

Final Report for

Professional Development Grant

Received by Joshua Lockyer, Ph.D.

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For the Following Professional Enhancement Activity:

“Assessing Sustainability Goals at Dancing Rabbit Ecovillage”

B. Restatement of Research

This funding supported faculty and student worker travel to and expenses while at a field research site in Missouri called Dancing Rabbit Ecovillage (DRE). DRE is an off-grid community of 70 people on 280 acres in northeast Missouri whose stated goals are “to live ecologically sustainable and socially rewarding lives and to share the skills ideas behind that lifestyle” (see www.dancingrabbit.org). The PI (Lockyer) began visiting Dancing Rabbit Ecovillage in 2009 and, through a series of informal and formal conversations with community members, was asked to put together a team of researchers to assist the community in assessing their progress toward their goals over the long term. This funding provided support for the first season of preliminary data collection.

C. Review of Research Procedure

This project provided a baseline for a long term research project that aims to answer the following question: To what extent are the members of Dancing Rabbit Ecovillage achieving their goals of living ecologically sustainable and socially rewarding lives while also sharing the skills and ideas behind that lifestyle? To begin answering this research question, baseline data on various dimensions of ecological sustainability, social satisfaction, and the nature of DRE’s education and outreach program was collected during summer 2013. Faculty and student researchers collaborated with another researcher from the University of North Texas to collect data on DRE resident water and energy usage, consumption and recycling habits, food sourcing, travel patterns, and perceptions of well-being. The nature of DRE’s education and outreach programs was noted, although primary data on the effectiveness of those programs was not collected.

D. Summary of Outcomes

Extensive baseline data in the above stated areas was collected and will be used as a foundation for a variety of future activities. First, our data collection instruments will be revised and refined for use in future data collection seasons and at additional research sites. This research project at DRE is longitudinal in nature and all future data sets will be compared against data from this season to assess progress. In addition, the suite of research methods we used this summer will provide a foundation for expanding the research to additional ecovillage sites around the world. At the request of and in collaboration with DRE residents who also sit on the Executive Board of the Fellowship for Intentional Community, we will be applying for a National Science Foundation Science, Engineering, and Education for Sustainability Grant that will enable us to expand the project to include multiple sites at which longitudinal data will be collected. The funding provided by the Office of Academic Affairs at ATU allowed for the collection of preliminary data that will make obtaining this grant much more likely.

In addition to collecting baseline data and testing data collection instruments, the funding also provided a valuable opportunity for deserving ATU undergraduate students to gain valuable field experience in an interdisciplinary, collaborative context while also gaining knowledge about a cutting edge 'living laboratory' in ecologically sustainable living and sustainability education.

E. Conclusions

It will take several months to analyze the data sets that were obtained this summer and build publications and additional funding applications around this analysis. However, in addition to planned applications for funding to continue the project, a number of presentations and publications based on the supported research are in the works. First, the PI (Lockyer) is in the

process of planning a panel at the Society for Applied Anthropology meeting in Albuquerque, New Mexico in March 2014. The panel (see attached panel abstract) will include presentations by the PI and other research team members on the funded research that took place this past summer. Second, the PI has been asked to contribute a chapter to a forthcoming book on Food Utopias that will be based on food sourcing data from the funded research (see attached abstract). Additionally, the research will provide the foundation for articles to be submitted to the peer reviewed journals *Human Organization* and *Culture, Agriculture, Food, & Environment*. Finally, the undergraduate students involved in the research will make presentations about their experiences at the 2014 ATU Senior Honors and Student Research Symposium.

Destination: Ecotopia

James R. Veteto (University of North Texas) and Joshua Lockyer (Arkansas Tech University)
2014 SFAA Meeting, Albuquerque NM

Clifford Geertz (1996) once remarked that, “For it is still the case that no one lives in the world in general.” In an increasingly globalized world, some citizens have sought to enact an ecological way of living in place. Ecological counter-culture movements have been prominent from at least the 1960s forward but have attracted limited attention from anthropologists. In this panel, we will examine case studies from around the world stemming from the bioregional, permaculture, and ecovillage movements, among others. Contributions come from engaged scholar-activists who are both collaborating with and situated within alternative political ecology movements. Many of the panel participants were contributors to the recent edited volume *Environmental Anthropology Engaging Ecotopia: Bioregionalism, Permaculture, and Ecovillages*, which Laura Rival described as, “...redefining the field of human ecology as a contribution to the cultural revolution the world needs, if we are to achieve the transition to sustainability.” Additional contributions will be based on an applied, interdisciplinary, collaborative research project at Dancing Rabbit Ecovillage in northeast Missouri. Building upon the Alternative Political Ecologies track at the 2012 SfAA meetings in Maryland, this is eco-cultural edgework, an invitation to anyone interested in co-creating a sustainable, socially-just world.

Sustainability, Food, & Utopia in the Ecovillage Movement

Proposed chapter for *Food Utopias* (Routledge) edited by Paul Stock (University of Kansas)

Joshua Lockyer (Arkansas Tech University, USA)

Few arenas manifest more holistic efforts to transform food production, distribution, and consumption than contemporary ecovillages and other sustainability-oriented intentional communities. In many of these communities, food system transformation is seen as an essential component of their utopian efforts to create models for more sustainable societies. Using ongoing, ethnographic research at Dancing Rabbit Ecovillage in northeastern Missouri complemented by more extensive research in the global ecovillage movement, this chapter will examine the ways in which narratives of sustainable food are constructed by ecovillagers and analyze their efforts to produce and otherwise source food in ways that are more ethical, less fossil-fuel dependent, and more constitutive of sustainable community building. Using the author's previously articulated concept of transformative utopianism, the chapter will show that what matters is not achieving some pre-defined utopian state, but rather the ways in which the efforts to do so affect the participants, their neighbors, and others who come from far and wide to experience and temporarily participate in the community's utopian endeavors.