this delicate phase like the Initiative group, Municipality of Wageningen, WUR, Housing Association, interest groups like Green party, the Wageningen environmental Platform(WEP) Mooi and Durzam Wageningen. The various views of these stakeholders with some supporting and others opposing the establishment of Dreijn Eco-village helped me to understand various debates about eco-villages, people's perceptions and feelings and how the Wageningen stakeholders interact in project formulation and implementation. It also enabled me to understand the thinking that informs discourses as I found out the motivation of the people involved in working hard to have an eco-village established in the Dreijn

Thus I believe that studying a successful and eco-village in the initiative phase provides a balanced framework of having a full picture about eco-villages in the Netherlands. Studying only successful eco-villages in my view may mask some challenges or issues which must be explored if more useful information about eco-villages can be obtained.

1.7 Methods and techniques of data collection

1.7.1 Secondary data

I used mainly academic literature which I must confess is still not much in the area of eco-villages. On top of that I used non-academic literature like blogs, websites and newspapers. The worth of extra disciplinary knowledge, generated in non academic literature has been highlighted mainly because it is highly contextualized for a specific project (Tribe, 1997). It is such relevance of extra disciplinary knowledge contained in non academic published or unpublished government reports and project reports among others that I find document study an important source of data. Content analysis of relevant reports and documents will provide secondary data. This was more relevant with eco-villages because most of them have websites where I read to understand them without even visiting them. This greatly assisted me particularly in identifying discourses about eco-villages

1.7.2 Primary data

The methods and techniques for collecting primary data included

Semi structured interviews

Semi-structured interviews blend the advantages and disadvantages of unstructured and structured interviews. Kevin Dunn (2005:89) tells us that semi structured interviews are "content focused" and allow for "flexible questioning." With semi-structured interviews, I was able to ask the same questions of all interviewees, which I could then systematically compare. And, I was free to pursue interesting theme as they arose. Semi-structured interviews provided me with a window onto stakeholders' thoughts, opinions, motivations, challenges, and aspirations. Other

than using inflexible structured interviews, I used semi structured interviews with the selected participants to enable flexibility and ability to probe. I used the semi structured interviews guided by a topic list

Focus group discussions (FGDs)

Focus groups have been described as “focused or semi-structured group interviews” (Minichiello, Aroni, Timewell and Alexander, 2005 cited in Jennings, 2001:172). To gain a deeper understanding of the eco-villages within the wider socio-cultural, political and institutional context; I found focus group discussions necessary. Since FGDs allow generation of multiple realities, interaction, flexibility (Jennings, 2001) and mirroring; a wide range of experiences and opinions were understood which contributed to an understanding of eco-villages. 2 FGDs were held with the Initiative Dreijn and the Wageningen Environmental Platform (WEP) My role was to provide guidance but at the same time allow participants to air out their views. The interviews took between 1-2 hours and in my view were some of the most informative of all my research tools

Transact walks

I visited EVA_Laxmeer as well as the proposed site for Dreijn Ecovillages walked around to have a practical appreciation of the issues and to make some observations on the ground about how the eco-villages are organized. At EVA_Laxmeer, I was taken on a guided tour where I had the chance to see things like water and waste recycling, physical construction issues .unfortunately, language limitations discouraged me from interviewing residents

1.8 Data analysis

I analyzed both secondary and primary data. Secondary data was mainly used to understand the various discourses about eco-villages from mission statements of eco villages, pictures and also scholarly articles. The primary data was mainly analyzed in order to understand eco-villages in the Netherlands in terms of various stakeholders analysis based on responses given during semi-structured and FGDs.

1.9 Positionality

I approached this study as an outsider because I was trying to understand the views of community and institutions of the Netherlands which I don't know since I don't come from this country. This enabled me to expunge bias and take issues with an open mind. Personally, I am a disciple of communities taking things into their own hands in addressing challenges of sustainability. I believe in a bottom –up as opposed to top- down approach .therefore to some degree, I approached this study with a positive appreciation of what eco-villages can contribute to sustainable development

CHAPTER 2: DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

In this Chapter, I will first make an introduction about what eco-villages are in brief since there is wide interpretation of the concept in literature. I will then go on to discuss about the various discourses that can be discerned from literature and explain the underlying ideas of each discourse by using both scholarly and non-academic literature especially from eco-village websites. I will finally round up with a comparative discussion of the discourses.

Various definitions have been proffered by various academics to define eco-villages. Gilman (1991) defines an eco-village thus, “.human-scale full-featured settlement in which human activities are harmlessly integrated into the natural world in a way that is supportive of healthy human development and can be successfully continued into the indefinite future (Gilman 1991). Given the debate and at times misunderstanding surrounding this concept, it is important to analyze this definition further so as to sharpen our understanding of eco-villages

Definitional Analysis

According to Fischetti (2008), by "human-scale", Gilman (1991) refers to the size of the community. He believes that a community of no more than 500 to 1000 people allows community residents to know each other and to influence the direction the community is taking (Gilman 1991).

Gilman also used the term, “fully featured settlement.” According to Bang (2005) he is referring to a mixed-use community in which all aspects of life are integrated and present within a small radius. It is important to note that this is not referring to an isolated or completely self-sufficient settlement, but one in which there are multiple avenues of employment in the community, as well as eco-villagers who are employed outside the community, outsiders who are employed within the

community, and services outside the eco-villages that community members will access (i.e. airports, hospitals) (Bang 2005) Bang also comments that the term "human activities are harmlessly integrated into the natural world" refers to more than ecological sustainability. It also refers to an eco-centric (rather than anthropocentric) worldview, which values other forms of life on a par with humans (Bang 2005)

Quoting Bang (2005) again, he comments that by the phrase "supportive of healthy human development," Gilman (1991) is advocating for " ... a balanced and integrated development of all aspects of human life - physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual." He is referring to the fulfillment of the needs of both the individual community members and the community as a whole (Bang 2005)

The concept of sustainability in the broad sense is shown where Gilman (1991) says that the eco-village must "be continued into the indefinite future" This is clearly about intra and inter-generational equity. There are three components of sustainability: ecological, social, and environmental. In order for a community to be sustainable, all three of these components must be addressed. Gilman (1991) explains that that this is difficult because there are many hidden ways in which communities can be "living off the capital accumulated in other parts of the society; or dependent on unsustainable activities elsewhere; or not inclusive of a major aspect of life (such as childhood or old age)." This component of eco-village life requires a commitment to being fair and non-exploitative in present dealings with other parts of the world, in dealings with the non-human world, and in dealings with forms of life that will come in the future (Gilman 1991).

Furthermore, Fischetti (2008) highlights an important point when she argues that it is important to discuss a common response to the eco-village concept. Many recognize that various non-industrialized indigenous communities today do live in something similar to an eco-village, and many past traditional agricultural villages throughout the globe could also be considered something similar to an eco-village. With this recognition, it would appear that those involved in the eco-village

movement are advocating for the adoption of an indigenous village structure or a return to an idyllic past. This is not the case (Dawson 2006; Gilman 1991; Norwood and Smith 1995).

As Gilman (1991) aptly puts it, “very few people would describe these villages as either full-featured or supportive of healthy human development. The work is hard, life expectancy is short, opportunities for personal development and education are few (almost non-existent for women), and the diversity of livelihoods is small ... In addition, the harmony between these villages and the natural environment has often depended on low population densities - a luxury we no longer have... And finally, traditional villages are hardly paragons of harmony between humans. Village life is often, from a modern point of view, painfully patriarchal. Beyond the household there is feuding and mistrust within villages, between neighboring villages, and toward the world beyond.

Hence in the words of Gilman (1991) eco-villages are distinctively post-industrial phenomena because they address post-industrial situations, including environmental degradation, global population growth, the presence of new technologies (including scientific, communication, and renewable resource use technologies), new forms of human organization and new levels of human understanding and awareness of our place in the universe (Gilman 1991).

Critique of Gilman Definition

Given the raging debate as regards the eco-village, various critics of the concept has emerged. One of the most prominent critics of Gilman’s definition is Dawson (2006). He criticizes Gilman definition for what he terms its, “imprecision and for its aspirational nature.” He argues that “... points to the goal towards which eco-villages seek to move rather than a state which any has yet achieved” Dawson (2006) supported by Jackson and Svensson (2002) agree that defining an eco-village is not easy especially having a precise and static definition

They argue that this is because although, “.....eco-villages are build on a common vision; they differ greatly from each other according to the difference in focus placed on their ecological, social, and/or cultural spiritual-dimensions. They are also greatly influenced by different climactic conditions, their natural environment and prevalent local cultures” Accordingly they conclude that, “....any generalizations risk a homogenization of the diversity of eco-villages that exists”

Dawson (2006) however went on to identify five underlying characteristics of eco-villages which I have summarized below. Firstly eco-villages are private citizens’ initiatives. They’re grassroots. Secondly, eco-villagers value community living. Thirdly, they are not overly dependent on government, corporate, or other centralized sources for water, food, shelter, power, and other basic necessities. Fourthly, eco-villagers have a strong sense of shared values, often characterized in spiritual terms. Finally, they often serve as research and demonstration sites. Many offer educational experiences for others.

Apart from the Gilman (1991) definition which has been critiqued above by Dawson(2006), another important definition of eco-villages is the one that has been elucidated by the Global Eco-village Network(2005).Its important because it has brought to the fore another dimension of sustainability which has brought debate and innuendo about eco-villages. It goes thus, “urban or rural communities of people who strive to integrate a supportive social environment with a low-impact way of life. To achieve this, they integrate various aspects of ecological design; permaculture, ecological building, green production, alternative energy, community building practices, and much more. Eco-villages are living models of sustainability. They represent an effective, accessible way to combat the degradation of our social, ecological, and **spiritual**¹ environments.”

¹ Emphasis is mine

This concept of the spiritual being part of the sustainability matrix has led to the debate about whether the addition of spiritual is premised on the literal meaning of religion or not is the crux of the matter. Some scholars see eco-villages as spiritual communities from the literal sense where a group of people of a particular religion live together. However on the other hand other scholars do not interpret spiritual from the literal sense but it's interpreted to encompass spirituality as distinct from religion but as shared values of environmentalism, community development or local economies

In the following sections, I am going to discuss the various discourses about eco-villages. This discussion is based on scholarly ideas about what they are, their characteristics and what they seek to achieve. I have analyzed literature and grouped these issues into discourses. It is vital to note that I have given these discourses names from my synthesis and grouping of ideas scattered across various literature. These discourses just aid in simplifying our understanding and are not exhaustive or cast in stone. New ones can be added; some can be improved or rejected by other researchers

From the desktop research, I have identified 5 major competing discourses about eco-villages that will be discussed below which are resistance, deep green approach(Utopia), elitism and sustainability.

2.1 Eco-villages as spaces of Resistance

Throughout history, when people are not happy with any obtaining system or situation, they always try to resist it as a way of changing it in the direction they feel is right. According to Fischetti (2008) there are many negative consequences of the way we organize ourselves socially under the current capitalist, political, economic system that there have been (and continue to be) myriad attempts at multiple scales

to resist it and to find alternatives. Cresswell (2000) defines resistance as the use of power to change one's life circumstances. Pile and Keith (1997) argue that reorganization of material space can also be understood as resistance. Sharp et al. (2000) adds that because power and resistance both take place across space and in places, these entanglements of power and resistance are spatial, and indeed, geographical. They argue that those resisting forms of domination can exercise power through the reorganization of material space. Thus this is relevant to eco-villages in the sense that they utilize space to express their resistance

From the literature, two major forms of resistance which are resistance to globalization (anti-globalization) and resistance to traditional² governance structures in relation to residential developments are recurring. Therefore I am going to discuss them in the section that follows

2.1.1 Eco-villages as anti-globalization movement

In this section I will start by discussing the reasons that are forwarded in literature as to why anti- globalization is the motivation for establishing eco-villages. I will then look at the underlying determinants of anti-globalization resistance before looking at arguments advanced for suggesting that eco-villages are an anti-globalization “movement.” I will finally conclude by how eco-villages are defined from this perspective.

Irrgang (2005) argues that globalization has brought with it not only positive impacts but also some negative effects. In his view, at the core of these challenges is the culture of consumerism. He argues that nowhere is this culture more epitomized than in the massive growth of urbanization and the resultant negative consequences associated with it such as overcrowding, extensive mass consumption of non-renewable resources, massive pollution of air, water, land and noise, ecological destruction through the wanton destruction of both fauna and flora due to the

² In this context it means the mainstream top –down approach to residential construction by local authorities and professional bureaucrats

urban sprawl and the breakdown of social ties as the concept of community breaks down due to individualism in most conventional residential areas(Irrgang, 2005) In his view, this is the basis of the resistance to globalization by eco-villages.

Goss (2004) identifies social, cultural and personal impacts of the capitalist political economy promoted by globalization which he argues include (but are not limited to) impacts on consumers, such as commodity fetishism, alienation, and materialism. He describes commodity fetishism as the process by which consumers dismiss the impacts of their consumption choices on those people who actually produce the products, as well as impacts on the environment. Moreover, he views commodity fetishism as fostering the derivation of consumers' senses of personal identity through consumption .In his view, this leads to materialism that leads to overconsumption of the world resources without any regard to the environment and other negative effects hence breeding alienation from today's life in a globalised world. That is why in his view eco-villages are a response to that alienation of today's globalised society (Goss 2004). Kasser and Ryan (1996)and also Kasser and Sheldon(2000) supports Goss's view by also arguing that these strivings for materialism brought about by a capitalistic system hinged upon globalization diminish well-being, damage interpersonal relationships, reduce quality of life, and promote the overconsumption of resources, among other things. On the other hand they argue that a focus on intrinsic values promotes greater personal, social and ecological well-being and this in their view is what eco-villages represents thus they view them as resistance to globalization

The GAIA trust (2004) argue that eco-villages are against symbols of globalization like the World Trade Organization(WTO) They argue that WTO policies epitomizes all what is wrong with globalization and they list some of these as shown in the figure below from a GAIA Trust website

Figure 1 Anti-globalization view towards global institutions like WTO)

The WTO rules give foreign commercial interests priority over local citizen interests, forcing nations to compete with each other by cutting corporate taxes, providing gratis infrastructure, subsidizing corporations through publicly funded research and other more direct tax breaks and subsidies, forcing wages down, closing down native industries and small businesses with subsequent rising unemployment, and not least, cutting back on the social benefits of the welfare state. In effect, corporate profit is pumped up artificially by extracting wealth from communities, working people and the environment. This is not real growth, but is more like a global cancer. It is in resistance to this self-destructive system that eco-villagers are reacting.

