



The Future of Conscious Communities

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University of Houston | Fall 2020

Table of Contents

Introduction

Slide 3

- + Introduction
- + Executive Summary

Framing

Slide 5

- + Framing
- + History
- + Current Conditions
- + Stakeholder Analysis

Scanning

Slide 9

- + Scanning Highlights
- + Primary Research

Futuring

Slide 12

- + Futuring Inputs
- + Drivers
- + Scenarios

Visioning

Slide 19

- + Implications Analysis

Designing

Slide 20

- + Opportunities

Introduction

The aim of this project is to consider what conscious communities will look like and what their position will be in relation to the wider society in 2035. This project was conducted for a hypothetical client - a relatively new, non-residential conscious community just outside of New York City established with an ambitious vision to help people develop across all dimensions of their lives. The executive team is developing their long term strategy and wants to better understand what offerings and products would be most supportive for their target customers.

Conscious Communities (CC) exist in a variety of forms and structures but typically arise in response to dissatisfaction with the status quo. They can be residential or non-residential, urban or rurally based, focused on specific causes such as environmental sustainability, equality, peace, social justice, or simply sharing land or resources. Many people who join these types of communities either seek to leave the existing system completely, or to design new systems with the hope of integrating them back into the wider society for positive social change.

Given the informal nature of this movement, it makes sense that there is no single, standard definition of what makes a community conscious. For the purposes of this project, the term is inclusive of communities that self-identify as non-residential conscious community, intentional community, eco-village, eco-enclave, co-housing, co-living, or collaborative living.

For my semester long Futures Research course at the University of Houston, I chose to help this hypothetical client better understand how the world is evolving and how it will impact the needs of conscious community members over the next 15 years. For this project, I followed the University of Houston's scenario archetypes process¹ and the six step Foresight Framework² (excluding the Adapting phase), in line with the Association of Professional Futurists' Foresight Competency Model³. I also drew upon Integral Futures as a sense-making lens and Causal Layered Analysis in imagining the metaphors underlying each scenario, though both were more informally embedded into my process.

University of Houston Foresight Framework



¹ University of Houston Scenario Archetypes, <https://www.andyhinesight.com/forecasting/fun-with-scenario-archetypes/>

² University of Houston Framework Foresight Model, <http://www.andyhinesight.com/foresight-2/updating-framework-foresight-with-six-apf-competencies/>

³ APF Foresight Competency Model, <https://www.andyhinesight.com/foresight-2/foresight-competency-model-published-in-wfr/>

Executive Summary

How can we best support our members' development journeys?

The Drivers



Seeking Respite: How can I log off without becoming irrelevant?



Voluntary Simplicity: How much is enough – for me and for the world?



Redefining Reality: How can I create my own sense of the world?



Families of Choice: How can I restructure familiar relational concepts to suit my individual needs and desires?



Search for Meaning: How can I prepare for death and what will I leave behind?



Quest for Perfection: Hey Alexa, what is the optimal decision for me?

The Scenarios

Baseline – Capitalizing on Discontent

What's In It For Me?

A hyper-individualized society with largely utilitarian networks. Pockets of communities exist, mostly as safe spaces for the most marginalized.

Transformation – Live the Ancient, Today

Enough Is As Good As A Feast

A global network of arcologies creates strong cultural and social bonds. Suffering is not a prerequisite for happiness.

Collapse – Hikikomori

Lost In A World That Doesn't Exist

Trust is the foundation of communities; in a world of distrust they cannot exist. Without a shared reality, every person must fend for themselves.

New Equilibrium – Neither Here Nor There

Life On My Own Terms

Balancing being in nature and simpler ways of living with the comforts of connected, city living. Transient, convenient.

The Opportunities

How can the client help people expand beyond the paradigm of human exceptionalism to effectively respond to challenges of the future? Re-design curriculum using alternative lenses that do not assume human dominance over nature.

How can the client play a pro-active role in bringing a shared philosophy of enough-ness into being? Re-structure the organization on a philosophy of voluntary simplicity to serve as the pioneering model.

Framing

Client

Non-Residential
Conscious
Community in NE US.

- Concerned with developing long term strategy to anticipate member needs

Strategic Questions

How can we best support our members' development journeys?

- For which services and offerings will there be demand from existing and prospective members?
- How can we enable positive changes to ripple out beyond our community?

