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## ➡ Action Plan ➡

I am returning to Fielding HOD after an approximately 18 month hiatus. I had been a full-time student for some 11 years *in continuum* before this un-asked-for, though, as it turned out, fruitful intermission. Up until that time, being a professional student had been my career. As a matter of grace, or perhaps providence, during my hiatus I was offered another career – \*paid\* – so now I am able to rejoin the program, tailored as it is to “mid-career professionals,” as a practicing peer among peers.

During my first round at Fielding, I had been on what I considered to be a very interesting track: I had formulated an epistemology; I had coordinated the production of an international curriculum; I had explored archetypal structural patterns and current issues in three social research traditions; and then, as a sort of grand finale, during my extended Leave of Absence, I produced a book-length exposition concerning “The Urban Village: Synergy of Ecology and Urbanism.” Fittingly, as the culmination of an almost 12 year trajectory, this final piece – its content and approach, its purpose and audience, its scope and potential – is what qualified me for a \*paid\* career.

I now find myself in the familiar situation of my scholar-practitioner peers: a full load of work and possibilities in my career, and now, the complement of a full load of work and possibilities in my doctorate program. I’m feeling the need to grow – to raise my energy to a whole new level – to operate from a position of effectiveness, productivity, resourcefulness and discrimination like I’ve never known before. In short, I’m going to tap into the core of my potential so that, over the course of the next two to three years, I can design, administer, and complete a PhD program that can be a real contribution to the field – if not the world. This Action Plan is meant to serve as a ‘road map’ to chart and give direction to this stage of the journey.

Interestingly, the Action Plan that follows is almost completely a continuation of where I left off some 18 months ago, as if I am pursuing a somehow prescribed course of action, conditioned by a time-independent state of equifinality. I still find this track very, very fascinating:

## Contents:

### Completing the Foundational Studies:

- Phenomenology – as another perspective to supplement an “Epistemology for the Village Designer” – will include the basic writings of Husserl, Merleau-Ponty, and Heidegger, and then will branch out to include the newer ideas expressed in an emerging Phenomenological Ecology. In this sense, Phenomenology is understood as “a method of inquiry based on the premise that reality consists of objects and events as they are perceived or understood in human consciousness and not of anything independent of human consciousness.” This study will be well-suited for KA-702: Consciousness and Human Development.
- Humanistic Geography – There is a growing body of literature exploring and defining what could be called an ‘epistemology of place.’ This research community seems to be inspired by the seminal works of Yi-fu Tuan’s *Topophilia* and Edward Relph’s *Place and Placelessness*, wherein ‘places’ are defined as “impalpable territories of social activities and meanings projected into entire assemblages of buildings and spaces...in determinate wholes.” The conceptual interface between the cognitive, existential, experiential philosophy of Phenomenology and the environmental design professions – as enacted in the intention of meaningful ‘place-making’ – appears to be a fruitful avenue of research. This study may appear as elective KA-704.
- Traditional Villages – This study will focus on Ghandi’s image of a “society of villages” as the basis for a context of long-term sustainability. Bio-geographical, eco-social, and eco-nomical relationships will be explored with the purpose of translating conclusions as a set of prescriptions for the retrofit of the highly dysfunctional North American settlement pattern. Thierry Pauchant previously offered to supervise this study as an expression of KA-710: Social Ecology.
- Sacred Geometry – I’ve been wanting to do an in-depth study of this subject for many years now, as I know it to be integral to advanced work in my professional field. I’ve collected a small library of interesting titles, such as: *Sacred Geometry: Philosophy and Practice*, *The Geometry of Art and Life*, *The Divine Proportion*, and *The Power of Limits*. I plan to include this study as an elective in my doctoral program, perhaps interfaced with or applied to an organizational study?
- Organizational Development – Framed within the context of KA-717, I have a very interesting project upon which to apply this learning: We are currently moving through the permitting process to set up, in the language of the planner’s code, a “College” that will be the heart and center of an Urban Village. As a Community Education Campus, this College will be inherently community-based yet accessible globally. This Knowledge Area will provide me with the theoretical language and conceptual framework upon which to systemically organize the Campus as part of an encompassing Village.

Upon completion of these foundational studies, I will be prepared to competently engage my dissertation. I imagine this dissertation to be the product, process, and outcome of a Participatory Action Research project (PAR) that will follow directly from and build upon the KA-717 Organizational Studies mentioned above. The PAR will determine which areas of research and what sort of knowledge bases are required to set up the College, described in terms of a Community Education Campus, as part of an international network of similar educational centers. The package of 'Urban Village with College at its Center' is intended to serve as a prototype model for sustainable community design and development; thus, documentation of the development process, as organized into a dissertation, will evolve into a publication that can be referenced by others wishing to replicate this model.