Source: (http://www.gaia.org/mediafiles/gaia/resources/JTRJ_EV-Movement2004.pdf)

Since we have discussed what the eco-villages in this discourse are resting against, we can now focus on how various scholars describe how they resist these negative effects of globalization

According to Bang(2006) and Jackson (2006) eco-villages share economic resources using some form of redistribution of wealth by using alternative currencies and banking systems such as local exchange trading systems (LETS) and community supported agriculture (CSA) (Bang 2005; Dawson 2006). In addition, many eco-villages have on-site business ventures that support the eco-village financially. Jackson and Svensson (2002:66-68) identify some of these business activities. They include eco-village design, ecological building, permaculture consultancy, renewable energy and water treatment, consultancy in community skills, home-based work, education, living and learning centers, eco-village tourism, food production, healthcare, psychological and physical, health products, arts and crafts, media, printing and publishing, shops and mail order businesses.” This alternative financial system is in complete contradistinction to global financescapes where the world is now dominated by big multinational banks and few major global currencies like the euro and dollar manipulated by rich nations Therefore by promoting these local economic initiatives, the authors argue that eco-villages are attempting to delink local economies from the interconnected global economy where finance, labor, capital and goods and services move freely and rapidly across the whole world

Harvey (1989) and Sharp, Routledge, Philo, and Patterson (2000) argues that eco-villages are confronting both the built environment and capitalism. They do this through resistance to the ills of consumer culture including the negative personal, social, economic and environmental impacts of material consumption. They argue that the dominating power of the capitalist political economic system has not only infused the built environment, but also continues to play out across space and in places. In their view, confronting either the built environment or capitalism necessitates confronting the other. As a result, according to Cresswell (2004), Harvey (1989), Pickerill and Chatterton (2006), and Pile and Keith (1997), place, and the creation of new places, can be an important tool used by those resisting the ills of consumer culture. Hence the creation of eco-villages is viewed as a practical resistance to the culture of globalization

Kirby (2004), in "Domestic Protest: The Eco-village Movement as a Space of Resistance," identifies the eco-village as an everyday space that represents an alternative to consumer society using "the spatial arrangements of its built form" to promote connections among residents and their environment. He argues thus, "An increasing sense of dissonance between our sense of our own values and ethical standards and the behaviors that we are forced to adopt through participation in consumer culture leads to the drive to find new ways of relating to the world around us."

This resistance to globalization means a confrontation with these powerful forces of globalization. That is why those eco-villages that are anti-globalization usually confronts all the elements of globalization by at times even building their homes (occupying space) belonging to symbols of globalization as the following figure shows

Figure 2: A cartoon in the Schnews illustrating the eviction of eco-villagers in Britain by Guinness, a large commercial brewery

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WAKE UP! WAKE UP! IT'S YER DARK AND BITTER...

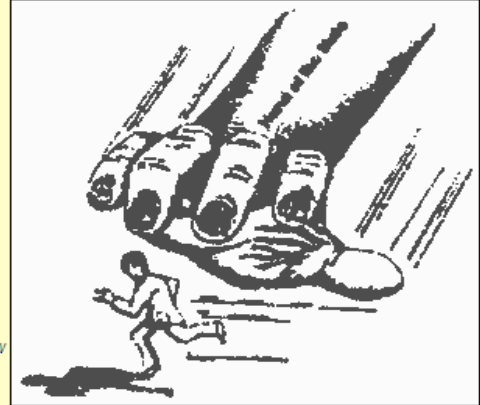
SchNEWS

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GUINNESS PILLAGE ECO-VILLAGE

"Guinness are vindictive bastards. We are all furious; not only have they evicted our new friends, they have flattened the site. London Wildlife Trust surveyed the site, and declared it a site of prime Metropolitan importance. I've now got massive floodlights glaring through my window. We have to hit them where it hurts - their profits. I want a national boycott of Guinness."

- Len James, Wandsworth local resident



On Tuesday morning 300 police and bailiffs invaded the Pure Genius site in Wandsworth and evicted 150 eco-activists. The 12 acre site had been derelict for six years before the occupation by The Land Is Ours campaign in May. In five months the campaigners built a sustainable, low impact community offering an alternative to the unsustainability of modern life. Vegetables were planted in raised beds, dwellings constructed and keys to the site were handed over to locals to share the running of the site.

Kicked Off

Guinness like to describe themselves as an "environmentally sensitive company". Some people even believe them. In the same week that they kicked everyone off the Wandsworth site they won the Ecology Sponsorship Award in Geneva!

The brewery giant evicted the greenies a month before a public enquiry decides whether to give planning permission to build a supermarket on the site. It seems unlikely that Wandsworth Borough Council will grant permission for the supermarket and luxury flats originally destined for the site, especially in light of the nine other superstores within a mile and a half radius.

A spokeswoman for Guinness told SchNEWS, "I'm not surprised that the eviction went ahead. We tried to offer an 'orderly resolution' to The Land Is Ours while they were illegally squatting but they refused to cooperate and continued the occupation."

(<http://www.schnews.org.uk/archive/news95.htm>)

In the above case, residents who had built an eco-village on land owned by a brewery (in this case a symbol of capitalism and globalization) are being involved in running battles with the police. Therefore, when you are anti-something, it means that there will be continuous friction between those for and against that concept which is summarized by the above story of the battle for land between the brewery and eco-villagers

This discourse has been called the eco-villages as an anti-globalization movement. Many scholars support this assertion that eco-villages are an anti-globalization movement

Jackson (2004) argues that the eco-villages movement is a global phenomenon responding to global causes which can be best understood as a part of the anti-globalization movement. He argues that the eco-village concept has morphed and evolved and has become a global not local concept that seeks to address the problems of globalization. He however notes that because of its global nature, the concept of eco-villages takes many forms meaning that there is no single model of what can be called an eco-village. Thus all those initiatives that seek to address the negative impacts of globalization particularly from the point of view of how people are living in communities can be called eco-villages. Thus Bonnette (2004) also concurs with this view when he says eco-villages are strong models of activism

Kirby (2004) argues that the rise of a movement that is concerned with the social and ecological consequences of the industrial capitalist system reflects the emergence of new ways of thinking about the world and our place in it thus he views the eco-villages movement as the most radical expression towards reworking the self-world relationship. In his view this is to be achieved through the creation of an alternative space in which the prescriptions and proscriptions of the dominant culture are excluded in favor of values that represent what has been termed a "new environmental paradigm." An emphasis on supporting sustainable practices such as organic agriculture, bioregional initiatives, recycling, and the practice of voluntary simplicity, flies in the face of the consumptive and globalizing force represented by the dominant social mode" (Kirby 2004)

Rosendal (2004) identifies eco-villages as part of the global social movements opposed to globalization when he says, "In my view, eco-villages, and the larger social movements of which they are an integral part, are the most promising and important movement in all of history." He thus tries to put the eco-villages at the core of the social anti-globalization movement. It's important to note that he clearly recognized that there are many social forces that are against globalization and its effects and the eco-villages is one of them.

Jackson (2004) argues that eco-villages are not the only anti-globalization movement but goes on to acknowledge that they are a unique anti-globalization movement. He says, "Yet while the more visible parts of the anti-globalization movement protest against the corporate dominated global economic model through demonstrations in the streets and consumer boycotts and through single issues movements, eco-villages have a different approach. They are quietly building small, sustainable communities with their limited resources, with personal commitment – walking their talk. They see eco-villages as models of how we must all live eventually, if the threat to our environment and our social structures posed by corporate led globalization is to be taken seriously. It is a lifestyle possible for everybody on the planet." Thus one of the issues that separate eco-village movement from other anti-globalization movements is that they are not only talkers, but doers of what they believe in through practically building these communities they believe can address the woes brought about by the forces of globalization. Because they are not involved in empty publicity stunts like marches, they are often not recognized and understood. Often because of their lower profile in the anti-globalization movement, they are dismissed by skeptics

To this end, those in the anti-globalization discourse define eco-villages as, "a microcosm of the macrocosm, as it represents in a very small area – typically with 50-400 people – all the elements and all the problems present in the greater society, while providing visible solutions to these problems, whether it be living sustainably, resolving conflicts peacefully, creating jobs, raising children, providing relevant education, or simply enjoying and celebrating life." They go on to distinguish it from the western model of living which they say, "fragmented families, separation of work and home, separation of rich and poor, crime in the streets, and living in constant fear under stress, is not least because deep down we all know that the current Western lifestyle of exaggerated consumption and social inequity is unsustainable and unjust on a global scale, and will come to an end sooner or later (Jackson, 2004)

Thus in conclusion, at the heart of the anti-globalization discourse is an assault of all the global manifestations of a capitalist globalised economy that promotes

consumption at the expense of social and environmental factors. Its also important in my view to note that the rallying point of anti-globalization discourse is mainly an assault of the current economic architecture which they link to globalization.

2.1.2 Eco-villages as resistance to traditional governance structures

In this section, I am going to look at the obtaining governance structures in relation to housing development especially from a Eurocentric perspective. I will then discuss why eco-villages are resisting these structures and proffer a definition of eco-villages from this discourse

The figure below aptly captures the traditional or current institutions that are involved in residential development as propounded by Egan (2004) in relation to the United Kingdom although in my view, I believe it is equally representative of the western and to some extend even the developing world. Its important to note that Egan (2004) calls it stakeholders in “sustainable communities” However, those who view eco-villages from the resistance to traditional governance structures want to radically and totally change this matrix in ways that will be explained later in this section

Figure 3: Stakeholders in sustainable communities

Implementers and Decision Makers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local authority elected members • Local authority chief executives and local authority staff • Members of Local Strategic Partnerships • Regional Assembly members and staff • Chief Executives and staff of relevant regional organizations (e.g. RDAs, Regional Housing Board) • Infrastructure provider and managers (e.g. transport, ICT, water and sewage) 	Environmental Occupations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environmental officers (conservation, tree, play) • Environmental advisors (e.g. English Heritage, Environment Agency, Forestry Commission) • Environmental managers (e.g. nature conservation, environmental health officers)
	Social Occupations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Managers of housing and social services
	Economic Occupations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developers (e.g. housing and

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regeneration leaders • Chief Executives and staff of relevant national agencies (Environment Agency, English Partnerships, Highway agency) • MPs and civil servants with relevant policy responsibility (e.g. Home Office, Defra, DTI, Health, Education, Transport, Police) 	commercial) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investors in property (e.g. institutional, private and public) • Economic development agency managers and officers
Built Environment Occupations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planners (e.g. urban, rural, highways, transport, environmental) • Urban designers • Area master planners • Architects (e.g. architects, architectural technicians, architectural technologists, landscape architects, police architectural liaison officers) • Engineers (e.g. civil, structural, building services, geotechnical, highways, transport, environmental) • Surveyors (e.g. geomatic/land, valuation, quantity, general practice, building, building inspectors) • Construction industry managers • Educators of built environment professionals 	Community Occupations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Professional community and voluntary workers • Community/neighborhood wardens and Community Support wardens Cross-cutting Occupations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Neighborhood renewal and regeneration Practitioners

Source: Egan Review (2004)

From the above figure, its clear that residential development is a field of professionals starting with implementers and decision makers , built environment occupations, environmental occupations, social occupations, economic occupations as well as community and cross cutting occupations

Pierre (2000) argues that such a structure promotes the usual top –down approach where government through its professional bureaucrats does everything for the people instead of with the people/residents .Bendell (2000) supports this assertion

and argues that processes such as increasing state failure, market liberalization, internationalization, decentralization and individualization means that the old paradigm of top-down, state-led, 'command and control' ways of steering no longer suffice. Winchester agrees when he says that this resistance is also against things like rigid municipality land use zoning laws, the role of city planners, developers, real estates as well as architects and housing association. From this perspective, eco-villagers want involvement at all stages and to be consulted in the residence that will be constructed hence the resistance entails refusing to 'play by the rules' of the mainstream (Winchester *et al.* 2003)

Hence its argued that the development of eco-villages is an attempt by the people to seek freedom away from the bureaucratic straight jacket which limits community initiative, innovation and control over their communities. Therefore, the eco-village concept is a form of rebellion against the centralized and often top-down approach by both central and local government. In this case, communities are taking their own affairs and future into their own hands and creating a regime they want instead of having rules, regulations and ideas about their living defined by government authorities and professional bureaucrats.

Trainer (2000) who argues that "In other words there must be participatory self-government whereby all citizens can be actively involved from time to time in the discussions, the committees, the working bees, town meetings and referenda that will determine what is done locally. Some functions might remain for state and national governments but many of the things they now do will be performed far more satisfactorily through the voluntary contributions of local people"(Trainer, 2000)

An expression of resistance to traditional governance is illustrated by the figure below

Figure 4: An illustration of a campaign against local authorities

Voluntary committees, working bees and rosters will carry out many tasks presently performed by expensive experts and councils... Most tax revenue will be collected and allocated locally. Taxes will be partly payable in non-cash forms, e.g., contributing to working bees.

Therefore in place of the structures of local governance which were identified at the beginning of this section, eco-villages want them replaced by voluntary committees, working bees and rosters. They also want residents to manage their own taxes and for taxes to be paid in non-cash items

Storey (2001) adds that these communities are governed by consensus which means that the members can participate in discussions on all relevant topics. After all opinions are heard, members attempt to reach a unanimous decision. Members are also actively involved in admitting new members and visitors to the community. Although committed to inclusive procedures such as consensus decision making, the members of many intentional communities can also exclude other people from their home, through territoriality or “the spatial expression of power.” This approach sees the role of government and local authorities being reduced as people take more control of their life.

