

Sustainability Sunday Fact Sheet #10: Constructing a community of voluntary value exchange

I would ask how many of the people in this room have haven't noticed an income gap growing larger between the rich and the poor every year, or that while the square footage of each house has doubled and tripled we seem no happier as a culture in fact quite the opposite but I won't insult your common sense. I mentioned last week that we are all immigrants, and when we came here we burrowed into small parts of neighborhoods and created cities that became melting pots of culture, all of them based on the cohesiveness of close knit families and communities, I don't know how true that actually is but it will at least be the ideological foundation upon which we will build from here. What happens when the average person no longer gets what they need from their neighborhood or family? With the application of television and the internet it has become increasingly harder to connect with people and when you do it usually involves going to a bar or some type of event and consuming alcohol, or using a cell phone or some type of screen based communication. I'm not here to preach against the evils of alcohol or television or anything else each is an object and like words rely on context and use to determine the nature of the thing in each situation, I AM however here to look at solutions to a feeling of isolation and removal from good healthy communication and responses to everyday working folk in the face of the world in which we live.

I have often felt lately that I somehow slipped off the path, like a compass that had lost its magnetic north and just kind of spun aimlessly. After I left school and decided to educate myself to the best of my ability I realized how much work it really takes to focus yourself and to adhere to goals when someone isn't looking over your shoulder and demanding results- but it also lead me to examine the types of results that had been expected and the face of the system that demanded them. I think it would be hard for anyone to argue that the culture in which we live has not likewise sort of lost its way, or at least begun to operate in an unsustainable manner. I know no other way to find solutions to these problems other than to create them from existing materials and constructing communities of like minds who would do the same. For example if your car broke down you wouldn't just take it to the first mechanic you saw in the phone book you would ask around, find friends and family members that had knowledge of mechanics and bounce ideas off them to find solutions that were practical and efficient. So if the system in which you

live has broken down you likewise would look to the resources you have and begin to narrow down information and find practical solutions.

When I was a kid we would take family vacation and I remember looking at the other cars that would pass us and wondering where the people in them we're going, as I've gotten older I now I wonder what they've gained on their journeys and what we might benefit from sharing it. And thus here we are: a diverse yet relatively like minded group of people who have accumulated a treasury of stories, experience, knowledge and skill sets. The idea then becomes to take a look at tradition, the possibility of using existing skill sets and knowledge, and creating a community that benefits the individuals and the whole in a way that they could not have gotten otherwise. The European Union just spent an enormous amount of money and the last five years studying collaborative services and innovative creative communities all across their countries to look at ways of creating them on a large scale. I am now interested in doing the same, by spring of 2010 I would like to have a small tight knit functioning community that share an existing set of resources, and create a closed loop energy and waste system operating a community garden and actively engaged in Kansas City for the betterment of our surroundings.

However right here and now, I want to wet my feet a bit and I hope very much you will as well. I started Sustainability Sundays to find good people I do it for each of you new and old alike, so today I challenge you to the chance at action.

On the wall you will see a piece of paper, I would ask each of you to write your name, a way you would be comfortable to be contacted and then skills or knowledge you have that you think others would value from and then likewise ones that you would be interested in gaining. It is important to note that THERE ARE NO FRIVOLUS SKILLSETS OR KNOWLEDGE!!! The very nature of Maslow's hierarchy of needs is to illustrate that after the necessities are obtained IE food, shelter, water we must pursue our desires [given they are healthy] in order to obtain a quality of life. Whether it's juggling, engineering, balancing spoons on your finger or burping the alphabet I promise you that someone else values it and often you would never know until you put it out there. This is the first step at creating a voluntary community of value exchange. To offer a way for people to interact based on physical communication and a mutual benefit, I would ask only those truly interested in giving their time to participate seeing as how this will only be as successful as those who make it so. I truly hope to get to know each of you a little better as time goes on and to begin to create something out of honest, kind and passionate action so that we might share in the wealth of each individual and thus the whole. Thank you for your time, Dane.