

Community Building in Britain Newsletter

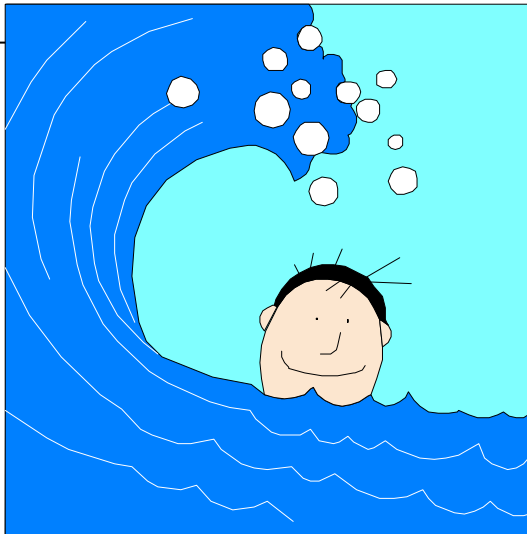
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July 1998

The newsletter is issued by a growing network of people in Britain who are committed to developing community building beyond that originally described in Dr. M. Scott Peck's book, 'The Different Drum', and as further developed by the Foundation for Community Encouragement in the USA (FCE).

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From the Editor

There is likely to be just one more newsletter before the Confluence, which promises to be an interesting and 'different' event. Several of the contributions to this edition of the newsletter could be used as starting points for dialogues in the Confluence.

Focused sessions

I am not sure what sessions have so far been established, or who has volunteered to do what. I hope there will be more news about these in the next edition. I know I am looking forward to joining in the ones about sponsoring an event, and about ongoing groups.

I have heard that there is room for more people to come forward with ideas and thoughts, and even to volunteer. I am not sure what is involved - but call Gerri Moriarty on 012657 69139 and she can let you know more.

If there is an interest I would be happy to be involved in a session on the newsletter, and I am looking forward to meeting those of you who are at the moment just names to me.

Letters

I am delighted with the number of letters in this edition. Tessa Lowe's article in particular seems to have triggered off a number of reactions. If you want to respond to anything you read here I would be very glad to receive a letter, email or telephone call from you.

I am happy to publish most things people send me that has some relationship with community or community building, or relates to people involved with community building. I try not to censor what people contribute, and certainly am willing to put in things I disagree with.

Note

Cliff Jordan has left his previous address and will be travelling for a while. There will be a note in the newsletter again when he returns.

Network, not organisation

CBiB, of course, is a network of people and not an organisation. I therefore assume there is no 'official' CBiB stance on anything, and I do not need to worry whether an article fits in with it or not. What I write personally certainly does not represent anything official from CBiB and I usually try to write in the first person, and own what I say as just being my views.

However I am aware that sometimes I, and others, can have a tendency to use a sort of insider's jargon. One of the letter-writers this edition mentions this, and I think it is quite a challenge. Any ideas?

Welcome and thanks

A special welcome to new readers of the newsletter, who have responded to the offer in the recent mailing. I hope you find something of interest to you in each edition, and if you feel moved to contribute something - whether a letter, an article, a reflection, a poem, or a drawing - I would be especially pleased.

Having caught something of the vision for what community can mean to me, and how it can be encouraged, I gain a lot through the things that people share with me, both directly and indirectly.

Some of you have written in particularly to express your appreciation for what people do for the newsletter and other aspects of the life of CBiB. Thanks for all your encouragement and sharing. There are lots of people who do things, and I am particularly thankful to both the sponsors and the facilitators of events, who take big risks in different ways.

The work of the CBiB network does depend on what individuals do, and there is no funding or organisation. If you feel moved to help in some way, why not give a call to one of the numbers on the back page or write to me.

Peter Cooper (details on back page)

Community Building in Britain Events

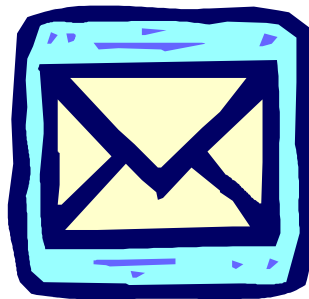
<u>Date</u>	<u>Place</u>	<u>Contact</u>	<u>Fee</u>	<u>Notes</u>
17-20 Sept	Unstone Grange near Sheffield	Teân Stuttaford 0121 420 4390	£90 (see discounts)	Confluence (see later page)
5-8 Nov	Othona, Dorset	01308 897130	£150 (residential)	CBW
1999 15-17 Jan	Grt Massingham Norfolk	Sue Hirst 01328 862940	TBA	CBW
27-28 Mar	Edinburgh	Ian Davidson 0131 445 3381	TBA	CBE

Note: - **CBE** stands for “Community Building Experience”, which provides an opportunity to build community in a large group over two days. In a “Community Building Workshop”, or **CBW**, a third day is added so that not only can participants experience the building of community but they can also learn about the process through discussion and reflection.

There are two other sets of initials you might hear about (although neither types of event has been arranged in the UK for a while). **CBSS** stands for Community Building Skills Seminar, which deepens understanding of community principles and behaviour; it focuses on the skills of facilitation and leadership and teaches how to evaluate and monitor the processes of community building in ongoing groups. **LEP** stands for the Leadership Education Programme.