Thus at the core of resistance to traditional governance structure is that eco-villages residents want to decide on their own the type of residence that are suitable for themselves and at times construct the residences alone. This is clearly against the traditional norms where government, local authorities, professionals like planners, architects, civil engineers and many others decide on their own what type of residence to build for the people

From this discourse, eco-villages are defined more as intentional communities where a group of like minded residents come together to establish their own community complete with rules and regulations. They are totally delinked from the current governance structures(Irrgang, 2005)

2.2 Eco-villages as Deep Green/Utopia living

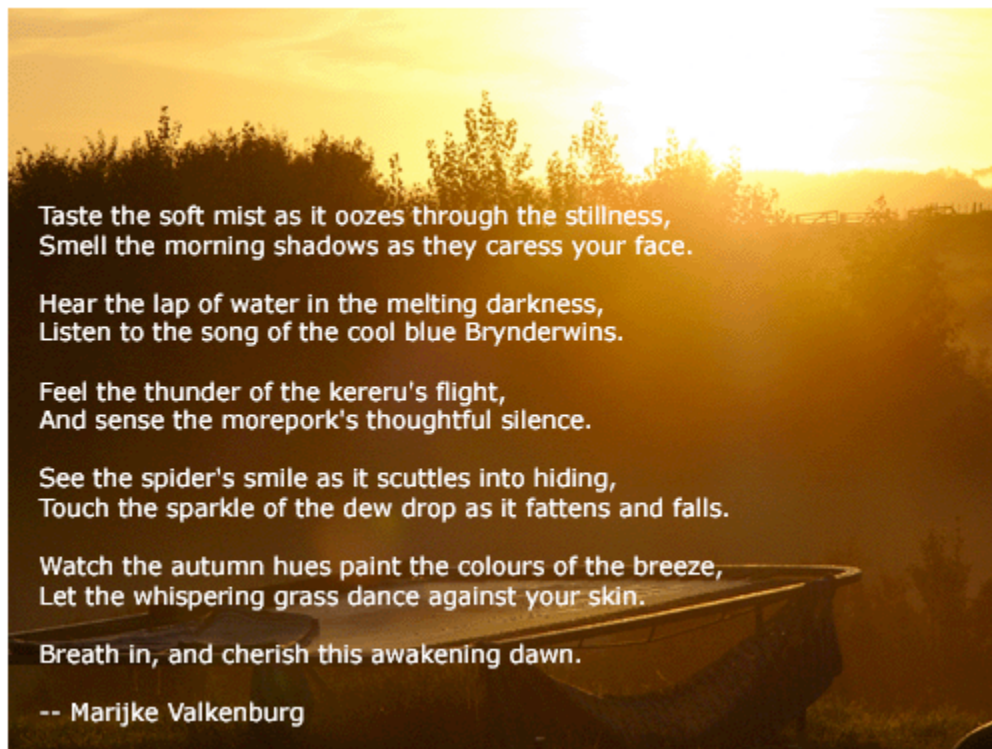
In this section, I will start by looking at what is meant by deep green/utopia and then look at what motivates eco-villages from this discourse and finally round off by defining eco-villages from this perspective

(Sargsson, 1990) propounds the view that eco-villages are constructed by people living on the fringe of society, idealists or utopians. Svensson and Jackson (2004) concurs and add thus, “they are deliberately created communities whose members strive to live in a socially and environmentally sustainable manner, to practice voluntary simplicity, and to cultivate meaning, life satisfaction, and fulfillment.”

Sargsson (1990) adds that they are an offshoot from the hippie movement of the 1970s seeking unmaterialistic life closer to nature, freedom and an opportunity to do their own things. They locate their communities in remote backwaters, up mountains, steep valleys or on the shorelines of wild coastlines. The land they buy is usually uncultivated, often uncultivable and unsuitable for farming. They build themselves homes from timber in the bush. Land is shared and collectively owned. Their homes are often built without proper planning consents. There are community buildings for meetings and shared meals. To be close to nature means rejection of modern convenience such as mains water and electricity, telephones and washing machines. They are thus based on fostering eclectic spiritual beliefs, pioneering a spiritual communal lifestyle (Metcalf, 1996)

The figure below shows one of the poems that has been written by a member of Otamatea Ecovillage in New Zealand. The poem aptly captures the idealism of the residents of this eco-village in terms of what they want the place to look like

Figure 5: Poem by Marijke Valkenburg, resident of Otamatea Eco-village in New Zealand that shows idealistic notions of eco-villagers



Source: (<http://www.otamatea.org.nz/community/poem.htm>)

The above poem shows the romanticisation of nature by eco-villages in this discourse. Therefore, they are more worried about a symbiotic relationship between people and nature which they view as both inseparable and indivisible

The figure below shows the mission statement of Otamatea Eco-Village with its emphasis on a simple traditional native lifestyle

Figure 6 Otamatea Eco-village Mission Statement)

VISION STATEMENT

Otamatea Eco-Village:

Will practise permaculture in a spirit of co-operation, mutual support, respect for one another and the land.

Will preserve and enhance the native ecosystems on the land and surrounding sea.

Will create fertile, holistically integrated agricultural systems and a village culture that abundantly provides our community's needs for healthy living at all levels: physical, social, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual.

Will do this sustainably, ethically and with beauty and creative variety.

Will be a positive part of the wider New Zealand society especially as a model of sustainability and bio-diversity.

Will be part of the wider global cultural evolution giving and receiving knowledge, wisdom, inspiration and love.



Source: (<http://www.otamatea.org.nz/>)

The above mission statement shows the emphasis of eco-villages on the land hence at times they are referred to as agricultural communities . This is aptly captured by the following line which goes, “Will create fertile, holistically integrated agricultural systems and a village culture that abundantly provides our community’s needs for healthy living at all levels: physical, social, emotional, intellectual and spiritual” Its important to note that they don’t say anything about economic or institutional levels as part of a healthy living. This shows their deep green approach

Another interesting dimension from this mission statement is the inclusion of spiritual dimension because these utopians in some literature are linked to religious zealotry. Hence Gefter (2005) argues that utopian communities were in the United

States are motivated by religious as well as secular views. This means that the concept is not yet in the mainstream but rather associated with religious and other groups

This approach fits in J. Dawson (2005) five principles of eco-villages which are that firstly eco-villages are private citizens' initiatives. They're grassroots. Secondly, eco-villagers value community living. Thirdly, they are not overly dependent on government, corporate, or other centralized sources for water, food, shelter, power, and other basic necessities. Fourthly, eco-villagers have a strong sense of shared values, often characterized in spiritual terms. Finally, they often serve as research and demonstration sites. Many offer educational experiences for others. These characteristics identified clearly show the embracing of the deep green approach to eco-villages

In addition, the Global Eco-village Movement explains that eco-villages means recognizing and relating to others, sharing common resources and providing mutual aid, emphasizing holistic and preventive health practices, providing meaningful and holistic work to all members, integrating marginal groups, promoting ongoing education, encouraging unity through respect for differences and fostering cultural expression(Global Eco-village Movement as quoted in Irrgang, (2005) One can indeed argue that if all the features identified in the above definitions are fulfilled resemble a deep green/utopian approach however with strands of sustainable development.

Kennedy (2004) suggests that the motivation for eco-villages is the need to reverse the gradual disintegration of supportive social and cultural structures and the upsurge of destructive environmental practices on our planet. To a larger extent this link of eco-villages to spiritual and cultural factors is why most might see them on the lunatic fringe and hence call them utopia.

2.3 Eco-villages as havens for the Elites

In this chapter, I will start by expounding what is meant by elitist and then discuss why they are viewed as elitist. I will conclude by looking at a counter argument which views them as cheap so as to show that there are indeed various forms and approaches to eco-villages and to demonstrate that this approach is a critical to eco-villages

Ridell (2005) argues that eco-villages are elitist clubs either by economic status or social standing because they are usually created by rich people who are highly educated. Kirby supports this by arguing that by and large, ecovillages in the United States are a distinctly white, middle-class endeavor (Kirby 2004). Pepper (1991) further asserts that eco-villages seem to have a certain following particularly in the North (Europe, USA, Australia) as well as some limited influence in the South. In fact, the geographical distribution of the movement simply reflects its class structure and the concerns of most people taking part in it. In other words he is pointing out the fact that since broadly speaking, there is an affluence-poverty, north-south dichotomy, and the concentration and popularity of eco-villages in the rich global North is an indictment on the view that they are an elitist club. Moreover, many scholars argue that by seeking a detached lifestyle where they plan their own community, eco-villagers are trying to escape from the mainstream which is cheaper to build expensive exclusive enclaves far detached from the bustle and hustle of everyday life in conventional housing particularly in the west

R. Ridell (2005) argues that eco-villages are residential dormitories that offer aesthetically attractive, fairly private options for mobile elite at a considerable social cost to the already established agriculture-serving population. This is premised on his belief that eco-villages are peri-urban phenomena by city dwellers who can afford to live out of time on the urban-rural peripheral of the city. He argues that in Britain, various technical tools like the Green Belt, Rural White land designations, Regional land management practices etc are used to conserve these rural urban hinterlands. He further claims that where this quasi-urban area is under freehold tenure, the

urban elites are rushing to purchase it so as to enjoy what he calls, “mock ruralism” or a “neither town-or-country commoditization of rural space.”

Ridell(2005) further argues that the characteristics of eco-villages, which he describes as , “a net density of 30 houses plus per hacture,self sufficiency in food production, water harvesting, green canopied and pleasant to live in , self reliant in food and energy do not come cheap” In fact he argues by quoting Rydin (1992) who argues that , “a benchmark feature for an eco-village in a greenfield setting is a minimum net residential density of 30 household units per hectare which influences the siting massing and materials incorporated into buildings” He thus concludes that this can not provide affordable housing for low income families. His argument on the elitism of eco-villages is that they need low density to be viable like public spaces and this will be costly because of the high cost per unit of land

Below shows an advertisement for potential residents of a planned eco-village. The description of the eco-villages explained below shows that the eco-village will be elitist and can only be afforded by very rich people to support the concept that eco-villages are an elitist concept

Figure 7A real estate agent advertising for residents for a planned eco-village

An elite 120 hectares eco village is planned for the end of 2011. Vinery, five star hotel with helicopter landing site, Spa, Sauna and Gym will be only part of the facilities the village will have by 2011. The main advantages of this property are the location, the quality of build, and the high level of finishing. Once completed, the houses will considerably grow in value. Surely, this is a risk free investment with good return potential and great value for money.

Source: (<http://www.bestrealestateplanet.com/go/en/viewProperty--PropertyID--11365480442008082311412066e211----property--Avrens-crown--page.html>)

From the above , features such as helicopter landing clearly shows that this is an elitist project that can only be afforded by the filthy rich and such projects reinforces this approach that views eco-villages is elitist

Figure 8: An artist's impression of the eco-villages referred in Fig 7



The above picture reinforces the view that eco-villages are elitist In addition, according to Trainer (2000), many eco-villages simply involve people in trying to build better circumstances for themselves, often within the rich world in quite self indulgent ways

Financing eco-village projects is one of the major concerns during the establishment of eco-villages. No matter how inspired and visionary the founders, only about one out of ten new communities actually get built. The other 90% seems to go nowhere occasionally because of lack of money or not finding the right land and because of conflict (Fischetti, 2008) This high levels of failure of planned eco-villages suggest that lack of enough money is one of the causes which reinforces the elitist view

The alternative approach to developing an eco-village often presents obstacles for financing the project, often it is difficult to go through conventional means like banks and credit unions as in typical real estate markets. Christian (2003) offers two reasons for this hurdle. First, the development plans of eco-villages fail to meet bank criteria. Conventional financial lenders may be weary of non-standard or alternative development techniques and practices, such as un-subdivided property, natural building techniques and composting toilets, and so on

Second, usually in the form of a non-profit entity, an eco-village lacks the credibility as a for-profit entity such as a corporation thus losing preference to these lending agencies.(Jackson (2002) cited by Stive, 2004) adds that a banker's unfamiliarity with ecological features complicates matter often in the process of risk evaluation on the loan. They are interested in lending to a project that can resell on the open market in case of the need to repossess the property. This evidence suggests that as more models are successful, then conventional funding sources will be less reluctant to finance unconventional projects. Hence if there is lack of mortgage financing for such initiatives, it thus goes that only elites with prior savings of their own can afford to build eco-villages. This is reinforced by Kirby (2004) who observed the following about eco-villages in the USA when he says, "Eco-village homes in the United States, which often include high-tech technologies for resource conservation and production, can be quite expensive In addition, eco-village settlements are all privately funded, further reducing their affordability. As a result, there is a tension for many American eco-villagers between voluntary simplicity and the affordability of eco-village life (Kirby 2004).

This elitist approach is a very critical approach to the whole concept of eco-villages by making eco-villages some form of a ruse. It is because of this that it has been heavily criticized by eco-villagers who still insists that eco-villages are very cheap form of housing .An example that depicts eco-villages as cheap are the utopians as has already been explained in preceding paragraphs

In contrast, eco-villages are also viewed as a cheap alternative as the following quote about Russian eco-villages will show; eco-villages can also be very cheap

Figure 9: Eco-villages are cheap in Russia-Medvedev

Medvedev expressed his support of the concept of eco-villages in a March 5, 2007 online conference organized by the newspaper Izvestia and the internet portal Yandex and broadcast by TV channel "Vesti-24." During the interview the host suggested that the outlook of the nation is shifting. Medvedev replied, "Yes, and [the] psychology is changing too. People feel themselves in a completely different way."

The host stated that the question of eco-villages was brought up because he had received 5,000 emails from supporters of the "Kin Domains" concept before the show asking about the plan to give each Russian family a hectare of public land to create a Kin Domain and the allowance for them to be organized into eco-villages.

Medvedev speaks of the district of Belgorod Oblast, near the Ukraine border that he has visited, where political moves are already under way toward arranging land for this idea in that area.

