

An Alternative Living Approach: Sustainability in Modern Day Intentional Communities

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Abstract: The Federation for Intentional Communities defines an intentional community as a group of people who have chosen to live together or share resources based on a set of common values (FIC, 2021). Often, these communities are referred to, almost interchangeably, as communes, ecovillages, or even co-housing. Nevertheless, each description has a different connotation regarding underlying shared beliefs or values shaping community life and ways of living together. Historically, such groups have either been seen as anarchists or acting in opposition to conventional views and often disregarded as too idealistic or impractical. However, intentional communities engaged with community living have repeatedly demonstrated their movement's practicality through their positive relation to the environment with land management or farming.

Using five case studies of contemporary groups that identify themselves as intentional communities, this research aims to analyze the relationship between community groups' social organization and their motivation for alternative sustainable lifestyles. In the *Seven American Utopias*, Dolores Hayden states that "to achieve a successful community living dynamic, there must be a balance between authority and participation, community and privacy, and uniqueness and replicability." Using this statement as a framework for our analysis, the journal article will study the following intentional communities: Acorn Farm Community (VA, USA), Twin Oaks Community (VA, USA), Ecovillage at Ithaca (NY, USA), and Auroville (Pondicherry, India). Each of these communities differs in size and exemplifies complex social structures that aim to practice various degrees of sustainable living. The study uses survey data collected from members, ex-members, and long-term visitors from Acorn Farm Community and Twin Oaks Community, along with secondary data from Ecovillage at Ithaca and Auroville to help compare, contrast, and analyze plausible urban influences using a more comprehensive range of existing sustainable models.