



PROJECTS AS PRACTICE, INTERNAL TO EXTERNAL

Intentional Community > Neighborhood > Region > Extended Networks > State

Housing collectives and other intentional communities can exist in layered contexts. Some of these spatial layers range from their internal function and dynamic, to the neighborhood, regional area and society to which they are connected. There are also layers to their external connections to other intentional communities, ally communities and networks that can span all spatial layers. Radical, activist intentional communities seeking to build and support various liberation struggles in the context of White-Supremacist-Capitalist-Patriarchy can become locally rooted institutions that facilitate agency in information sharing, organizing and building localized power. In doing this, they can become a rooted foundation for shifting power towards their stated goals beyond their localized spatial context.

We think this is important to understand because any sustaining movements need institutions to support their efforts. It is often the case that left/anarcho/progressive movements do not possess the resources by which to engage in building and sustaining radical organizational structures that exist to facilitate and assist radical movement. As the recent history of the past 20 years shows a sharp decline in and marginalization of older existing institutions with infrastructure that traditionally supported transgressing radical politics and agency, one way to build this back where it matters most is by layering the uses of places we have access to. Such a location can be the place in which we live. Towards this end, the following outline attempts to give meaning and example of why and how this can be done.

Intentional Community as Grassroots Infrastructure for Liberation Movements

Synopsis:

What follows is an attempt to open up discussion on how intentional communities in the form of cooperatives and collectives can assist in creating a catalyst for political struggle to challenge and overcome various forms of oppression.

In this effort, we will try to find examples of liberatory theory and practice from small internal actions among members to larger vision, strategies and tactics both within intentional communities as well as with the broader communities and cities in which they exist.

We will attempt to come up with some solutions to known problems within the context of White-Supremacist-Capitalist-Patriarchy and see if we can point to some examples of these solutions both



existing and potential.

This attempt will largely be the framing of a much larger conversation to take place as a continuing practice among people seeking a collective or cooperative living space while committing their lives to the efforts of sustainability and liberation.

Operational definitions:

Intentional Community - community formed or joined based on agreement to principles established prior to membership.

Cooperative - intentional community based on a model of consensus or democratic decision making with sustainable structure and procedures primarily focused on its own internal dynamics; often more heterogeneous in theory and practice.

Collective - intentional community based on model of consensus decision making with sustainable structure and procedures focused on its own internal dynamics as they pertain to facilitating the achievement of stated external action and goals; often more homogeneous in Left/Anarcho theory and practice.

Hegemony - control through rule, force or unequal influence politically, economically and/or culturally.

Hegemon - the institution, government or society that is the dominant and ruling force in a given context, circumstance or historical moment.

Control-society - a social order governed with authority, power and intention to know and affect the outcome of all actions by groups and individual lives.

(A)s mentioned, the context in which intentional communities seeking sustainability exist is one of White-Supremacist-Capitalist-Patriarchy or W-S-C-P. The dominant value of this system is one of putting the maximization of profits before the well being of people. It is an economic system of production with riches for few rather than production for use by all. The context is wrought with inequalities that grant white, male, heterosexual privileges with greater access to the top of hierarchically organized positions as exist among the vast majority of institutions in our W-S-C-P society.

I. The people who may come together to engage in a collective or cooperative intentional community project must do so while dealing with the personal and collective effects from a system of profits before people, wage slavery, materialist consumer culture, racial, gender, sexual and ability inequality in a political-economy that has an internal logic of the need for a continuing expansion in order for its' continued existence.

A. Where there is such concentration of power, there is always resistance in some form and collective and cooperative intentional communities, like individuals, must seek sustainability understanding that there is no neutrality to the actions of their lived context.



1. The large scope and pervasive negative effects from the institutions of imperialist hegemonic power leads to anti-imperialist resistance.

a. The WTO (World Trade Organization), IMF (International Monetary Fund), WB (World Bank, NAFTA (North American Free Trade Agreement), TPP (Trans-Pacific Partnership), Prison Industrial Complex, corporate lobbyists, local police, etc. all have resistance to the logic and agenda of their efforts both foreign and domestic, violent and nonviolent.

B. The power of oppression out there and overseas creates resistance on a level of immediate survival such as Afghanistan, Iraq, Palestine, etc. (in the past: Spain, Vietnam, Nicaragua, etc.) to a level of strategic resistance such as Iran, Bolivia, Ecuador, etc. (in the past: Iran, Cuba, Chile, etc.)