"Thus the idea of Kin's Domains in this regard is absolutely positive and it is related to the idea of low-rise construction. By the way, those processes are going quite well in some regions. Let's take, for example, the Belgorod oblast. I happened to drop by into one of the offices with the Governor. This office is in charge of registration of paperwork for the land and I was surprised in a good way by the price for land. Not too much, not one hectare yet. However, enough for building projects. They offered

about 2500 sq.m, if I'm not mistaken. And the price for this land in today's Russia sounds almost "funny" - something around 10-15 thousand roubles (\$300-\$400 USD). So one can get such piece of land but on certain terms and conditions: within 5 years there must be a house build there. And for three years this house can't be sold not to allow any profit

Source: (<http://carolynbaker.net/site/content/view/313/>)

The above figure demonstrates the polar opposite view of eco-villages showing that this elitist approach is a more critical approach of looking at eco-villages

2.4 Eco-villages as bastions of Sustainable development

In this section, I am going to firstly discuss the concept of sustainability through the lens of the prism of sustainability, features of a sustainable community from the academy of sustainable communities as well as Masdern's model of a localized eco-economy before looking at why eco-villages are seen as bastions of sustainability. Furthermore, I will discuss what characterizes eco-villages per this discourse before rounding up with a definition of eco-villages from this perspective

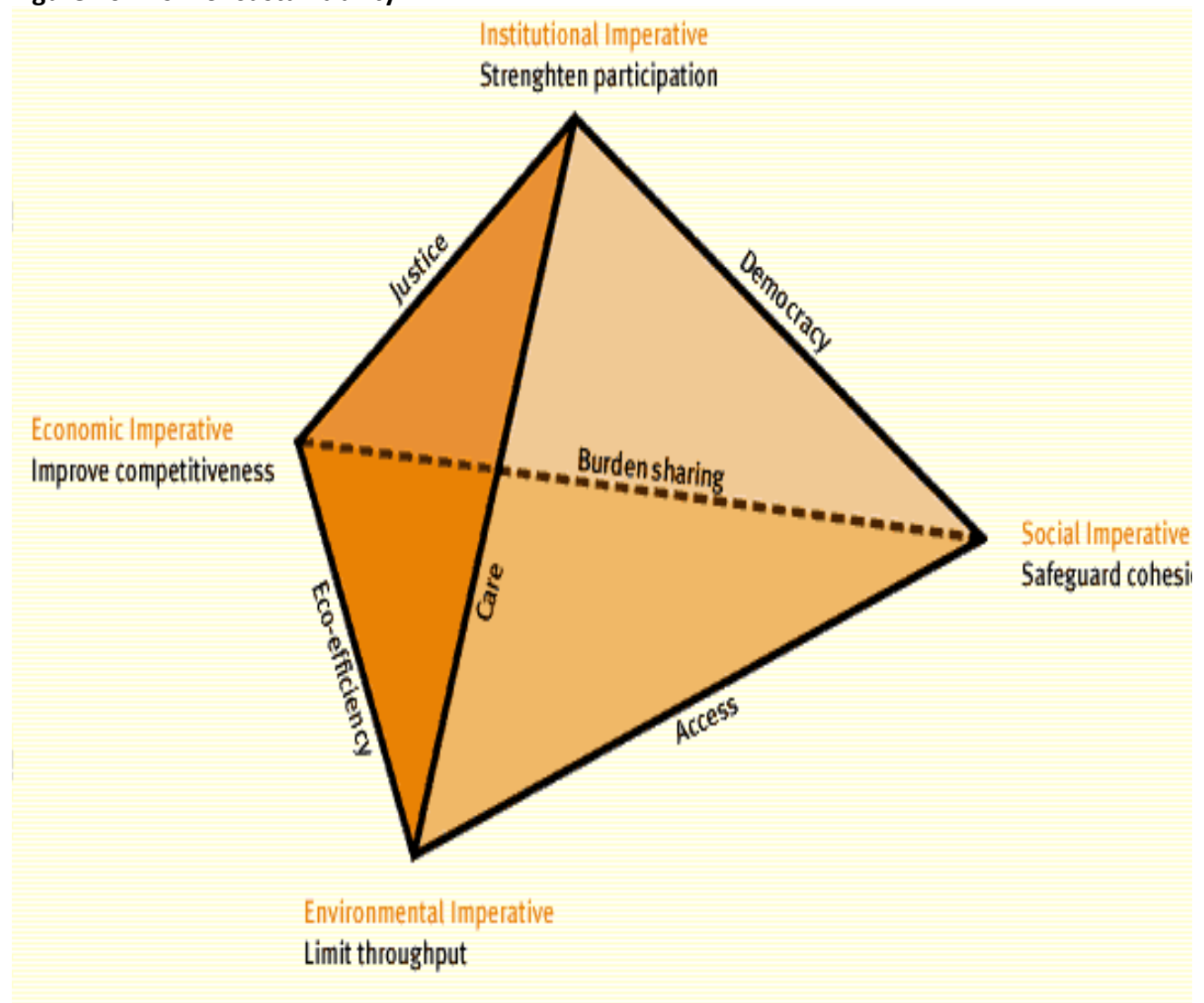
Sustainable development became extremely popular starting in the 1980s. This was largely due to the publication of the Brundtland report, "Our Common Future" and the preparation of the UNCED conference in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, although it should be realized that the concept was definitely not new (Johnson, 1993; WCED, 1987). The concept of 'sustainable development' first appeared in the 1980 World Conservation Strategy (WCS) of IUCN, UNEP and WWF (Arts, 1994). However, its meaning was mainly conservation oriented in the WCS, whereas the Brundtland Commission defined sustainable development as a way to integrate economy and ecology (Arts,B.& Buizer,M, 2008) Through rapid development and immediate and worldwide application of environmental technology, economic growth, environmental performance and the conservation of natural resources should go

hand in hand, benefiting both present and future generations (Arts,B.& Buizer,M, 2008)

Eco-villages are viewed as bastions of sustainable development because from this perspective, they are seen as addressing society ills through a comprehensive way by looking at both ecological, social, economic and institutional dimensions of sustainability.

The figure below summarizes the concept of sustainability through what is referred to as the prism of sustainability

Figure 10 Prism of sustainability



Source : Joachim Spankernburg (1999) SERI

According to Spankernburg(1999) all the 4 dimensions of sustainability derive from how sustainability was defined by the Brundtland Commission. With this approach the environmental imperative describes the need to reduce the pressure on the physical environment to within ecological system limits. The environmental dimension of sustainability aims at keeping intact, indefinitely, the stability of the processes of the ecosphere as dynamic and self-organized. An economic system is environmentally sustainable only as long as the amount of resources utilized to generate welfare is permanently restricted to a size and quality that does not overexploit the sources or overburden the sinks provided by the ecosphere. This imperative is defined from an anthropocentric point of view. structure

The institutional imperative calls for strengthening people's participation in political governance. The mechanisms of decision-making have to integrate people's wishes and activities. This way, the acceptance of and identification with political decisions both become broader, and democracy is strengthened. The social imperative demands that all individuals have access to the resources and facilities they need to live a healthy and dignified life. This implies a non-discriminatory social fabric, supported by measures to reduce social exclusion and guarantee social minimum standards and human rights. The economic imperative is to satisfy human needs for material welfare. This implies an economy which supports employment and livelihoods, in a framework which is competitive and stable at the macro-economic scale.

The 4 dimensions of sustainability are not much useful without looking at the linkages between the various dimensions according to Spankernburg(1999). These include right to resource access. The degree of equity in access to limited resources is as important for sustainability as the total amount of resources extracted from the environment. This is an interlinkage imperative connecting the social and the environmental. Democracy is the interlinkage between the institutional and the social imperative, and the basic condition for a society of more tolerance and solidarity. Participatory democracy is a basic condition for social cohesion, and thus for sustainable development. This constitutes the interlinkage of the social and the

economic dimension. The interlinkage between the institutional and the environmental imperative - care - describes a combination of dedication and action. Legal regulations as well as organizations and individual action should care for the environment. Eco-efficiency is the economy-environment link which is a measure of how efficiently we use resources to deliver our social and economic needs

Since sustainability is entirely a broad concept that can be applied to various situations, we can bring it specifically to communities to look at how sustainable communities should look like. Hence the figure below shows the characteristics of a sustainable community

Figure 11: Features of a sustainable community



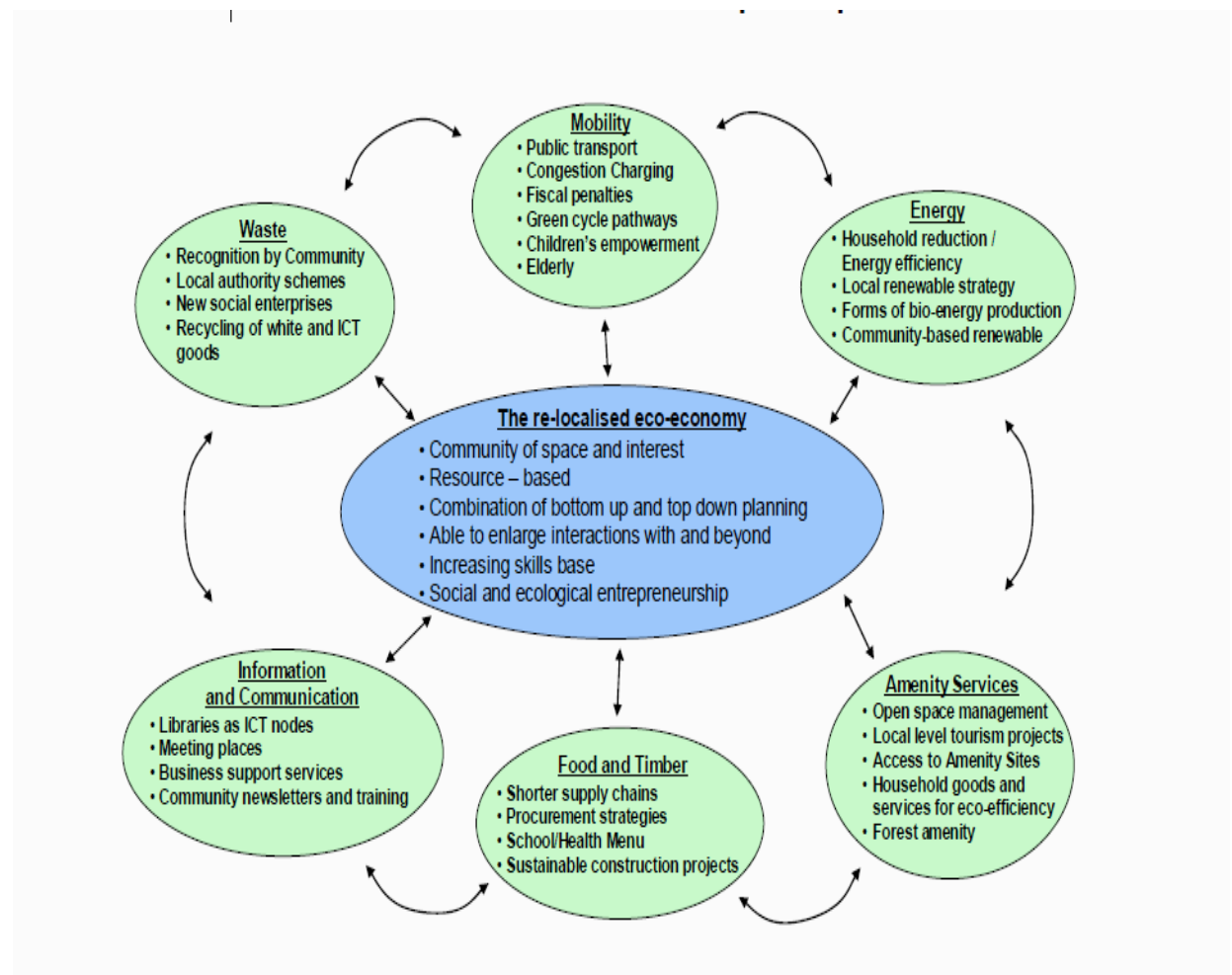
Source: Academy of Sustainable Communities

The above figure narrows down the concept of sustainability to specifics of place making which are very clearly defined in the above diagram by focusing on equity, economy, housing and built environment, social and cultural factors, governance,

transport and connectivity , services as well as environment. All these factors must be present in a positive way to have a sustainable community

Another way to look at sustainable communities is from Marsden approach which is shown by the diagram below

Figure 12: Using Marsden to explain attributes of a sustainable community



Source: Marsden (2008)

The above diagram shows the fundamental requirements for a sustainable community although in the above .

Jackson (2004) also posits the view that eco-villages are motivated by sustainable development. He says “When Findhorn community in northern Scotland announced

the topic for their annual autumn conference in 1995 as ‘Eco-villages and Sustainable Communities’, they were overwhelmed with applications from all over the world, breaking all previous records. Eventually, they had to turn away about 400 people for lack of capacity in the beautiful Universal Hall.” This clearly demonstrates how sustainable development discourse has impacted on the eco-village concept. The concept of eco-villages became more popular in the mainstream at almost the same time the sustainable development discourse was taking root, that is post late 1980s. During that time eco-village already existed in some parts of the world but those who associate them with the sustainable development discourse like Dawson (2006) argue that they gained prominence in the wake of the sustainable development hullabaloo

A number of eco-village prides themselves as bastions of sustainability. For example, Figure 1 below shows an extract from the Findhorn Eco-village website in Scotland which celebrates all aspects linked to sustainability

Figure 13: Findhorn Eco-village website home page

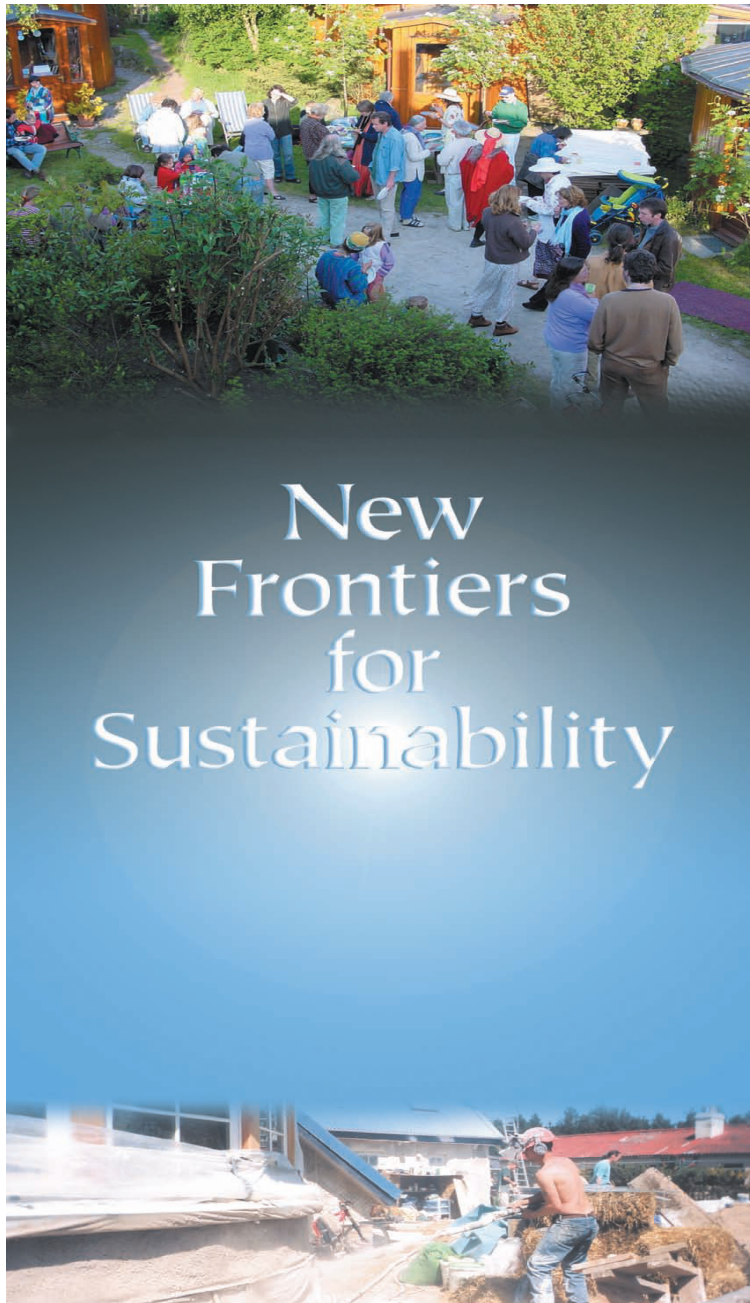


Source: (<http://www.ecovillagefindhorn.com/index.php>)