Scope



Time Horizon

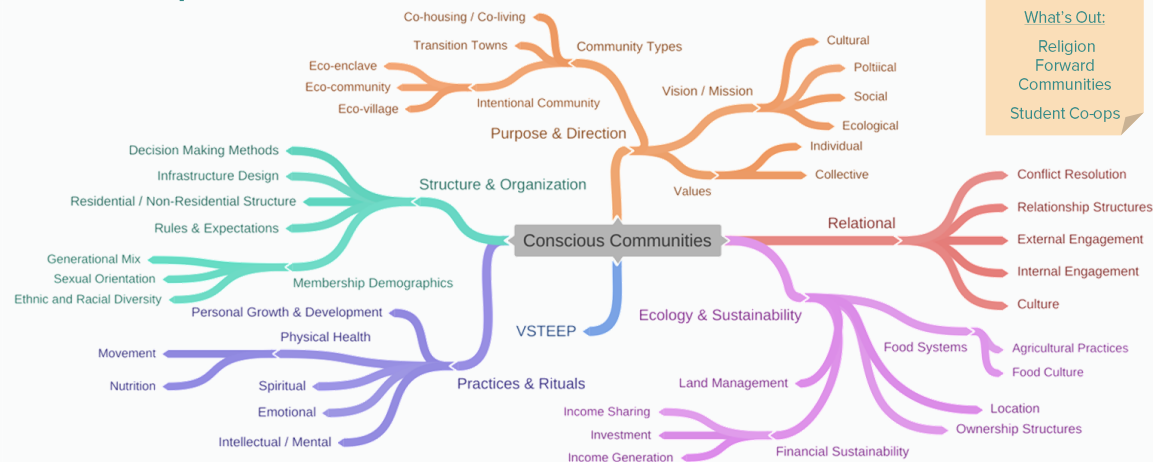
H1: 2020 – 2030
H2: 2030 - 2035
 H3: 2035+

Conscious Community Definition

A group of people who come together deliberately and intentionally to create a mutually supportive environment for experimentation and typically lead alternative lifestyles.

Areas of experimentation often include: personal and collective growth, sustainable and cooperative practices, or ways of living in harmony with the environment.

Domain Map



History

The Enduring Desire for Human Connection

Global Ecovillage Network (GEN) established | 1994

750,000 American households living off-grid | 2010

WeWork unveils first co-living apartments, WeLive | 2016

Off-grid solar revenue growing 30% annually since 2017 | 2020

Uber founded | 2009

Burning Man attendance grows by 24% from previous year | 2013

168,000 people sign up for Veganuary, up 182% from 2017 | 2018

1995

2008

2011

2014

2017

2020

Airbnb founded | 2008

Marcin Jakubowski presents TED Talk on Open-Sourced blueprints for civilization with instructions for self sustaining village | 2011

of intentional communities nearly doubles since 2010 to ~1,200 | 2016

Meditation's popularity more than triples since 2012 | 2017

Yoga practice rises to 14.3%, up from 9.5% in 2012 | 2017

Current Conditions

Growth of CCs

The Conscious Community movement of the 60's and 70's is experiencing renewed energy from millennials in the form of co-housing.

- Popularity of co-housing increasing, offering more privacy. 170 running with 100 in progress as of July 2019
- Executive Director of Foundation for Intentional Community (IC) estimates 100K people living in ICs in January 2020
- 2017 study found that members of ICs scored higher on quality of life markers than 30 of 31 other groups.

Diversity in Community

CCs have traditionally lacked in diversity; communities are increasingly engaging in trainings around D&I.

- As of 2017, 95% co-housers were white, 82% identified as Democrat, 66% held graduate degrees – overwhelmingly un-diverse
- 2019 International Communal Studies Association Conference theme was Diversity and Inclusion in CCs with focus on those with developmental disabilities
- Many POC-led CCs do exist and are growing in number, but does not resolve the issue of uniformity within communities

Loneliness and Anxiety Epidemic

COVID-19 has heightened mental health issues, leaving Americans eager for human connection.

- 2 in 5 Americans feel relationships are not meaningful and 1 in 5 feel lonely or isolated
- UCSD study in 2018 found that 76% of American adults experience moderate to high levels of loneliness
- Depression and anxiety spiking in the US amid pandemic
- Cleveland Clinic survey of American men found that about 77% reported increased stress caused by the pandemic

Mindfulness and Ecology

We are beginning to understand the role of mindfulness in supporting ecologically sustainable practices

- 2018 study finds increased mindful awareness favors more healthy lifestyles, which in turn relate to increased ecological behavior beyond personal health benefits
- Meditation apps taking off amid COVID stress
- Unilever studying how to encourage sustainable consumption; estimates 70% of its greenhouse gas footprint depends on which products customers choose and how they dispose

Financial Un-sustainability

CCs always struggled to achieve financial sustainability and the pandemic is causing additional strain.