### Supporting Journals:

In order to keep abreast of the most current literature in subject areas that have become priorities of direct relevance to both my professional work and to upcoming threads in my dissertation, I will reference and engage on a regular basis the following scholarly journals:

- *Planning*
- *Urban Ecology*
- *Ecological Economics*
- *Urban Affairs Quarterly*
- *Urban Design International*

### Travel:

Throughout the course of my education, I have complemented intensive and extensive academic study with focused and highly deliberative field-work. Using this strategy, I have come to be accepted as an active participant in an international community of like-minded individuals working on similar projects. Together, through innovative educational programs, publications, and the establishment of state-of-the-art demonstration sites, we have been navigating the evolving edge of the meaning of 'sustainable human habitat.' As I move into the next stage of my doctoral program, I plan to continue this experiential approach through the following proposed field-work:

- Study of Traditional Villages – I am quite keen to study the patterns, processes, and structures of the villages in two regions in particular: The Provence of France and Tuscany in Italy. These are exemplars of the integration of human habitat into a native ecology in such a way that flourishing cultures and the attainment of enhanced human potential are the result. Art is Life.
- Immersion into an Ecovillage – Plans are already being made for me to have an extended stay at Findhorn, among friends. While immersed in the daily life of the community, I will enjoy the benefit of face-to-face contact with fellow writers of our EDE curriculum, as together we coordinate and produce a refined Version 5. While in the UK, I want to establish and nurture connections with the following

groups: a) The Prince's Foundation, b) Schumacher College, c) Dundee University Centre for the Study of Natural Design, and d) the Centre for Alternative Technology in Wales.

- Synthesis of Traditional Villages and Ecovillage – The goals of this study are perhaps best achieved at Auroville in the Tamil Nadu, a splendid example of a settlement purposely established to promote the evolution of consciousness. A trip to Auroville – and the lessons learned therein – will be a suitable culmination for my KA-710 Social Ecology study.

#### Internship:

In order to provide my doctoral program with a practical, applied component – in the sense of having a palpable, creative, artistic outlet for all the intense learning and growth that is about to occur – I propose undertaking an Internship with a certain Greg Ramsey from the firm Village Habitat Design. I have already participated in a Design Studio hosted by Mr. Ramsey, and found him to be the most proficient facilitator I have ever studied with. This is a man of creative genius, who skillfully applies classical architectural training to the organic design of sustainable human habitat. As long as I'm going to be a 'student' while still in my doctoral program, I want to study with a 'teacher' like Mr. Ramsey – whom I consider to be one of the best in the world. The kind of Village Design work that Mr. Ramsey exemplifies, and for which I am currently developing professionally, will be the societal contribution coming out of our Community Education Campus – a "College" yet to be named. In fact, I presently have four substantial Village Design projects, in various stages of research and development, for which I would appreciate greatly an augmentation of design skills in the classical vein. These Projects include:

- North Creek Village – the home of the Community Education Campus
- The renovation and retrofit of a spacious downtown Bothell site
- The Ananda Temple Village, also in Bothell
- An ecologically conceived sustainable community design project in Malibu

#### Interface with Antioch University Seattle:

As the home of my Master's degree program in Whole Systems Design, I've maintained amicable relations with several of the professors there. There's already been some talk about introducing a graduate level class under the general theme of Sustainable Community Design and Development; therefore, as the applied component to one or some of my PhD studies, I propose formalizing the design and presentation of this class. The likely applied component of the class will be one or more of the design projects mentioned above.

San Francisco Institute of Architecture:

I've already enjoyed some interface with this progressive, innovative, internationally reputed school of design and would like to undertake some formal study there as an aspect of my PhD program. While "Architecture" and "City Planning" may not normally be considered relevant to a PhD program oriented to research, I believe I can make a case for including them as an effort in defining a more holistically approached Sustainable Community Design and Development, using Participatory Action Research as a practice in ecological democracy.

So there it is: picking up where I left off, a proposed Action Plan for the completion of my PhD degree in Human and Organization Development. My two previous degrees, both my B.A. and my M.A., were likewise holistically conceived and designed to be transdisciplinary, multi-dimensional, and ultimately focused on the practical goal of setting precedent as prototypes for formalized curriculum in the emerging field of Sustainable Community Design and Development, applied at *village* scale – with all that implies. I'm very happy to be back on board, and am very appreciative for all the work that's gone into maintaining an academic institution that accommodates such self-motivated flexibility at such high standards of accomplishment. It is, then, with great anticipation that I embark now on the 'road map' of this Action Plan, ever diligent of the increased level of mastery it will require of me – discipline, commitment, focus, fortitude – and ever open to the wonder of emergent possibilities and opportunities that may appear along the path.

In community,

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