1. Important to note here is that the more decentralized points of resistance to the hegemonic imperialist power, the better the chance for over-extension of the reach of the hegemon leading to the consequence of there being established and sustaining points of resistance to the oppressive power and conditions created by the hegemon.

a. This can be seen in the recent, largely successful resistance efforts to U.S. imperialist power and control in the countries of Iran, Venezuela, Bolivia, Ecuador and Nicaragua as there was not the means, economics or political will to stop those countries turning to points of resistance while hegemonic U.S. control was over reached fighting two wars simultaneously overseas as these countries struggled to become more independent; this being a lesson for domestic institutional points of resistance.

C. As broad as the forces of oppression that act on people and places out there may be, many people seek to set up a collective or cooperative intentional community as something they can practically do (after recognizing U.S. foreign policy and its military are a means of enforcing W-S-C-P; such an endeavor can be done sustainably by recognizing the connections of their collective efforts on local problems with the problems of those unknown or far away.

1. This is necessary for all intentional communities who see sustainability as defined as the flourishing of all interconnected things in a way that continues their flourishing.

II. With the ever expansion demand in the logic of Capitalism and the layered forces of oppression that aid its dominance and control, Globalization in its current oppressive form and the strategy of control-society are factors that any collective or cooperative intentional community will have to grapple with in their efforts to bring sustainability to their local experience in a way not threatened by power of force and hegemonic strategy.

A. One such strategy of Capitalist political-economy is the attack on the powers of the nation State pertaining to civil society and its ability to create rule and law under sovereign constitutional process, leaving the military and police to only act on rule and law that benefits the system of actuating profits for the few at the expense of the many.

1. As this strategy of W-S-C-P hegemonist power seeks to erode any potential challenge to it



from civil society, the ability to engage in local challenges to this oppression diminish greatly and even with resistance movements against this strategy such as the Seattle protests, anti-war coalitions, immigrant rights movements, queer equality etc., there is still the reality that the oppressive, imperialist strategy of hegemony continues as if uninterrupted.

a. Control-society is then a means of enforcing this strategy that seeks the decline of sovereign civil governance and does this via the Patriot Act, NSA surveillance, the militarization of police forces and use of “non-lethal” weapons as crowd suppression.

2. This is the main external threat that collective and cooperative intentional communities face as they seek course for sustainability on a local level and attempt to facilitate efforts toward that goal.

B. In context of the assault on sovereign local governance, resistance has been shown to take the form of noncompliance to the rules and laws of the hegemonic State.

1. In an example of what can be done on the local level as a means of resistance, the municipalities of Portland, Oregon, Eugene Oregon and Arcata, California all passed local ordinances directing their public agencies (including law enforcement) to not comply with federal laws that mandated implementing aspects of the Patriot Act.

a. This actually took the form of Portland city council and mayor ordering their Police to not work with federal agents seeking enforcement of the Patriot Act.

2. Intentional communities seeking sustainability can organize on a local level to help facilitate such localized resistance and more radical forms of non compliance with the hegemon.

a. Any such successful efforts of resistance to control-society and oppressive hegemonic strategy would only be so do to the development of a more sustaining form of governance at the local level in which institutions that counter oppressive hegemonic institutions will be locally based with grassroots support.

III. Collective and cooperative intentional communities can be more than just a living space. They can be layered as a safe space for facilitating transgressive and radical discourse while modeling and organizing an example of an alternative institution to those that permeate hierarchical control-society. Such intentional communities can as an aid in over-extending the hegemon’s efforts at control-society.

A. Intentional communities in a collective or cooperative model can exist as anti-hegemonic institutions in themselves.

1. They are locally rooted such that their true grassroots potential is something that is intrinsic to their definition and local matters are of a collective, personal and individual matter.

a. They can be situated in urban or suburban centers; ex: apartment complex, townhome, house, owned or rented.



2. Collective or cooperative models can both exist to facilitate sustainability in their collective and extended endeavors by helping with generating and maintaining sustaining tactics, strategies and goals.

a. Depending on the size and level of homogeneity, multiple dwellings could make up a co-op of collectives.

3. Collective and cooperative intentional communities are likely not vanguardist as they are part of their neighborhood and extended community and tend to see vanguardist leadership as being at odds with sustainability and sustaining theory and practice; hence, they have horizontal, non-hierarchical, relations with their communities.

a. Such intentional communities practice what they preach as good or sustaining agency, and they lead by example in their doing.

