

My Experience at the First CLEAR Village Lab by E. Chris Mare – President, Village Design Institute

I remember hearing about the first CLEAR Village Lab just a few days before it was going to happen. My friend Daniel sent me a notice apologizing for the lateness yet saying that he thought it would be perfect for me. After reviewing the material, I had to agree with him. I've been pursuing this Village Design idea for awhile now; the CLEAR Village proposal was the most well-conceived, thorough, creative and collaborative initiative I'd seen to date. Within the half hour I had purchased a plane ticket to Barcelona.

The actual Lab was a joy to experience: a very talented and professional international assemblage of sustainability and community design pace-setters were skillfully gathered and guided through a series of exercises intended to lay the groundwork for the design and development of an actual sustainable village. The CLEAR Village organizers knowingly included 'soft' aspects such as values, needs, social and spiritual concerns in the design process – aspects which are usually disregarded by less educated proponents of sustainable design.

The proceedings were lively, animated, and, at times, boisterous. Teams were assembled to go through an exercise and then provide a presentation afterward. I was amazed at the level of digital and artistic adeptness demonstrated in producing on-the-spot, high quality reports. A camera crew was on-hand, which really added to the animation: a team member might be discussing a point within their group when all of a sudden three movie cameras would appear to document the action!

The CLEAR Village team also was very generous in providing a superior culinary experience throughout the affair. I think this was good, intelligent, deliberate strategy as it facilitated an atmosphere of good cheer, positive morale, and high motivation. More so than any other seminar, symposium, workshop, or conference I've attended, I really felt that my input and participation was appreciated and valued at the CLEAR Village Lab. Thanks for that.

In summary, I feel very fortunate that my friend Daniel alerted me to the village design experience in Barcelona in November of 2009, for this CLEAR Village group is setting a global standard. Sustainable Village Design and Development is the wave of the future: I think this CLEAR Village group is way ahead of everybody in actually getting a prototype, full-featured sustainable village implemented, thus setting the precedent for the proliferation of sustainable village models throughout the globe. This could very well be the most important work happening on Earth today.