

Earthseed's Values¹, Guiding Principles, and Strategies

Synopsis of the Sad State of Communal Affairs in WEIRD Societies

While there is much to be grateful for, there is also something radically wrong with the way most **(WEIRD)**² societies tend to be structured. They often leave us at the mercy of impersonal corrupt bureaucracies, oppress us with a justice system that is often neither fair nor efficient, isolate us from one another in over-worked nuclear families embedded in inhumane vehicle-dominated neighborhoods, and grant those in power ever more advantage over those that aren't and they have been plagued by these flaws since their very inceptions. These systems tend to exploit and degrade the commons for the benefit of the few, make it difficult for local communities to develop the ability to self-govern, exploit those outside as well as those within their territorial borders with near impunity, and at the risk of exaggerating slightly, generally impede consensual, loving, and creative solutions at every turn.

Why does it seem so difficult to fundamentally shift any of these societies, particularly the status quo in the United States? Why have the intentional community movement, the back-to-the-land commune movement, the civil rights movement, the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) movement, and even the global ecovillage network movement all failed, at least to date, to reform any WEIRD societies, or catalyze significant lasting broader cultural change, or even just begin to exponentially increase their membership numbers in some way that might give us some justification for solid hope with some caveats³? Why has it been so challenging to establish supportive expanding networks of culturally advanced communities within WEIRD societies? Earthseed's mission is to answer these questions and then unite us, one and all, around a common course of action that each of us will consent to, aimed at building the society and global ecosystem of tomorrow that we wish existed today.

¹ Values are individual beliefs that motivate people to act one way or another. They serve as a guide for human behavior. Generally, people are predisposed to adopt the values that they are raised with. People also tend to believe that those values are "right" because they are the values of their particular culture. The Earthseed Network rejects this in favor of a rationally selected set of values incorporating the best wisdom from a wide variety of cultures and research fields.

² **Western Educated Industrialized Rich and Democratic.** Coined in 2010 by anthropologists and psychologists, the term highlights a significant blind spot in behavioral science: the tendency of researchers to base broad theories of "human nature" on data drawn almost exclusively from a tiny, unrepresentative slice of the global population.

³ The liberatory reform movements currently broadly recognized as experiencing the most explosive, exponential growth in membership are youth-led Climate Justice coalitions, the Indigenous-led LANDBACK Movement, and anticapitalist political groups such as the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA). These movements are expanding rapidly due to their intersectional focus on equity, economic restructuring, and systemic change and the global ecovillage movement is considered to be intersectional with them all. The top exponentially growing movements:

Climate Justice and Just Transition Coalitions: Frontline alliances, such as the Climate Justice Alliance (CJA), have seen exponential growth—expanding to over 70 frontline communities and international networks. This growth is driven by youth-led mobilizations, which have surged in influence to address intersecting needs of health, policy reform, and human rights.

The LANDBACK Movement: Aimed at restoring Indigenous sovereignty and land stewardship, LANDBACK has grown into a generational global force. Powered by networks like the LANDBACK Action Network (LAN), the movement has achieved massive global resonance, accelerating land repatriation efforts that resulted in the return of millions of acres to tribal control.

Anticapitalist & Democratic Socialist Organizing: Groups such as the DSA experienced explosive growth in recent years, expanding their base by over 1,300% to include over 320 local chapters and dozens of active public officeholders.

Hope for a Solution

Lucky for us, we live in a time where many clues to these radical questions and effective strategies are being uncovered by a host of dedicated researchers and made widely accessible. Libraries of analyses of different failures and successes in commoning⁴, culture design⁵, and community creation are now being compiled to reveal the common threads of what is needed for communities and networks to thrive. This is beginning to make a vast experimentally-vetted tool kit of practices available to anyone interested in creating the intentional communities and empowered networks of the future. We are still in the early days of the synthesis of all these sociological principles, but what an exciting time to be alive and birthing a united grassroots effort! We hope this evolving list of values can help unite and guide our network's efforts to make the world a better place.

⁴ e.g.: Management of a common pool of resources.

⁵  Building Utopia

What is the overall Earthseed strategy and framework?

The Earthseed strategy seeks to achieve a breakthrough in local and global collaboration foundationally based on the principles of informed consent and universal unconditional love⁶, not some imaginary “social contract”⁷ you never agreed to - basically do what you want without enacting violence or fraud on others while caring for yourself and others as best you can. No violence or fraud includes not intentionally violating the agreed upon rules of the different commons you are a signatory to. Violence could be loosely defined as any non-defensive initiatory act of physical (or potentially auditory) aggression that is not consensual. Fraud is any act of trickery that is not consented to in advance. A commons is any resource, ecosystem, built environment, or cultural heritage that reasonably belongs to no single individual but is stewarded by the collective it benefits. One should belong to as many commons as one appropriates from. To appropriate means to take for one's benefit from a common pool resource. A common pool resource could be anything that extends beyond a reasonable private possession such as a communal kitchen, a common house, a neighborhood path system, a village water supply system, a microgrid electric supply, an ecovillage, a mushroom patch, a regional wild game quota, an aquifer, a collective vision, or a global borderless ethical and consensual network alliance or “sovereign state”⁸.

⁶ Universal unconditional love is the active disposition to wish well for and care for all beings, regardless of their actions and without necessarily expecting anything in return. It combines unconditional acceptance with universal scope (extending this care to all of humanity and nature rather than just one person). It includes ourselves as well as those we might consider “evil” or “deplorable” while also requiring that we uphold reasonable boundaries for the care of ourselves and others.

⁷ The mythical “social contract” is an implicit agreement in which individuals voluntarily surrender certain natural freedoms in exchange for the security, order, and services provided by a governing authority. It forms the foundational conceptual basis of modern democratic societies and the rule of law, particularly in the United States. The concept was primarily developed during the Enlightenment by prominent political philosophers who explored the shift from humanity's primitive “state of nature” to organized society:

- **Thomas Hobbes:** In his 1651 book *Leviathan*, Hobbes argued that a state of nature without authority would result in chaos and violence. He believed individuals must surrender their freedom to an absolute sovereign to ensure collective security.
- **John Locke:** Locke argued in his 1689 work *Two Treatises of Government* that citizens retain their natural rights to life, liberty, and property. If a government fails to protect these rights, citizens have a moral obligation to revolt.
- **Jean-Jacques Rousseau:** Building upon the idea in his 1762 book *The Social Contract*, Rousseau posited that legitimate authority resides in the “general will” of the people, aiming to achieve both civic order and moral freedom.

In practical terms, the social contract manifests through governmental monopolies over the law, contract enforcement or policing, and various monopolized public services:

- **Taxation:** Citizens are forced to pay taxes to fund various government activities, including public infrastructure, the military, and social welfare programs supposedly in exchange for an organized and safe society.
- **Legal Systems:** Individuals agree to abide by laws, supposedly in exchange for the state maintaining justice and personal safety.
- **Voting:** By participating in democratic elections, citizens supposedly exercise the “consent of the governed” to hold decision-makers accountable.

⁸ A sovereign state is generally regarded as an independent political entity with a defined territory, a permanent population, and a government that holds supreme authority. It in theory has complete autonomy to manage its internal affairs and conduct foreign relations without interference from other powers although it may be forced by them to pay “tribute” in some form. We use the term here with the hope of redefining it to remove or alter all of those unethical aspects including the defined territory (the territory only covers the reasonable domain of its signatories), the population is not permanent and includes only those who sign the agreements and those in their “custodial care” such as children who have not yet been initiated into “adulthood.”

What is the broad view of the Earthseed ecosystem?

The Earthseed Ecosystem consists of a nested hierarchy of organizations starting with the widest global Earthseed Network, then flowing out to the global Earthseed Ecovillage Network and out from there to the founding Earthseed Ecovillage Network headquarters on roughly 400 acres in Jamaica Vermont, the founding member ecovillage of which is Earthseed Ecovillage at that site. The Womb is the core founding neighborhood of Earthseed Ecovillage and the Catalyst Pod is its founding pod of roughly 5 committed residents who have been dedicated to designing and creating that initial neighborhood as well as the broader Earthseed framework and processes. Finally there is the occasionally disputed “Source”⁹ of the Catalyzing Pod, myself, the “Source author” of this document, under evaluation for an above average rating within the source founder trustworthiness rating system being designed by the Global Ecovillage Network (GEN)¹⁰ and The Foundation for Intentional Communities (FIC)¹¹. I aspire to turn over succession of the “Source” role as soon as possible and practical to the Catalyzing Pod or another Pod within the Earthseed ecosystem or a widely trusted individual or couple as a last resort.

What is the global Earthseed Network?

The Earthseed Network is the global alliance of organizations, self-governing intentional communities, and individuals that are signatories to the Earthseed Social Contract¹² that will serve as an evolving over-arching consent-based constitution of a sort. The Earthseed Network will oversee the network’s currency and banking systems, arbitrate some alliance contract disputes, clarify the rules of warfare and peace treaty settlement, and provide other coordinating services. Some of the organizations being evaluated for full signatory membership are: The Global Ecovillage Network, the Foundation for Intentional Communities, the Tamera Healing Biotores Network, the Earthseed Ecovillage Network, The People’s Project, The Permaculture Association of New England, the Network for a New Culture, and many others.

What is the Earthseed Ecovillage Network?

The Earthseed Ecovillage Network is an alliance of ecovillages around the world. It is in alliance with the forming global intentional community network and plays a key role alongside the Global Ecovillage Network (GEN). Its current headquarters is situated on 430 enchanted acres of forests, streams, orchards, ponds, fields, and gardens in south central Vermont on the edge of the Green Mountains between Brattleboro and Manchester. GEN is also evaluating that site as the potential future home of the Vermont headquarters of GEN and it is the current home of the first aspirational Earthseed Ecovillage.

⁹ Peter Koenig’s Source Principle posits that every initiative has a unique “Source”—the individual who conceived it—who retains ultimate responsibility and intuitive guidance over their vision. While clarifying, the framework is criticized for potentially fostering authoritarian leadership, founder ego, and conflicting with democratic, decentralized models. For more pros and cons and how Earthseed aspires to incorporate them in practice, see Appendix 1.

¹⁰ <https://ecovillage.org/> The Global Ecovillage Network envisions a world of empowered citizens and communities, designing and implementing their own pathways to a sustainable future, and building bridges of hope and international solidarity. The Global Ecovillage Network embraces a holistic approach to sustainability, integrating the Social, Cultural, Ecological and Economic areas of existence. At the centre, we place the practice of integral design. GEN advocates for ecovillages with UN Consultative status, and general consultative status, the highest level of accreditation of non-member entities, and is evaluating the potential for advocating for ecovillages and the Earthseed Ecovillage Network to be granted non-voting “Observer State” membership (such as enjoyed by the Vatican City and Palestine), and eventually “Full Membership” and elite “Permanent Member” status on the UN Security Council should it continue to exist during the global transition.

¹¹ <https://www.ic.org/foundation-for-intentional-community/> FIC champions social, ecological, and economic justice and resiliency through the support and growth of cooperative culture and intentional communities.

¹² Link to draft text and design process document TBD

What is Earthseed Ecovillage?

Earthseed Ecovillage is an aspirational ecovillage that is growing in some membership dimensions at a squared annual rate over the past five years. The 430 acre site was purchased in June of 2022 and members moved onsite 2 years later full time. The core founding neighborhood of Earthseed Ecovillage has been called the Womb and its two commons houses are located near the Leviathins' Pool on the central Peace Brook. It aspires to become a neighborhood of roughly 5 pods within an ecovillage with a population less than the Dunbar number¹³. The Womb's founding pod is called the Catalyst Pod and like most pods is composed of roughly 5 adults. A pod is a tightly knit and deeply committed group of individuals on a shared mission.

Earthseed takes its name from the communitarian visionary dystopian/utopian writer, Octavia Butler's work in the Parable of the Sower and Parable of the Talents. Earthseed is working on writing and embodying a future-primitive community revival movement novel inspired by Butler's uncompleted third book in her Parable trilogy.

¹³ Dunbar's number is a cognitive limit on the number of stable social relationships a human can maintain—where you know who someone is and how they relate to others. Proposed by British anthropologist Robin Dunbar, the cap is generally cited as 150 people. The theory is rooted in the "social brain hypothesis," which posits that primate neocortex size limits the amount of social information a brain can process.

Overview of Earthseed's Values

Earthseed's values align highly with those expressed by the Global Ecovillage Network (GEN) and we subscribe to the Global Ecovillage Network's **Ecovillage Map of Regeneration**.¹⁴ The Global Ecovillage Network embraces a holistic approach to sustainability, integrating the Social, Cultural, Ecological and Economic areas of existence with the practice of integral design at the center. The **4 Areas of Regeneration** and the central path of integral design make up the **Ecovillage Map of Regeneration** – a road map to the creation of ecovillages – intentional or traditional communities in urban and rural locations, using participatory processes to integrate the ecological, economic, social, and cultural areas in order to regenerate social and natural environments.