We recently mailed out leaflets for the Autumn 1998 events, to people who do not receive the newsletter. You should find some leaflets have been sent to you with this newsletter (although it delays things a little, it does save some postage). I have put one more in than you usually receive, in case you can use it. If you think you can use this many or more leaflets in future please let me know.

Thanks to those who helped.
Peter



I also hear there is a CBW in Hamburg Germany on 9-11 October 1998. This is independent of CBiB, so for details call Regina Haß on 0049 (0)40 86 23 62

Ongoing Groups Page

A new group has formed in Oxfordshire, in addition to the existing one on the back cover. It developed out of the recent event at The Abbey in Sutton Courtenay.

I have also heard a little bit about the South London Group recently, but rather than reporting on my hearsay, I am hoping the group will at some point feel moved to put something into the newsletter about themselves.

Encouraging news

From Sheffield Alison tells me that the group there has grown in size, and energy. This was following a mailing from our database they did to people in the area. I hope to hear more later, and share it with the newsletter.

Starting a group

If you have energy and feel moved to consider starting a group in your area, why not contact one of the existing groups to find out what it involves. I do have a booklet from Jerry Hampton in the USA which some have found useful when considering starting a group, but there is nothing like finding out from people who are doing it here and now.

When you have decided to try the water, and would like to contact people in your area, I would be happy to provide administrative help. All I ask is that you treat the names and addresses with care.

The Confluence

The gathering for everyone interested in Community Building this year is called the Confluence - you will have seen adverts for it in the newsletter and should receive a leaflet with this edition. It has a different name and will be a different format from previous years.

There are still openings for focused sessions, and I am really hoping there will be one around ongoing groups. If you would be interested in being part of such a session, or indeed in pulling one together, please call Gerri Moriarty on 012657 69139. I would personally be very interested in coming along, as even though I do not belong to a local

group, I do belong to the holding group and experience some of the same issues.

Personally I would like to hear things like:

- what people's practical problems are
- how we might use the newsletter to help on-going groups
- what the difference between building community in a CBE/CBW and an ongoing group feels like
- is there a minimum size for a viable group
- does an ongoing group need a 'task' to be viable in the long-term, or is just 'building community' enough of a task

Other questions

Then there are the questions like:

- do we need different techniques to build community in a small ongoing group?
- if so, is it because it is small, or because it is ongoing?
- what difference does having a facilitator in a small group make - is it useful and/or essential, or is it a hindrance?
- are the skills taught to, and learned by, facilitators of CBE/CBWs relevant to small ongoing groups?
- can most members of a group learn to facilitate - does it help to encourage it?

Your questions and thoughts

What would you like to ask in a session focused on ongoing groups? Are there any points you would like to make? Would you like to hear from people already involved in a group? What can we learn from groups that have happened for a while but ceased?

The next edition is the last before the Confluence, so you could share thoughts and questions with others beforehand through the newsletter - or just book to come along and share as you are moved at the time. Of course we can also share about these things through the newsletter.

Peter Cooper

On Sponsoring the Brighton CBE 1998

Around January 1997 I invited around 50 people in the Brighton area to form an ongoing group whose task was to set up a CBE in Brighton.

The first group

After some coming and going a group of 4 finally assembled and proceeded to experience mostly chaos for six months! 6 months was a deadline for us, so we disbanded (although 1 member had only attended sporadically anyway).

Well - up from the ashes grow the roses of success ("Chitty Chitty Bang Bang"), and two of us decided to give it another bash.

Go ahead

We had gentle and unpressured meetings throughout October and November 1997 and after more research and gentle probing of where we both felt (a) supported, (b) needy and (c) terrified, we (Louise Cuming and myself) decided to "Go Ahead" at the end of November 1997.

Money

The big issue for us both in many ways was money. Neither of us had spare money that we wanted to throw away needlessly, and although we were willing to take risks, we both wanted to be sure that any risk we did take with putting money up was taken with a "glad heart".

It's hard to explain this but for me it's about really wanting to do it but not blindly or stupidly or under pressure from the tales that are told of what others have wanted to do (eg putting entire visa card credit limits up for sponsoring).

We talked a lot about what we both felt happy to lose. We then also asked CBiB whether they would underwrite any losses if the event failed to happen and what we heard from them was "probably". This

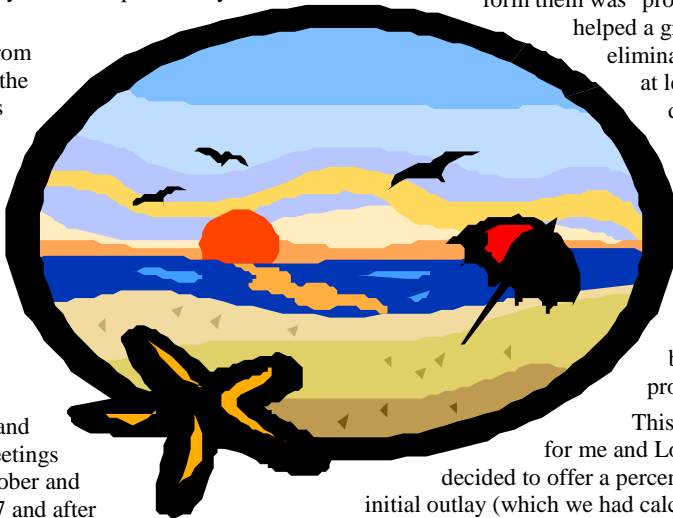
helped a great deal - not eliminating risk, but at least helping to diminish the sense of it. It was CBiB saying "Look, if you fall, we'll do what we can to catch you, but no promises".