- Business models for many CCs remain elusive or unformed
- Communities can benefit from digital workers to diversify income and ease pressure of self-sufficiency
- Pre-pandemic, 85% of Findhorn Foundation's income came from guest programs and ~2,000 visitors
- CCs are realizing the importance of going online to build a worldwide community

Stakeholder Analysis

Stakeholder	Examples	Interest & Implications	Impact
Local Governments	County, city, special purpose	Regulatory challenges to communal land ownership and extended non-family living compounds. Governments desire to maintain wellbeing of citizens and safety within their jurisdiction. Local governments benefit from fewer commuters and higher housing density	High
Landlords	Owners of property, homes, and co-housing buildings	CCs <u>offer many benefits</u> to landlord including higher housing density, more salary earners, long term leases, and more rental income per square meter.	High
Remote, Flexible Workers	Digital Nomads & Freelancers	Flexible workers are often interested in short to medium term living arrangements; it may not align with CCs long-term view but does offer steady, diversified source of revenue and diversity	High
Service Providers	Energy companies, retail, financial services, supermarkets	Impact of communities designing self-reliant lifestyles: living off-grid, consuming fewer goods, re-purposing items and DIY, community oriented financial systems, non-traditional ownership structures, and subsistence farming and gardening	Medium
Other CCs	Intentional Communities, Eco-villages, Co-housing	Potential for collaboration and resource sharing, developing complementary missions and values, and a broader support network	Medium
Educational Institutions	Daycare, Montessori, Primary Schools	Interest in benefits of and potential applications of concepts of alternative living within the classroom environment; potentially lower enrollment rates due to home-schooling or community-based models	Low

Scanning Highlights (1 of 2)

Sample from Over 300 Scan Hits

Title	Norway island wants to be first time free zone	Real Health Starts with Eating Light	Forests as the New Graveyard	Preparing for an AI-enabled future: Conversation with Yuval Noah Harari
Horizon	H3	H2	H2	H2
Description & Source	Island of Sommaroy <u>planning</u> to get rid of conventional time-keeping.	<u>Eating light</u> is a healthier and more compassionate way to live. Intermittent fasting, eating until 80% full, and choosing simple, fresh ingredients.	<u>Oversoul's</u> investor deck outlines plans to create the cemetery of the future by reimagining graves as trees and graveyards as forest.	<u>Discussion</u> of how democracy and technology have evolved; imagining both dystopic and utopic AI-enabled futures.
Impact	Communities that shift from Chronos to Kairos-based living, trusting intuitive sense of what feels right in each moment. A more present, relaxed society.	Eating light would create global food security, and a values shift from scarcity to "enough-ness"	Shifting how we think about our impact in the world, our legacy when we're gone, and the conversations around death.	AI helps us optimize for the types of people and societies we want to be / build, but we need to define what that is first.
Category (STEER)	Political	Economic	Environment	Technology
Impact	4	3	4	5
Plausibility	2	3	3	4
Novelty	4	2	3	3
Credibility	3	2	2	4

Scanning Highlights (2 of 2)

Sample from Over 300 Scan Hits

Title	Grief Sanctuaries and the Complexity of Human Experience: An Interview with Dr. Bayo Akomolafe	Rest as Resistance: A Movement by The Nap Ministry	Long Term Stock Exchange Opens for Business	Scientists Developed a Way to Make DMT Trips Last Longer Than Ever
Horizon	H2	H2	H1	H3
Description & Source	A podcast interview discussing the need to embrace complexity and create space for grief.	Nap Ministry is a website and community that examines the liberating power of naps. Rest as a form of resistance.	New Canadian stock exchange launches trading companies who are focused on long term success.	Two scientists researching techniques borrowed from anesthesiology to deliver drip infusions for longer DMT trips.
Impact	Creating room to grieve could allow us to slow down and notice the world differently, take pause from jumping to “solution-ing”, and engage more deeply with our biggest challenges.	Deprogramming the masses from the grind culture. A shift away from the struggle of “busy-ness” into rest and relaxation. Resisting the narrative of human bodies as tools for productivity.	Financial world shifting in values from short term to longer term view. Re-defining success and creating appropriate incentives.	Tourism to “inner dimensions”, new forms of spirituality and religious experience, deeper exploration of our selves and advances in neuroscience
Category (STEEP)	Social	Political	Economic	Technology, Science
Impact	4	3	2	4
Plausibility	4	4	2	3
Novelty	3	2	3	3
Credibility	3	3	4	4

Primary Research – Expert Interviews

“ [Windward is] focusing on Death with Dignity. The idea is that people can come to Windward to die, get turned into compost and sent back home to feed their vegetable garden.