The **Ecovillage Map of Regeneration** is made up of 32 Ecovillage Principles – six in each Area of Regeneration and eight for the central path of integral design. It illustrates and distills years of experimentation and learning within the global network, as well as current research on resilience, sustainability and participatory design. These principles can be applied wherever a person is – in one's individual life, in an organisation, in designing a new project, in formulating community-led development plans and more. They are meant to be an inspiration and road-map to implementing ecovillage lifestyles regardless of where or who you are.

Social

Ecovillagers tend to actively work to build trust, collaboration and openness between people, and to make sure they feel empowered, seen and heard. Ecovillages often provide a sense of belonging through community relationships, common projects, shared goals, and social processes, but do not demand that everyone is the same – unity and strength through diversity is important to the ecovillage movement.

- Nurture diversity and cohesion for thriving communities
- Develop fair, effective and accountable institutions
- Practice conflict facilitation, communication and peacebuilding skills
- Empower collaborative leadership and participatory decision making
- Ensure reasonably equal and lifelong access to education for sustainability
- Promote health, healing and wellbeing for all

Culture

Ecovillages aim to build or regenerate diverse cultures that support people to empower and care for each other, their communities and the planet. Many actively engage with practices that encourage people to feel deeply connected to each other, to the planet, and to themselves. Celebration, art, dance and other forms of creative expression are often embraced as central to thriving human life and communities. Most ecovillages find their own ways to talk about, connect with, respect and support life and the beings and systems that sustain it.

- Clarify vision and higher purpose
- Nurture mindfulness and self-reflection
- Enrich life with art and celebration
- Honour indigenous wisdom and welcome positive innovation
- Engage actively to protect communities and nature

¹⁴ <https://ecovillage.org/ecovillages/map-of-regeneration/>

- Reconnect to nature and embrace low-impact lifestyles

Ecology

Ecovillages aim to access food, shelter, water and energy in ways that respect the cycles of nature. They aim to integrate humans with the rest of nature in ways that increase biodiversity and regenerate ecosystems, and that give people a chance to experience their interdependence with systems and cycles of life on a direct and daily basis.

- Grow seeds, food and soil through regenerative agriculture
- Clean and replenish sources and cycles of water
- Move towards 100% renewable energy and transport
- Innovate and spread green building technologies
- Work with waste as a valuable resource
- Increase biodiversity and restore ecosystems

Economy

Ecovillages aim to build economic practices and systems that contribute to sharing of resources, mutual support, and strong local economies and networks that serve the needs of local people and ecosystems. Most ecovillages actively work to provide sustainable alternatives to the mainstream economy and monetary system, and reclaim ways of thinking about wealth and progress that include all aspects of life. Local currencies, sharing, social entrepreneurship, circular economy and collaborative forms of ownership are central to many ecovillages.

- Reconstruct the concepts of wealth, work and progress
- Commit to responsible production, consumption and trade
- Cultivate social entrepreneurship for local regeneration
- Increase economic justice through sharing and collaboration
- Ensure equitable access to land and resources
- Use banks and currencies that strengthen communities

Integral Design

Some principles apply to all Areas of Regeneration, and help bring them together in holistic designs for resilient communities and systems. In GEN, the integral design approach to design and regeneration is paired with a strong focus on collaboration and participation. This means that the principles of integral design are put into practice in ways that actively include everyone concerned and encourage transparency at every level.

- Learn from nature and practise whole systems thinking
- Identify assets, needs and leverage points
- Adapt solutions to scale and context
- Be aware of privilege and use it for the benefit of all
- Build alliances across all divides
- Engage all stakeholders in designs for the future
- Spread core patterns of regeneration
- Listen to the feedback of the world

In additional elaboration, we hold the following shared values:

1. **Proper Pursuit of Power:** Let research and wisdom guide our leadership practices.
2. **Unity Under Reasonableness:** All beliefs should yield to evidence and reason.
3. **Equality and Chosen Obligations:** We are not created equal and we should carefully choose a path.
4. **Humanism and Ethical Utilitarianism:** Prioritizing the messy affairs of us crazy apes while caring for all.
5. **Pursuit of Freedom for All:** Awareness of social justice issues and intention to act in service of social change.
6. **Rational Compassion:** Awareness of our evolving collective and individual “caring” capacities in support of communal vitality, radical growth, and universal service.
7. **Environmental Regeneration:** Striving beyond sustainability towards the regeneration of our ecosystems.
8. **Personal Sovereignty and Treatment of Youth:** Valuing personal freedoms, individual sovereignty, and communally supported discipline.
9. **Collective Sovereignty:** Valuing the self-governance power of groups and the cooperation that arises from honoring consensual agreements between self-sovereign groups.
10. **Authenticity:** Promoting self-awareness, radical transparency, and radically honest communication.
11. **Body and sex positivity/normativity:** Celebrating nature within and minimizing harmful forms of shame.
12. **Working through discomfort and conflict:** Addressing conflict and disconnection early and frequently in healing and transformative ways. Creating trustworthy systems to peacefully address any disputes within the network.
13. **Creativity and Play:** Expanding the ways we relate, celebrate, and grow into our whole empowered true selves.
14. **Prioritizing Rest:** Balancing regenerative rest and productive service.
15. **The Seven Principles of Sociocracy 3.0¹⁵:** Striving towards effective, efficient, and ethical group coordination at all scales of the network’s growth by creating relatively decentralized organizations where power is widely distributed and almost everyone has the opportunity to contribute meaningfully to decision-making processes.
 - a. **The Principle of Effectiveness:** Making the best use of our time, energy, and resources towards achieving our collective objectives.
 - b. **The Principle of Consent:** Seeking out objections in search of worthwhile ways to improve our plans so that they are good enough for now and safe enough to try.
 - c. **The Principle of Empiricism:** Testing assumptions you rely on through experiments.
 - d. **The Principle of Continuous Improvement:** Regularly review processes and make improvements.
 - e. **The Principle of Equivalence:** Involve people in making and evolving decisions that affect them.
 - f. **The Principle of Transparency:** Make valuable information accessible to everyone.
 - g. **The Principle of Accountability:** Keep your word and shoulder the greatest responsibility you sustainably can handle for the course of the organization and the benefit of the whole.
16. **Principles of Commons Management:** Upholding the eight principles of commons management that help us avoid the tragedy of the commons. Define it and its members. Distribute abundance fairly. Participate in making the rules. Monitor it. Sanction violations. Resolve conflicts swiftly and fairly. Maintain internal regulatory sovereignty. Cooperate with other commons as part of a larger whole.
17. **The Social Suite:** Optimizing for the love we evolved to share. (Individual identity, love for partners and offspring, friendship, social trust networks, encouraging broad cooperation, balanced in-group preference, mild hierarchy or relative egalitarianism, and social learning.)

¹⁵ [A Practical Guide for Evolving Agile and Resilient Organizations with Sociocracy 3.0](#)

1. Proper Pursuit of Power: Let research and wisdom guide our leadership practices.

Power should be cultivated in the hands of those groups and individuals that exemplify wisdom, courage, temperance and justice in service of humanity's collective liberation and well-being. This goal is complicated by the fact that the wisest council most often arises from a minority within any group.¹⁶ What's worse is that those that are most attracted to power and skilled at power games are more likely to abuse it for personal gain than the majority.¹⁷

While we acknowledge that the pursuit of wealth and power for short-sighted gain is likely at the root of the global polycrisis, it is a strategic mistake to abandon that pursuit to the least trustworthy amongst us. Since the pursuit of money, wealth, and power outside of a humane system and ethical coordination structure can corrupt, degrade, and divide us, it is critical that we learn to wisely navigate these power game dynamics together if we are to be of service to all life on earth and enjoy epically meaningful lives in the process.

We can avoid the many pitfalls that have trapped countless other well-intentioned collectives by studying the structures and dynamics in communities and businesses that lead to those failures and evolve wiser practices that better safeguard our circles. We can study the many different patterns for enhanced group coordination outlined in Sociocracy 3.0 that have allowed many groups of different scales to overcome the tyranny of structurelessness and ineffective coordination. Through the study of these and the latest ongoing science in group coordination, we will experimentally identify and refine those principles that are of the highest importance and incorporate them into our practices and this ever evolving document.

As our network and work groups grow, we can learn how to better tap into the collective intelligence of the whole by using innovative tools, practices, and algorithms to help us collectively evaluate each others strengths, weaknesses, and "believability"¹⁸ in different arenas. We can collectively weight our votes according to a variety of those individual credibility factors and according to how confident we are about our personal opinions during different types of rated votes¹⁹. These and other research innovations could help us increase the odds of making the best choices and allocating decision making power more optimally across our organizations harnessing the wisdom of the crowd both within and outside our organizations as we grow in numbers.

While a group is often collectively able to accurately identify the relative believability, trustworthiness, and wisdom of its members through 360 degree evaluations in the context of a relatively safe space that values transparency and honesty, we may often over or under estimate desirable characteristics in each other based on how familiar, attractive, charismatic, or similar to us the individual is. Therefore it is critical that we statistically correct our peer evaluations and processes for any cognitive biases we might not be totally free from ourselves, like attractiveness bias²⁰ for example.

We also share a goal of creating communities and networks where there is a strong sense of belonging and unity - where even the newest members feel appreciated and aligned with the collective mission - entrusted with the duty of helping the collective evolve into its fullest potential - and as deeply devoted and essential to it as any founder or senior member. If we should sometimes fail to achieve that level of wholeness, we will at least strive to

¹⁶ Statement from James Priest, (find supporting research and Sociocracy 3.0 reference)

¹⁷ (find research on how psychopathy tends to increase when moving up hierarchies). [Corporate psychopathy: Talking the walk - PubMed](#), [Why Do Psychopaths Crave Power? | Psychology Today](#), book *The Wisdom of Psychopaths* by Kevin Dutton

¹⁸ See [Life Principles](#) for how individual believability ratings can help enhance group decision making in large group votes.

¹⁹ [Rated voting - Wikipedia](#)

²⁰ [Physical attractiveness stereotype - Wikipedia](#)

experimentally evolve our systems to prevent founder or seniority dynamics from taking hold leading to an “us vs. them” dynamic within the network.

2. Unity Under Reasonableness: All beliefs should yield to evidence and reason.

Without agreed-upon deference to the most reasonable argument, it is difficult to create objective common ground together from which to take effective action in the world. To bring us into a more empowered symbiotic union with our communities and the network as a whole, we will conscientiously harness our tribal drives and beneficial innate biases while forming and spreading a healthy anti-cult that protects its members from the more harmful aspects of their cognitive biases, irrational mental habits, and tribal drives.

To support our members in gaining more awareness of their cognitive biases and applying effective corrective action, we will promote a culture that values studying and monitoring for these biases, both collectively and individually. We agree to actively seek within and compassionately help each other identify these biases, particularly when in-group/out-group dynamics might be at play. We will also use the research in these fields to help correct for these biases on the group decision-making level to enhance cooperation within and amongst working groups.

To help inoculate ourselves against these potential pathogens, we encourage our members and friends to adopt a simple meta-tribal creed such as the following from Team Human:

I am a member of Team Human.

Our creed is that beliefs should change in light of evidence.

We are a community of inquiry where beliefs are deemed reasonable if they can withstand reasonable challenges to their veracity.

We are the Metatribe.

3. Equality & Chosen Obligations: We are not created equal and should carefully choose a path.

We were not created equal, nor are we equally trustworthy or capable. We all grew up in different soil under different hardships. We recognize our uniqueness, including unique abilities and individualized choices that lead to varying degrees of work ethic, trustworthiness, personal health, talent, and ability to participate in communal events. Each of us is a marvel billions of years in the making. No one is fundamentally “above” another. Everyone’s voice matters, but none in the same way.

Each of us chooses to be responsible for helping determine the different ways trust and decision making power are distributed across our intimate circles and evolving communities. Each of us chooses to help design an environment where that can be done honestly without threat of retaliation. Each of us chooses to be responsible for protecting our systems of self-governance from corruption and gamification.²¹ We may choose to delegate some of these responsibilities and duties to others, but should they fail to fulfill their responsibilities, we are responsible for reassuming or redelegating those responsibilities.²²

Each of us openly chooses which obligations we wish to be bound to and endeavors to carefully reconsider all the unchosen obligations to family, friends, organizations, and governments we may have unconsciously adopted. Chosen reasonable obligations are the only ones we pledge to honor. We seek those to join us who are willing to openly declare their chosen obligations, as well as the ones they reject, and to declare as well when there is any change in the strength or nature of their commitments. Such public personal declarations of freely chosen

²¹ For examples of gaming the system under different voting systems: [Gaming the System](#)

²² See principles of delegation vs representation under anarcho-direct-democracy: [Kropotkin: Against Representation](#)

obligations, responsibilities, and asserted liberties can help lay the foundations of a new world order based on written consensual individual and group social meta-contracts,²³ helping to erode the justifications used for rulers, implicit social contract theories, and unnecessary warfare.