This was enough for me and Louise too. I decided to offer a percentage of the initial outlay (which we had calculated through a careful budget) and Louise put up a different percentage. This is what we both wanted to do - had energy for, and from then on it was as if all lights turned green for Go!

Green lights

From 1st December 1997 onwards was like 4 months of incredible synchronicity and good fortune, and as we moved forward, doors opened, lights changed (sometimes only just as we reached them) and basically, it all went like clockwork.

Somehow the timing was just right and we had 2/3rd filled the event within 3 weeks of our publicity starting on 5th January.



What helped?

Here are some of the factors that I believe helped to make this happen:

- A year of hard work led us to realise what we didn't want from a task group.
- We spent 2 months carefully, and without obligation talking about what we could and wanted to give in terms of money, time and energy. The fact that these amounts of money time and energy were different for each of us was a place of gentle friction that we seemed to do our own community building around. In fact the majority of time together was usefully spent listening to each other and being open about our fears, cross feelings, frustrations, guilt, happiness and optimism.
- We were very clear with each other about how much time we wanted to clear and booked a lot of time together well in advance.
- We accepted (more so as time went on) our differing roles. I really enjoyed mine. (I think Louise enjoyed hers?)
- Brilliant support from other people - particularly: local libraries, shops, cafes, bookshops, community centres, local publications, friends, and a great deal of support from Suzy Adderley, Anthony Kirke, Peter Cooper, Ruth Goffe, John Hoggett, Tracy Barr, Cliff Jordan, Sharon Usher, Alex Sharratt.

Thanks

Thank you to all the above.

Thanks to the facilitators, who were brilliant (Tracy, Anthony and Rusty).

Thanks to St Benedict's, they were amazing.

If you want more information about organising an event from me - particularly some of the finer detail (like how many thousands of leaflets you need to put out there) then please feel free to contact me (*) - although I'm spending June, July and August in the USA! Lovely.

And finally

It was a lot of hard work - loads of phone calls, visits, liaison, footwork, planning, writing, negotiating and other fiddly bits and bobs.

The only way I could do it was to clear a lot of time and space in my life - but I really just loved it! It was a mission for me and really - I needed to do it - and for me that's the key.

Jonathan Melville-Brown

(Editor's note: I have spoken to Jonathan and written up the things he told me about numbers of leaflets etc. It will be going into the new 'sponsors pack' that I hope to have ready, at least in draft form, for the Confluence.)*

Congratulations

Many congratulations to Júlia from Slovakia, whom some of you have met. I received a lovely card through the post recently with the following news.

"I am pleased to inform you that I have just finished my studies in Psychology as a Magister (Master of Science) and the graduation ceremony will be held on 7th July 1998 in Bratislava.

Júlia Sadovská, Sliezská 7, 831 03 Bratislava, Slovakia"

CBiB Confluence

17th to 20th September 1998

Come and meet other people interested in community building and explore different aspects and perspectives of the experience.

As well as spending time in diverse special interest groups and workshops, we will be facilitated in meeting in a circle as a whole group at least once a day.

We especially wish to support and encourage public event organisers, and this will be one of several focused sessions.

There are still workshop spaces available.

Please call Gerri Moriarty on 012657 69139 if you would like to offer to put together something around an interest or issue related to community building.



The location is a country house near Sheffield, with indoor and camping accommodation. We will be offering vegetarian cuisine, and children are very welcome.

Costs (for Thursday evening to Sunday lunch) are:

- Adults in the house£90
- Adults camping or non-residential£55
- Children under 16 sleeping on the floor, camping or non-residential ..£15

Book early to avoid disappointment

(there are only limited spaces available in the house, and a booking form is enclosed)

10% discount for fees received before 31st July

For further details please contact Teän Stuttaford at:

Flat 2, 136 Poplar Avenue, Edgebaston, Birmingham, B17 8EH (tel 0121 420 4390).

Learning Opportunities

The LOG (Learning Opportunities Group), being only 5 people, was able to look at habitual emotional attitudes - including:

- seeing the opposite sex as 'saviours'
- never being seen, or heard
- feeling cut off when feelings are only talked about (needing to see demonstrations)
- being pulled between 2 formal opposites (control/ spontaneity)
- selling out on authenticity for inclusion

Active Learning

Barry's Active Learning exercise gave us more idea where each other was coming from. There was a feeling that Community could be experienced in any of the 4 stages, though some form of resolution of inner or group conflict was necessary for stage 4.

The Confluence

It was agreed that our contributions to the Confluence could be a replay of the various

exchanges and difficulties that had arisen at our meetings; also a demonstration of the Active Learning.