– **Walt Patrick, Co-Founder of Windward, WA**

“ We see it like family where you figure out how to make it work versus other communities where they come together for similar values. We have super conservative and super liberal, devout religious and new age spiritual people. You can't unfriend people in community, you have to come up with a solution. By virtue of living together, you're forced to value your relationships more than you value your need to be right.

– **Co-Founder, Intentional Community, CA**

“ The way [Elizabeth Cline] frames Ethical Consumerism in this article² reminds me of McM mindfulness – ideas that appear potentially revolutionary at first but carry the danger of diverting energy away from addressing root causes, instead resulting in a new industry that further consolidates power within conventional structures.

– **Michael Stern, Emerging Leaders Group, NY**



“ Life sharing¹ aspect is critical. Yes, have a mission of helping mentally ill, disabled, homeless people but it's not about trying to raise \$1M to start a non-profit. Instead of creating an institution with paid staff, you're actually living with them.

– **Dr. Betsy Morris, Planning for Sustainable Communities, CA**

“ At the ground level [conscious communities] are about survival [...] the evolution is asking how are we going to thrive? To the point that we get to share our thriving capacity, our abundance, with others so they too can be witnessed. To give others permission to be human.

– **Co-Founder, Intentional Community, CA**

¹ Life-sharing is a concept originally developed by the Camphill movement.

² The Twilight of the Ethical Consumer, <https://www.highsnobiety.com/p/twilight-ethical-consumer/>

Futuring Inputs – Trends and Plans

To Live, Age, and Die Well

Trends

Senior Cohousing: 17 senior co-housing communities in the US, with another 288 in progress as alternative to nursing homes

Dying Well: A “better death” is increasingly one aspect of defining a well-lived life; new rituals around death arising

Closed Loop Systems: Companies increasingly collaborating across the supply chain to reuse materials

“Slow” Movement: Time has become a valuable commodity. Other industries following in footsteps of the slow food movement.

Hyper-personalization: Starting with fitness and the introduction of at-home fitness equipment that tracks your movements and adjusts in real-time. Also named Metamorphic design, or relevance as a service

Folk Religion and Digitization of Metaphysical: Santeria now followed by 100M people worldwide and demand for spiritual vending machines in South Korean have surged

Plans

- Minneapolis clearing way for intentional communities, **cluster developments**
- Marc Lore, **building a city of the future** that will reform capitalism
- SpaceX: Elon Musk wants to send 1 million people to Mars by 2050 to build a **permanent settlement**
- Michael Brickler forming **new intentional community** based on “**Diversity, Bridging, and Consciousness**” on land where great-great-grandfather was born a slave (Note: Older announcement, 2018)
- Ann Arbor **Decriminalizes Psychedelic Plants**
- Berkeley **launches psychedelic research center**
- Sentio Solutions wants to **replace therapy** with AI tech

Futuring Inputs – Projections and Issues

To Live, Age, and Die Well

Projections

Future of Home Living 2030: Piers Fawkes of PSFK builds an image of communal compounds housing thousands with option of “hot bed” rentals.

- Sleep, play, shop and work in large buildings with hundreds, if not thousands, of others and use shared objects
- Some will have permanent room to sleep and store items, others will have “hot beds” with belongings stored in a vault
- Solar panels and heirloom crops on roofs, food factories in suburbs
- Remote hotels over isolation in wood cabins and small islands

One Shared House 2030: Survey conducted by IKEA’s future-living lab and Space10. Results from 7,000 people across 150 countries on their preferences for communal living.





- Small communities 4 – 10 people, or 10 – 25 for families
- Diversity – backgrounds and ages
- Concern for lack of privacy
- Neat, tidy, honest, considerate most important qualities
- Choose who joins the house
- Shared, equal ownership of the house

Issues

- How can we build and maintain financial sustainability in alignment with core values?
- How can we work with, around, or through existing laws and regulations designed for single, monogamous, families (e.g. zoning, housing, medical benefits)?
- How should we integrate technology into our daily lives and as an enhancing element of our community?
- Should we have specific rituals or spiritual practices as requirements for members?
- How do we evolve, respect individual values and ideas, and continue to deepen connections as a diverse community?