These values around equality vs. difference and freely chosen obligations tie in closely with the first value of Earthseed and the wise collective organism we seek to create. They may also lead us to deviate from certain strict definitions of egalitarian decision making at times. We recognize that each of us has different characteristics and capabilities and that it is necessary for us to all evaluate each other and our ideas along a variety of dimensions in order to get the clearest picture of reality and allocate power in a way that will lead to high quality decision making and this may be difficult for some. For example, those high in agreeableness or low in social courage may find it nerve wracking to give harsh feedback. So in order to receive their valuable contributions, some feedback systems may benefit by offering a degree of anonymity.

We seek to create an organization with high collective intelligence where the best science in group psychology, coordination, and commons management is put to use in service of our collective evolution. We aspire to incorporate and evolve the best collective management tools and principles being pioneered by the world's leading business and philanthropic organizations. At this particular stage in our networks birth, we have a particular interest in self-governance systems like Sociocracy 3.0²⁴ that can help us structure our groups in ways that mimic the cellular and beneficial hierarchical patterns in nature. Research in the field of group decision making can help us design the optimal size for each of our decision making or work groups (e.g. often 6 +/- 2). Leading group coordination practices can help us have productive meetings and support innovative good-enough-for-now and safe-enough-to-fail experiments. Successful experimental innovations can then be rolled out to other applicable working groups.

4. Humanism & Ethical Utilitarianism: Prioritizing the messy affairs of us crazy apes while caring for all.

While we acknowledge the value and interconnectedness of all species, we believe it is of paramount importance at this time in Earth's history for the well being of all life for our species to liberate itself from oppressive belief systems and arcane mass coordination strategies such as the bordered nation-state violence-monopoly paradigm, racism, and xenophobia. We will therefore prioritize some human-centric needs towards that end, particularly at this early stage in the growth of the movement.

The long term mission of the Earthseed network is to do the greatest good possible for the whole, with the whole including ourselves, and in fact, with a loving prioritization of our members' well-being to some extent in support of the movement's exponential growth. This is essential given typical human nature and the predominant pattern of burnout in a mix of different intentional communities and activists movements²⁵, but care must also be taken that this in-group preferencing does not go too far in causing harm to others actively or through neglect.

We define the whole to include the well-being of the whole planet and all life, but with a preferential weighting towards the interests and relationships of us humans, not because our species is necessarily superior in any way rationally, emotionally, or ethically²⁶, or because our species is more valuable than any other²⁷, but because it is both

²³ For an example of one ambitious project in that arena: <http://www.selfsip.org/solutions/index.html>

²⁴ [A Practical Guide for Evolving Agile and Resilient Organizations with Sociocracy 3.0](#)

²⁵ [Activists Are Burning Out — No One's Picking Up The Pieces](#)

²⁶ FMI on interspecies cognitive science and how it informs the design of new paradigm cultures: link

²⁷ FMI on a counterargument that places humanity in a particularly vital role in the continuation of the evolution of life in this galaxy and on this planet: link

“our” species and the one that is playing an oversized role in the development and uncertain continuation of life on earth, as well as its spread to other terraformed planets²⁸. It is critical that we grow up as soon as possible and begin intelligently managing our global commons. Also, given the average individual’s level of ethical development, it seems unreasonable to assume that few if any of us will soon integrate and transcend self and human-centric biases to the point where we will begin to equally value the well-being of other lifeforms and ecosystems. However, we can foster a culture that recognizes the beauty and dignity of all life. Together we can come to better understand our evolved animal natures and our interconnections with all other lifeforms and habitats.²⁹ This human-centric bias may allow some members of the network at times to adopt strategies and permaculture³⁰ practices that may be incompatible with veganarchism³¹ and animal liberation³² such as animal husbandry and hunting. This bias will also likely allow strategic activities at times that may run counter to ecofeminist³³ principles against extractive activities like mining, logging, and well drilling.

We acknowledge the imperative to prioritize that which will most serve life in the long run though it may come at the cost of some social or environmental justice issues in the short run. Any network that cannot eventually excel in and transcend the current money and power game dynamics of the global state-capitalistic economy is bound to eventually be eclipsed by it. Extreme vigilance will be required to prevent our organizations from being subverted and coopted by it as we work at evolving and implementing the new systems that will make the old ones obsolete.

In the establishment of new cooperatively owned businesses within the network, compromises may need to be made in the use of materials or practices that are not environmentally ideal in order to get to a more economically sustainable position. Perhaps a challenging decision may need to be made around the degree of decision making power or profit sharing to grant an outside investor in a new Earthseed cooperative in order to gain their support. Regardless of the dilemma, when we can’t readily come to a decision due to conflicting values, we will do our best to choose wisely with our eyes open to all the long term potential impacts.

5. Pursuit of Freedom for All: Awareness of social justice issues and intention to act in service of social change:

We seek to increase our understanding of privilege and oppression. We recognize that we all experience both, though in vastly differing proportions, and that oppressive systems negatively impact everyone. While we aim to hold space for the pain and fear that often drive oppressive behavior, we believe privilege comes with a responsibility to listen, learn, and adapt.

We reflect on ways we have internalized dynamics of oppression and seek to change them in ourselves and our immediate communities as well as in the world more broadly. We seek to create the social systems our world needs now, rather than replicate the ones we have been handed.

We believe diversity of identities, experiences, and thought can often make groups stronger and lead to better and more creative decisions. We strive to be inclusive of all identities and experiences, including but not limited to race, ethnicity, culture, citizenship, religion and belief (if not in opposition to our values), gender identity and expression, class, education, body size, parental status, age, ability, neurodiversity, and mental illness. While all identities are welcome, behaviors that run counter to our values are not. In addition, our inclusivity may need to be limited at times

²⁸ Links to the Earthseed series by Octavia Butler [Earthseed - Wikipedia](#) [Parable of the Trickster | Gerry Canavan](#) and SpaceX’s 2030 mission to Mars [Mars Colonization Timeline](#)

²⁹ FMI on education and practices that aid in this effort: link

³⁰ Link to Permaculture Principles

³¹ Veganarchism principles link

³² Animal Liberation principles link

³³ Ecofeminist principles link

due to our collective “caring capacity” to support some individual’s needs and behavior patterns, particularly at this early stage in our network’s development.

6. Rational Compassion: Awareness of our evolving collective and individual “caring” capacities in support of communal vitality, radical growth, and universal service.

We seek to understand our individual and communal capacities to care for others and ourselves and discern accurately when, where, and to whom to extend that care. While we seek to hold space for great diversity, we prioritize the sustainability of our community and its broader service by cultivating discernment around when we choose to extend care and the ways in which we can have the greatest impact. While we acknowledge that a degree of in-group preferencing is natural and to be expected in our species at its present level of ethical development, particularly in one’s most intimate circles, we intend to minimize the harm this might cause to other out-groups. We seek to extend our compassion outward to nurture a more symbiotic meta-culture that also deeply values those outside our communities and network.

To that end, we study the different types of particularly challenging behaviors that tend to manifest in communal living and work environments and the personality characteristics that tend to go along with them along with ways of responding to them. We carefully weigh the different psychological characteristics, backgrounds, and behaviors of those we may choose to bring into our circles of care, estimating the impact that may have on the effectiveness and balance of our internal circles and small work groups. As we grow and learn, we can then adjust our crews in alignment with the best evidence on group composition and cooperation.

A key way to enhance rational compassion is by cultivating communication skills. We use Nonviolent Communication³⁴ as a model, owning our feelings and trying to understand each other’s perspectives and needs. We intend to communicate our needs clearly. Communities thrive when we consider our own needs, as well as taking others’ needs and desires into account. We use active deep listening, and reflect back what someone says to us to be sure we understand what they are expressing and experiencing.

7. Environmental Regeneration: Striving beyond sustainability towards the regeneration of our ecosystems.

Sustainability is insufficient. We seek to regenerate the forests and ecosystems we interact with from centuries of exploitation and degradation. We mourn the disappearance of 85% of the wild terrestrial mammalian biomass³⁵ since the rise of humans, and the vast groves of old giants decimated in a geological blink of the eye. We seek ways to nurture and respect the life around us, giving back as we ask to take what we need. We look for ways to nourish the soil and sequester carbon; to move crucial nutrients, plants, and animals around the landscape to enhance its biodiversity and resiliency. We seek to increase the overall plant and animal biomass carrying capacity of the lands we occupy, their fertility, and ability to heal. We acknowledge that humans now have a complex keystone role to play in earth’s ecosystems and find inspiration in the principles of permaculture³⁶ and centers like the Whole Systems Design³⁷ research farm in Vermont.

The twelve principles of permaculture also map closely to Earthseed’s values with the possible exception of principle 9: “use small and slow solutions.” It is argued that small and slow systems are easier to maintain than big ones,

³⁴ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nonviolent_Communication

³⁵ link

³⁶ <https://permacultureprinciples.com/permaculture-principles/>

³⁷ <https://www.wholesystemsdesign.com/about-us> and <https://www.wholesystemsdesign.com/the-resilient-farm-homestead-ben-falk>

making better use of local resources and producing more sustainable outcomes. The proverb “the bigger they are, the harder they fall” reminds us of the disadvantages of excessive size and growth while “slow and steady wins the race” encourages patience while reflecting on a common truth in nature and society. We recognize the wisdom in this while also acknowledging that sometimes it may be preferable to pursue the bigger, bolder, broader, faster, and potentially riskier solution, particularly in times like these when attempting to find and fix root causes in the midst of a global Category 5 shitstorm.

We are concerned about the plummeting numbers of animals and insects on earth, the decimation of ecosystems around the globe at the mercy of blind global capitalism, the global impacts of the exponential rise in greenhouse gasses, and the loss and decline of indigenous cultures, languages and practices from their ancestral lands. We support local, national, and international efforts to mitigate these crises. We acknowledge that our support of these efforts may sometimes involve complicated involvement with untrustworthy, ineffective, archaic, and corrupt organizations or governments that may be doing more harm than good. We seek wise counsel in determining the best strategic approach for engaging with or avoiding them in hopes of prioritizing the actions that address the underlying root causes while simultaneously reducing the harm to the most vulnerable along the way.

Taking inspiration from the Dancing Rabbit Ecovillage’s membership agreement, sustainability guidelines and ecological covenants³⁸, our network’s communities will strive to use recycled, reusable, renewable, local, and on-site resources where possible. All praise be to the dumpster gods! We aim to purchase local, organic, and fair-trade products from allied organizations when strategically feasible. We are committed to carefully controlling on a communal level through collective purchases and individual agreements the substances that are allowed to go into our groundwater and food systems erring on the side of caution where evidence is lacking.

We strive to meet our electrical and heating needs in renewable ways onsite through solar power, biochar producing wood gasification, biodigester methane production, and micro-hydroelectric systems. We seek to minimize or eliminate the use of personal vehicles on our sites in favor of a shared more ecologically friendly fleets of vehicles.

Though we recognize that there is a danger in expanding human habitation zones beyond their present bounds within urban and village centers, we also believe that many of the communities of the future and the movement as a whole will benefit greatly from doing this well as will those habitats they occupy. When those forests, fields, and waters come under the skilled care of people that are in an intimate intergenerational relationship with them, there’s a greater chance we can stop the cycle of exploitation and degradation encouraged by the system. There are also strategic advantages to shifting the intentional community movement in a more rural direction as the rise of virtual reality meeting technology and remote work options erode the economic advantages that come from living in ever larger cities.³⁹

8. Personal Sovereignty and Treatment of Youth: Valuing personal freedoms, individual sovereignty, and communally supported discipline.

We value personal freedom, autonomy, and respect for boundaries within a social structure that supports the development of healthier habits and wiser choices even though they may not always match our present moment preferences. We take responsibility for our own choices and support others to feel at choice. We approach consent as applying to all aspects of life to help us deepen our relationships with each other and create more enjoyment and mutuality in our interactions. [Here](#) are some good examples of how experts in the field think about consent.⁴⁰

³⁸ <https://www.dancingrabbit.org/about-dancing-rabbit-ecovillage/vision/>

³⁹ See the Civium project for a further analysis of these trends and the coming shift towards optimal human scale social groups.

⁴⁰ <http://www.consentbeyondyes.com/>

At the same time, we recognize that, to varying degrees, we are each vulnerable to addictions and unhealthy habits that do not align with our personal vows or serve the fulfillment of Earthseed's long term mission. Therefore we intend to consent to a communally supported discipline involving an evolving lifelong course of study and ecology of practices aimed at increasing our wisdom and sovereignty, both individually and collectively. The time and energy commitments that will entail will vary over time and between members. We will do our best to clearly write out the time-bounded commitments we will be seeking from others and agreeing to ourselves.