I suggested that what I had designated 'special needs' were experienced as 'unmet needs' by everyone. (The concept was in the book of the TV programme 'Sword of the Spirit'.)

*Yvonne Poulson
Flat 2 Linden Court
6 Linden Grove
Nunhead
London SE15 3LF*

*(Editor's note: Yvonne has also shared with me something of her concern that we recover more of a balance, as emphasised in *The Road Less Travelled*. Perhaps we could hear more about balance from anyone concerned that we may have lost something in recent years during the growth and development of community building in the UK.)*



A Christian Community in Croydon

Would you be interested in joining us to form an ecumenical Christian community in Croydon? The aims of the community will be to support one another in our lives and to serve the local community. We would like to buy a large house where 6 or more people, both married and single, can live together, praying together and taking some meals together. We are a married couple with one young child and are members of our local Baptist Church. If you are interested, please ring David Hawthorn on 0181 680 1146 (evenings/weekends).



Dear Peter

As I'm not very active in CBiB at the present, the newsletter is crucial to my sense of still being involved with an organisation that is important to me. It keeps me in touch and I do feel part of it. The reports from the Holding Group and Facilitator's Training Group are crucial to this.

Keep writing

So to Cliff, please DON'T STOP using the newsletter to report your goings on. They don't read that dry to me, particularly written as they often are in a personalised way. (I can almost hear Cliff's thoughts whirring as I read.)

So Peter, you are doing a great and worthwhile job and I appreciate your efforts and those of everyone who work to keep the organisation going and developing.

All the best

*Andy Wood
16 Spencer Street
New Bradwell
Milton Keynes
MK13 0DW*

'Downsize This'

Hey Dudes,

I found this brilliant book that says more about community than anything I've read in years. It's called 'Downsize This,' by Michael Moore, ISBN 0-7522-2269-4, and I think both Tessa Lowe, who ponders on the mutual exclusivity of 'community' and business, and David Saunders, who writes (well he strings words together - though what they mean I couldn't say, and I'm not sure I want an explanation either) on something (?) to do with business and ethics.

I joined a union

Michael Moore made a film called 'Roger and Me,' about the closing of the General Motors factories in Flint, Michigan and the effect on the town (just think Wales and Pit Closures, or the North of England and Steel mills). He also made TV Nation (unfortunately I don't have a TV but I think it was a minor cult for a while).

For anyone who likes the words 'Politicle' or 'Spiritual' Michael Moore must be the Laurel and Hardy of the nineties. After reading this book I joined a union and so did my colleague, and he hates them! Michael Moore is well informed, opinionated and extremely funny.

Buy or borrow

Borrow this book from the library or buy a copy for your teenage children for their leaving home present or get your ex-lover to buy you a copy as a 'lets-make-it-up-but-not-back-together' present: then read it, and if you don't feel at least a little enlightened them, honey, you probably don't belong on the same planet as me.

He's one of those guys who leaves me thinking, 'God, what a genius - yet he's just like the guy next door!'

Well that's enough from me for a while, I'm of to cause havoc at work, give my landlord hell and get my protest group to shake a few sticks at the local 'developers'.

Chow Babes - see ya.

*From John Hoggett
Flat 3
1 Eldon Road
Reading
Berks RG1 4DJ*

Building Community at work

Dear Peter

I am very impressed with the look and content of the community building newsletter and I guess it has been to do with, among other facts, the consistency of your work on it.

I was especially impressed by Tessa Lowe's contribution as I have experienced two years of CB at work and share a lot of her conclusions. We were a group of women and mainly dealt with interpersonal conflicts and so basically used work as a venue to meet.

Most men at work were not even interested

in the concept, probably because they felt good and happy with their positions and functions, and power at work. Whether they were truly happy and fulfilled is a totally different thing.

Safety in power

So I guess I have come to a similar assessment about community building and the functioning of capitalism. If ~~you are~~* I am in a position of power in our society ~~you~~* I will be challenged in my behaviour and the way I interact especially with subordinates - I will retreat into ways of relating that insure my safety!

Unless that is if I see more life and hope for myself in going through growth and change which is often painful and the outcome can't be predicted.

A list?

I am a bit perplexed as to what Tessa means when she talks about a community building list? Is there a published list of CB participants?

Co-housing

I've heard of a co-housing project and self-building schemes also for homeless people, and ecological projects based on co-housing.

I'd be interested to get some more information about it.

Jutta Ried
Camphill Community
Ballytobin
Callan
Eire

(*You can see my self-censoring here - trying to speak the 'correct language' as Tessa also pointed out - funny world!)



Editor's note: Here I have to come clean. Tessa wrote her article as a contribution to a sharing/ discussion on the internet, and because I found it so relevant I asked her permission to edit and reprint it in the newsletter. The 'list' referred to is a list of people who have signed up to be part of the discussion on the internet about community building. I know of no published list of CB participants. I should have done my editing better!

On the question of co-housing I too have heard about schemes, but do not know much. Do any of you have experience you would like to share with the rest of us?

From Australia

Hello, this is Alrisha.

It is two years since I came back here and, I feel, time to let you know what I am doing.

