

# **ACTION PLAN**

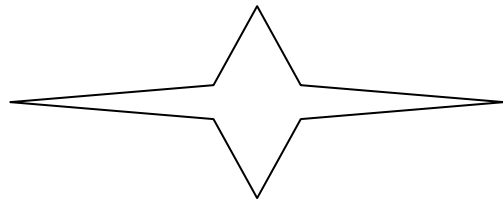
*for a Master's Degree*

*in "Village Design"*

*at the Whole Systems Design*

*Individualized Graduate Program*

*of Antioch University Seattle*



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## Introduction

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I want to live in Paradise: Paradise is Heaven on Earth. Paradise is a situationing in which both Heaven *and* Earth are *flourishing*, in exultant intercourse with one another. When both Heaven and Earth are flourishing, I and I can comfortably center Self between the Two, partake of the Two, merge with the Two - and so *thrive*, and live in Paradise.

Paradise will not appear independently of my actions: Heaven will only return to Earth after sustained virtuous effort on my part. I and I must devote continual attention, imagination, and focus on the *processes* by which Paradise can be *created*, as well as the *conditions* from which Paradise can manifest *itself* - for Paradise already exists (in forever stirring potential) and *wants* to fully manifest; Heaven *wants* to embrace Earth. I and I can assist this process of Paradise coming into being by *consciously creating the conditions and context favorable for its appearance*.

## Ecovillage

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Ecovillages are “an integrated solution to the global social and ecological crisis, and are as appropriate to the industrial world, both urban and rural, as to the remaining two-thirds of the world. Ecovillages are in essence a modern attempt by humankind to live in harmony with nature and with each other. They represent a “leading edge” in the movement toward developing sustainable human settlements and provide a testing ground for new ideas, techniques and technologies which can then be integrated into the mainstream” (Gaia Trust, 1995, from their website at [www.gaia.org](http://www.gaia.org)).

This incipient outline is being constructively interpreted in a diversity of ways: many variations of human settlement are currently being employed to serve as ecovillage models. Some of these models are no more than amended subdivisions; some are redesigned urban neighborhoods or villas, and others still are far too small to be considered ‘villages’ at all and are more appropriately labeled ‘cohousing developments,’ ‘community land trusts,’ ‘ecohamlets/ecoaldeas,’ ‘retreat centers,’ ‘demonstration sites,’ or even just plain old ‘intentional communities.’ The impetus to begin creating new, sustainable settlement patterns to replace the outworn, unsustainable pattern of ‘civilization’ (centralized, city-based culture) is alive and stirring – but there is not yet common agreement amongst all the participants as to the qualities and characteristics that distinguish the ‘ecovillage’ from all others. The truth is, there does not yet exist anywhere a fully-functioning, full-featured ecovillage.

The model I am developing has grown directly from the definition provided by Robert Gilman and Context Institute in their 1991 seminal work “Ecovillages and Sustainable Communities: A Report for Gaia Trust.” Therein, the ecovillage is defined as a:

- 1) Human scale
- 2) Full-featured settlement
- 3) In which human activities are harmlessly integrated into the natural world
- 4) In a way that is supportive of healthy human development
- 5) And can be continued into the indefinite future

The Context Institute publication was a precursor to the convening of the world’s first ever conference on “Ecovillages and Sustainable Communities” held at the ecovillage of Findhorn, Scotland in the Autumn of 1995. There, representatives, thinkers

and doers from all over the world united to formally inaugurate the ecovillage solution, providing germinal seeds of concept and scope, with a few actual models-in-process as examples. From this conference was born the Global Ecovillage Network (GEN) whose purpose is to support and proliferate the ecovillage vision throughout the world.

## Education: Undergraduate

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(This section traces my intersections with the Global Ecovillage Network as their educational component began to take form).

I began my formal education in 1994, before the Findhorn conference, with the expressed purpose of learning how to design an ecovillage (though I wasn't familiar with the terminology at the time). I was motivated by a desire to build a deluxe setting for my community, so we could spread roots and flourish. I had already immersed myself in Permaculture, accepting it as a philosophy/technique for regenerating the planet. The last chapter of the *Permaculture Designer's Manual* is entitled "Strategies for an Alternative Nation" and in it is a subsection entitled "Village Development." This whole last chapter demonstrates permaculture principles applied to macro-scale; the ecovillage concept lies latent within permaculture philosophy and practice.

So when I arrived at University, I immediately began choosing courses I deemed relevant to a self-deigned major that at the time could be considered Advanced Permaculture Design with a focus on Village Development. I proceeded a little clumsily at first, guided by instinct, for there were no precedents to follow. With perseverance, a coherent pattern, a schematic began to emerge. This whole process was facilitated greatly by my discovering the Context Institute publication, for then I had a shared name for what I was conceiving: "Ecovillage."