We also value the cultivation of personal sovereignty in our youth. We hope to clearly elaborate our principles around the treatment of children and create learning experiences that help everyone get in sync on how we can hold clear boundaries for them together. We intend to err on the side of requiring too much verbal consent before initiating physical contact with youth, particularly when the relationship is unfamiliar. We take inspiration from the writings and experience of communities like Tamera and (some Japanese community I need to look up) that you can investigate more here.⁴¹

9. Collective Sovereignty: Valuing the self-governance power of groups and the cooperation that arises from honoring consensual agreements between self-sovereign groups.

We value the freedom, efficacy, and sovereignty of groups within our network and those allied with it. We also value the unity and power that arises from appropriately negotiated agreements between groups.

Like any self-identified group of any size; nation states, religions, towns, corporations, and neighborhoods do not physically exist apart from the consenting or coerced individuals that comprise them. Yet they can effectively function as collective organisms with unique interests and the capacity to collectively bargain with other groups. Those that fail to recognize their power run the risk of entering into conflict or a state of war with them unnecessarily.

We seek a world where warfare on any scale is only engaged in consciously and rationally. We value abiding by honorable rules of peacecraft and warfare, crafting clear achievable truces wherever possible.

We value the sovereignty of the groups within our network, both big and small. We pursue the complex undertaking of maximizing their autonomy and sovereignty within their appropriate domains amidst the other constraints needed to maximize the well being of the whole network.

(TBW: Piece on domain discovery per Sociocracy 3.0 patterns and the right of domain sovereignty according to the eight principles of commons management. Piece on independent dispute resolution organizations and processes for binding individual and inter-group dispute commitments outside the current legal system.⁴²)

10. Authenticity: Promoting self-awareness, radical transparency, and honest communication.

Where it is "safe" to do so, we seek to be aware of our present moment felt experience, and skillfully reveal our inner world to build trust, intimacy, and shared understanding. We engage in meditation, original circling method,⁴³ ZEGG forum,⁴⁴ contact improvisational dance,⁴⁵ authentic relating games,⁴⁶ and other practices to develop tools to self-regulate when emotionally activated and to connect more deeply. We try to ask directly for things we want; noticing when we're coming from unconscious/manipulative strategies to get our needs met and choosing to reveal rather than enact those strategies.

⁴¹ Child treatment links tbw

⁴²  Mediation and Arbitration Agreement Draft and Outline

⁴³ <https://circlinginstitute.com/what-is-original-circling-approach/>

⁴⁴ <https://geo.coop/story/zegg-forum-%E2%80%93-ritualized-form-communication-larger-groups>

⁴⁵ Link tbw

⁴⁶ Link tbw

11. Body and sex positivity/normativity: Celebrating nature within and minimizing harmful forms of shame.

We celebrate bodies and sex as normal and transcendent parts of everyday life and intend to minimize shame around them. We value examining and leaning into any discomfort that comes up around nudity and sexuality. We may not have the “caring capacity”⁴⁷ to provide a therapeutic environment for resolving trauma around our bodies and sexuality although it is something we aspire to.

Groups in our network are clothing-optional where strategically practical. What is strategically practical may be greatly impacted by who is or might be present and the surrounding status quo norms around bodies, sex, age, gender, gender expression, hetero-normativity, and mono-normativity. We agree to abide by the wise counsel of our chosen communities on when it is reasonable to challenge these norms and where it is best to constrain ourselves and each other to achieve other goals.

12. Working through discomfort and conflict: Addressing conflict and disconnection early and frequently in healing and transformative ways. Creating trustworthy systems to peacefully address any disputes within the network.

We cultivate the ability to hold multiple viewpoints as valid and maintain curiosity about other people’s experiences and intentions. We share the goal of bringing our behavior into alignment with our individual and shared values, with awareness and forgiveness that we will never be perfect at this. We intend to work through interpersonal discomfort before it becomes conflictual, and to work through small conflicts before they become large.

We acknowledge that interpersonal conflict is a grave communal concern and agree to try to resolve the conflict internally and identify how much of it is one’s own shadow work. (For an interesting perspective on this work, see existential kink philosophy.⁴⁸) If that does not adequately clear the issue, we agree to attempt to resolve it with the individual or group directly, and failing there, to request the assistance of a community member. We also agree to bear responsibility for the general vibe and not ignore or divert others attempts to resolve conflicts with us.

Sometimes conflicts or disputes will continue even after other community members are brought in for assistance. There may be a temptation to default to filing a lawsuit in government courts to resolve the issue by force. However we acknowledge that if we are to live principled lives as responsible adults, we also must take full responsibility for providing ethical dispute resolution and contract enforcement services for ourselves and each other whenever possible without relying on the services of unaccountable, non-consensual, and untrustworthy external authorities. We recognize this is no small task but if we are to be truly free and honorable, we must collectively bind ourselves to it. To this end, we are working to craft mediation and arbitration agreements and principles that parties both within and outside of our network can rely on to achieve swift, reasonable, fair, and efficient resolution.⁴⁹

13. Creativity and Play: Expanding the ways we relate, celebrate, and grow into our whole empowered true selves.

We consider lightheartedness and humor to be just as important to relationships as reflection and conflict resolution. We value making art, playing music, parkour, biking, swimming, and dancing, individually and together. We

⁴⁷ <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0890406599800504#preview-section-abstract>

⁴⁸ https://bookshop.org/p/books/existential-kink-unmask-your-shadow-and-embrace-your-power-a-method-for-getting-what-you-want-by-getting-off-on-what-you-don-t-carolyn-elliott/13067847?gclid=CjwKCAiAs6-sBhBmEiwA1NI8s_VWNCM_ovu52cODB8f4SeBw8Cf48QVErm4vgkGamut57B-9ivYpKxocQlQQAvD_BwE

⁴⁹ [Mediation and Arbitration Agreement Draft and Outline](#)

particularly value the medium of contact improvisation dance⁵⁰. We like having campfires and creating epic theatrical productions. We believe in incorporating the humorous profane trickster role into our sacred play. We particularly value the concept of “serious play”⁵¹ as described by John Vervaeke and Aaron Cantor that stretches us into embodying different identities, perspectives, and ways of being.

14. Prioritizing Rest: Balancing regenerative rest and productive service.

TBW by Marissa and Bob. Outline ideas: How rest is essential for optimal productivity and associated research findings. How rest can be a radical act that leads to societal healing. Weekly rest practices in various cultures and their established benefits. The negative effects of stress, scarcity, and sleep deprivation on longterm planning and intelligent decision making. The benefits of communal rest for group cohesion, resiliency, and cooperation. The different types of rest/work/play/education/ceremony. Seasonal variations in workload and rest. Separate section on sleep value?: Variation in individual sleep needs and timing and those benefits for individual and tribal well being balanced with preference for rest in alignment with sun cycle and conservation of resources. Benefits and qualities of restorative sleep. Values around noise/blue-light/EMF/grounding/light-in-general... meditation before sleep etc.. Post sleep communal practices including dreamwork.

“Rest actually improves our performance. One study found that when people have predictable and consistent time off work, they are actually more productive overall because they feel more mentally rested, which increases motivation and work enjoyment (Perlow & Porter, 2009). Other research shows that even breaks within one’s shift or workday increase both the quantity and quality of the tasks they are able to engage in throughout the rest of the day (Wendsche et al., 2016). ...working in multiple 80 minute sessions throughout the day separated by rest periods will yield the best results (Eccles et al., 2022).”⁵² A 4 day work week study in Iceland with reduced hours showed numerous long term benefits and possibly even an increase in productivity.⁵³

15. The Seven Principles of Sociocracy 3.0: Striving towards effective, efficient, and ethical group coordination at all scales of the network’s growth by creating relatively decentralized organizations where power is widely distributed and almost everyone has the opportunity to contribute meaningfully to decision-making processes.

Sociocracy 3.0 is built on seven foundational principles⁵⁴ which we attempt to integrate into everything we do to achieve our mission to be of epic service to the whole by spreading ways of achieving highly effective, efficient, and ethical group coordination at all scales, from the smallest pods to the large networks of ecovillages. We believe the immense challenge of proper group coordination and our species failure to master it is one of the root causes of all that ails our world. These principles are well worth diving into deeper in the “Practical Guide to Sociocracy 3.0,” but here they are in brief:

The Principle of Effectiveness: Devote time only to what brings you closer towards achieving your organization’s overall objectives, so that you can make the best use of your limited time, energy and resources.

The Principle of Consent: Raise, seek out and resolve objections to decisions and actions, so that you can reduce the potential for undesirable consequences and discover worthwhile ways to improve. Adopting the principle of consent invites a change of focus in decision-making, shifting intent from trying to reach agreement - can everyone

⁵⁰ <https://www.contactimprov.com/whatiscontactimprov.html>

⁵¹  Why serious play is transformative.

⁵² <https://www.fitnessblender.com/articles/the-importance-of-rest-for-productivity>

⁵³ <https://time.com/6106962/shorter-work-week-iceland/>

⁵⁴ <https://patterns.sociocracy30.org/all.html>

agree with this? - toward the practice of deliberately checking for objections - are there any arguments that reveal why this is not good enough, safe enough or that there are worthwhile ways to improve?

The Principle of Empiricism: Test all assumptions you rely on through experiments and continuous revision, so that you learn fast, make sense of things and navigate complexity as effectively as you can.

The Principle of Continuous Improvement: Regularly review the outcome of what you are doing, and then make incremental improvements to what you do and how you do it based on what you learn, so that you can adapt to changes when necessary, and maintain or improve effectiveness over time.

The Principle of Equivalence: Involve people in making and evolving decisions that affect them, so that you increase engagement and accountability, and make use of the distributed intelligence toward achieving and evolving your objectives.

The Principle of Transparency: Record all information that is valuable for the organization and make it accessible to everyone in the organization, unless there is a reason for confidentiality, so that everyone has the information they need to understand how to do their work in a way that contributes most effectively to the whole.

The Principle of Accountability: Respond when something is needed, do what you agreed to do, and accept your share of responsibility for the course of the organization, so that what needs doing gets done, nothing is overlooked and everyone does what they can to contribute toward the effectiveness and integrity of the organization.

16. Principles of Commons Management: Upholding the eight principles of commons management⁵⁵ that helps us avoid the tragedy of the commons.⁵⁶ Define it and it's members. Distribute abundance fairly. Participate in making the rules. Monitor it. Sanction violations. Resolve conflicts easily. Maintain internal governance sovereignty. Cooperate with other commons as part of a larger whole.

The commons are those things that we all care for together, that are neither privately owned, nor managed by the government on our behalf. Some are large scale and somewhat abstract, such as the English language. Others are local and more tangible, such as fishing rights, and they need more careful management. The current political paradigm is skeptical of communal commons management - asserting that if nobody takes responsibility for something, it will inevitably be abused and therefore it needs to be in private hands or run by public institutions.

However, there are many examples of commons being managed well for generations, such as irrigation networks, pastures, and fisheries. There are also many examples of failed commons where a resource was destroyed. This can also often occur when the state, an organization particularly prone to the tragedy of the commons, takes over a commons and then egregiously mismanages it such as in the example of the collapse of the northwest Atlantic cod fishery.⁵⁷ After study a plethora of different successful and failed commons, Elinor Ostrom compiled the following list of eight principles for managing a commons. Her groundbreaking research demonstrated that, despite what governments often claim, ordinary people are quite capable of creating superior rules and institutions that allow for the sustainable and equitable management of shared resources when they adhere to these principles. These principles can be encapsulated into the follow agreements that members of an Earthseed network commons might uphold together:

⁵⁵ <https://www.prosocial.world/the-science>

⁵⁶ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tragedy_of_the_commons

⁵⁷ <https://www.sciencehistory.org/stories/magazine/a-tragedy-with-no-end/>

1. As a member of the () commons, I clearly understand which resources I need to care for and with whom I share this responsibility. Commons resources are those that we create together, that we maintain as gifts of nature or whose use has been guaranteed to everyone.
2. We use the common resources that we create, care for and maintain. As a commoner, I am satisfied that there is a fair relationship between my contributions and the benefits I receive.
3. We evolve our own rules and commitments, and every commoner can participate in this process. Our commitments serve to create, maintain, and preserve the commons to satisfy our needs.
4. We monitor the respect of these commitments ourselves and sometimes we mandate others whom we trust to help us reach this goal. We continually reassess whether our commitments still serve their purpose.
5. We work out appropriate rules for dealing with violations of our commitments. We determine whether and what kinds of sanctions shall be used, depending on the context and severity of a violation.
6. We maintain internal conflict mediation and arbitration processes that every commoner can make use of to receive a swift and trustworthy resolution. We seek to resolve conflicts among us in an easily accessible and straightforward way.
7. We regulate our own affairs and insist that external authorities respect that just as we respect the solidarity of other effectively self-governing commoner associations.
8. We realize that every commons is part of a larger whole. Sometimes different groups working at different scales are helpful in coordinating stewardship across many different commons and tackling larger goals. Provided they abide by our common values and principles, we intend to collaborate with such groups to enhance voluntary societal cooperation and better meet our collective needs.⁵⁸

To further elaborate on how Elinor Ostrom's eight principles for managing a commons⁵⁹ might specifically be adapted within the Earthseed network, we will dive into each principle

Clearly define boundaries around what the commons includes and who are the individual members of the commons. Ideally, the members should share a strong collective identity and feel connected to their group's purpose. In the context of intentional communities, this sense of group identity and shared purpose can be enhanced through camp crafting practices.⁶⁰ The commons also needs clear processes around the vetting and orientation of new members as well as the voluntary or involuntary revocation of membership.