I am not involved in any community building organisation as I thought I would be. At first I was disturbed by my inability to commit to the groups out here. I was after all there at the foundation of the NSW one and it seemed the logical step after being so involved in CBiB. Eventually I was able to understand that it wasn't appropriate and I backed right off with only a conviction that I needed to find a way of working that was 'my own'.

The threads of my life

Now I am teaching Astrology in a kind of shamanic way in workshop situations. After the latest one I was given some feedback which made me realise the importance of everything I had done and experienced in my life up to now, most particularly the recent time I spent in England. As I was listening to this feedback it was as though all the threads of my life came together, meeting at the point where I stood and there was a clear path stretching out ahead of me into the distance, firm and strong.

To much of this I was able to say 'Yes, sitting in CB circles is where I learnt that.'

It is not the content that I am referring to but my way of being, my confidence, timing, ability to allow discomfort and participants to stumble their own way forward, are the kinds of things I mean.

So to all of you and especially those with whom I did sit in circles I say thank you.

*Alrisha Gillies
29 Hughes Avenue,
Lawson NSW 2783.
AUSTRALIA*

The task feels so huge

Dear Peter,

I have been an avid reader of Scott Peck's books for as long as they have been published, and attended a CB experience in Darlington - it must be about five years ago. It was a very deep, exciting, challenging experience and I wanted more of it.

Sadly there have been few events in my area and I have been unable to attend others for one reason or another. I have to confess that sometimes the task feels so huge and difficult (ie community building) I wonder if it is viable - but then we each can only take one step at a time. (Better to light one candle than curse the darkness!)

A recurring theme

'Community' seems to be a recurring theme in my life - it crops up in one form or another in

many areas of my life. I feel there is a desperate need for it in our world, in every field. My own deep desire at the moment is for community within the churches which I feel is a basic necessity but which I find virtually non-existent.

I recently attended a workshop on 'Living Life out of Call', led by three members of Wellspring, a mission (community) group of the Church of the Holy Saviour, Washington D.C. They are a unique way of 'church' called to living (and to encourage others to live) the Inward Journey, the Outward Journey, and to Community.

Pure Scott Peck

The sense of Community we reached in both the large and smaller group was incredible and wonderfully encouraging. I enclose an article I wrote for my church magazine (*not reproduced here - Ed*) which gives some idea of what the different communities within a larger community are achieving.

The article was written in a great hurry and doesn't do justice to Wellspring. I didn't stress the prominence community played in their lives (I hoped I would be asked questions - no such luck). It seemed to me pure Scott Peck. I was greatly excited, challenged and humbled by the weekend and am wondering how I can begin to introduce and develop the concept of community within my life.



Exclusive language

I have to say that I shared several of the feelings expressed by Tessa Lowe (April). I have felt that the newsletter was primarily intended for those 'in the know' and has a language (often exclusive and unintelligible) of its own. It doesn't seem relevant to those like Tessa and myself who have limited experience of CBiB yet greatly desire to bring community into our personal and public lives.

I find it difficult to articulate why I feel as I do. Sometimes I feel it is more caught up in the philosophy than in the actuality of Community (sorry, I need more time to think about it!) I do feel, however, that the newsletter has improved over the last few issues so in the hopes of(?) I am renewing my subscription.

Good luck

Yours sincerely



*Beryl Davies
Kylefield House
15 Grove Terrace
Burnopfield
Newcastle/Tyne
NE16 6NP*

(Editor's note: thank you Beryl for your comments and I do hope that there continue to be things in the newsletter to interest and challenge you. I rely on people to contribute in the way they feel led, and from where they are at the time.

What do others think?)

Can community survive?

Dear Peter,

Thanks for your encouragement to respond to items in the newsletter.

Like Tessa Lowe I want communities and friendships to last years not just a few days. It seems really sad that business and community

cannot coexist. The demands of ownership are powerful.

Unrealistic dream

I own my own small business and I recognise the 'hierarchy quickly reasserting itself', as I try to keep the organisation going and meeting the demands of the environment (paying bills, repaying loans, doing what Public Health Inspectors require etc).

I would like to establish Community

Building in my organisation (unrealistic dream?).

Making money is one of my goals. And the goal of all the other members of the organisation too. Nothing wrong with that. (See 'The Sufficient

Community' – exchanging goods and services in a LETS scheme – where 'making money' is put in terms of a community co-operating to live.)

Making money is wrong in the extreme, where greed and exploitation are allowed to exist. Bad for everyone. In fact I don't make much money. This has similar effects though. I concentrate on task – the success of the business, at the expense of the success of the community.

Difficult

If I could set up a C.B. in my organisation, I think I would be attracted to be in it – as community – as my first aim. The process of living with others would take the place of task predominance. But I guess it would not come easily. Task/process balance. Difficult. Also others would find themselves sharing my problems too.

As Scott Peck said 'The struggle is over and one is no longer alone. One has come home. There is also a feeling of increased energy and possibility. ... Above all, people share. They listen to and feel for one another

and, thereby, of something greater than themselves. Love is at everybody's shoulder.'

Risk

I have risked so much in setting up the organisation. I think I would risk more. As Andy Wood in the extract from Diggers and Dreamers questioned his hypothesis that living communities benefit from C.B. He asked us for successful models. Surely there must be somewhere.