By my second year, I began to travel. Inspired by a presentation given by Lawry Gold of Pacific Lutheran University (PLU), I went off to Findhorn to experience my first ecovillage. I arrived just a couple months after the Ecovillages and Sustainable Communities conference - and the place was still buzzing with excitement! I was so amazed to actually be there, for the place is legendary. While participating in programmes at Findhorn, I was able to connect with two other student groups from the States: the one from PLU and another called "Geocommons," from a school in New Hampshire. John Talbott, Ecological Village 'focalizer,' described for us the process for developing a newly acquired property at Findhorn, the "Field of Dreams," into an ecovillage model.

I became hooked to experiencing these ecovillages in person; there is no substitute for actually being there! Two quarters after Findhorn, in the Autumn of 1996, I flew off to Australia. There, at Crystal Waters, another premier example of ecovillage-in-process, I attended the newly established GEN's first ever "Village Design" course. John Talbott was there, along with a full delegation from GEN: Max Lindegger, GEN

Secretariat for Oceania and Asia; Declan Kennedy, GEN Secretariat for Europe and Africa; Albert Bates, GEN Secretariat for the Americas; Hamish Stewart, GEN Secretariat General; Linda Joseph from the Manitou Institute – as well as an international cast of presenters and students alike. The program was set up so that everybody was accessible to one another; it was a genuine community building experience. In between learning modules we socialized and partied and had informal discussions where I was able to ask pointed questions to influence my evolving degree. This experience was absolutely invaluable.

After a month of living and studying at Crystal Waters, I flew off to Perth to catch the Sixth International Permaculture Conference. The whole GEN crew was there as well, along with 400 other permaculture designers from around the world. *My* world expanded considerably, and I began to experience inclusion in a global community. After the conference, many of us went down to Rosneath Farm, a newly establishing ecovillage close to Dunsborough, to participate in another Village Design course.

The Australian trip transformed my life: I was no longer searching for contents to add to my degree but instead editing all the possibilities! Shortly after returning from Australia, I wrote my Concentration Proposal – a detailed contract for the proposed curriculum of my self-designed major – and gave my degree a name: “Village Design: Ekistics for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century” (see Appendix A for course content). Having become aware of the international ecovillage climate, I believed my degree could help provide definition and credibility to a conception that often was being applied loosely.

Two quarters later, in the Spring of 1997, I flew off to The Farm, home of Albert Bates and the Ecovillage Network of the Americas (ENA). There, an americanized Village Design course was offered, facilitated by Peter Bane (editor of *The Permaculture Activist*) and his colleagues. This Village Design course was much better holistically conceived than the previous ones I had attended – but then the whole vision was still relatively fresh and gradually acquiring form and definition. The presenters, at the time, were involved in the preliminary stages of establishing their own ecovillage – Earthhaven in North Carolina – and seemed to use the course as a way of presenting and practicing their process up to that point. The course was grounded in Human Ecology: I came to accept Human Ecology as the basis for an education in Ecovillage Design, and even saw Permaculture as an expression of Applied Human Ecology. My own sophistication as an evolving student of ecovillages was revealed by my being able to evaluate critically and compare the contents of their presentation with my own evolving Ecovillage Design curriculum. I made many new friends there, re-established some old connections, and discovered that my Ecovillage Design B.A. degree would be the first in the world

My next contact with the Global Ecovillage Network occurred at Huehucoyotl, Mexico in the Spring of 1999. I was on another Independent Study investigation from Fairhaven College; GEN was having an annual Board meeting centered around education. I reconnected with Albert Bates and Max Lindegger – they knew me by that time and Albert even approached me with a big smile and hug. I had ulterior motives for arriving there during their Board meeting: I had recently produced a Village Design portfolio compiling the best of my undergraduate education and was curious to see how it would be received and evaluated. By good fortune, one day while I was working on a cob house project, Ross Jackson (founder of Gaia Trust) came strolling by, and I took the opportunity to present to him my portfolio. He was interested and took the portfolio for perusal. A few days later, he returned it to me with affirmations and asked if I would send, in particular, my Village Design curriculum schematic to him in Denmark. One quarter later, after I had actually graduated, I so complied. I also included my “Summary and Evaluation,” narrating my educational process, and my “Senior Project,” a detailed preliminary proposal for establishing an Institute of Village Design.

