

**Final Report for Faculty Research Grant**

**Received in Spring 2015 by Joshua Lockyer, Ph.D.**

**Assistant Professor of Anthropology**

**Dept. of Behavioral Sciences**

**For the Following Faculty Research Activity:**

**“Evaluating Progress Toward Sustainability Goals at Dancing Rabbit Ecovillage”**

**B. Restatement of Research** This funding supported faculty travel to and expenses while at a field research site as part of a larger, cross-institutional research project in collaboration with colleagues from the Anthropology Department and the Center for Prairie Studies (CPS) at Grinnell College as well as staff of a non-profit 501(c)3 educational institution at Dancing Rabbit Ecovillage (DRE) in Missouri. The project involved working with the members of DRE, a 20 year old community of 70 people on a 280 acre 501(c)2 land trust in northeast Missouri, whose stated goals are “To create a society, the size of a small town or village ... which allows and encourages its members to live sustainably [and] to encourage this sustainable society to grow to have the size and recognition necessary to have an influence on the global community by example, education, and research” (DRE 2014, see [www.dancingrabbit.org](http://www.dancingrabbit.org)). This project is part of a long term research project that aims to answer the following question: *To what extent are the members of DRE achieving their goals of living ecologically and socially sustainable lives while also effectively sharing the skills and ideas behind that lifestyle through educational programs?*

**C. Review of research Procedure** The funding supported the ATU faculty member (Joshua Lockyer, Ph.D.) during his travel to and from the field site and stays at the field site at the beginning and end of the field research season. Lockyer worked with other project members in the field – one student sponsored by the Center for Prairie Studies at Grinnell College and Brooke Jones, M.A., Research Coordinator at DRE’s educational nonprofit. Lockyer made two extended visits to DRE during the summer to participate in and supervise data collection in the following areas: fossil fuel and electricity use, renewable energy use, vehicle travel, number of vehicles per person, water use, recycling and trash production, food production and consumption practices, firewood use, land use and land cover change, perceived quality of life, and effectiveness of education and outreach programs. Data was collected using a variety of

methods, including direct monitoring, surveys, self-reporting, interviews, participant observation, and archival research. In addition to the above described data collection activities, daily work included data analysis, presentation of results to relevant community parties, and meetings with additional outside researchers.

**D. Summary of Findings** Ongoing analysis indicates that the members of DRE live on approximately 10% of the resources compared to the average American citizen in six major resource use areas while maintaining a similar quality of life. We are still collecting and analyzing data to enhance robustness and determine trends over time. Other data sets in expanded data collection areas are still under preliminary analysis.

Results of the ongoing research project were previously disseminated through a variety of fora including presentations by Lockyer and Jones at the Society for Applied Anthropology annual meeting (Lockyer 2014a, Jones 2014a) and the Communal Studies Association annual meeting (Lockyer 2014b, Jones 2014b) as well as Jones' master's thesis at the University of North Texas (Jones 2014c). In addition, former ATU undergraduate student Morgan Middlebrooks (who participated in the research in summer 2013 under Lockyer's supervision) presented on the research at the 2014 Arkansas Sociological and Anthropological Association undergraduate conference and, with Lockyer, co-authored an article that appeared in *Communities Magazine* (Middlebrooks and Lockyer 2014).

A manuscript based on the research is currently under review with the peer reviewed journal *Communal Societies* (Lockyer and Jones, Under Review; see abstract below). Lockyer will present on the research at the November 2015 meeting of the American Anthropological Association where he is part of an invited double panel that includes anthropologists from several different continents and a variety of prestigious institutions of higher education (see

abstract below). The papers for this panel will be submitted collectively for a special section of the open-access, peer-reviewed *Journal of Political Ecology*. Lockyer will also make presentations on the research at the annual meetings of the Communal Studies Association (October 2015; see abstract below) and the Arkansas Sociological and Anthropological Association (November 2015). Additional future publication venues will include the peer-reviewed journals *Human Organization* (flagship journal of the Society for Applied Anthropology) and *Environment and Human Values*.

**E. Conclusions and Recommendations** This funding was an essential part of the faculty member's ongoing research program. It has enabled him to continue a long term project that will produce valuable data and serve as the basis for multiple conference presentations and peer reviewed publications in the future. The funding enabled the faculty member to continue building cutting-edge research partnerships with community-based organizations, students, and other scholars. During the research period funded by this grant, the faculty member met with other scholars from the University of Missouri and State University of New York at Binghamton. This meeting resulted in a partnership between the faculty member and Dr. David Sloan-Wilson, Distinguished Professor of Biology and Anthropology at SUNY-Binghamton, wherein Dr. Sloan-Wilson will take the lead on writing a major National Science Foundation grant, the largest component of which will be an expansion of Lockyer's ongoing research at DRE. The opportunities provided by ATU's Faculty Research Grants are much appreciated and should continue to be offered to ATU faculty if at all possible.

## **F. Bibliography**

Dancing Rabbit Ecovillage (DRE). 2014. "Dancing Rabbit Mission Statement." <http://www.dancingrabbit.org/about-dancing-rabbit-ecovillage/vision/mission-statement/>. Accessed on 7 October 2014.