I want to hang on to the hope that Community can not only survive in a capitalist business environment – but can flourish. I wonder how to get CB going in my organisation? Any ideas?

*Roger Green
Val Verde
Diamond Court
Water Street
Bakewell
Derbyshire DE45 1EW*

Special interests

Dear Peter,

Thank you for the mailings I receive. I am a great admirer of Scot Peck's work in the field of community building; he is a pioneer in this ever growing field of work. I have not yet been to any community building workshops to date.

The '1998 Confluence' special-interest workshops at Unstone Grange is on a weekend that is already booked. My special interest is in Community Theatre, business organisations, and voice improvisation. Would you please pass my name on to those who take this work further. I am a performing artist and have trained in movement and voice work and I also have a background in business.

Again thank you for the information I have been receiving and I look forward to receiving more newsletters, etc., in the future.

Yours sincerely,

*Jackie Stroka
Prospect High St
Nutley
Uckfield
Sussex TN22 3NH*

Organisation development

Dear Peter,

I have participated in the past years in a few large group gatherings the process of which is conducted partly at least along CB like principles. This led me to write the attached set of notes (not a formal paper and unfinished) to try to get my ideas straight.

Does it make sense to you? Would I find other people at the Confluence with similar interests in organisation development applied to businesses as well as non-profit as well as churches etc...?

Similar interests anyone?

I would certainly like to meet other people with similar interests. In the extract it should be clear however that my goal is to meet people, not academics; my paper may seem to give the wrong message. I talk about things I explore; I like to meet other explorers.

I suppose there will be ample opportunities to assemble in various workshops.

Another theme I would certainly like to handle with whoever cares, is community building in our parishes, beyond a mere assembly of church goers.

Sincerely yours,

*Jean Brasseur
3 Ave Ste Therese
1640 Rhode St Genese
Belgium*

(Editor's note: an edited version of Jean's notes follows. I hope it gives you the flavour of his thoughts.)

Community building and lasting communities

These are some notes from Jean Brasseur following his participation in a few large group gatherings the process of which is conducted partly at least along CB like principles.

He says it is a 'work-in-progress' to try to get his ideas straight.

"I talk about things I explore; I like to meet other explorers."

At an annual reunion of OD (Organisation Development) practitioners mainly from Holland and also from several European countries in Rolduc a discussion group was devoted to the theme of Community building and lasting communities.

Most of the participants were not familiar with "community building" as practised by FCE or CBiB, but they had signed in for this discussion because they were concerned with the fact that we, OD practitioners and trainers, can design and facilitate beautiful processes for our clients in which important transformations take place, but on the other hand the teams, networks, ... seem to evaporate fairly quickly.

A variety of processes

Most participants are familiar with other processes than community building, but which are closely related with it, in which large groups of people search how to live together in spite of conflicts, tensions, differences in views, values,...; for example the whole conference works in "open space technology" (see below).

Communities

Notes from the workshop:

- A community is an open space.
- Community is a process that makes room for each participant's life, for change, for differences.
- A network can be, but is not necessarily a community. A network is very often a closed space reserved for a specific race, a profession,... Some networks are geared

at resemblance first rather than at accepting differences.

- A community is a place where conditions are continuously constructed and maintained for the unexpected to emerge: unexpected people, unexpected aspect in people, common ground among people... Community is that precarious state of spontaneous emergence.
- A community is people who are committed to take the risk that nothing will emerge.
- A community is a safe place to be and to become more of oneself, including the freedom to leave.
- Many community building workshops assemble individuals who have no

common stakes except to learn about community; the workshop binds people together in as far as they have uncovered 'common ground'; but as

OD practitioners can design and facilitate beautiful processes for our clients in which important transformations take place, but the teams seem to evaporate fairly quickly.

soon as they separate the 'common ground' dissolves. However the participants will keep the experience of emergence; it will feed their belief, their confidence in the spontaneity of emergence of community.

The family

For me the most elementary community is the family in as far as it allows children to emerge.

A family is a community when it offers each child a space of containment in which it can develop to its full potential and walk out to what it is called to be and to do in life.

Scott Peck started community building in

order to create such spaces of containment for

people to grow in. He found this to be a better investment than investing in psychotherapy after people have been mis-grown.

Meaning

Another workshop at the Rolduc conference dealt with our various paths in the search for meaning.

- Such paths are easier to recognize in hindsight than in foreview; it was pointed out that meaning is not necessarily there: "Life does not have to have a meaning"
- Different people experience their path in different ways: running in circles, ascending on a spiral, winding through the forest, a simple line in the void, ups and downs, etc...
- In order for new meanings to emerge, one needs phases of meaningless play. Play is an essential ingredient of creativity, of creation...

Future Search Conferences

One is called "future search conference" - it aims at finding a "common ground" of values, vision, hopes between various stakeholders who are involved in broad clusters of issues like designing a new airstrip for the Frankfurt airport or improving a school system.

This process can stand on its own, but it can become the starting point for decisions to which all will be able to commit; however it is not in itself a decision making process.