Finally, my most recent contact with GEN came in the form of a reply to my mailing, just a few weeks ago. Hildur Jackson (wife of Ross) wrote me a generous letter congratulating me on my accomplishments and thanking me for my contribution. (!) She also sent detailed documentation of GEN’s most recent work in the field of education. It turns out that the global network has been envisioning the establishment of “Gaia University,” and the initial conceptualization moves with the same kind of wording as my initial conceptualization of an Institute of Village Design. There is a niche to fill here.

As I begin now my Graduate Program in Whole Systems Design at Antioch University Seattle, I sense the tremendous opportunity of coordinating my work in obtaining my Master’s degree with GEN’s work of establishing “Gaia University.” I want to develop a degree whose contents may be a useful contribution to the manifestation of “Gaia University.” My self-designed program will include subjects, projects, and practices that will assist me in approaching and achieving this goal. I feel the exhilaration now of being immersed in my life’s work and enjoying the fruits produced by ‘following my bliss.’ “Gaia University” is an alluring attractor: now that is a project to which I could commit.

*Let us envision Utopia and thus bring it into existence. There is no other reasonable alternative.*

~ Willis Harman, Institute of Noetic Sciences



## Education: Graduate

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My education at Antioch University will be an effort to obtain the skills, understanding, and qualifications necessary for collaborating an Institute of Village Design, a contribution to Gaia University, subsumed under the auspices of the Global Ecovillage Network.

I feel especially qualified to undertake such a task having conceived, created, and completed the world's first Bachelor of Arts degree in Village Design. The curriculum I designed for that degree must be a useful precedent since it co-evolved in a participatory fashion with the gestation and growth of the Global Ecovillage Network itself. Now I am pioneering formal, accredited education in Village Design at the graduate level.

I envision work at Antioch as being divided into two major stages:

Phase 1: will be filling in important aspects of Village Design that I ran out of time to attend to during the course of my undergraduate degree. I don't want to bypass these elements and rush right into the work of designing and collaborating an Institute because I want to have a full, comprehensive overview of core subjects that will be presented. All of the following I consider essential in a curriculum devoted to Village Design – where human systems are modeled after natural systems, and where human settlements are ecologically, sustainably integrated into larger Gaian supra-systems. The disciplines and areas of concern will be:

- 1) Immersion in Biology (in process)
- 2) Immersion in Living Systems Theory (in process)
- 3) Immersion in Ecological Economics (in process)
- 4) A) Effectively define Civilization (centralized, city-based culture) and the evolutionary 'meaning' and significance of the reversion/succession to Eco-Post-Civilization (decentralized, village-based culture)  
B) Knowledgeably reference past settlement/culture patterns that serve as useful ecological village models:
  - a) Classic Maya (in process)
  - b) Classic Egyptian
  - c) Amerindian Southwest Pueblo
  - d) Amerindian Northwest Village

e) Essene

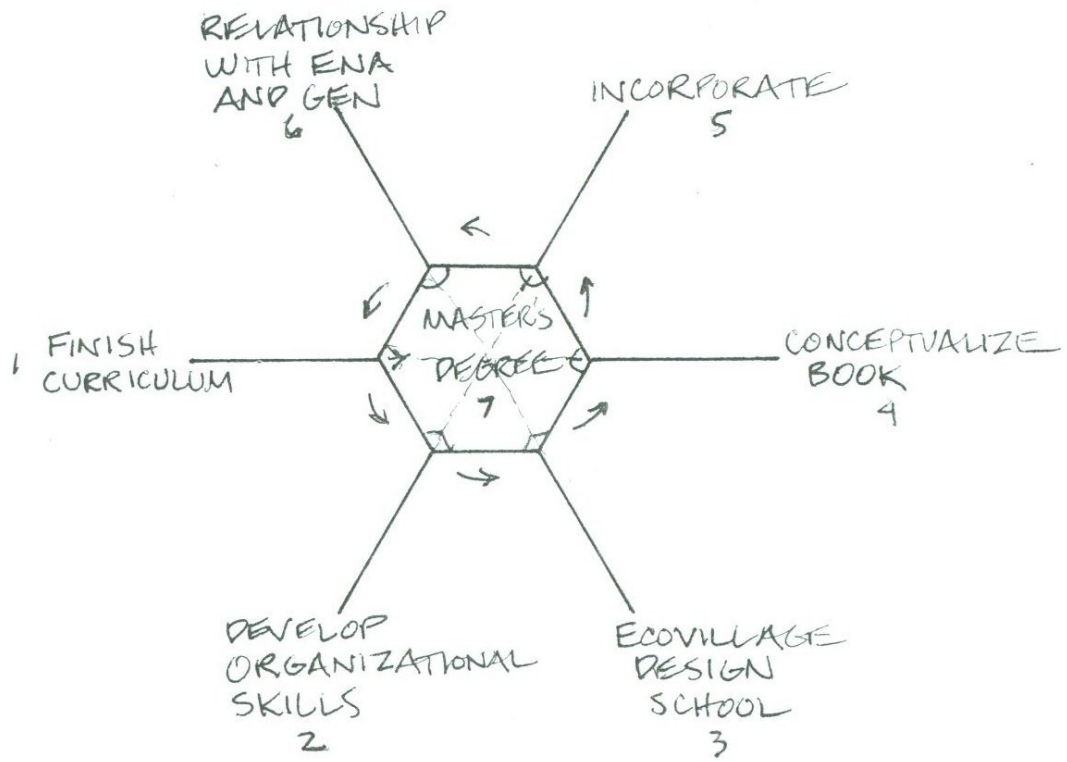
- 5) Produce a comprehensive, detailed Village Design for a particular place (probably in Arizona with Phil Hawes in conjunction with the San Francisco Institute of Architecture)
- 6) Introduce Village Design Course at Fairhaven College (in process)