It is clear from the above description of Findhorn that the residents pride themselves as a sustainable community. The highlighting of things like carbon footprint, wind and solar energy, recycling, biological sewage treatment as highlights of the ecovillage shows that the main driving principle is achieving sustainability

The photo below shows the brochure that explains Findhorn Eco-Village

Photo 1: Front Page of Findhorn Eco-Village brochure



(<http://www.ecovillagefindhorn.com/docs/FF%20Frontiers%20brochure.pdf>)

It is clear from the above brochure that the Findhorn residents are motivated by sustainability and view their eco-village solely from sustainable development binoculars hence naming the brochure that explains their eco-villages as “New frontiers for Sustainability” as shown in the above Photo 1

It is also important to note that as issues about sustainable development continue to evolve, the eco-village concept also evolves with it. The dominant narrative at the

present about sustainable development is centered on climate change. Hence we also see from the Findhorn example that they have also moved to show that they are actively involved in addressing the climate change issue as can be shown by the following extract from Findhorn eco-village

Figure 14: Ecological Footprint of Findhorn

Ecological Footprint Study

Findhorn Ecovillage scores record low ecological footprint

A study issued in 2007 has found that the Findhorn Ecovillage in Moray, Scotland has recorded the lowest-ever **ecological footprint** for any community in the industrialised world. Ecological footprinting is a tool to measure the consumption of resources and the creation of wastes, and is increasingly relevant to the world of today where energy efficiency and sustainability are critical in our efforts to combat climate change.

The community's footprint is a fraction over half the national average, meaning that the average resident in the community consumes just one half of the resources and generates one half of the waste of the average citizen of the UK.

The study was undertaken by **GEN-Europe** (the Global Ecovillage Network) in collaboration with the **Sustainable Development Research Centre (SDRC)** in Forres. Technical support was provided by the internationally-recognised footprinting consultants, the Stockholm Environment Institute based at the University of York

Source: (<http://www.ecovillagefindhorn.com/index.php>)

Those who view eco-villages from this discourse like (Gilman,1991) defines an eco-village as ,“a human-scale, full-featured settlement in which human activities are harmlessly integrated into the natural world in a way that is supportive of healthy human development, with multiple centers of initiative, and (which) can successfully be continued into the indefinite future.” This definition clearly shows that eco-villages are concerned about sustainable living of people with nature and a social system that is symbiotic to ecology. It also links this kind of living to the posterity of present and future generations. This is the broad trajectory of the sustainable

development lexicon as per the Brundtland approach that tries to balance the triple bottom three of people, planet and profit

2.5 CONCLUSION and DISCUSSION

In this section, I am going to have a discussion about the discourses I have explained above and look at the relationship between the discourses by looking at their similarities and differences.

From my study of the actual eco-villages through their websites, I realised that in actual practice, many eco-villages have characteristics of a number of discourses and they don't necessarily fit within one discourse. For example, in Figure 10, a closer look at the Findhorn eco-village website reveals characteristics of both sustainability and anti-globalisation discourse. Sustainability is easily shown from such aspects like ecological footprint, climate change, use of renewable energy to mention but a few. However, in the same website, we also see that Findhorn has its own local currency, a quality closely associated with the anti-globalisation discourse. Therefore from this example, it shows just like Jackson (2004) noted that eco-villages continues to morph and evolve to address current issues. Therefore they are not a static concept.

This is also true in the example of Otamatea eco-village website in Figure 6 where the mission statement goes, "Will create fertile, holistically integrated agricultural systems and a village culture that abundantly provides our community's needs for healthy living at all levels: physical, social, emotional, intellectual and spiritual" Its important to note that they don't say anything about economic or institutional levels as part of a healthy living. This shows their deep green approach. Be that as it may, we also note in the same mission statement where they say , "Will be a part of the wider New Zealand society especially as a model of sustainability and biodiversity" This statement if juxtaposed in light of the first statement on the same website which in general is mainly emphasizing ecological sustainability, then one may say this shows that the concept of sustainability is understood in various ways. In this

case, it's the pre-Brundtland era definition of sustainability which had the main focus on conserving the environment through ecological sustainability

Discourses like resistance and deep green/utopia shows a radical rejection of the current order. Its actually a call for a complete and total change of the whole structural matrix of residence as we currently know them. The extremes like initiating own currency or living in mountains far detached from the rest of society represents the apogee of rejection of the current world order in favor of a totally new one. It is the sustainable development discourse in my view that seeks change in a more reformist as opposed to revolutionary way because it tries to look at all factors about sustainability from economic, social, ecological and institutional in a balanced way so as to achieve the triple bottom three of planet , people and profit in a fair way

Another interesting dimension is that there is no rigid compartmentalization among the discourses but there is a lot of overlap. All the discourses in the first place are against the current housing configuration and view themselves as representing a paradigm shift from the present. Therefore all paradigms are anti-status quo but in totally different ways as I have described above

There is also direct contradiction between some discourses. For example the elitism approach views eco-villages as expensive models for the elites whereas in the examples of the deep green approaches its shown as a model that is for the middle class and the poor or actually as transcendental to economic class divide .This therefore means that there is need for more focus on this contradiction in research so as to really establish if there are certain conditions or places where eco-villages are for the elite or for the poor and try to find out if there can be a plausible explanation for these differences

I have also noted that the sustainable development discourse is more in line with the current thinking in a number of issues across the world. This focus may position the eco-village movement within the mainstream and make them more acceptable than

if they take the deep green approach, resistance or elitism which may not find resonance among various people

Finally, I think it is important to realize these discourses , imperfect as they are in the context of real practice, give us an important tool to analyze and gain a greater understanding of eco-villages and can be an important tool in helping us to understand why the eco-villages differ from one place to the other

CHAPTER 3: NETHERLANDS CASE STUDIES

As was explained in the introduction and preceding chapters, the reality about eco-villages in the Netherlands outside the theoretical debates was studied through site visits, interviews, focus group discussion with key informants. The modalities of the interviews was discussed under the methodology chapter. In this Chapter, I will start with a brief explanation of the housing situation in the Netherlands before looking at the 2 case studies which are EVA-Lanxmeer and Dreijn. I will then discuss the findings related to these 2 case studies

3.1: General background to housing in the Netherlands

In this section, I will give a brief outline about housing in the Netherlands as an introductory preface to give the reader a broad insight of the housing situation which can help in contextualizing the concept of eco-villages since they are part of the Dutch housing matrix

The Dutch Ministry of Housing, Spatial Planning and Environment is responsible for housing. According to the Ministry website, housing has been high on the political agenda in the Netherlands for a long time. Even today it receives much public attention in terms of availability and accessibility of sufficient, good-quality and affordable housing. The focus of this attention and the political debates has changed over the years. Whereas large-scale shortage of housing was the major problem for large groups of the population after World War II, nowadays problems are focusing on certain quality aspects of housing. Affordability remains an important topic. The link with general urban development and social integration has become more and more explicit.

Massive government subsidization for the construction of many new affordable dwellings was characteristic for housing developments for several decades. These subsidies were largely channeled through housing associations that were responsible

for social rental housing in the Netherlands. Local municipal - that is: government-owned - housing diminished in the nineteen-nineties who largely sold their stock to these housing associations of who were privatized and turned into housing associations. These housing associations are private non-profit organizations with a legal task to house lower incomes and are supervised by government. They constitute a quite specific characteristic of Dutch housing in comparison with other countries in terms of their share of the total housing stock: they still own, rent-out and manage about one-third of the total housing stock and some 75% of the total rental stock. Over the past 10-15 years their number has decreased as a consequence of mutual mergers. So their size has grown substantially and they have turned into large, professionally managed social housing institutions.

Government construction subsidies have decreased substantially over the past so many years because of the sound financial situation of the housing associations themselves. In mutual co-operation they have set up financial structures to safeguard their social housing objectives, including government guarantee structures. Government determines what annual maximum rent increase may be in the social rental sector. All in all, the (government) regulated share of the total rental sector is very high in spite of attempts by the previous government to successively diminish this share.

In spite of the continuing importance of rental housing, owner-occupancy has steadily grown. This was, at first, facilitated by government construction subsidies - which, again, were largely abolished - and mortgage interest deductibility from personal income. This tax deductibility is a very important fiscal instrument of government; most owner-occupied dwellings in the Netherlands are mortgaged. A guarantee fund, with government counter guarantees, exists. Next to this, and more recently, also a government subsidy scheme for lower income home-owners was introduced and improved.

Since the last few years, much housing policy attention is being directed toward the improvement of housing and living conditions in deprived urban areas. Forty of such deprived districts and neighborhoods have been selected for intensified support

including not just housing renovation, but also measures for improving education, employment and social integration. These steps are undertaken in close co-operation with the municipalities and housing associations who are expected to invest strongly in these areas on top of central government subsidies.

In terms of target groups, Dutch housing policy is, of course, has retained its focus on lower income groups, but increasingly also at elderly people in view of the further ageing of the population. As far as quality aspects are concerned, increasing attention is being given to energy saving measures in the housing stock and the built environment. Also minimum technical, safety and health requirements are regulated and enforced.

These and other aspects of housing and urban development policy are detailed in the following pages. (<http://www.vrom.nl/pagina.html?id=37360>)

3.2: Dutch housing challenges

The Netherlands, like many EC countries face poor air quality, severe congestion, high levels of ambient noise, poor-quality built environments and large polluted brown field sites are among many. Restructuring and regeneration are essential to make cities livable. Meanwhile, continuous resource consumption, greenhouse gas emissions, urban sprawl and the generation of waste and waste-water produce disproportionate ecologic footprints of Europe's towns and cities. To maintain a healthy and prosperous future for Europe urban management respecting the principles of sustainability is not just desirable; it is an absolute necessity. (Creedy et al , 2007)

The Netherlands has a high population density. Its economic activities and leisure activities are extensive and expanding so, not surprisingly, the quality of its environment is facing serious threats. The Netherlands government, along with the general public and the business community, are therefore looking for ways to attain sustainable development. A recent principle of the Dutch government is to spend

more money on environmental protection in order to compensate the negative effect of ongoing economic growth. The environmental policy of the Netherlands currently addresses climate change; acidification; eutrophication; toxic and hazardous substances; contaminated land; waste disposal; disturbance and groundwater depletion. Information and communication play an important role alongside legislation and financial incentives in changing people's attitude and behavior.

3.3 Institutional Response

The National Spatial Strategy has shifted the emphasis in the policy of DG Spatial Policy from "imposing restrictions" to "promoting developments". The ability to develop is the central consideration. It translates into less detailed regulation by central government, fewer barriers and greater latitude for other levels of government, members of the public and market parties. This approach is anchored in the National Spatial Strategy. Working together from the start on an integral spatial vision for a particular area makes it easier to deliver quality and achieve an equitable distribution of costs and benefits. Members of the public, government authorities and companies at local and regional level will be in a position to ensure strong cities and vibrant rural communities.

The National Spatial Strategy includes an implementing agenda. The agenda is a new instrument to link the objectives contained in the policy document to current and planned implementation tracks. The matters addressed in the agenda include central government's investment priorities, the effects of policy on local planning and zoning schemes and the use of implementing instruments. The agenda is an overarching way of giving integral form and substance to the implementation of plans. More than ever before, this kind of approach is essential because of the growing importance of and need for co-operation between different stakeholders in addressing spatial issues. A central theme is the integral development of supra-local areas. Areas must be developed through 'development planning'.

Area development

Members of the public, companies and community organizations take initiatives every day to improve spatial quality. DG Spatial Policy wants to provide more scope for such initiatives by creating good conditions for developing areas. This will align spatial policy more closely to society's wishes and allow their earlier fulfillment. Provincial governments, the Ministry of Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment and other stakeholders will undertake model development planning projects to show the way forward. It is in this policy framework that focuses on decentralization of the institutional framework, community involvement and focus on sustainability that various innovative housing models have been developed. The one which is the subject of this thesis is the issue of eco-villages

3.4: Brief history of eco-villages in the Netherlands

In this section I will briefly discuss the genesis and evolution of eco-villages in the Netherlands. I hope such a discussion will give us some insight into the factors that shaped the Dutch eco-villages timeline

According to Beatley (2000) the eco-village concept in Europe in particular has its roots in the co-housing movement in Scandinavian countries led especially by Denmark and Sweden. As Albert Bates (2003a) explains in "A 73-Year-Old Eco-village in the Land of Ice and Fire," the first eco-village was created in Iceland in the late 1920s (Solheimer). And, as Bates (2003b) elaborates in "Eco-village Roots (and Branches)," as early as the 1970s a few eco-villages were independently coming into being. These included *Mother Earth News'* educational center (Henderson, North Carolina) and *okodoif* (*Gorleben*, Germany), which was formed in support of an anti-nuclear protest. Eco-villages continued to form independently since that time, but were not networked or organized under one organization or association.