Experience from FSCs

Notes from another workshop in Rolduc on Future Search Conferences (FSCs)

- The FSC is a forum for all stakeholders involved in a broad issue: people who really have stakes in the issue, rather than people who "talk about"
- Preparing the FSC together is already achieving 80% of common ground
- The FSC is a place where conflicts become 'livable'

- The FSC is a place where all the data on the broad issue are assembled and given meaning shared by all
- The people themselves assembled in the FSC finalise what the issue is they deal with together, rather than letting a handful specify precisely the issue beforehand and then selecting appropriate participants
- The FSC's result is for each participant to realise that his/her ideas are discussable, it is for all to agree on the issue we want to visit, rather than deciding what to do; decision is for decision makers not for all the stakeholders
- FSC is escaping together from the closedness of a system as it has been defined

Open Space Technology

Another well known such process is "open space technology"; it is sometimes summarised as opening space for emerging order.

- "Emergent order, says Harrison Owen, appears in open space when the conditions for self organisations are met. The only way to bring an Open Space gathering to its knees is to control it."
- The word "technology" points at instruments; in "open space technology" the main instrument is space, physical, intellectual, psychological and spiritual.

Metaplan

"Metaplan" processes are also linked to the above. Wolfgang and Eberhard Schnelle had first been involved in designing open space offices.

As they searched for ways to improve communication among co-workers, they also wanted to avoid the repetition of the phenomena which brought the Nazis to the power. They therefore wanted to make sure that everyone would have an opportunity to speak up and make himself heard.

"Life does not have to have a meaning"

Space

In their approach the ideas and opinions of all participants are visualised, conflicts are brought out in the open and discussed, minorities are given space and individuals have real opportunities to change their mind without losing face.

Metaplan is a much more structured approach, it uses more technology (cards, markers, posters, etc), and the process is carefully planned, but basically it rests on the assumption or rather the belief that across the differences between people something common is waiting to be revealed.

Dialogue

As it is defined by Bill Isaacs

...miracle!

Links?

There is some kind of link between "community building", "future search conferences", "open space technology",

"Metaplan",?

All these methods somehow are based on the belief that under certain conditions radically new meanings emerge from a group and that such a process cannot be planned, but it occurs again and again under these conditions.

All these methods somehow are based on the belief that under certain conditions radically new meanings emerge from a group and that such a process cannot be planned, but it occurs again and again under these conditions

'Soul work' in organisations

A recent article by Philip H. Mirvis "'Soul work' in organizations" exposes this more in details told from a participant's point of view. (see *Organizational Science March/April 1997*; the article is also available on the Internet site of the "Foundation for community Encouragement" : [http://www.fce-](http://www.fce-community.org/main.html)

[community.org/main.html](http://www.fce-community.org/main.html))

The article also points out what the theory of complexity tells about emergence. More about this in Ralph Stacey's book "Complexity and creativity in organizations", Berrett-Koehler, 1996.

Jean Brasseur

(Editor's note: I have only slightly edited Jean's notes, and I hope you find them

stimulating. As Jean himself states they are just notes to help him get his ideas straight. Any reactions, thoughts, similar experiences, or suggestions - why not send them in to the newsletter, or send them to Jean himself, or even bring them along to the Confluence?)



Poem for Everyman

From: John Wood, How do you feel? A guide to your emotions. 1974

Contributed by Anthea Pablow

I will present you
parts of myself slowly
if you are patient and tender.

I will open drawers
that mostly stay closed
and bring out places and people and things,
sounds and smells, loves and frustrations, hopes and sadnesses,
bits and pieces of three decades of life
that have been grabbed off and found lying in my hands.

They have eaten their way into my memory,
carved their way into my heart
altogether - you or I will never see them-
they are me.

If you regard them lightly,
deny that they are important or worse
judge them,
I will quietly, slowly,
begin to wrap them up,
in small pieces of velvet,
like worn silver and gold jewelry,
tuck them away
in a small wooden chest of drawers
and close.

Spirituality: the embarrassing personal secret

Peter Laxton has suggested people might be interested in the following article. It is reprinted by permission from 1997 issue of 'The Vision' (the magazine of the National Retreat Association).

Perhaps others with different views and experiences of 'spirituality' would like to contribute something to the newsletter? Ed.

David Hay, formerly of the Alister Hardy Research Centre, Oxford, now works at the Centre for the Study of Human Relations, Nottingham University.

It is now well established by repeated scientific surveys that somewhere between a third and a half of the adult populations of Britain, Australia and the United States are aware of a spiritual dimension to their experience.

That disclosure is in response to anonymous opinion pollsters who knock on the door. In-depth studies, such as I have directed in this country, increase the proportion to about two thirds of those questioned.

No need for embarrassment

The reason for the difference between the national and the in-depth surveys is that people are embarrassed. They fear that they will be thought ill-educated or mentally disturbed. In fact, there is no need for them to be so fearful.

Scientific research yields three important findings:

1) Impoverished and poorly educated people are less likely to be able to articulate their spirituality than those who have not been socially disadvantaged. As the ability to reflect on one's spirituality is tied in with deepening both one's sense of personal worth and one's ability to co-operate with others in the struggle for social justice, there is therefore an important political dimension to spirituality.

2) People who claim to have a spiritual dimension to their lives are more likely to be in a good state of mental health than those who do not.