Jones, Brooke. 2014a. "Trailblazing Sustainability: How an Ecovillage in Northeastern Missouri is Creating Sustainable Culture in Community." Presentation as part of a double panel entitled "Destination: Ecotopia" at the 74th annual meeting of the Society for Applied Anthropology, Albuquerque, NM. March 19, 2014.

Jones, Brooke. 2014b. "Faith in Sustainability: How Dancing Rabbit Ecovillage is Creating Sustainable Culture in Community." Presentation at the Communal Studies Association annual conference. Amana, IA. October 11, 2014.

Jones, Brooke. 2014c. "Toward Sustainability: Assessing Progress at Dancing Rabbit Ecovillage." Master's Thesis, Department of Anthropology, University of North Texas.

Lockyer, Joshua. 2014a. "Toward Sustainable Community: Participatory Action Research in an Ecovillage." Presentation as part of a double panel entitled "Destination: Ecotopia" at the 74th annual meeting of the Society for Applied Anthropology, Albuquerque, NM. March 19, 2014.

Lockyer, Joshua. 2014b. "The Architecture and Craft of Sustainability at Dancing Rabbit Ecovillage." Presentation at the Communal Studies Association annual conference. Amana, IA. October 11, 2014.

Lockyer, Joshua and Brooke Jones. Under Review. "Trailblazing Sustainability: How Dancing Rabbit Ecovillage is Creating Sustainable Community." *Communal Societies*.

Morgan Middlebrooks and Joshua Lockyer. 2014. "Seeing the Good in the World Part II: Transformative Learning Experiences at Dancing Rabbit Ecovillage." *Communities: Journal of Cooperative Living*, Fall 2014, p.78-80.

## **G. Abstracts for In Process Presentations and Publications Based on the Research**

**Trailblazing Sustainability: How Dancing Rabbit Ecovillage is Creating Sustainable Community.** *Communal Societies* journal manuscript.

Joshua Lockyer and K. Brooke Jones

**Abstract** In the 1990s, a new wave of intentional communities – many calling themselves ecovillages – arose with a deliberate focus on living ecologically sustainable and fulfilling lifestyles. Dancing Rabbit Ecovillage, a community of roughly 40 members in northeastern Missouri, was founded during this time and has since been working to create radical sustainable living practices and a culture of eco-friendly values in the context of a cooperative, livable community. All members agree to abide by sets of ecological covenants and sustainability

guidelines and all join in cooperative management of their 280 collectively held acres. Using data generated in the course of a collaborative, community-based research project, this study explores how Dancing Rabbit Ecovillage is creating more sustainable ways of living and how this lifestyle affects happiness and well-being. Our research demonstrates that community members consume significantly less resources than the average American while maintaining similar levels of perceived happiness and well-being.

**Ecovillages: Community, Intentionality, Degrowth. Abstract for 2015 AAA meeting.**

Joshua Lockyer, Ph.D.

For centuries, intentional communities of various sorts have been formed to experiment with alternative socio-cultural and economic models. As we enter the Anthropocene and find ourselves in a world challenged to come up with a post-carbon economy that is no longer reliant on endless growth, such models are in greater demand than ever. Since the mid-1990s, hundreds of ecovillages around the world have been experimenting with ways to create ‘prosperity without growth’ (Jackson 2009). This paper uses ongoing ethnographic research to describe how Dancing Rabbit Ecovillage in northeast Missouri is creating such models by cultivating cooperative cultural values and behaviors, recreating the commons and the institutions to effectively manage them, and sharing their experiences and lessons with broader publics through media, research, and educational programs. Based on ongoing participatory action research, the paper presents data on areas such as energy use, water use, and solid waste production to illustrate that the community is achieving the decreased consumption patterns required for degrowth while maintaining high levels of happiness and well-being. Questions about the scalability of ecovillage models and policy obstacles and opportunities will be considered. Finally, the paper reflects on the role of the anthropologist as activist-researcher facing the dual tasks of helping the community move toward its goals while simultaneously translating the particular to more broadly applicable theory and practice.

**Community, Conservation, and the Commons: Landscape Transformation and Restoration at Dancing Rabbit Ecovillage. Abstract for CSA 2015 meeting.**

**Joshua Lockyer and Brooke Jones**

In its almost twenty years of existence, the members of Dancing Rabbit Ecovillage in northeastern Missouri have created significant changes in their surrounding physical landscape. Through cooperative and individual endeavor a mostly uninhabited 280 acre chunk of degraded farmland has been transformed to patchwork of regenerating prairie ecosystems, a developing urban area, and a variety of edible landscapes. All of these changes have taken place as the community utilized a land trust model to manage their collective relationship with the landscape. This paper provides an overview of the community’s system of common property management as a context for community formation and landscape transformation. It then visually depicts some of the physical changes in the landscape including efforts toward restoration of the prairie ecosystems, integration of the built environment into the environmental surroundings, and plans for future community expansion.