Fair distribution of benefits and costs: High status or other disproportionate benefits must be earned through generous contributions to the group. Unfair inequality poisons collective efforts as does unfair equality when some take greater risks and contribute more. Some collectives choose to cap the relative amount the highest status member can receive in comparison to the lowest. Others may rather choose to focus on limiting member's conspicuous displays of wealth⁶¹ because that behavior may correlate more strongly with declining cooperation than mere income or wealth inequality. In America, the ratio of CEO pay to that of the typical worker rose to 399:1.⁶² Compare that to the 6:1 cap instituted at large worker

⁵⁸ <https://patternsofcommoning.org/uncategorized/eight-points-of-orientation-for-commoning/>

⁵⁹ <https://www.onthecommons.org/magazine/elinor-ostroms-8-principles-managing-commons/index.html>

⁶⁰ https://www.thestar.com/entertainment/books/creating-a-better-future-how-to-take-our-instinct-to-belong-to-a-group-and/article_bb057d02-7f25-594d-997f-fff0b77a4087.html

⁶¹ <https://www.apa.org/pubs/journals/releases/psp-pspa0000303.pdf>

⁶² <https://www.epi.org/publication/ceo-pay-in-2021/#:~:text=In%202021%2C%20the%20ratio%20of.%2Dto%2D1%20in%201989.>

cooperatives like Mondragon.⁶³ The Earthseed network will employ the Transparent Salary Pattern from Sociocracy 3.0⁶⁴, the Happy Money Story Approach⁶⁵ of the Greaterthan network⁶⁶, and experiment with other approaches to value exchange that serve in diverse contexts. We will explore how money can inhibit our natural sharing behaviors due to how easily infinitely hoardable it is in comparison to, for example, excess food which is something our hunter gatherer ancestors would have been better off “banking” in their tribesmates’ stomachs.⁶⁷ We will explore ways of incorporating individual present need as well as value-given-for-value-received⁶⁸ and splitting-the-surplus⁶⁹ models of equitable exchange and cooperative bargaining. We will encourage each other to consider the present financial circumstances of the community and broader network, and keep their surplus invested in the flourishing of the network to the extent tolerable. Over time as we build trust and communal skills, we will strive to share more and more with each other financially and in other dimensions of life.

Participatory decision-making is vital: There are all kinds of ways to make it happen, but people will be more likely to follow the rules if they get to help design them or are at least given the option to either do so themselves or conditionally delegate that responsibility to someone else. Many people detest being told what to do but will work for group goals that they have consented upon. With the practice of different self-governance patterns like those found in Sociocracy 3.0,⁷⁰ more efficient, ethical, and trustworthy decision making can be achieved. However, it will take disciplined and creative collaboration to implement the best patterns in the appropriate contexts (e.g. simple, complicated, complex and chaotic domains per the Cynefin framework⁷¹).

The commons and the behaviors of its members must be monitored. Once rules have been set, communities need a way of checking that people are keeping them. Commons don’t run on good will, but on accountability. As conservatives are all too well aware, managing a commons is inherently vulnerable to free-riding and active exploitation. Unless these undermining strategies can be detected at a relatively low cost by norm-abiding members of the group, the commons will be in danger of collapse. We will explore ways of lowering these risks through psychological and background screening of new members,⁷² initial vetting procedures,⁷³ different trial membership periods, and actively audited norm monitoring systems.⁷⁴ These may include 360-degree anonymous compiled evaluations of commons members along with procedures to help identify problem areas and members that may need special attention⁷⁵.

Graduated sanctions for rule breaking: Ostrom observed that those commons that worked best didn’t just ban people who broke the rules or norms. That tended to create resentment. Instead, they had systems of warnings and fines, as well as informal reputational consequences in the community. However, the community needs to retain the authority to increase the severity of punishments up to and including

⁶³ <https://australiancardijninstitute.org/mondragon-limits-maximum-salaries-to-6x/>

⁶⁴ <https://patterns.sociocracy30.org/transparent-salary.html#:~:text=A%20transparent%20salary%20formula%20needs,of%20what%20is%20considered%20fair.>

⁶⁵ <https://www.greaterthan.works/resources/happy-money-story-decoupling-remuneration-from-calculation>

⁶⁶ <https://www.greaterthan.works/>

⁶⁷ Can’t find link to studies cited in Our Tribal Future about how we are less likely to share an abundance of money versus other abundances.

⁶⁸ <http://morelife.org/practiceindex.html>

⁶⁹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cooperative_bargaining

⁷⁰ <https://patterns.sociocracy30.org/governance.html>

⁷¹ https://thecynefin.co/about-us/about-cynefin-framework/?srsltid=AfmBOopZjqJma7SKIW2OQ38LDDeVzreFHDnteX9tv-EwwlrN_kQ57Fqh

⁷² Include link to our initial intake background survey process

⁷³ Include link to psychological tests.

⁷⁴ Include link to norm feedback process

⁷⁵ Include link to example of 360 peer review process and <https://patterns.sociocracy30.org/peer-review.html>

expulsion after initial reminders and consequences have failed to correct the behavior. We will explore ways that commoners can be encouraged to collectively shoulder the challenge of managing and upholding a culture of graduated sanctions as well as ways specific sociocratic circles can be designed to carry some of the load. We will also explore the principles of restorative justice⁷⁶ and how those that break the norms can be encouraged to carry more of the burden of repair and rule monitoring through the same system of graduated sanctions. It is essential for cooperative behavior that we explore ways of lowering the cost to commoners of altruistic social punishment⁷⁷ for norm violations.

Swift and fair conflict resolution mechanisms: When issues come up, a decision for resolving them should be achieved in a fair, timely, and straightforward manner by individuals of high integrity, wisdom, appropriate skills, and subject to minimal conflicts of interest. Any commoners should be able to easily bring their conflict up for resolution knowing that the burden of resolving the conflict will not fall solely on their shoulders. It must be possible to resolve conflicts without delay and in ways that are perceived as fair by most members of the group. We will explore ways that the burden of conflict resolution can be borne more wisely and broadly across the membership. We will also investigate how universal membership evaluations can be used to identify those that might excel at being part of a specific conflict resolution or decision making circle and the optimal group size for such circles to help ensure high quality and efficient decision making.

Right to freely self-organize within the common's appropriate domain:⁷⁸ Members of the commons must have the authority to manage their own internal affairs. Externally imposed rules by a higher authority are unlikely to be adapted to local circumstances and violate principle 3. If the actions of a commons or community negatively impacts an outside group, then those actions may need to come under the jurisdiction of a higher authority. Otherwise the group should be free to govern their own affairs and not be superseded by some external government.

Appropriate relationships with out-groups: Some things can be managed locally, but some might need wider regional cooperation – for example an irrigation network might depend on a river that others also draw on upstream. Large scale governance requires finding the optimal scale for each sphere of activity and appropriately coordinating the activities, a concept called polycentric governance. All too often, current governments; be they towns, states, or nations; impose rules from the top down that undermine the ability of a commons to devise a better solution within their domains. This is a violation of the concept called subsidiarity whereby governance tasks are assigned by default to the lowest jurisdiction practical, unless this is explicitly determined to be ineffective or it has been determined that the “lower” circle has grown irreparably dysfunctional.

17. Optimizing for the Love We Evolved to Share: the social suite and features of successful communities and societies.

“At the core of all societies, I will show, is the social suite: (1) The capacity to have and recognize individual identity (2) Love for partners and offspring (3) Friendship (4) Social networks (5) Cooperation (6) Preference for one's own group (that is, “in-group bias”) (7) Mild hierarchy (that is, relative egalitarianism) (8) Social learning and teaching” “The universals of the social suite—shaped by natural selection and encoded in our genes—are not only facts, but also sources

⁷⁶https://www.firststepalliance.org/post/what-is-restorative-justice?gad_source=1&gclid=CjwKCAiAnL-sBhBnEiwAJRGigtxE8yYvuUWAzluH8dTgJ9dZlQlaBoqCnpVUvu2D9HaZsPdFYNOOuxoCXXkQAvD_BwE

⁷⁷ <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41598-018-38323-7>

⁷⁸ <https://patterns.sociocracy30.org/clarify-and-develop-domains.html>

*of our happiness. They are essential to the ability to judge which social arrangements are good for humans.” — Nicholas A. Christakis, **Blueprint: The Evolutionary Origins of a Good Society***

Through a wide ranging analysis of intentional and accidental communities throughout history, insights can be gained into some of our innate human drives and how societies can be structured to harness them for the benefit of all. While these drives can be modified through cultural pressures, history has shown that communities that fail to align their design accordingly often collapse or suffer serious consequences. There is a great deal of alignment between the social suite and the eight principles for successfully managing a commons. Let's go through them individually and explore ways we might enhance each of them.

- a. **Individual identity:** Communities thrive when they value what makes their members unique and create an environment that supports self-actualization through compassionate enlightened parenting,⁷⁹ education, and ritual rites of passage.⁸⁰
- b. **Love for partners and offspring:** Like the Tamera ecovillage in Portugal,⁸¹ we intend to create a communal relationship culture that is free from fear, deceit, and possessiveness. While supporting fulfilling pair bonds of all sorts, both monogamous and ethically non-monogamous, we reject the broader culture of toxic mono-normativity⁸² in favor of consciously chosen and ethically executed relationship anarchy.⁸³

Like Tamera, we also take a unique approach to raising all of our children together in a field of love and trust⁸⁴ while also honoring the special bond between a child and their parents. We support communal mentorship in parenting practices and reject the notion that parents possess children or that they should have blanket autonomy in how they choose to treat and raise them outside of any communal input or feedback. The destiny of children determines the destiny of our world. Our children will live together as groups in family units and within pods of families, embedded within their larger communities. We suspect that, like the adults, they will often form their own communal societies and sometimes they will self-organize and create bigger community groups to live together for certain times. We acknowledge the failures of the more radical kibbutz models of collective child-rearing⁸⁵ and look to more egalitarian, non-patriarchal, and non-mononormative cultures for inspiration^{86 87} and emerging cultures where collaborative ethically non-monogamous parenting is becoming less stigmatized.⁸⁸ (For more on the parenting and mentoring culture we hope to develop, check out these [documents and resources](#).)

- c. **Friendship: Creating a culture that supports deep and long-lasting friendships.** A society that fails to value and strengthen friendship ties will experience declines in mental and physical health, higher suicide rates, an⁸⁹ epidemic of loneliness. Communities that succeed at strengthening friendship ties, like Roseto in Pennsylvania, can become beacons in the storm.⁹⁰ We intend to create environments and communal practices that bring people closer together and provide them with the skills to nurture deep friendships.

⁷⁹ <https://www.incultureparent.com/raising-a-little-buddha-part-1/> and article on communal child support?