3) It is true that churchgoers are somewhat more likely to talk about their spirituality than people who don't go to church. But as over 60 per cent of the general population acknowledge a personal spirituality, and as

well below 10 per cent of the population attend church regularly, the very great majority of the people who do acknowledge their spirituality are not regular churchgoers.

Other research findings

People often become particularly alert to their spirituality in times of personal distress. In contrast, a large minority of descriptions relate to times when the reverse is true - that is to say, when the individual is feeling very happy.

Another interesting finding is that the short- and long-term effects of awakening to the spiritual dimension of one's experience are beneficial to the individual. In the short-term, in cases of distress people are better able to bear the immediate pain of their situation. In the longer term, a discovery of the spiritual depth of one's experience can form the starting point for a disciplined life of prayer; or, less ambitiously but perhaps more commonly, it can act as a reference point in a changing and unstable world.

Moral imperative

Most important of all is the fact that people link their spiritual or religious experience with a moral imperative. Almost without exception they say that the initial effect of their experience is to make them look beyond themselves. They have an increased desire to care for those closest to them, or to take issues of social justice more seriously, or to be concerned about the total environment.

These findings give strong support to the traditional intuition that spirituality underpins ethical behaviour and encourages social cohesion. I believe that spirituality implicitly underlies political efforts to re-create a single nation in which every citizen has a stake. It is

implicit spirituality that enables people who have been denied a decent standard of living to maintain hope and to struggle to build community even in the midst of inner city decay.

Social and political implications

There are two problems to be faced up to:

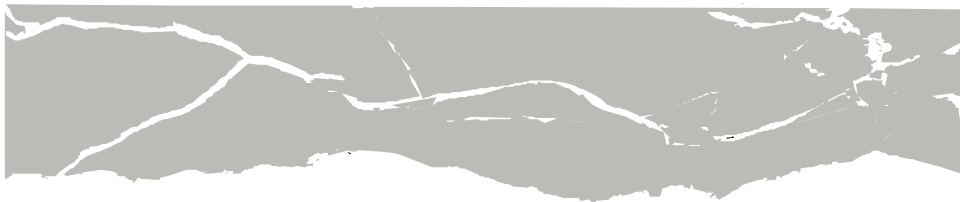
Firstly, teachers need to understand that spirituality is intrinsic to the life of every child. We cannot teach spirituality: it is there already. The role of the teacher is to prevent the destructive pressures of society from crushing it out of awareness.

The second problem arises out of the first. Because of social pressure, spirituality has

become a personal secret for many people, inside as well as outside the churches. This has had most unfortunate social and political results. Making spirituality into an embarrassing personal secret dissipates its potential to change society because it does not feed into public understanding or legislation.

The task of generating social cohesion is currently the most important political role of the churches in the life of the nation. Leadership is urgently needed.

The general argument above is expounded in detail in David Hay's book, Religious Experience Today: Studying the Facts (Cassell/Mowbrays, 1990).



A Living Together in Community

Are you committed to personal and planetary healing?
Would you like to experiment in communal living?

My idea is to rent a large house within 1 hour of Central London (e.g. Victoria) and attempt such an experiment using the community building model. If at all interested please ring me.

Margaret 0171 794 9158

Margaret writes: "In a recent community building group someone said they didn't understand why I advertised for people interested in planetary as well as personal healing. Well, it's because I believe that they are one and the same.

(There's a quote from Shakti Gawain that I'm unable to find at the moment, but to paraphrase:)

We are all droplets in the Great Ocean of Life and the transformation of each droplet profoundly affects the whole.

And according to the theory of morphic resonance (Rupert Sheldrake) if a small percent of the population transforms the rest follows suit."

Local Ongoing Community Building Groups

Some groups are open to anyone interested in experiencing Community Building, some are open to you only if you have already attended a CB event, some are open all the time to new members, some may not be open to newcomers just now; some build community as in the CB events, some are support groups based on The Road Less Travelled... Check with the local contact person.

Brighton: Meets on the second Saturday of the month. Contact Tracy Barr on 01243 775745

Central & North London: The group is having a break for a while - news will be given when it re-forms

Leamington Spa: First Monday in the month, 8pm. New members welcome. Prior attendance at a CB event is necessary. Contact Debbie or Armando on 01926 337 409

Malvern Hills: Meets fortnightly on Thursday evenings. Contact Susie on 01684 540138

Oxfordshire: Currently not open to new members. Contact Sharon on 01235 848132

Sheffield: Meets monthly. Contact Alison 0114 263 0177

Other groups exist but are not currently publicised. If you are interested in joining, or forming, a group please feel free to contact Peter Cooper (address below) for information and help.



General Enquiries

.... about Community Building in Britain or Community Building events:

Anthony Kirke, 125 Greenham Road, Newbury, Berks, RG14 7JE Tel/Fax: 01635 47377

Newsletter

Subscription rate [UK] to March 1999: (Apr-Jun) £8; (Jul-Sep) £6; (Oct-Dec) £4; (Jan-Mar) £2.

Please make cheques payable to "Community Building in Britain" and send to the newsletter editor:

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Please send items for inclusion in the next issue to the same address by 15th August 1998.

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