In the Netherlands, the roots of eco-villages can be traced down to hofjes (almshouses). They date back to the fifteenth century and are a distinctive form of housing peculiar to the Netherlands. Hof means garden and hofjes are building or building units clustered around a garden. They can be between 8 to 25 units. They combine the benefit of urban amenities and living with the privacy of green interior courtyards and gardens sheltered from busy urban streets.

They were intended to provide housing for the poor by bequests from rich members of society. There were stipulations about living in the area and one of the most common and interesting was that they had to pray for the soul of the benefactors. The hofje design has been used in newer projects as well. In Den Haag for example, a newer infill project Het Haagshe Hof centers the residential units around green courtyards (Den Haag Nieuw Centrum, 1995).

There is also, the *centraal wonen* (or central living) which include the same four characteristics as cohousing (participatory process, intentional neighborhood design, common facilities, and resident management), but rather than having common facilities in the center of the community, "... clusters of four to eight households usually share a living, kitchen, and dining area" (McCamant and Durrett 1994:149). After five years of planning, the Netherlands's first *centraal wonen*, Hilversum, was completed in 1977 (McCamant and Dunett 1994).

Beatley (2000) also adds that eco-villages in the Netherlands emerged from cohousing. In Utrecht for example, the Housing Project Het Groene Dak (the green roof) include many of the features of co-housing (common house, a collective store for organic food, democratic process for designing project and but there are no common meals. It also involves ecological features (green roof on the common house, passive solar, solar hot water heaters and greywater and rainwater retrieval systems and the most distinctive place being its wild courtyard where a distinctive wild natural space has been created. It was built by social housing cooperation with active involvement of future residents in all stages of the process. Consists of 66

attached units, 40 rentals the rest privately owned and are publicly subsidized, that is social housing

Completed in 1993, the important element of design was to configure building layout to maximize the south facing solar potential and at the same time to create marvelous green and wild interior space. Units have ground level gardens. Common house built by residences themselves lies in the centre. Ten of the units are independent from the Municipal sewage system but are connected to a large centralized composting site

The higher density of the projects 66 units per hectare shows that higher levels of greenness and community can be achieved even in high density areas. The buildings are not high rise with 2 storey and some few with 3 storeys Roomberg in Leiden also shows promise. For example it aims for 1000 development units on 24 ha of land (City of Groningen, 1997) Currently there are many eco-villages in the Netherlands and the approach is gaining momentum. Eco-villages such as Eva-Lanxmeer has won worldwide acclaim as a model of a European eco-village of the 21st centuries

3.5 CASE STUDIES

The following case studies were studied. The justification for selecting these case studies have been explained in the Methodology section

3.5 .1 EVA-Lanxmeer

In this section, I will give a description of EVA-Lanxmeer based on the information I got from visits I carried out to the site and the brochure I was given about the project. This description is to give a general overview to inform readers about the project

Brief History of the Project

According to Project Manager of EVA_Lanxmeer, Mrs Klaptein, in the late 'eighties', the publication of the Brundtland report, caused an inspiration all over Europe. People really wanted to work together and do something about the serious environmental problems. This inspired her to start the EVA-Lanxmeer project. It started in 1993 as a private initiative for an ecological pilot project. A proposal for an ecological pilot project was developed by a group of people of different disciplines, among them architects, landscape architects, energy consultants and a permaculture specialist. This group later became the initiative group to work the plan out. They met during several months and visualized the project and discussed the qualities and quantities that were needed for a sustainable settlement.

In October 1994 the Stichting E.V.A. - Ecologisch Centrum voor Educatie, Voorlichting en Advies - was founded and in 1995 the EVA concept was published in the first EVA brochure. In 1996 the partnership of EVA and the city of Culemborg started. The Project group EVA-Lanxmeer was installed and appointed an external project manager to organize the planning process. The Province of Gelderland gave Culemborg permission to build 200 extra houses above their quota for this special pilot project. In 1996, Andreas von Zadow von MATCH, who was making an inventory of ecological projects in Europe for the German Ministry chose EVA-Lanxmeer as an example of New Forms of Cooperation and Citizen Participation, together with six other projects out of 100 initiatives giving the project a lot of attention and prominence

Project description

The project EVA-Lanxmeer concerns an ecological settlement within the small-scale city of Culemborg, surrounded by an attractive river landscape. The location of the EVA project is unique: near the central railway station of Culemborg, on 24 hectares of agricultural land and some orchards. It is the first case in the Netherlands in which permission was given to build near to and partially in the protection zone of a drinking water extraction area. The regional government allowed building at this site only if guarantees were made that it was built carefully according to modern

sustainability principles. Future residents and other relevant parties like environmentalists, architects, energy- & water specialists, landscaping architects, sociologists all participated right from the beginning of the initiative

The project EVA Lanxmeer offers conditions for living, working and recreation in a natural environment within the city conglomeration. It consists of approx. 240 houses and apartments, ecological office buildings, a biological city farm for local food production, the EVA Centre (Education-, Information- & Conference centre for Integral Ecology, with Hotel), a Sustainable Implant (Living Machine & Biogas generation plant, Retourette, E-Fulfillment), and (collective) permaculture gardens. The overall design of the district Lanxmeer and the architecture of the most of the buildings is based on permaculture and organic design principles. The structure of the urban plan is mainly based on the record of the existing landscape (www.evalanxmeer.nl)

The subterranean structure has been used for the overall plan, the water zoning and ecological plan. General principles of permaculture affected the spatial structure of the plan, especially the green zoning. There is a gradual transition from private, semi-private and public space towards a more natural landscape in the protected zone of the Water Company. Four different green zones (actually five if one counts the private gardens within the half open courtyards) which are connected spatially and ecologically were designed. These are firstly, the collective gardens, as a part of the different building clusters with playgrounds, relax areas and 'edible gardens' Secondly, the public green with retention ponds, extensive planting and reed beds. Thirdly, agricultural grounds, city farm and orchards and finally, ecological developing areas with infiltration ponds, woodland and 'dry' and 'wet' hayfields.

Together these green zones form an environment that displays the diversity and resilience of natural ecosystems. There is also integration to the water, energy and waste concept of Lanxmeer hence making the arrangement and the management of the four zones oriented on biodiversity, natural dynamism and coherence between elements, places and processes. The natural cycles are paramount within the overall

structure. The different zones are linked. Firstly physically, through the design of watercourses, (informal) paths, green belts and the recycling of 'raw materials', nutrients, plants and products. Secondly, spatially, through the intensified experience of unity and 'soft and green delimitation between public and private areas. Thirdly, ecologically , through a larger diversity and vitality of the whole and finally socially, through the joint use and management, while (future) residents were even invited to participate in several realization processes, among which the design, building, management and further development of their environment.

Photo 2: Some buildings at EVA _Lanxmeer showing the rich blend of ecology and physical design







Source : EVA_Lanxmeer Information Centre

Project Phases

The development of the project can be seen in three (or four) phases which are the initiative phase: from 1993 – 1996, the planning phase: from 1996 – 1998, the building phase: from January 1999 - 2003 approximately (in four phases) and living in a sustainable settlement from 2000 onwards

Stakeholders Involved

The project is a collaborative endeavor between various stakeholders who are listed as follows :the city of Culemborg and the EVA Foundation ,the project manager: Hein Struben Advies BV, Overveen, energy concept: C.O.R.E International, Lochem, integral water concept: Buro opMAAT, Delft, housing association BCW in Culemborg, Urban planning office: BügelHajema, Assen', process & citizen participation: ORTA Process, Bunnikmand Stichting de Regie, Amsterdam,the Province of Gelderland ', the drinking water company: Waterbedrijf Gelderland,the gas company: GGR Gas,

the electricity company: NUON, and last but not least: a large group of interested people that wanted to live in the EVA project. In April 1997 these future inhabitants founded the Bewonersvereniging EVA-Lanxmeer, the BEL and BCW are the Project group partners. Urban design: Econnis, Tübingen, Landscape design: Copijn Utrecht BV', Architects: Joachim Eble Architektur, Tübingen and ORTA Atelier, Bunnik', a project leader to coordinate the building process, ORTA Traject ,ARCADIS BV contractor for the infrastructure and building trade Kingma Bouw BV

Financing

The EVA project started in 1994 with a loan of DFL 30 000,00 from Mrs Klaptein's mother .It received DFL 40 000,00 in order to organize the first citizen participation workshops for the brief of the urban plan from the VROM. The rest was raised by the members

3.5.2 The Dreijn

The Dreijn eco-village is still in the planning and implementation phase. Because its still in the formulation stage, I will look at a brief description of the project as well as a discussion about the various stakeholders which are involved. The justification for selecting this project although its not yet established was explained in the methodology section.

Figure 15: Map showing the area of Dreijn



Brief Project description

The Dreijn is a territory in the south-east of Wageningen at which a part of Wageningen University and Research Centre is located. Buildings at the Dreijn are currently used for research and education activities. Parts of these buildings are icons in history from an architectural point of view. Another special part of the Dreijn is the Arboreteum, a garden in which many special types of plants and trees grow and in which special facilities were build for experiments with growing plants. The WUR is moving its activities from the Dreijn towards the new campus 'De Born'. The WUR will probably move its activities in phases and plans to have left the Dreijn entirely in 2018. The Dreijn will then become a residential area. The WUR currently owns the territory and has not made any decision yet what to do with it. The university is planning to leave the area phase by phase provided that the already existing architectural icons will remain as they are. They need to make agreement with the municipality to develop plan for the area which is sustainable in terms of environment and social activities

Who are key stakeholders in Dreijen and their roles?

The key stakeholders in the Dreijn are as follows:

Intiatief Group

The IG has already been established for the Dreijn. It is composed mainly of Professors and other employees of the WUR and is in the process of organizing so that its vision of an establishment of an eco-village at Dreijn will come to reality. In order to steer the realization of the eco-village in Dreijn , it is providing leadership, building strategic alliances, lobbying community stakeholders and other advocacy initiatives

The WUR

The WUR are the owners of the Dreijn and they expect to have totally moved out of Dreijn by 2016 at least 2 years earlier than originally planned according to the Department of Real Estate. They have already signed an intention agreement with the Municipality but at the same time they will have a say with the Municipality about how the area must be used. From my interviews with the Department of Real Estates, they sounded a bit skeptical about the eco-village concept. We deduced a department that have a deep green kind of mentality about the eco-village. For example, the interviewee in the Department questioned how 360 houses can be built in an eco friendly way like banning cars questioning whether that will not be in violation of fire and safety regulations. This might reflect that WUR is not supportive of the project. They were not enthusiastic even about using Dreijn to practically showcase WUR innovations

Municipality

The Municipality is a very important However; the interests of all stakeholders in the municipality are not the same. From the interview we had with the Municipality representative, they showed that they were fully supportive of the eco-village in

Dreijn. They said they were going to amend the land use zoning to accommodate the eco-village in the Dreijn. hey also said they want to involve residents as much as possible but the interview later with the WUR estates seems to contradict the optimism the Municipality had since it seems they are planning with the WUR and architect without involving other interested parties like the IG

WEP (Wageningen Environmental Platform)

A student group focusing on sustainability of the WUR.It organizes various activities like information evenings about topical environmental issues in Wageningen.It was formed by the Wageningen Students Association and Progressive Studenten Fractie to lobby the WUR to be sustainable in many aspects. The energy and vibrancy of the WEP can be taped if collaborative initiatives are to be undertaken

Green party

It is a party in the municipality that supports the concept of sustainability as well as eco-village concept. It therefore is an important voice in the municipality for this concept

G) Mooi Wageningen, Durzaam Wageningen

These 2 organizations support the concept of keeping Wageningen authentic, traditional and sustainable.

Some of the partners like energy, water companies, architects etc will be appointed in the event that the project gets the approval. As of now the parties that are involved are simply lobbying the WUR and Municipality to approve their concept of establishing the eco-village at the Dreijn

3.6 Findings

In this chapter, I will review the results of my qualitative methods case study of eco-villages, and then discuss the rationales residents believe influenced their decision to move to eco-village or plan to move to eco-villages. These reasons and rationales are very important because in my view they help in revealing the discourses. I will also look at views of the various stakeholders involved

3.6.1 What are the motivations for initiating Eco-villages in the Netherlands?

I found out that the interviewees at the 2 eco-villages were motivated by promoting sustainable living. Sustainable living was defined not only from an ecological perspective but also from a social and economic angle. Mrs Kapltein of EVA_Lanxmeer was very critical of current Ministry of Housing, Spatial Planning and Environment (VROM)'s approach to sustainable living which she felt was not comprehensive. She said,

"The Ministry of VROM made huge plans for new town-development. The so called VINEX locations. The intention was to build 700 000 to 800 000 houses around the larger cities, from the year 1990 to 2010. These new suburbs were meant to be more sustainable than the normal practice was at that time, but the high spirit of the late eighties had worn off a bit and the idea of 'sustainability' had narrowed down to a more 'economic point of view'. The plans were just too big, and the civil servants who had to carry them out were not trained in comprehensive ecological approaches. The VINEX locations that are under construction at the moment, are now subject to severe criticism"

Hence the above remark from Mrs Kapltein shows that the current approach by the Dutch Ministry VROM about sustainability does not go far enough beyond economic issues. Sustainability has to include ecological and social issues hence her high regard for eco-villages

In addition she was also critical about talking instead of doing approach that is dominant in issues of environment in the mainstream. She said,

“ The government is just too anonymous to inspire and convince ‘16 000 000 grown up individuals’. Postbox 51 TV commercials that say: ‘A better environment starts with yourself’ are probably not enough...Information we get through the media about environmental issues is very fragmented and usually cover only all the bad news. How about the good news about positive initiatives and developments! There are many new products ready to be applied on a large scale, think of PV and wind energy, but they were still very expensive. Only a growing demand from users for these products would decrease the production costs that are involved”

Therefore she recognized herself as among the doers and the talkers and she said that is what inspired her to initiate and the part of EVA_Lanxmeer group from its inception until its success

Dr Baas of the Dreijn eco-village said that the main motivation for wanting to establish the eco-villages is to promote sustainability. He was very particular that if the Dreijn area, which he said is a hill to my amazement, is left in the hands of private developers, it can be destroyed especially the Aboretum and the historical buildings. He said,