⁸⁰ <https://www.animas.org/journey-from-childhood-to-adulthood/>

⁸¹ <https://www.tamera.org/healing-of-love/>

⁸² <https://allgo.org/what-is-toxic-monogamy/>

⁸³ <https://www.attachmentproject.com/enm/relationship-anarchy/#:~:text=Start%20Quiz-,What%20Is%20Relationship%20Anarchy%3F,%2C%20romantic%2C%20or%20platonic%20relationships.>

⁸⁴ <https://www.tamera.org/children-and-youth/>

⁸⁵ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7753919/>

⁸⁶ <https://www.montessoriservices.com/ideas-insights/indigenous-parenting#:~:text=Indigenous%20parenting%20validates%20the%20importance,harmonious%20families%20who%20work%20together.>

⁸⁷ <https://yorkspace.library.yorku.ca/server/api/core/bitstreams/8b33890f-9576-4691-bcb3-fa7e01439135/content>

⁸⁸ <https://www.todaysparent.com/family/parenting/polyamorous-parenting-the-surprising-benefits-of-the-ultimate-modern-family/>

⁸⁹ <https://www.cdc.gov/suicide/facts/data.html>

⁹⁰ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roseto_effect

One key way the Earthseed network will accomplish this is through the cellular pod or crew system which supports members in naturally grouping together in intimate circles, pods, or crews of roughly five individuals each embedded within camps of roughly 25 individuals in self-governing communities of up to around 5 camps. The people within one's inner pod or crew will ideally be friends with whom one shares deep bonds of trust, aligned values, and can rely on for support and mutual accountability. This structure would apply both in work groups and social living arrangements, sometimes with a high degree of overlap between the two. Like some foraging societies, we may discover that there are benefits to having greater diversity in work crews than in social crews. In addition to supporting conversational intimacy, this group size allows for minimal coordination drain and reduced social loafing⁹¹ while being large and diverse enough to tackle ambitious complex goals. Much of our social time will likely be vibrantly spent in these intimate crews where techniques like integrated circling, authentic relating, and meditation will help us transform through conflicts, share power and responsibility transparently, and ensure all are appreciated for their gifts and supported in addressing their weaknesses and shadow aspects.⁹²

Another way we will foster lasting bonds of friendship and chosen kin is by reviving lost ritual practices that bond us together in ties of romantic partnership, friendship, chosen-kin, and intentional community. We can take inspiration from the binding rituals of ancestors and re-envision them in ways that have deeper relevance and significance in our modern lives such as described in David Samson's book, *The Tribe Drive*.⁹³

Since the strength of our communities will mirror the strengths of our friendships, we will regularly prioritize and set aside time for activities designed to deepen our friendships, whether that be hot tubbing, working on a group project, dancing, singing, studying, cooking, feasting, or winter myth-making together. We will collectively and quantitatively track the health of our friendships and experiment with adjusting our celebrations and practices accordingly.

d. **Social Networks: Designing a network of friendships and agreements that can bootstrap trust between strangers within the network and beyond.** Earthseed values trustworthy social networks with clear agreements, domain boundaries, and dispute resolution processes.⁹⁴ These along with a robust reputation sharing system will help foster a strong social network that its members can rely on. With proper care and developmental design, these processes and agreements may one day be able to replace the current obsolete defense, policing, and judicial systems. The network's members and allies will make up the nodes and their friendships and agreements will form the web of connections. Through this network, its members will have access to an ever-growing network of diverse communities along with an integrated universal prosocial library⁹⁵ of all manner of consumable goods, technologies, heavy equipment, and skilled services. As the social and library networks grow together in complexity, comprehensiveness, and power so will their collective value to their members. Their coordinated collective utility maximizing mission will provide them with a competitive edge over the more primitive uncoordinated capitalistic markets that only respond to price signals and individual buying power.

e. **Cooperation: Supporting and incentivizing cooperation between species, ecosystems, honorable individuals, groups, and communities when there aren't obvious immediate short term gains to each for doing so.** Obviously, communities that nurture a discerning culture of effective cooperation thrive over less collaborative ones. The challenge is to find ways of nurturing that cooperation when it may come at a short-term cost to one party, such as when an ecovillage within the network is tasked with assisting in the startup of a new

⁹¹ <https://www.sortlist.com/blog/ringelmann-effect/>

⁹² [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shadow_\(psychology\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shadow_(psychology))

⁹³ <https://davidsamson.substack.com/>

⁹⁴ [Mediation and Arbitration Agreement Draft and Outline](#)

⁹⁵ <https://librarysocialism.org/>

community or cooperative. This cooperation can be partially encouraged by consciously cultivating a philosophy that values a “gift culture” or Moka exchange⁹⁶ wherein our mutual indebtedness comes to strengthen our kinship bonds and increase our gratitude for the relationship. Other ways can be found through encouraging an ethos of “paying it forward” amongst the more privileged, or by demonstrating the very real individual benefits that come from growing the size and power of the network. Where these prove inadequate to gain cooperative consent, long term mutually-advantageous value exchange agreements between sovereign individuals and groups can be custom designed to meet all parties’ needs and capacities for appropriate reciprocation.

f. **Preference for one’s own group: The natural prosocial in-group bias that can lead to disaster if the out-group is devalued.** (See values 2 and 4). While it is a naturally evolved tendency that can help internally strengthen a community or group, in-group bias can also powerfully delude groups into making poor choices that harm the whole. The Earthseed network seeks to hold this paradox with the greatest of care while supporting its members in growing their self-awareness and conscious capacity to connect compassionately with all life. To this end, we participate in the development of a rich ritual celebration calendar that helps strengthen our internal bonds and awaken us to our connections with every “being” and every “thing.”

g. **Mild hierarchy/relative egalitarianism:** (See Value 16, Elinor Ostram’s Commons Principle 3 on participatory decision making, and Value 1, proper pursuit of power, on how some hierarchy of authority can be appropriate but too much can lead to myriad problems).

h. **Social learning and teaching:** The Earthseed network aspires to an educational mission that encompasses and goes beyond the current offerings of Tamera Peace Research and Healing Biotope Education Center⁹⁷, MAPLE (The Monastic Academy for the Preservation of Life on Earth)⁹⁸, Shinzen Young⁹⁹, John Vervaeke¹⁰⁰, and Wheaton Labs¹⁰¹ to name a few. As our network grows we hope to expand and refine the training and mentorship we are able to offer. One of our more lofty goals in this department is to create a cutting edge wisdom cultivation center/monastery that combines the latest technology and innovations in cognitive science and its related fields with vetted wisdom practices from around the globe.

⁹⁶https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gift_economy#:~:text=A%20gift%20economy%20or%20gift.for%20immediate%20or%20future%20rewards.

⁹⁷ <https://www.tamera.org/peace-education/>

⁹⁸ <https://www.monasticacademy.com/buddhism-for-all/#>

⁹⁹ <https://www.shinzen.org/>

¹⁰⁰ <https://www.youtube.com/user/johnvervaeke>

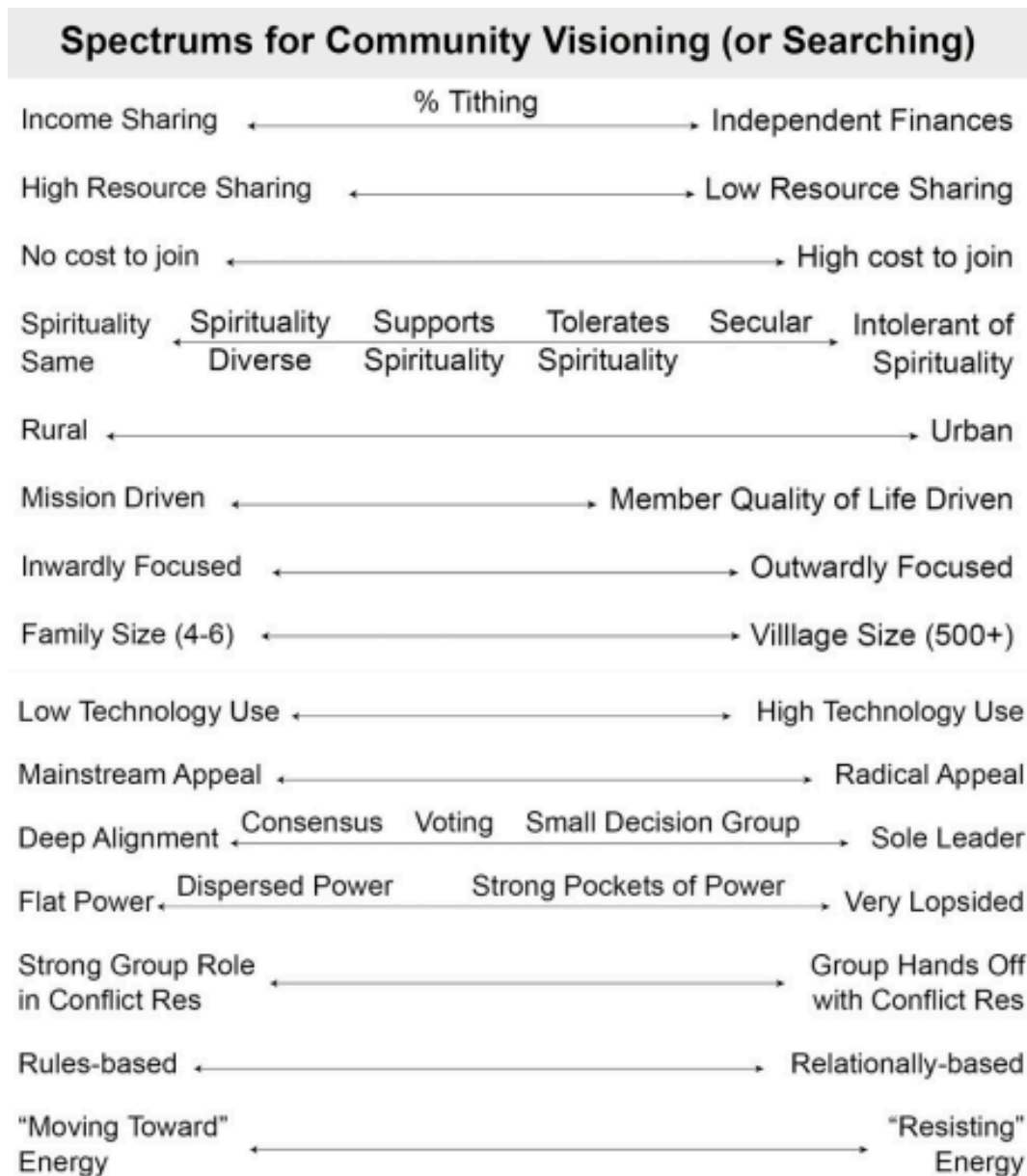
¹⁰¹ <https://wheaton-labs.com/>

Appendices and Rougher Works in Progress Section:

Appendix on 12 factors of healthy lifestyle discovered in the Blue Zones.

<https://www.netflix.com/tudum/articles/live-to-100-secrets-of-the-blue-zones-documentary>

Appendix for Spectrums for Community Visioning:



1. **Income Sharing vs Independent Finances:** We believe that income-sharing maximizes the benefits of intentional community, which at its core is all about sharing and some research seems

to confirm that it is correlated with member community satisfaction.^{102 103 104 105} We also believe that income-sharing is one of the best ways for an IC to undermine state capitalism and the culture of hyper-individualism endemic in the US, and spreading around the world. And we believe that's core to effecting fundamental systems and culture change in the world, which we believe is the core purpose of intentional community.

Income sharing can also reduce economic instability for individuals and groups, allowing greater economic risks to be taken collectively on promising business ventures.¹⁰⁶

2. Resource Sharing vs. Individual Ownership:

Appendix on values documents from other allied organizations:

Dancing Rabbit Ecovillage, Rutledge MO

To create a society, the size of a small town or village, made up of individuals and communities of various sizes and social structures, which allows and encourages its members to live sustainably.* 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.

*Sustainably: In such a manner that, within the defined area, no resources are consumed faster than their natural replenishment, and the enclosed system can continue indefinitely without degradation of its internal resource base or the standard of living of the people and the rest of the ecosystem within it, and without contributing to the non sustainability of ecosystems outside.

Here are the ecological covenants people who live at Dancing Rabbit agree to adhere to:

1. Dancing Rabbit members will not use personal motorized vehicles, or store them on Dancing Rabbit property.
2. At Dancing Rabbit, fossil fuels will not be applied to the following uses: powering vehicles, space-heating and -cooling, refrigeration, and heating domestic water.
3. All gardening, landscaping, horticulture, silviculture and agriculture conducted on Dancing Rabbit property must conform to the standards as set by OCIA for organic procedures and processing. In addition, no petrochemical biocides may be used or stored on DR property for household or other purposes.
4. All electricity produced at Dancing Rabbit shall be from sustainable sources. Any electricity imported from off-site shall be balanced by Dancing Rabbit exporting enough on site, sustainably generated electricity, to offset the imported electricity.
5. Lumber used for construction at Dancing Rabbit shall be either reused/reclaimed, locally harvested, or certified as sustainably harvested.
6. Waste disposal systems at Dancing Rabbit shall reclaim organic and recyclable materials.

Bellingham Cohousing, Bellingham WA

¹⁰² <https://www.pnas.org/doi/10.1073/pnas.2311703121>

¹⁰³ [Measuring Success in Intentional Communities: A Critical Evaluation of Commitment and Longevity Theories](#)

¹⁰⁴ [Happiness in Communal Life: A Scientific Project](#)

¹⁰⁵ [Quality of Life in Intentional Communities](#)

¹⁰⁶ <https://www.ic.org/incomesharing/>

We aspire to create a collaborative, multi-generational community where we place a high value on kindness, respect, gratitude and shared responsibility. We honor each person's unique way of being and support each other's interests, skills and contributions to our community, the larger community and the planet.

We recognize that awareness and acceptance of our interdependent nature is the foundation for health, happiness, well-being, and survival. Therefore we commit to more deeply embody our principles so that we may make them a living part of our daily lives and by so doing manifest the community of our aspirations. To this end, we feel that these principles are best held as questions rather than statements, and each of us will continually ask ourselves . . .

How do I deepen my trust, respect and acceptance of others? How do I bring joy to our community through both work and play?

How do I resolve conflict responsibly?

How do I live interdependently while acknowledging individuality?

How do I contribute to my community?

How do I authentically care for the members of my community? How do both I and my community live more lightly on the earth?

Appendix on Usufructian Property Rights Theory and the Universal Library Economy.

Usufruct: Right to use and enjoy the Fruits

Abusus: Right to abuse or destroy

Complementarity: Different gifts and preferences complement

Irreducible Minimum: Minimum level of care guaranteed to all involved despite contribution.

