



Volume 1, January 2000

News from the Global Ecovillage Network

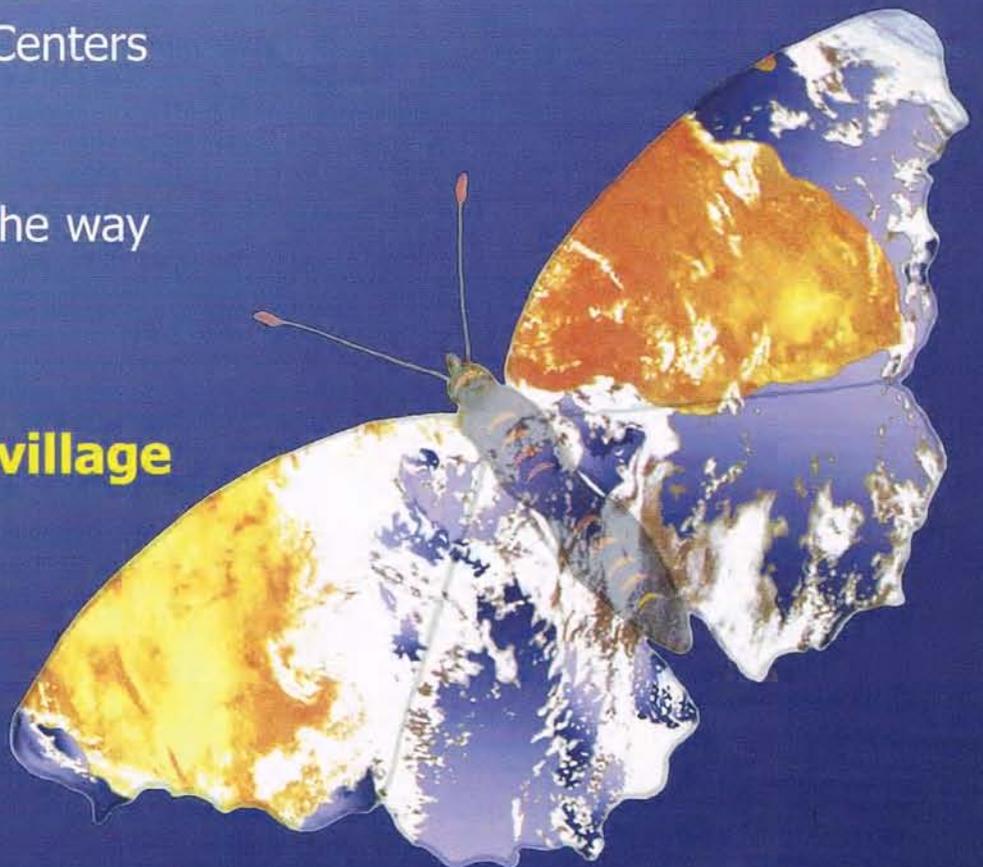
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Pioneers Around
the World**



Millennium Money: Sustainable Abundance

Hildur Jackson on Bernard Lietaer

As one of our New Year's greetings, we would like to introduce to you the revolutionary ideas presented by Bernard Lietaer, former Director of the Belgian Central Bank and father of the "Euro", professor of economics and co-creator of the Gaia Trust strategy. He writes about the possibility of creating a new economic system, based on something as contradictory as 'Sustainable Abundance'. Lietaer has recently issued two books exploring money and a new currency system, *The Mystery of Money* and *The Future of Money*. Though not created for ecovillages in particular, these books may become some of the strongest aids for making ecovillages possible as self-sufficient economic entities.

I would like to note that these books first appeared in German thanks to the efforts and enthusiasm of Margrit Kennedy of Lebensgarten, but are soon due in English. Last August, 1999, Bernard led an inspiring seminar for 50 people in Lebensgarten, developing his innovative ideas and elucidating ways to implement these ideas that can change the money system towards our values and social structure.

The following is a summary of a wide, kaleidoscopic cultural exposé where you totally forget that you are reading about something as difficult and boring as money systems. Enjoy.

The Mystery of Money

The Mystery of Money is an attempt to demystify money by going back to the roots of how it was created by man, and how we are the only ones who can change it to fit our values and support the creation of a loving, sustainable lifestyle.

Bernard Lietaer defines money as a conscious agreement within a community to use a medium of exchange. Money can be shells, stones (like in Ladakh), pieces of metal, coins or paper with stamps. Money seems to get the status of a taboo (like sex and death) and needs to be demystified in order for us to take action and reclaim our inherent right to change it so that it supports the kind of society we want. He searches for the emotionally tabooed origin of money in the collective unconscious and in the suppression

of the Great Mother archetype, tracing this down through history ("her-story"). The suppression of the feminine is linked to the kind of economic system that is prevalent. Two kinds of money are defined:

"The World has enough for everyone's need but not for everyone's greed."

Mahatma Gandhi

Yang currencies whose issuance is based on hierarchy. They lead to centralization, accumulation by the few, investing in short term goods. It is scarce and creates competition. All conventional national currencies are yang currencies because they exhibit all of these features.

Yin currencies are egalitarian and discourage accumulation, while encouraging cooperation among its users. They lead to decentralization (support of the local), are always available in sufficiency, and create investment in long term goods. Yin economies have existed forever typically in the form of a gift economy. Gift exchange is one of the builders of community.

Bernard claims that a balance between Yin and Yang economies is indispensable for a sustainable society to function. For this reason he calls Yin currencies "complementary currencies"-complementary to the existing Yang economy. He argues convincingly that we have had periods where the mother archetype was not repressed and yin currencies were prevalent, creating sustainable wealth generally. He builds a strong case in his rendering of the story of the Middle Ages, when all the churches and cathedrals of Europe were built. He sees the widespread cult of the Black Madonna as a striking example of how the feminine was then cherished as our relationship to the Earth.

In the present era, the upsurge of LETS (Local Exchange Trade Systems) systems are seen by Bernard as an expression of the feminine archetype

coming to consciousness.

Another sign is the growth of the 'Cultural Creatives' as shown in a study by Paul Ray. Although it is a global phenomenon, there is only data from the US on this very new driving force. Geographically, the Cultural Creatives live all over the US. They are middle to upper class, have a median age of 42 and count more college graduates than other subcultures. There are 50% more women than men in this group. At the personal level their main concern is self-actualization. The study estimated this group to be 26.6% of the population, but they are hardly recognized as yet as they do not have a newspaper, political party or organisation to make them visible and channel their ideas.

At the collective level one of their main concerns is the deterioration of the community and the environment (92 % want to rebuild community, 87% believe in ecological sustainability). They are more altruistic than other groups and are willing to make perso-



Ross Jackson, Margrit and Declan Kennedy, Bernard Lietaer. Photo: Hildur

nal sacrifices. They do not believe in success as the main criterion (70%) but give higher priority to creative time. What is surprising is that they have appeared in less than a generation. Bernard observes: "The Cultural Creatives are the movers and shakers to get the yin type complementary currencies operational."

The Future of Money

In the second book Bernard Lietaer promises the reader an understanding of the inner workings of the world of money in layman's language. Central in his thinking are 5 different possible scenarios of where the global community is heading.

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