

## COMMUNITY AS A RESEARCH ISSUE

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Dr. Dieter Duhm Photo: © Nigel Dickinson

We cannot put the best goals into practise unless we are able to establish functioning communities that have the ability to survive. Ecological humanism requires a new social structure. Throughout the history of our project, we have gathered surprising experiences in the area of human cohabitation, and they have made us think more deeply about community building and solidarity.

It will only be possible to carry out the tasks for the future on the basis of a well functioning community. Ever since the sixties, many community projects have failed due to unsolved human conflicts, so we must not be naive in this area. If we want to put a sustainable form of ecological humanism into practise, we must find a form of humane, social and sexual humanism that liberates the participants from the burdens and pains of the past. The difficulties that stand in the way of a worldwide healing process lie not only in the outside world but also in ourselves. Above all, the fields of conflict about money, power, love and sexuality form inner barriers that cannot be overcome by mere appeals for peace. In our common daily life it is very simple things, such unfulfilled need for contact, striving for dominance, competition for love and sex, jealousy, unconscious negative projections, fear of being judged etc., that have internally destroyed groups in hundreds of projects. Since these factors are not only individual defects, but mainly the consequences of a collective cultural disease, they can not be permanently resolved at an individual level.

We all carry the original pain of a great wound inside of us. We all have, as the Ex-Vietnam-soldier and today's Zen-Buddhist Claude Anshin Thomas mentioned, our "inner Vietnam". We all have been victims and perpetrators in our past and present life times and we all have received many wounds in the course of our karmic life journeys. Healing work, as we mean it here, means healing these wounds in ourselves and others. The signposts for this are truth, mutual support, responsibility for the community and service to life. Also, help others so that you, too, receive help.

Here, we come to a deeper definition of "sustainability". The necessary ecological changes require human change and can only happen in a lasting way if we go to the roots and develop new basic patterns for culture and society. Establishing trust among people and making transparency possible between people is not only an individual issue, it is mainly a societal, cultural and political issue. This is a basic thought of the Project of the Healing Biotopes. We must develop communities in which lies, deceit and betrayal no longer provide an evolutionary advantage. We need new societal structures that make a durable cohabitation in truth, love and trust possible. It is a difficult historical heritage that rules our individual existences in the most intimate spaces. This issue must be solved in such a way that entelichal healing can be fully liberated and can take full effect.

The research of the Project of the Healing Biotopes deals with the development of future communities that can offer their participants new experiences of healing and growth that come from a new experience of trust. Such communities inevitably go through a series of inner experiments, with which they extend their present boundaries and gain new terrain. It is about pushing boundaries outward, making it possible for new inner focal points to emerge in one's own life. It is a research adventure of great significance, perhaps the biggest adventure of our time.

One might wonder and ask whether it is necessary to invest so much work and time in intense research work in order to establish functioning communities and develop new life forms that are stable and sustainable. The answer is unambiguous: yes, it is necessary. Up to now, the alternative models of simple life have never worked for any long period of time because they were not able to counter the imminent destructive forces of modern times. The problems that need to be solved at the end of a patriarchal, capitalist-imperialist era can no longer be solved at the level of ancient Christian or Buddhist agrarian communism (even if this could

temporarily help many participants). The issues of our time are so interwoven and so closely linked to each other that they cannot be solved individually. A truly non-violent ecology cannot be developed without a new relation to our own inner nature, for outer nature and inner nature are two sides of the same issue and they are moved by the same life energies. As long as we suppress our own nature and deny it, we will hardly have a loving relation with our co-creatures in outer nature. The same is true for technology and medicine. The paradigm shift that is needed requires increasing cooperation with those inner forces that have so far mostly been suppressed and fought against. These mental/spiritual forces operate in all living matter. Teilhard de Chardin described them as the “inside” of things, thereby opening up a new view of the material world. The cosmic, super-conscious, subconscious or suppressed forces that so far have been attributed to the separate areas of deep psychology, religion, magic and art, must gradually be integrated into a conscious way of living, so that we can dissolve the latent schizophrenia of our contemporary culture. This means creating a new image of ourselves as human beings.

The most powerful guarantor for the success of the work is the field-building forces that begin to operate in every community as soon as agreement is found among the participants regarding new experiences and overcoming boundaries. It is then no longer only one’s own force, but mainly the force of the field that enables the participants to have new experiences. Then, we must no longer do everything ourselves. We do what we can and the rest, we “let God do.”

Some psychological criteria of modern high tech work should be applied to the interpersonal, spiritual and ecological research work in such a way that an efficient and permanent power of peace can emerge. These criteria have to do with spiritual/mental energy, will power, continuity and looking forward to the outcome with joy. They also include believing in success, being willing to go beyond almost any limitation, and declaring that what so far seemed to be impossible is in fact possible. Here, experimentation and research is called for, not clinging to old beliefs. In the stormy processes of transformation of our times the universe, which is in a constant state of becoming, constantly projects new futures onto the horizon of our vision circle. Research work in the inter-personal and the communitarian areas always also entails keeping up with these developments without stress. The appropriate calm is dependent on finding the right speed. The proper attitude is provided by our will, which prepares us for a long and difficult process. Here, it becomes apparent that our mental and physical condition is very important.

One can imagine the dimensions of the issues that a group of people will have to deal with if it wants to take on the task to create a societal model for a future without war. But doesn’t the basic rule also apply here, that the greater the tasks are, the greater the power that comes to our aid?

## **Healing Processes in the Community through the Establishment of Trust**

*“Happiness is being at home in something greater.”*

The fulfilment of life also depends on how I answer the question: for whom or what are you doing all this? If the answer is convincingly directed towards something greater than one’s own person, a fulfilled life could be in sight. Personal problems require a higher level of order in to be solved. Community is such a higher level of order. Community means living on a communitarian instead of a private basis. The mental and moral shift from a private to a communitarian way of life may be one of the most radical paradigm shifts. It is only in this way that we can permanently dismantle the mechanisms of protection and defence with which the isolated human beings of our time have had to familiarise themselves. The Project of the Healing Biotopes has suffered some massive strokes of fate in its more than 30 years of history. How has the community been able to survive them? It has survived because it developed a stable energy field that held the participants together. The participants were already sufficiently familiar with the rules of a communitarian way of life to not fall into individual resignation.

Community means to get to know other people and see who they really are. We gradually enter the human world that lies beyond the facade of fiction. Here, we find real encounters from centre to centre and from truth to truth, and the result is genuine trust. Trust is the most original and most efficient of all healing forces.

The very first task of a community is therefore to create trust among the participants. Can you sense what this means? Do we know how many wedges have been driven between human beings during the patriarchal era: between man and woman, parents and children, young and old, peoples and cultures. The task of re-establishing lost original trust is equivalent with the task of activating completely new chains of information in the genetic code of humanity. Old patterns of conduct must be abandoned and replaced by new ones. It is a learning process beyond comparison. But isn't Elisabeth Kübler-Ross right when she says that all learning processes in life in the end result in having to learn to love? And should we not be able to do that? Let us look from a greater distance to this question. Humanity has built stations in space, invented self-guiding missiles, de-ciphered the genetic code and shot at cancer cells with nano-cannons – should it not be able to solve its inner problems with the same effort and the same persistence?

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