Library Economy

In *The Ecology of Freedom*, social ecologist Murray Bookchin spends a lot of time exploring three key concepts: usufruct, the irreducible minimum, and complementarity.

These concepts are foundational to any cooperative, caring, and egalitarian society, but particularly to what Bookchin called 'organic society,' which consist of the egalitarian tribal societies that can be found in much of human history.

Beginning with the first essential concept for a library economy, usufruct refers to the freedom of individuals or groups in a community to access and use, but not destroy, common resources to supply their needs.

The second essential concept for a library economy is the irreducible minimum, which is the guaranteed provision of the means necessary to sustain life, the level of living that no one should ever fall below, regardless of the size of their individual contribution to the community.

Complementarity is a way of looking at non-hierarchical differences within a society as something generative, where each person contributes a small part to an outcome greater than the sum of its parts.

<https://librarysocialism.org/> for more

Appendix on Ray Dalio's Life and Work principles, (leader of most successful hedge fund):

<https://www.principles.com/principles/418eaeca-564f-41e8-bd90-8e0d042f28d5/#table-of-contents>

Appendix on Elon Musk's management principles:

First principles thinking

A way of thinking that involves identifying and defining the problem, challenging assumptions, and rebuilding from the core.

Minimize meetings

Musk believes that frequent meetings disrupt productivity and that time should be spent on meaningful tasks. (But one of the prime tasks is to get in sync with your team mates.)

Accelerate cycle time

Musk believes that every process can be sped up, but only after following the first three steps.

Follow common sense

Musk believes that rules should be questioned if they don't make sense or apply to a situation.

Simplify and optimize

Musk's five-step design process includes simplifying and optimizing the design, accelerating cycle time, and automating.

Build a feedback loop

A system where two parties regularly provide constructive feedback to help each other improve.

Communicate directly

Musk believes that communication should follow the shortest path to get the job done, regardless of hierarchy.

- Make the requirements less dumb.

Musk notes that *"your requirements are definitely dumb, it does not matter who gave them to you."* Similar to [Framestorming](#) and its reminder to 'question the question', Musk uses this step to test assumptions, pointing out that requirements from a 'smart person' are often the most dangerous since you might not question them enough.

- Delete the part or process.

"If you're not adding things back in at least 10% of the time, you're clearly not deleting enough." Musk suggests starting lean and building up when and if required, but warns that the bias will be to add things 'in case', *"but you can make 'in case' arguments for so many things."* He goes further, arguing that each requirement or constraint must be accountable to a person, not a department, because you can ask that person about its relevance and purpose, rather than having a requirement that nobody owns and persists for years despite being redundant.

- Simplify or optimise the design.

"Possibly the most common error of a smart engineer is to optimise a thing that should not exist," Musk explains, emphasising the importance of working through the first two steps before trying to optimise. To do this effectively, Musk argues that each engineer needs to take a holistic view of the project, pointing to previous mistakes where engineers had invested enormous resources into reducing the weight of the rocket's engine but hadn't adequately addressed the

equivalent problem of reducing payload weight.

- Accelerate cycle time.

Musk embraces the drive to go faster but warns against pointing your efforts in the wrong direction, saying *"if you're digging your grave, don't dig faster."* He seems to recommend an accelerated [Agile approach](#), but only after the first three steps of his process are satisfied to ensure that you're moving faster in the right direction.

- Automate.

Musk warns against automating before the earlier points are addressed. He relates the story of streamlining a robotic process to build battery mats in the Tesla Model 3. He describes investing massive time and effort to automate and streamline that problematic process before he finally asked what the mat was for. He discovered that it had been created to reduce sound but was no longer required.

Incorporate Toyota's principles? https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Toyota_Way

The system is summarized in 14 principles:

1. "Base your management decisions on a long-term philosophy, even at the expense of short-term financial goals."
2. "Create a continuous process flow to bring problems to the surface." Work processes are redesigned to eliminate waste ([muda](#)), such as overproduction and waiting times, through continuous improvement ([kaizen](#)).
3. "Use 'pull' systems to avoid overproduction." A pull system produces only the required material after a subsequent operation signals a need.
4. "Level out the workload ([heijunka](#)). (Work like the tortoise, not the hare.)" This principle aims to avoid overburdening people or equipment and creating uneven production levels ([mura](#)).
5. "Build a culture of stopping to fix problems, to get quality right the first time." Quality takes precedence ([Jidoka](#)). Any employee can stop the process to signal a quality issue.
6. "Standardized tasks and processes are the foundation for continuous improvement and employee empowerment."
7. "Use visual control so no problems are hidden." This principle includes the [5S](#) Program, steps that are used to make all workspaces efficient and productive, help people share workstations, reduce time looking for needed tools, and improve the work environment.
8. "Use only reliable, thoroughly tested technology that serves your people and processes."
9. "Grow leaders who thoroughly understand the work, live the philosophy, and teach it to others." This principle argues that training and ingrained perspective are necessary for maintaining the organization.
10. "Develop exceptional people and teams who follow your company's philosophy."
11. "Respect your extended network of partners and suppliers by challenging them and helping them improve."

The automaker intends to apply the same principles to suppliers that its employees use.

12. "Go and see for yourself to thoroughly understand the situation ([Genchi Genbutsu](#)).\" Toyota managers are expected to experience operations firsthand to see how they can be improved.
13. \"Make decisions slowly by consensus, thoroughly considering all options; implement decisions rapidly ([nemawashi](#)).\"
14. \"Become a learning organization through relentless reflection ([hansei](#)) and continuous improvement ([kaizen](#)).\" The general problem-solving technique to determine the root cause of a problem includes initial problem perception, clarification of the trouble, locating the cause, [root cause analysis](#), applying countermeasures, reevaluating, and standardizing.

Appendix on Permaculture Principles including slow and small solution critique.

Appendix 1?: on Peter Koenig's source principles?:

<https://medium.com/workmatters/the-source-principle-provenance-collaboration-and-succession-146fbb0615cc>

"Source Principles" by Peter Koenig refer to a set of ideas that identify a "Source" within any project or organization - the individual who originally conceived the vision and has the deepest connection to its realization, allowing them to guide the direction and evolution of the initiative while collaborating with others to bring it to life; essentially highlighting the importance of acknowledging the origin of an idea and the key role the "Source" plays in its successful development.

Key aspects of the Source Principles:

Originality:

Every project has a single "Source" who initiated the vision and holds the most profound understanding of its potential.

Others could hold more profound visions (other potential global sources) or more profound understandings of the potential of aspects of the vision (potential sub-sources). The source can also involve others in the development and articulation of the vision and even hold a vision that involves a process around forming a collaboratively generated vision. But is it possible that a group or a different individual could hold a more powerful understanding of the vision that is wanting to be manifest in the collective than the original source and then also succeed in realizing that vision with everyone? Can we find evidence of this happening in other communities and

organizations in a productive way? Is there a middle way that recognizes the sources special history, role, and responsibilities while allowing for more equal power sharing around vision guidance and development?

Collaboration:

While the "Source" leads, they need to effectively collaborate with others who align with their vision to execute the project.

Succession Planning:

Recognizing the "Source" is crucial for smooth transitions and succession when the original leader moves on.

Why are the Source Principles important?

Clarity and Alignment:

By identifying the "Source," teams can better understand the core vision and ensure everyone is working towards the same goal. But could clarity also be achieved by better communication about the core vision and proper delegation of authority around who gets to clarify what aspects of it and how?

Conflict Resolution:

Recognizing the "Source" can help mitigate power struggles and conflicts within an organization. But are there other ways of addressing power and responsibilities more directly and with more discernment around the individual's strengths and weaknesses?

Empowerment:

It allows the "Source" to utilize their unique insight and intuition to guide the project effectively. What if we have evidence that there are better ways to guide the project though then following their insights and intuitions?

1. Provenance

The Source Principle states that all initiatives — be it a project or organization — can be traced back to a single source; a person who originated the idea and took the first risk to see it realized. And this is true even if there are multiple co-founders! There's always just one source; one person whose relationship with the originating idea enables him or her to visualize what's possible and intuit the next step.

2. Collaboration

The bigger the initiative, the more likely it is that the Source needs help realizing the vision. Collaborators become agents of the Source, helping him or her carry out and execute their vision. And in such situations, it's important that the collaborators' own vision aligns with that of the Source. Because without this alignment, there is little hope the endeavor

will garner much momentum.

3. Succession

Alignment is important. And surprisingly, so is the acknowledgment of who the Source is and the role that he or she plays. In fact, Koenig suggests that lack of acknowledgment is a common source of tension within organizations. This is especially evident in the case of succession when the proverbial baton is handed from one person to the next. There can be absolutely no doubt as to who the Source is at any point in time.

Source Principles

In summary, there are two Source Principles:

Equivalence: Every person has the potential to become a Source and therefore to discover the full creative potential within themselves and express it in different forms. This means that we can support each other to step into the role of Source, and learn more about how to unfold our Source and creativity potential. This also means that not everybody has the capacity to step into the role of Source at a certain place and time, but maybe later.

Primacy: We need to recognise the special role and unique place of the Source in a group due to their special responsibilities and capabilities. However, the Source still relies on the people around them and on all specific Sources and members in the initiative, as they might be walking in an unhealthy direction or they may need help formulating and clarifying next steps.

To avoid any misunderstandings, the Source Principles are not an invitation for a cult-like style of leadership where the global Source has unlimited power. On the contrary: Source Principles are a part of moving from the paradigm of “power over” to “power with”, where power is shared among the members of an initiative. Just like any human being in the initiative, the Source can make mistakes and should be questioned regularly. Sharing power relies on a culture which welcomes different opinions and celebrates a diversity of voices and experiences. If the Source principles are misinterpreted they can be used in harmful ways.

According to Peter Koenig, the "Source" in an initiative or project holds the special responsibility of being the originator of the idea, taking the initial risk, and having a deep intuitive understanding of the vision, which allows them to guide the direction of the project while ensuring its core intention remains intact, even when others contribute ideas or suggestions; essentially acting as the steward of the original vision and feeling a strong connection to its potential evolution.

Key points about the Source's responsibilities:

Visionary leadership:

The Source is responsible for maintaining clarity around the core vision and purpose of the project, even when faced with different perspectives.

Intuitive decision-making:

They often have a strong sense of what the next steps should be, even if they can't fully articulate it verbally.

Taking responsibility:

The Source feels a deep responsibility for the success or failure of the initiative, as they are the one who initiated it.

Collaboration with others:

While the Source has a unique role, they should still foster collaboration and empower others to contribute their expertise.

Identifying potential derailments:

The Source can sense when the project is moving away from its original intention and needs to be course-corrected.

Now as far as why it is important that external messaging acknowledges the distinction of this role... I think it provides clarity around our initial dynamics and if the evidence does support all of this as I think it does to some extent, then it is also a guiding principle we will want to incorporate in many ways at all levels and into the values. As for the types of organizations and initiatives this has been investigated in, he makes it clear that he has investigated this source concept in a wide array of diverse situations including families, businesses, communities,... and it seems to have applied equally to all in some surprising ways. And from my research into communities whose express purpose is the co-creation of a shared life embodying shared values, there is almost always an obvious single source there holding the vision at least for awhile and taking the big initial risks to initiate the project. He also seems to find that alot of the conflict and confusion in organizations gets cleared up when the source is more correctly identified and acknowledged and when people move towards looking for and challenging each other on the basis of "clarity" around the next correct decision to be made.

<https://www.unityeffect.net/resources/building-thriving-organisations-by-working-with-source>

Mindset

(inner / individual)

Acknowledge yourself and others as a Source.

Nourish your own creativity.

Schedule sourcing time (going for a walk, spending a day in nature, gardening, sports, ...) and consider this as working hours.

Practise active listening skills towards yourself and others.

Behaviour

(outer / individual)

Role model: Take action and invite others to do so as well.

Provide insight and clarity about the boundaries of the initiative.

Share about being a Source and the challenges of not-knowing and doubt.

Invite others to contribute inside the boundaries of the initiative.

Culture

(inner / collective)

Nourish the creative field of the initiative:

Host spaces for others to share and contribute their perspective.

Weave a collective and shared story about the origins of an initiative. Who contributed when? Whose shoulders are we standing on?

Connect yourself and the initiative with other initiatives that share the same values, soil, ambition, to get an overview of the wider field that you're contributing to.

Structure & Processes

(outer / collective)

Clarify the interplay between the Sources (e.g. via an organisational map):

Name the role of Source (with whatever name you prefer: steward/keeper/host ...) and make it an official role to avoid informal hierarchies; share the knowledge and acknowledgement with everyone.

Host sourcing check-ins: Are we fully able to contribute and share what we think matters? What is our relationship with respect to being/becoming Sources and the interplay of Sources?

Invite others to step into the role of Source by empowering them to take over an existing part of the initiative or to start something new.