4. Collectives and cooperatives leading in this way by example engage in a horizontal organizing methodology that seeks alliances under the value of equality and shared position to the context which they exist.

a. These are the people next door, down the street and surrounding neighborhoods.

5. What can be done to bring about sustainability in day-to-day living, physical space as well as the space created between people by collectives and cooperatives can be practiced by those occupying living space no matter if they are a collective, cooperative or any type of intentional community.

a. Nuclear and alternative families can follow all or some amount of the principles of collective and cooperative intentional communities.

B. Sustainable, community-centered organizing can better influence the outcome of decisions by local governing bodies including how such governing bodies are created and function.

1. There is greater potential for introducing and passing local rules and legislation that mandate non-compliance with the rules, laws and dictates of the oppressive hegemon; in this case, the State and Federal governing bodies. e.g. tenants of the patriot act, facilitation of spying on citizens, enforcement of drug laws, minimum wage, landlord-tenant law, etc.

C. Helping to facilitate a strong, rooted, local/regional, organized resistance and non-compliance to the mandates from the oppressing hegemonic governing bodies of control-society can bring their response in attempts at forced compliance.

1. Attempts to bring about forced compliance in one internal region of the hegemon is liken to the resistance in one external region such as Cuba, Ecuador, Bolivia, Afghanistan, Iraq, etc.

2. By helping to facilitate multiple regions of non-compliance both internal and external, hegemonic oppressing governance can have an over-extension of the reach for control-society.



a. This overextension can help break the domestic front of the hegemon's oppression in building control-society.

IV. Towards a realization of an alternative to hierarchical oppression and governance from control-society, the localized resistance and decentralized horizontal scope and governing practices that would successfully liberate the local from the national and global is a basis for building new governing institutions on a larger scale. In that, there is a coherence of intentional community with self-governing society where links can be drawn between the theory and practice of both.

A. Collective and cooperative intentional communities are self governing institutions in-and-of themselves.

1. Groupings of these institutions and others who follow their practices (or are allied in solidarity) into neighborhoods, cities and regions can create a counter to the power of the hegemon while simultaneously creating alternative governing structures consistent in principle from local to regional, near to far.

2. The coherence and consistency of a liberatory theory and practice is constructed when the micro practices of a particular community are in Solidarity with the macro neighborhood, local and the regional practices and this is done in accordance with axiomatic (must have) principles of governance.

a. In the case of collective and cooperative intentional communities, this happens when these communities are in agreement with a theory and practice of principles such as the collective ownership of the means of production, putting people before profits, and environmental sustainability.

B. For collective and cooperative communities to be sustaining, there must be an understanding of sustainability that accounts for not just environmental destruction and oppression of people out there in the world but the destruction and oppression that can be reified and re-ascribed in the context of micro interpersonal relations; hence, 'the personal is political' is a principle of sustainability.

1. Interpersonal relations exist in, and are products of, a socio-historical-political context.

a. As mentioned above, the contemporary socio-historical-political context in which we exist begets the intersectional oppressing dynamics of W-S-C-P.

2. There can be no intentional community that exists outside of this socio-historical-political context even if the intention is to go far away and live off the grid.

a. This is true just as an individual expatriating from the hegemonic government of control-society will not make them safe from or unaffected by its reach elsewhere in the world either from its environmental devastation or its political-economic policy.

3. For intentional communities to be coherently sustainable, requires a dedication and adherence



to these agreed upon axiomatic principles in shared context; meaning, dedication and adherence with an understanding of W-S-C-P as the context in which the collective or cooperative exists and further, adherence to these shared principles with that understanding in mind.

a. Understanding the intersectionality, interconnectedness and synergy of various forms of oppression, there can be no adhering to these principles toward sustainability without confronting each oppressive layer of the context of W-S-C-P which agency, in keeping with the principles, seeks to counter; thus, one must seek to fight oppression simultaneously on all fronts.

4. The locally based counter to these intertwined fronts of oppression that rooted intentional communities in the form of collectives or cooperatives can help to create becomes a decentralized, horizontal counter-hegemony that has the theoretical scope with potential power to shift the centralized hierarchical hegemony of oppression.

a. This must be done for sustainability to be achieved, in keeping with environmental and liberatory struggles, while preserving the diversity, difference and greater autonomy and freedom for subjects of civil society.