“ The Dreijn has a rich history about not only the WUR but Wageningen as a whole. There are important buildings of historical significance which must be conserved. There is also the Aboretum which can be destroyed if a residential area is constructed in the conventional way. An eco-village will conserve these important features of the Dreijn”

Therefore the motivation of sustainability from an ecological perspective was a recurring theme with the above 2 respondents

However, there was also a dissenting view coming from the Manager of Real Estate at the WUR. He is totally against the concept of eco-village in the Dreijn. He said,

“ Do you think it will make sense to have a development where there are no roads in the community? What will happen if there is a fire? How will the fire brigade vehicles access the area? This is clearly against the laws and regulations, the municipality will never accept those like of utopian ideas”

Asked about the idea of the WUR selling the land to the Initiative Group Dreijn, he said,

“As WUR, the money we are going to generate will be needed to fund the construction of other WUR buildings in Droevendaalsesteg. Therefore we need to get the highest amount of money”

This shows that his approach is based on economic considerations than the ecological and social considerations. As WUR stands for sustainability given its mandate as a centre of life sciences, this is shocking as it shows that economic considerations can override ecological and social factors even by people who must know better

Another important question was on how they understood eco-villages to mean. This in my view can give us an idea of their discourse and also help in framing a conceptual framework of eco-villages in the Netherlands

3.6.2 How are eco-villages defined in the Netherlands?

It is interesting to note that although in literature, EVA-Lanxmeer is identified as a leading and successful “eco-village” in the Netherlands, Mrs Kapleten avoided throughout the interview to call EVA-Lanxmeer an eco-village even after I attempted several times to put those words into her mouth. She referred to EVA_Lanxmeer as a “Sustainable Community” This may show something about how perhaps the term eco-village is viewed in the Netherlands

On the other hand, Dr Baas and other members of the Initiative Group Dreijn were very comfortable and emphatic that what they want to build in the Dreijn is an, “eco-village” Even the Municipality of Wageningen and WEP as well as the Green Party were clear that they support the establishment of an “eco-village” They also referred to EVA-Lanxmeer as an “eco-village”

This can reinforce the fact that the understanding of the definition of what an eco-village is and what it is not may be blurred in the Netherlands. Whilst an eco-village is one of the initiatives that can be called sustainable community in literature, sustainable community can also mean other initiatives like co-housing as I discussed in preceding chapters

There was however consensus on the following issues about eco-villages. First that they all were motivated by promoting ecological sustainability

Mrs Kapleten of EVA_Lanxmeer described the eco-village as an,
“Ecological settlement”

The Dreijn Initiative Group also emphasized the need to conserve the arboretum within the eco-village. The Arboretum consists of fauna and flora that was planted decades ago

There was also consensus on promoting the use of sustainable sources of power like wind, solar and biothermal. They favored this than the electricity from the grid because of the fact that they considered these as clean and beneficial to the environment

However, interestingly, the Initiative Group Dreijn as well as the Municipality of Wageningen are against the use of wind energy in the Dreijn. They said it will affect some fauna. It is actually policy of the Wageningen Municipality that there can not be windmills erected. I pressed the municipality respondent on whether there was

scientific basis but in my view, I found out that in this 21st century age of cutting age innovation, this may be more of an ideological position of city fathers rather than on the limitations of innovation in the area of windmill technology

There was also consensus on the waste management on site as well as recycling .they also both favored community based water harvesting initiatives. They also agreed on the physical construction that must be inspired by promoting social interaction, the banning of cars and instead use of pedestrian paths and bicycles

There were however differences when it came to permaculture which was supported at EVA_Lanxmeer but rejected by the Dreijn

3.6.3 Who is involved in the eco-villages?

There was consensus that eco-villages must be accessible to all socio-economic groups as long as they shared the same values of ecological, social and economic sustainability Dr Baas of the Dreijn was emphatic that the proposed eco-village must be built in such a way that, “people of all income groups” must be able to be residents as long as they shared the same values.

The WEP was more emphatic about the issue of inclusivity. The WEP respondent had this to say,

“We also want consideration for low income groups. That is why in our view as WEP, we will be pushing that student barracks be part of the eco-village for those students who want to live in a sustainable way”

Mrs Kapletein of EVA-Lanxmeer said that the fact that they also targeted senior citizens shows their commitment to include all members who share the same belief in the eco-village model and who want to participate in the activities and life in the eco-village

3.6.4 What is the role of current institutions?

There was agreement that although eco-villages are a community initiative, it must not be completely detached from current institutions but work with and through them to achieve their goals

According to Dr Bas of Dreijn,

"We don't want a world out there. We don't want a community totally detached from the rest of society. That is not our idea of an eco-village. We want to remain within the main water, sewer and electricity grid. We want to be part of society not a crazy community out there. We are realists, not utopian"

According to Mrs Kapletein ,

"The fact that EVA_Lanxmeer partnered with various institutions including the VROM Ministry, Province of Gelderland, City of Culemborg, water, waste, electricity companies, architects and many others shows that they realize that these institutions are indispensable. What we just want is that the initiative comes from future residents who must now work with all these experts .In fact, the residents is an important stakeholder that must be consulted and participate at each stage of the project. That has been the missing link, residents not being able to have their ideas included in residential buildings"

According to Wageningen University, the Municipality remains committed to its institutional responsibility of being the local government and the enforcer of by laws. However, it has a new strategic thrust which focuses on increasing the role of residents' involvement in matters that are affecting them. That is why the Municipality stands supportive of the idea of an eco-village in Dreijn and if the approval by council is granted, it will quickly change the zoning of the Dreijn that is currently an educational

On the contrary, the WUR real estate said that although institutions like the WUR can participate by making sure that it showcase some of its research, this could not be used as leverage for WUR to sell land at the Dreijn cheaply

CHAPTER 4: Comparative analysis of Literature and the Dutch Practice

In this section, I am going to make a comparative analysis of eco-villages in literature as expounded in Chapter 2 and juxtapose it with the findings of the Dutch case studies in Chapter 3. This analysis will enable me to answer the major research questions

- Which discourse about eco-villages is more dominant in the Netherlands?
- Why is this discourse(s) dominant in the Netherlands?

4.1 Which discourse(s) about eco-villages is more dominant in the Netherlands?

In Chapter 2 where a discussion of the discourses was carried out, I identified the following which are resistance (eco-villages as anti-globalization movement and eco-villages as resistance to traditional governance structures) eco-villages as deep green/utopia, eco-villages as elitist havens as well as eco-villages as bastions of sustainability. In this section, I will look at each discourse and confront it with the findings of my Dutch case studies

4.1.1 Are Dutch Eco-villages bastions of sustainability?

In my view the sustainability discourse is very visible in the 2 case studies. According to my discussion of literature in Chapter 2, at the heart of the sustainability discourse is the Brundtland perspective which is underpinned by the prism of

sustainability which was explained in chapter 2 . It was clear from the interviews carried out with the EVA_Lanxmeer and The Initiative Groep Dreijn that the major vision and aim was to build a sustainable community that is mainly focused on the need to address issues of sustainable development

Hence Eva-Lanxmeer director, Mrs Kapltein capture this well in a paper she presented to the 'Urban Visions' in Freiburg in 1999 where she said that

“In the late ‘eighties’, the publication of the Brundtland report caused an inspiration all over Europe. People really wanted to work together and do something about the serious environmental problems. Also the Dutch Ministry of VROM - Housing, Urban planning and Environment - published the first National Environment Policy Plan, (NMP) followed by an action plan ‘to Choose or to Lose’, with environmental measures that covered the main aspects of society: the pollution of the building industry, of agriculture, chemical industries, transport and traffic, and so on’

Thus its very clear that she directly links the establishment of EVA_Lanxmeer to the Brundtland Report which is like the bible of sustainable development discourse

Sustainable development discourse offers the most comprehensive approach by looking at both ecology, economy , social issues as well as institutional issues as articulated by the prism of sustainability referred to earlier above. The case studies in the Netherlands shows that eco-villages are addressing all these issues in a fundamental way. There is no narrow focus on only one aspect. The approach is balanced .Thus from an ecological point of view, we note the following at EVA_Lanxmeer,as put by Mrs Kaptein

“ ecologically built houses, in a natural environment, where biological water treatment and the production of sustainable energy is a common practice, with a city farm around the corner where healthy food is produced”

Furthermore, in the paper, “Introducing urban agriculture related concepts in the built environment: the Park of the 21st century”, Roling (2005) said the following about EVA-Lanxmeer ecological design,

“Basis was the creation of four different green zones (actually five if one counts the private gardens, within the half open courtyards), which are connected spatially and ecologically: (1) the collective gardens, as a part of the different building clusters, with playgrounds, relax areas and so called ‘edible gardens’, (2) public green with retention ponds, extensive planting and reed beds, (3) agricultural grounds, city farm and orchards, and (4) ecological developing areas with infiltration ponds, woodland and ‘dry’ & ‘wet’ hayfields. Together these green zones form an environment that displays the diversity and resilience of natural ecosystems. It can be called the ‘Park of the 21st century’. Moreover because of the added links to the (waste) water-, energy- and waste concept of Lanxmeer. The arrangement and the management of the four zones is oriented on biodiversity, natural dynamism and a coherence between elements, places and processes.”

The Initiative Group Dreijn also addresses the ecological dimension. They talk of a need to maintain the Aboretum so as to conserve the faun and flora. They are also planning to tap solar energy, waste water and rain water treatment as well as using local ecological building material in the construction of the houses. As one of the members put it to me,

“We want to use the various technologies that have been developed at WUR. Its a pity that the WUR is a leader in developing these sustainable models but we have never showcased them. The establishment of an eco-village at the Dreijn will give us an opportunity to showcase some of the research outputs on sustainable buildings”

Apart from the ecological dimension, there is also a concern for the social issues shown by the following from EVA_Lanxmeer,

“Future residents were identified and invited to participate alongside professionals like town planners, architects, housing association, water company etc. Residents were treated on equal terms as any other stakeholders and their ideas were incorporated into the building of the EVA_Lanxmeer. More so residents can interact more through car pooling, the common spaces in the area as well as working together at the City farm or in recreation at the city farm. In addition, the concept of self builders can mobilize the community as well as regular meetings means that children and residents live and come to know each other”

Roling (2005) said the following about EVA-Lanxmeer social design,

“socially, through the joint use and management, while (future) residents are even invited to participate in several realization processes, among which the design, building, management and further development of their environment”

With regard to the Dreijn, the Intiatief Group is in the process of identifying future residents. So far they have over 45 members involved in the group that are working with various stakeholders in the effort of getting the permission to develop the eco-village in the Dreijn

According to the Initiative Groep Dreijn,

“We would like the design to emphasize and capture the social spirit. We are looking at issues like common rooms and public spaces where residents can meet and share so as to create that spirit of a well knit community”

The eco-villages are also interested in the economic sustainability. They want to promote activities that promote the production and consumption of local products .This is particular especially with regard to the City farm in Culemborg where the residents of EVA_Lanxmeer work together to grow organic farm produce. However, I did not see those extremes like an idea for a local currency or any emphasis that all residents must be employed in the area as happens in other eco-villages like Findhorn in Sweden where they have gone to the extent of having their

own currency. This more rational approach to economic issues shows that their motivation is simply sustainability as opposed to anti-globalization that is embraced by those who challenge the traditional concepts of globalization by promoting issues like a local currency

The other aspect of sustainability is the institutional sustainability. Here we are looking at institutions for sustainability

In the case studies, I realized that eco-villages in the Netherlands want to work with not against or replace the existing institutions like the Municipalities, housing Associations, city planners, architects etc. What they are however challenging is the exclusion of residents. That is why in both cases of EVA_Lanxmeer and Dreijn, we see the establishment of Initiative Groups of residents that act as a stakeholder in the process. The eco-villages in the Netherlands has not adopted a we go it alone mentality but they are cooperating and collaborating with the institutions but persuasively putting across their ideas for acceptance. Therefore this can reinforce the fact that their motivation is more on promoting sustainability rather than any ideological issues.

In Chapter 2 , figure , we discussed elements of a sustainable communities by the Academy of Sustainable Communities that summarized the properties of sustainable communities. I will not reproduce the diagram here but suffice to say that the building blocks of a sustainable community starting with governance, transport and connectivity, services, environment, equity, economy, social and cultural as well as housing and built environment are the issues that are at the core of eco-villages in the Netherlands. I have already discussed factors like governance, environment, equity, economy and social issues above which are all emphasized in both of the 2 case studies therefore I will not repeat. However, an interesting aspect from the Academy of Sustainable communities that I have not yet discussed is the issue of transport and connectivity. Both the 2 case studies are not detached but connected to the various cities they are located.

For example, in the project description of EVA_Larxmeer, I found the following, *‘an ecological settlement within the small-scale city of Culemborg, surrounded by an attractive river landscape. The location of the EVA project is unique: near the central railway station of Culemborg.’*

This shows that it is not detached from the rest of society but is actually a part of the City of Culemborg thus fulfilling this requirement of a sustainable community as elucidated by the Academy of Sustainable communities.

This is also true of Dreijn which is also in the City of Wageningen as the following statement about its location shows, *“The Dreijn is a territory in the south-east of Wageningen at which a part of Wageningen University and Research Centre is located. Buildings at the Dreijn are currently used for research and education activities. Parts of these buildings are icons in history from an architectural point of view.”*

Thus the 2 case studies meet all the requirements of a sustainable community from the academy of sustainable communities perspective which in my view further reinforces that they are within the sustainability discourse

Another way of looking at sustainability of communities as I discussed in Chapter 2 is the Marsden approach which I will not reproduce here. The major issues identified by Marsden apply to eco-villages in the Netherlands In my view, at the heart of the above elements towards what Marsden calls a re-localized eco-economy (which in this case will mean eco-villages) is the issue of energy, waste, mobility, amenities, information and communication and to some extent food

This is exactly what one finds at EVA_larxmeer as the following description about EVA_Larxmeer from the project brochure shows,

“It consists of approx. 240 houses and apartments, ecological office buildings, a biological city farm for local food production, the EVA Centre (Education-, Information- & Conference centre for Integral Ecology, with Hotel), a Sustainable Implant (incl. Living Machine & Biogas generation plant, Retourette, E-Fulfillment), and (collective) permaculture gardens.”