Phase 2: will initiate the transition into professional life and will include the preliminary steps toward designing and establishing an Institute of Village Design. This kind of work will be very new to me and so justifies my desire to complete my investigation of fundamental principles first. I want to feel very internally integrated and competent before I attempt teaching, and before I attempt organizationally, institutionally to influence the fundamental paradigm shift shaking in the world. (The intuited sense of timing in this proposal is deduced from interpreting astrological transits – see Appendix B). Subjects and areas of concern to explore and incorporate include:

- 1) Develop closer relationship with ENA and GEN
- 2) Develop organizational skills (through classes at Antioch University)
- 3) Incorporate as a Non-profit (preceded by developing a formal design strategy, including setting up a Land Trust and purchasing real property)
- 4) Strengthen Bioregional Association (organically, collaboratively developing a network of associated and complementary projects, businesses, and educational institutions within Ecotopia; then extending out to integrate with the network being established by ENA; and ultimately reaching out to connect with the Global Ecovillage Network itself)
- 5) Learn Spanish (to be able to extend the scope of the Institute to include all the Americas)
- 6) Learn the Cognition Theories of Maturana, Varela, Bateson, and Whitehead (intuited to be the educational approach of the Institute)
- 7) Conceptualize book: “Fundamentals of Village Design”
- 8) Take Advanced Permaculture Design Course (to qualify for teaching Permaculture)

Phase 3: Post-Antioch

- 1) M.A. in Architecture
- 2) Ph.D.
- 3) Complete book: “Fundamentals of Village Design”
- 4) Establish School (a residential research, training, and demonstration site called an “ecovillage”)



## Conclusion

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Implicit in this proposal is the formulation of three overarching lifetime goals:

- 1) Design a Village Design School
- 2) Grow an Ecovillage
- 3) Write a book

Essentially, these are three facets of one crystal.

If I am going to live in Paradise, I begin by consciously creating the conditions and context favorable for its appearance. For me, that means growing an ecovillage. And an effective, collaborative way to grow an ecovillage is to have at its center a Village Design School. And the school will be both instructed by and instructing the living body of knowledge that becomes the contents of books. And this is one organic way to provide a deluxe setting for my community, so that we may spread roots and flourish.

My Whole Systems Design degree will be the documented culmination of the subjects, projects, and practices I pursue as I approach and begin to achieve these goals, within the time-frame of the next two years. This proposal is designed to illustrate the framework of experience and understanding I consider necessary to activate and fulfill the opportunities of the present moment.

Whole Systems Design is a firm foundation and appropriate title for the undertaking of this educational exploration – its principles and processes will be used throughout: in the design of the degree, in the design of the school, as contents for the degree and school, in the design of the ecovillage, in the organization of the book, as contents for the book, in the design of a non-profit organization to serve as a vehicle for achieving these goals, etc.

I especially want to be able to describe, design, speak and write about villages as *living systems* – with all that implies – and if possible as organisms.

One more thing: My home base of operations for pursuing this degree will be the greater Bellingham area. That is my domain and the context within which this work began to grow and take form. Village Design implies a clear sense of re-inhabitation to a particular place with a particular group of people. I want to grow an ecovillage but not just any old ecovillage: “the community already exists – they just need a place to live. I want to grow an ecovillage for them. That is my work.”