Design rituals for the crucial moments of succession and Source handover. Also be aware of the details when somebody is going on a temporary leave (paternal leave, sabbatical) to decide jointly how to deal with the role of Source.

Some hands-on examples from us here at Unity Effect:

Our Sources schedule sourcing time in the calendar, which can be personal time to reflect on ongoing projects, or conversation time that can happen during a walk, by phone, or anything else – just not a regular meeting!

Working with reflective questions, such as “Which areas of our work or which topics are you passionate about?” or “What do you need to fully commit to this project and to contribute as a Source?”

We're using Tom Nixon's work to map our own organisation. This helps all of us to understand the cascade and interplay of Sources. Over the past months, this has helped us a lot to understand emerging tensions and potential conflicts, as well as making sure that the person responsible for a project has all the support they need from all other relevant Sources. You can use the open Source tool Maptio to do this for your own organisation (with more resources here for mapping the creative field).

<https://tomnixon.medium.com/spiral-dynamics-from-peter-koenig-s-source-perspective-70b617dc7cbd>

Green

Green attempts to address Orange's shortcomings with a pluralistic perspective. Collectivist needs for equality and community take centre stage. Green seeks work/life balance and intrinsic motivation, finding fulfilment in the work itself, not just the rewards. Billionaires who made their fortunes in Orange gain deeper meaning in their lives by giving away their fortunes to philanthropic causes in their retirement years.

Initiatives are sourced not just to meet selfish needs, but to improve life for all stakeholders: The source, their sub-sources, the wider community, customers, suppliers and the physical environment. Innovative strategies are created to align the interests of all stakeholders. Charities and NGOs are established to meet the needs of those less fortunate.

The power over people inherent in Red, Blue and Orange is replaced by decentralisation and empowerment.

Working with Source can feel uncomfortable for people in Green. Leaders do not want to be the top-down dictators of the past. They know it doesn't get the most out of sub-sources and they know that 'no one of us is smarter than all of us'. Power over people is not as effective as a community of peers, working together for the common good.

In Green, individuals let go of individual authority and responsibility in favour of collective authority and responsibility. Everyone's voice is valued and through consensus or consent-based decision making, many more voices input into decisions, both creative and functional.

Green's dislike of individual power over other people can also suppress an individual's ability to bring their own personal vision to life. Unlike Orange, strategy is created through group processes, involving collective visioning and design. A leader may be elected or appointed by the group, but their power is limited. Much time is spent working through 'tensions' rather than work being in a state of flow.

However, whilst groups can add insight, ideas and support to an idea, the source's individual vision is ultimately diluted or compromised to accommodate the needs of more people. To Green, a reasonably content group is more important than a happy source. Visionary founders having given up their creative authority to the group can lose their passion for their organisation and eventually leave to realise their individual vision elsewhere. The source can suffer since some of their energy is still tied up in the organisation even though they've physically left, and those left behind can find the initiative drifts with far less passion than the early days.

Like Orange and Blue before it, Green can be constrained by organisational thinking. The organisation is treated like an entity in itself with clear boundaries around it. People are in or out. This creates a sense of scarcity. If people can't input into the organisation's vision then they can't feel completely valued or fulfilled. To Green, this feels oppressive, reminiscent of Orange's top-down strategy process and there is a wariness towards leaders who attempt to 'own' a vision and say what's in and what's out.

Yellow

The transition from Green to Yellow marks a far larger leap than the steps before it. As individuals and organisations move to Yellow, they have access to all levels of the spiral that came before it. They have the opportunity to benefit from the positive sides of each level: The creativity, passion and adventure of Red; The sense of purpose, values and order (where order is useful) of Blue; The innovation, autonomy and self-betterment of Orange; and the community connection, equality, environmental sustainability and deeper fulfilment of Green. Yellow takes a systemic view of organisations and values adaptability and integration.

By accessing the full spiral, the individual and the collective can both be fully valued. The full range of human needs can be expressed through sourcing and joining other's initiatives.

Yellow is the first level on the spiral where Source can be highly effectively manifested. Yellow can separate out creative and functional authority. Individuals can take full authority and responsibility for realising their vision without suppressing themselves to the whims of the group. However this can be done without needing to exert power over people like in Blue and Orange.

A good example of this is at W.L. Gore Associates where all employees can start new initiatives without permission. Others are recruited in not through force (Red), duty (Blue), the promise of rewards (Orange) or equality (Green), but voluntarily. If working on a source's initiative meets a need for a sub-source and helps them realise their own personal vision, they will choose to follow.

In Yellow, the collective visioning of Green is no longer necessary to create highly effective organisations. Instead, a source, starting with the very first founder, can 'recruit' individuals (where there is a good matching of needs) and put together groups to help them better articulate their vision and extend it in ways they may not have thought of themselves. The source can still have the final say over what's in and what's out. Unlike in Green, this does not need to create a sense of scarcity or fear of a dictatorship, since anyone at any time can join other initiatives or start their own. There is an abundance of opportunity for everyone to realise their own personal vision, and this can happen partly inside and partly outside an organisation as necessary.

Turquoise (and beyond)

Organisational thinking can be transcended in Turquoise. Turquoise no longer sees stakeholders like Green does — as separate groups which need to be 'aligned'. There is no absolute wall around an organisation. To Turquoise, all people and other life-forms exist in an infinitely complex and awe-inspiring web of interdependent connections.

Turquoise takes a holistic, global perspective. There is less separation of individual and collective needs, since we're all connected like neurons in a brain. Compassion — relief from suffering — is the driving force. Some ancient wisdom cultures describe this as a journey towards enlightenment, where all suffering disappears. Individuals, driven by compassion source initiatives, and others join them to help, whilst also starting their own initiatives.

Today, Turquoise may still use organisational constructs like a 'company' from lower levels on the spiral since the socio-economic systems in the world today are dominated by Blue, Orange and Green mindsets. However this is purely for convenience and the work extends far beyond the walls of the organisation.

As humanity as a whole moves towards a Turquoise mindset, we may eventually completely rethink our most basic assumptions about law, money and organisations, finding new ways to work with compassion towards all beings. We can be sure that humans will continue to source initiatives as this unfolds, just as they have done since the earliest days of human consciousness.

<https://workwithsource.com/>

Critiques of Peter Koenig's Source Principles in Regards to Sociocratic Organizations

1. **Compatibility with Sociocratic Values** One critique of Peter Koenig's source principles is their perceived incompatibility with the core values of sociocracy, which emphasizes equality, consent-based decision-making, and collaborative governance. Critics argue that the concept of a "source" may inadvertently reinforce hierarchical structures, as it implies a singular origin or leader from whom initiatives stem. In sociocratic organizations, power and authority are distributed among all members, which contrasts with the notion of a centralized source that can dictate terms or control outcomes.

2. **Focus on Individualism Over Collective Action** Another critique centers around the individualistic nature of Koenig's source principles. While these principles highlight personal initiative and passion as drivers for action, sociocracy prioritizes collective decision-making and shared responsibility. Critics suggest that an overemphasis on individual sources may undermine the collaborative spirit essential to sociocratic practices, where the input and consent of all members are crucial for effective functioning.

3. **Risk of Shadow Sides Manifesting** Koenig acknowledges that every principle has its shadow side; however, critics argue that his framework does not adequately address how these shadow aspects can manifest within sociocratic organizations. For instance, if individuals take initiative based solely on personal motivations without considering the collective well-being, it could lead to conflicts or divisions within the group. Sociocracy aims to mitigate such risks through structured processes that ensure all voices are heard and considered.

4. **Lack of Emphasis on Feedback Loops** Sociocratic organizations thrive on feedback loops to adapt and evolve based on collective experiences and insights. Some critiques point out that Koenig's source principles may not sufficiently emphasize the importance of continuous feedback mechanisms in sustaining initiatives over time. In sociocracy, regular evaluations and adjustments are vital for maintaining alignment with shared goals; thus, any framework that overlooks this aspect might struggle to integrate effectively into a sociocratic context.

5. **Potential for Misinterpretation** Lastly, there is concern regarding how Koenig's concepts might be misinterpreted or misapplied within sociocratic settings. If individuals interpret "source" too rigidly or hierarchically, it could lead to power dynamics contrary to sociocratic ideals. This potential for misinterpretation raises questions about how well-defined and adaptable Koenig's principles are when applied in diverse organizational contexts.

In summary, while Peter Koenig's source principles offer valuable insights into individual initiative and leadership dynamics, they face critiques regarding their compatibility with the egalitarian and collaborative ethos central to sociocratic organizations.

<https://www.aihr.com/blog/team-effectiveness-models/> some models for team effectiveness that could have bearing on how much decision making power to allocate a source.

Peter Koenig's [Source Principles](#) operate primarily as **qualitative, phenomenological, and experiential**

frameworks rather than traditional, double-blind empirical science. The evidence supporting them derives from 30+ years of qualitative field observation, entrepreneurial psychology, and practitioner outcomes. [1, 2]

The "evidence" base for these principles is established through the following qualitative and behavioral frameworks:

1. Phenomenological & Qualitative Research

The foundational tenets—such as the idea that every enterprise originates from a single "Source" person who holds foundational responsibility—were developed observationally. Koenig and practitioners of his method (like Tom Nixon and Charles Davies) base their principles on repeated [case studies and observations](#) gathered during dozens of workshops with founders. [1, 2, 3, 4]

2. Practitioner & Case Study Validation

The principles are supported by organizational consultants, founders, and business leaders who apply the framework in practice. Their evidence stems from the self-reported resolution of organizational friction and the attainment of higher team alignment after explicitly identifying the original "Source" and clarifying [succession and collaboration](#) pathways. [1, 2, 3, 4]

3. Alignment with Related Socio-Psychological Models

While Koenig's methodology (often called "sourcework") relies primarily on his [proprietary research](#) rather than peer-reviewed academic journals, it closely mirrors established psychological and sociological concepts, such as: [1]

- **The Concept of Emergence:** The idea that a single individual's initiation sparks an energetic "field" of activity aligns with how emergent properties are studied in complex systems theory. [1, 2]
- **Psychological Ownership:** The Source Principle's emphasis on recognizing the founder's intrinsic connection to their initiative parallels research in [organizational psychology](#) regarding the behavioral and cognitive effects of psychological ownership. [1, 2, 3]

4. "Money Work" and Behavioral Insights

The psychological dimension of Koenig's work—particularly his seminars on how [money acts as a mirror](#) for our deeper belief systems and shadows—is validated through self-inquiry and qualitative shifts in participants' behaviors. It is evidenced by personal growth and improved professional confidence documented in coaching and [identity work](#). [1, 2, 3]

While Peter Koenig's Source Principle offers a powerful lens for understanding organizational clarity, it faces significant pushback from modern management theorists and practitioners. Critics argue that the framework introduces severe risks to organizational health, equity, and scalability.

Here is an expanded critical analysis of the main critiques against the Source Principle:

Risk of Authoritarianism and Centralization:

- **Single point of failure:** Concentrating ultimate creative authority in one "Source" can easily degenerate into a top-down, authoritarian regime.
- **Disempowerment of teams:** If only the Source can truly access the "next step" of the vision, collective intelligence and autonomy are systematically undermined.
- **Bottlenecks:** Organizations can stall if the Source lacks administrative skill but refuses to yield final decision-making power over the vision.
- **Deification of the founder:** The principle risks creating a cult of personality around the creator, validating the idea that their intuition is inherently superior.
- **Lack of accountability:** Founders can use "vibrational alignment" or "intuitive downloads" as a shield to dismiss valid, data-driven critiques from their team.
- **Confirmation bias:** It encourages the Source to trust their gut over market realities, potentially leading to catastrophic strategic errors.
- **Clash with DAOs and Teal:** The principle directly contradicts flat, decentralized structures (like Holacracy or Teal organizations) that distribute authority across self-organizing circles.
- **Artificial hierarchy:** Critics argue that creating a metaphysical hierarchy ("who came first") undermines the psychological safety and peer-to-peer equity needed for true collaboration.
- **Suppression of co-creation:** It implies that others are merely "helping" the Source realize *their* vision, rather than genuinely co-authoring the initiative.

Severe Succession and Offboarding Hazards

- **The "Founder's Trap":** Passing the "Source role" to a successor is notoriously difficult in this framework. If the transfer is incomplete, the organization loses its strategic compass.
- **Identity entanglement:** Because the initiative is deeply tied to the Source's personal energy, founders often experience identity crises when trying to exit, sabotaging their own succession.
- **Value destruction:** If a Source leaves abruptly or dies without a clear, conscious transfer of the "source energy," the framework implies the organization may lose its structural integrity.

Lack of Empirical and Scientific Grounding

- **Mystical terminology:** Terms like "field," "source energy," and "transmission" rely heavily on esoteric and spiritual language rather than verifiable sociological or psychological data.
- **Survival bias:** Success stories attributed to the Source Principle often ignore the thousands of intuitive, founder-led startups that fail due to a lack of shared governance and structure.