On the issue of mobility, there is the use of pathways for walking and cycling which is so organized at EVA_Lanxmeer. The cycle paths are also green. Apart from reducing congestion, the issue of reduction of the carbon footprint was highlighted showing that the eco-villages in the Netherlands are alive to the issue of climate change.

All the aspects of Information and communication are present in the Netherlands. At EVA_Lanxmeer in particular, there are libraries, meeting places and community newsletters and training. Mrs Kaptein of EVA_Lanxmeer is involved in various national and international consultancies and conferences as part of the outreach programme. So this is clearly an attribute at the heart of eco-villages in the Netherlands. In the EVA_Lanxmeer and proposed Dreijn design, there is plan for a hotel and other amenities. This is also in line with the amenity services. Finally, on Food and timber, all the factors like short supply chains, sustainable procurement strategies and sustainable construction projects are clearly emphasized in the projects that were visited in the Netherlands

This is the same as regards the Dreijn. According to Dr Bas of Dreijn, *“Dreijn eco-village must be constructed on ecological principles that maintains the natural beauty of the hill. We want to harness solar energy and practice waste and water recycling. We also want to establish a center in collaboration with Wageningen University that will provide information to visitors about the eco-village as well as showcasing some of the sustainable research outputs of Wageningen University.”* This also captures the major issues raised by Masdern about sustainability. Thus from the above discussion, I can say that the sustainability discourse is clearly visible in the 2 eco-villages in the Netherlands

4.1.2 Are Dutch Eco-villages spaces of resistance?

In Chapter 2, the concept of eco-villages as spaces of resistance both from an anti-globalization and resistance to traditional governance was discussed. In my findings of the 2 case studies, I found out that there is no motivation for resistance in the Netherlands

Firstly as regards anti-globalization, it was never mentioned in all interviews as a motivating factor for establishing eco-villages. This is why there is no motivation to delink both the economies of EVA_Larxmeer as well as Dreijn from the rest of global society. In fact, when asked about their financing options, Dr Bas of Dreijn said that they were exploring if they can get funds from banks like Rabo Bank which has a reputation of supporting green initiatives. This is clearly what the anti-globalization discourse is against as banks are seen as symbols of capitalism, consumerism hence globalization

Asked about whether they wanted to establish their own currency and local banks, both EVA-Larxmeer and Dreijn project managers laughed off the idea even when I sarcastically said they could perhaps bring back the Dutch Guilder in these communities. In Chapter 2, we realized that these issues like community banks and creating a local economy are at the heart of the anti-globalization movement but in my findings these are not the narrative in eco-villages in the Netherlands

In Chapter 2 we also looked at resistance to traditional government structures where eco-villages from this discourse want a totally new local governance matrix that exclude local authorities, professional bureaucrats and so on. As discussed in Chapter 2, all those professions involved in residential development are not embraced by this discourse. In their place they want,

“Voluntary committees, working bees and rosters will carry out many tasks presently performed by expensive experts and councils. Town banks will make our savings available for investment in ventures which will enrich our locality. Most tax revenue will be collected and allocated locally. Taxes will be partly payable in non-cash forms, e.g., contributing to working bees.”

This is not the case in the 2 case studies. In fact, we see close co-operation and collaboration between the local authority and professionals in the Netherlands. What they only want changed from the current matrix is the inclusion of future residents from the beginning of the process who are viewed as stakeholders with the same rights and responsibilities as all other stakeholders

Hence with regard to EVA_Lanxmeer, we note that the City of Culemborg actually went out of its way to grant them land in a place that was protected because it was a groundwater zone and we also see the province of Gelderland giving Culemborg city permission to build 200 more houses above their quota for this eco-village. Honestly, if these eco-villages were resistance to traditional governance structures, they could not have been working so closely and actually getting favours from local authorities. With regards to the Dreijn, the Initiative group is already working with the municipality, housing association, WUR, political parties, energy, waste and water companies among others. In my interview with the Municipality of Wageningen, I was told that they were in the process of amending the land zoning plan for the Dreijn to change it from educational to residential so as to enable the eco-village to be established. This clearly shows that local authorities and professional institutions are crucial in eco-villages in the Netherlands.

Thus in conclusion, I can say eco-villages in the Netherlands are not spaces of resistance.

4.1.3 Are Dutch Eco-villages havens for the elites?

As regards the elitism, I observed that the eco-villages in the Netherlands are generally middle class endeavor. These can not be called elites in a European context. The assertion by Riddell (2005) that eco-villages are peri-urban phenomena established by elites who want to enjoy “mock ruralism” is not true. In fact both EVA-Lanxmeer and Dreijn are in the city and not on the rural urban hinterland. Therefore, those who initiated these projects are not elites coming from big cities like say Amsterdam but are residents of the same towns.

Another issue that has been used to justify this elitist discourse is that land to build eco-villages which has wrongly been described by Ridell (2005) as on the rural-urban fringe and very expensive. In the case of EVA-Lanxmeer, according to Mrs Kaptein, it was only possible to establish the eco-village because the City of Culemborg actually

offered the land free of charge to EVA_Lanxmeer. In the case of Dreijn, Dr Baas told me that they are negotiating with both the WUR and the Municipality to buy the land at a cheaper than its market price since they will maintain the Dreijn sustainably. In addition, Dr Baas of the Dreijn is supportive of integrating poorer groups thus he was emphatic in his support of having social housing like a student barrack as part of Dreijn in support of the proposal of the WEP. Therefore in my view, the aspect of elitism does not exist in the Netherlands

4.1.4 Are Dutch Eco-villages deep green/Utopian Idealists?

From my discussion in Chapter 2 , we noted that those who believe in this discourse often view eco-villages as being on the fringe of society, idealists or utopians (Sargsson, 1990) They view eco-villages as deliberately created communities whose members strive to live in a socially and environmentally sustainable manner, to practice voluntary simplicity, and to cultivate meaning, life satisfaction, and fulfillment (Bonnette 2004; Kirby 2004; Svensson in Jackson and Svensson 2002) However, in the case studies I carried out, I realized that the eco-villages in the Netherlands are not on the fringe of society but within the mainstream. Eco-villages are just any other acceptable housing option

From my observations of residents I saw at EVA_Lanxmeer and the members of the Initiative group Dreijn that represents the future residents, there was nothing to suggest that they believed in hippy culture which is closely linked to this discourse. In addition , in all case studies there was not any spiritual dimension between the members. In fact the underlying characteristics of the residents in both the case studies is the diversity of residents across age, economic and social status making it impossible for a single unifying culture like the hippie culture

However, an interesting issue was the view of the Director of WUR Real Estate. His views about eco-village were the only critical of all the stakeholders interviewed. He viewed eco-villages from the utopian discourse when he said “ *how will these people will be allowed by the Municipality to build residences without roads ? How will the*

fire brigade get there in times of crisis? It is simply idealistic. People must get real!!"The above statement shows that there is a perception among other stakeholders in the Netherlands that eco-villages are utopian innovations by people on the fringe of society and idealists

4.2 Why is a particular discourse(s) dominant in the Netherlands ?

There are several reasons that has led to eco-villages in the Netherlands to develop in the way they have done Firstly, I observed that the Dutch government was instrumental in the pacification of eco-villages to an extent that they are not spaces of resistance, utopia or havens of élites. This to a greater extend can be attributed to the Brundtland Report which ushered in the concept of sustainable development and won worldwide global acclaim. This was clearly demonstrated by Mrs Kaptein of EVA_Lanxmeer who said,

““In the late ‘eighties’, the publication of the Brundtland report caused an inspiration all over Europe. People really wanted to work together and do something about the serious environmental problems. Also the Dutch Ministry of VROM - Housing, Urban planning and Environment - published the first National Environment Policy Plan, (NMP) followed by an action plan ‘to Choose or to Lose’, with environmental measures that covered the main aspects of society: the pollution of the building industry, of agriculture, chemical industries, transport and traffic, and so on’

Thus the Brundtland Report had an impact not only in the Netherlands but across Europe with governments taking a conscious effort to provide leadership in promoting sustainable development. Therefore, the Brundtland Report in my view provided a window of opportunity for governments to embrace initiatives that promoted sustainable development

This is why Mrs Kaptein went on to say about the Dutch government,

“The Ministry of VROM made huge plans for new town-development. The so called VINEX locations. The intention was to build 700 000 to 800 000 houses around the larger cities, from the year 1990 to 2010. These new suburbs were meant to be more sustainable than the normal practice was at that time, but the high spirit of the late eighties had worn off a bit and the idea of ‘sustainability’ had narrowed down to a more ‘economic point of view’. The plans were just too big, and the civil servants who had to carry them out were not trained in comprehensive ecological approaches. The VINEX locations that are under construction at the moment, are now subject to severe criticism”

This means that the Dutch government embraced the issue of sustainability through the construction of VINEX locations which were designed to be more sustainable. Therefore this shows that post the Brundtland report, political will was infused in the Dutch national government to promote initiatives that could enhance sustainable development. In the pot-pouri of such initiatives, eco-villages became one of the alternatives sustainability model. Therefore, one can conclude , on the basis of the 2 case studies that the Brundtland Report created a window of opportunity not only for eco-villages, but for all innovative ways of promoting sustainability. The eco-village concept also capitalized on that window

This is also true of the Dreijn. In my interview with the Municipality, I was informed that the Municipality of Wageningen has already developed a strategic policy and a plan to promote sustainable buildings and communities. Given such a policy thrust, it makes it easy for eco-villages, under the banner of promoting sustainability, to be given a chance

However, another important aspect that has led to eco-villages to develop in a way that is not about resistance or utopia as well as elitism is the fact that the Dutch government and local authorities have found a way to manage this initiative. Firstly, when groups present ideas about establishing eco-villages, we have noted that starting with central government through the Ministry of Housing, Spatial Planning and Environment, Provinces as well as Municipalities embrace the idea and work with the initiators. In this way, the local authorities have room to also influence the

residents about the final product. This is why despite it being a new concept in Culemborg, the City gave EVA_Lanxmeer permission to establish the eco-village in a groundwater protected zone. It's important to note the EVA_Lanxmeer was a collaborative effort between the city of Culemborg which donated land and the EVA_Lanxmeer group.

In traditional residential development, there are professionals that are key to the establishment of residences.

Some radical eco-villages especially those that are motivated by resistance and utopia normally want to work on their own in the design and construction of eco-villages by totally excluding the professionals. This is not the case in the Netherlands where the focus of eco-villages is not on excluding any stakeholder, but of including future residents whose ideas must also be considered but still purifies by professional experts. Therefore, instead of seeking to go alone by excluding all the professionals identified in the above framework like resistance and utopia discourses do, in the Dutch context, eco-villagers are only fighting for the inclusion of an important stakeholder that has been omitted in the traditional approach which are the future residents. However other stakeholders are still involved although the future residence remain at the core of the planning and implementation process

The Dutch eco-villages work with all local, regional and national institutions .That is why the eco-villages in the Netherlands are not totally detached from other institutions .There are no eco-villages in mountains or valleys in the Netherlands because eco-villages like EVA_Lanxmeer and the Dreijn works with all built environmental occupations, local authorities, social occupations, community occupations and cross cutting occupations These have been identified in preceding chapters for EVA_Lanxmeer and Dreijn

The other issue may also be that there is no widespread poverty in the Netherlands meaning that staying in an eco-village becomes a choice rather than a necessity which could have led to a mushrooming of hippy like utopian eco-villages

In a nutshell I can conclude this section by saying the Dutch policy of promoting innovative approaches to sustainable development given perhaps the high population density has led to sustainability becoming the dominant discourse of eco-villages in the Netherlands

CHAPTER 5 CONCLUSION

This study has highlighted the fact that eco-villages can be understood from various discourses among them resistance, utopia, elitism and sustainability. Different eco-villages around the world can fit broadly into any of the discourses. This thus support the view advanced by Jackson and Svenson(2003) who argued that , ““.....eco-villages build on a common vision; they differ greatly from each other according to the difference in focus placed on their ecological, social, and/or cultural spiritual-dimensions. They are also greatly influenced by different climactic conditions, their natural environment and prevalent local cultures” Accordingly they conclude that, “....any generalizations risk a homogenization of the diversity of eco-villages that exists”

In this mish mash of diversity found in eco-villages, this thesis also managed to show that the sustainability discourse. is dominant in the Netherlands This is a result of factors like the Dutch way of living (culture) institutional framework, the influence of the Dutch government in collaborating and embracing eco-villages as a legitimate housing model and the fact that eco-villages in the Netherlands are driven by the conviction that future residents must be at the centre of the plan conceptualization, planning, design and implementation of sustainable residences. This is thus an inclusive approach rather than and exclusion approach favored by other eco-villages especially in the resistance, utopia and elitism approach who are against the existing structures and therefore usually confront or totally divorce themselves from the current housing development regulations and institutions. The Dutch model emphasizes change from within inspired by promoting sustainability as opposed from change from without which is inspired by totally destroying the status quo and recreating a totally new phenomena.

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APPENDIX

SAMPLE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Why did you decide to move to Eco-village?

What does Eco-village mean to you?

Do you feel differently about 'mainstream' society now? In what way?

Who are the main stakeholders in establishing the eco-villages and in what way?

What is the role of central, regional and local government as well as other professionals? How do you relate to them?

Who are your residents?

What are your views regarding exclusion of other stakeholders in eco-villages?

How are these eco-villages financed?

How do you connect with this place?

What is your role in the community?

What goals are you achieving/concerns are you addressing by living here?

Is there a collective, cultural identity among the people who live here? Tell me about it.

In your mind, what is the most important characteristic of Eco-village?

Do you see Eco-village as being created in reaction to anything? If so, what?

What do you believe to be Eco-village's primary mission (role in the world)?

Did you participate in the design of your house?

- a. If so, was this participation important to you and why?
- b. What did you gain from your participation?

LIST OF INTERVIEWEES

NAME	ORGANISATION
Roan Lakerveld	WEP
Marlinde Koopmans	WEP
Anna Heinmeijer	WEP
Sico Stoldiler	WEP
Johan Feenstra	Initiative Group Dreijn
Bas Van Vliet	Initiative Group Dreijn
Marleen Kaptein	EVA_Laxmeer
Dr.ir. Grietje Zeeman	WUR Environmental Technology Group
Drs E.G van der Meer	WUR Real Estate
Anita Holstra	Wageningen Municipality