Appendix A: Curriculum Schematic: "Village Design: Ekistics for the 21st Century"

VILLAGE DESIGN: EKISTICS FOR THE 21ST CENTURY  
(A BACHELOR'S OF ARTS DEGREE IN ECOVILLAGE DESIGN)

HUMAN ECOLOGY		PERMACULTURE	
HUMAN ECOLOGY		PERMACULTURE	
HUMAN ECOLOGY / SUSTAINABILITY 4/5 ADVANCED HUMAN ECOLOGY 4/nc			
PHYSICAL HUMAN ECOLOGY		SOCIAL HUMAN ECOLOGY	
1) SCIENCE / PLACE ON PLANET 5/5 2) HUMAN GEOGRAPHY 3/A 3) ENVIRONMENTAL SYSTEMS 3/C 4) BIOLOGICAL STRUCTURES/METAPHORS 4/A 5) PHYSICS & NATURAL ORDER 2/5 6) GENERAL GEOLOGY 4/A 7) REGIONAL ECOLOGIES 4/5 8) FUNDAMENTALS OF ECOLOGY 4/nc	1) JUNGIAN PSYCHOLOGY 3/5 2) DREAM THEORY - SYMBOLS 2/5 3) WARRIORSHP 2/5 4) HIGHER CREATIVITY 3/5 5) INTRO CULTURAL ANTHROPOLOGY 5/A 6) INDIGENOUS ISSUES 4/5 7) NATIVE PEOPLES N. AMERICA 5/A 8) TRADITIONAL VILLAGES 4/5 9) PEOPLES OF MEXICO + C. AMERICA 4/6 10) HUMANITIES / EXPRESSIVE ARTS 5/5 11) IMPROV THEATRE 2/5 12) OPERA PERFORMANCE 3/5 13) FORM and CONTENT 2D 3/nc 14) FORM and CONTENT 3D 2/nc 15) FUNDAMENTALS OF MUSIC 3/5 16) DEEP ECOLOGY 5/5 17) TAOISM 3/5 18) SACRED GEOMETRY 4/5 19) CROSS-CULTURAL SHAMANISMS 4/5 20) COMMUNITY LIVING 5/5 21) ALTERNATIVE FUTURES 4/5 22) GROUP MANIFESTATION 6/5 23) COMMUNITIES CONFERENCE 1/5 24) COMMUNITY CENTERS 2/5	1) ORGANIC GARDENING 2/5 2) FACULTATE ORGANIC GARDENING 3/5 3) FACULTATE APPLIED HUM. ECOLOGY 3/5 4) PERMACULTURE DESIGN 3/5 5) PERMACULTURE DESIGN - IRELAND 5/5 6) PERMACULTURE DESIGN - AUSTRALIA 5/5 7) INTRO VILLAGE DESIGN 3/5 8) FUNDAMENTALS VILLAGE DESIGN 3/5 9) VILLAGE DESIGN - FINDHORN 5/5 10) VILLAGE DESIGN - AUSTRALIA 5/5 11) VILLAGE DESIGN - MEXICO 3/5 12) ADVANCED PERMACULTURE DES. 3/5 13) ALTERNATIVE ENERGY 2/5	1) GRANT WRITING 2/nc 2) VILLAGE ECONOMICS 3/5 3) ALTERNATIVE ECONOMICS 4/nc 4) INCORPORATION 2/nc 5) VILLAGE DESIGN SCHOOL 3/5
NATURE PROCESES			
1) PATTERNS IN NATURE 4/5 2) AWARENESS THROUGH THE BODY 4/5 3) BIOREGIONALISM 4/5 4) ECOLOGICAL DESIGN 3/5 5) A PATTERN LANGUAGE 2/5 6) GEOMANCY / FENG SHUI 3/5 7) INTRO TO ORGANIC ASTRONOMY 2/5 8) SYSTEMS THEORY 3/5			

## Appendix B: Astro-Timing

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Jupiter (♃) and Saturn (♄) now in the 12<sup>th</sup> house (see color code below) indicate the *closing* of cycles of 12 and 29 years respectively. Now is not the time for initiating new activity but rather for drawing in and completing past projects. I interpret this to be a good time to finish my investigation of fundamental principles and complete the curriculum, as outlined in this proposal under Phase 1.

In the Summer of 2000, Jupiter enters my first house, coinciding with the initiation of novel, emergent activity. This will be a great time to launch new, expansive projects, like projecting a philosophy. I correlate this time period with initiating Phase 2 of my proposal, and beginning the transition into professional life.

In the Summer of 2001, Saturn enters my first house, coinciding with the initiation of novel, emergent activity (of a different nature than the Jupiter event). The Saturn event symbolizes the beginning of creation of real structures in the world, including a new personal-life structure. I correlate this time period with completing my Master's degree and initiating professional work under the umbrella of a non-profit, setting up an Ecovillage Design School.