Drivers

The Push of Technology, The Pull of Nature

Driver	Description
 Seeking Respite	<p>A 24/7, 365 always-on world is taking its toll. There is a desperate need for rest and relaxation, a break from the constant screens vying for attention. Stemming from a desire to de-stress in an increasingly complex world, there is a move to bring consciousness to each experience by slowing it down and creating space to breathe. How can I log off without becoming irrelevant?</p>
 Voluntary Simplicity	<p>The climate crisis is finally causing people to re-evaluate their personal consumption choices and question the standards to which companies and governmental organizations are held. The more time people spend interacting with nature, the more they take on an ecological perspective, and the more they can identify the underlying systems at play. How much is enough – for me and for the world?</p>
 Redefining Reality	<p>Discontent with established structures of power and distrust of leaders is motivating people to re-evaluate what they hold as “truth.” Seeking a different perspective on the world and developing new mental models lies at the intersection of psychoactive substances, innovative sensory technologies, and simulated experiences. How can I create my own sense of the world?</p>
 Families of Choice	<p>Exploration of gender identity, sexuality, and relational structures, paired with loneliness, de-prioritizing marriage, and improving AI companion technology is driving a re-definition of family. How can I restructure familiar relational concepts to suit my individual needs and desires?</p>
 Search for Meaning	<p>The shunning of organized religion has led to a search for meaning from other sources. Explorations on the meaning of life, dying humanely and what happens after, and the seeming separateness of self from other. How can I prepare for death and what will I leave behind?</p>
 Quest for Perfection	<p>Increasing access to and quality of data paired with rapid advances in AI and VR/AR has encouraged a movement towards real-time hyper-customization, feeding the thirst to achieve the perfectly optimized self and life. “Hey, Alexa – what is the optimal decision for me?”</p>

Baseline Scenario

Capitalizing on Discontent – *What's In It For Me?*

A hyper-individualized society with largely utilitarian networks. Pockets of communities exist, mostly as safe spaces for the most marginalized.

Seeking Respite: Digital detox days used as a tool to improve creativity and productivity. Going offline without a purpose is a performance to be filmed and posted.

Voluntary Simplicity: Monthly subscription kits for the “conscious consumer” continue to grow, resulting in far greater packaging and production waste. Performative eco-consciousness reaches new high.

Redefining Reality: Distractions are needed 24/7. Psychedelics used mostly illegally, as an escape.

Families of Choice: Traditional family structure remains, except no one moves out. Adult children live with parents; few people are having children or much sex. Rent-a-friend and cuddle cafes thrive.

Search for Meaning: New age spirituality reigns supreme. Spiritual materialism and bypassing has led to severe delusional disorders.

Quest for Perfection: Obsessed with metrics, people pay to keep their numbers at socially acceptable levels.

Integral Development Stage: Blue – Orange Dominant

Transformation Scenario

Live the Ancient, Today – *Enough Is As Good As a Feast*

A global network of arcologies creates strong cultural and social bonds. Suffering is not a prerequisite for happiness.

Seeking Respite: Devices treated the same as cigarettes are today. Dedicated phone zones can be found, but not allowed in most places.

Voluntary Simplicity: A mindset of “enough-ness” leading to ethical non-consumption. Each takes only what they need, and no more.

Redefining Reality: Psychedelics legalized, widespread use has transformed society. Fear based politics is ineffective. Constructs of time and objective reality loosen.

Families of Choice: New, flexible laws passed to extend legal benefits and protections for non-traditional, multi-party family structures.

Search for Meaning: Group practices and rituals become central. Meaning is found in the connective tissues of life. Death and grief welcomed as important and valuable friends in the quotidian.

Quest for Perfection: Health and wellbeing preferred over the perfectly optimized life. Technology as life enhancing. Data highly secured and owned by each individual.

Integral Development Stage: Yellow – Teal Dominant

Collapse Scenario

Hikikomori – *Lost In A World That Doesn't Exist*

Trust is the foundation of communities; in a world of distrust they cannot exist. Without a shared reality, every person must fend for themselves.

Seeking Respite: Online world is now the default world.

Voluntary Simplicity: Convenience is king! If it's too late to reverse climate change, might as well enjoy the last few good years in luxury. Hyper-consumerism and decadence runs rampant.

Redefining Reality: Complete lack of trust, conspiracy theories spiral out of control. Psychedelics heavily controlled and prosecuted – double down on the war on drugs.

Families of Choice: Rise of hikikomori, or recluses, living in complete isolation in tiny apartments. Remote work allows for avoidance of social interaction, complete disconnection from human contact.

Search for Meaning: No religion or spirituality. Dualistic thinking prevails. Why focus on death when we're striving for immortality?

Quest for Perfection: Companies have taken over full control of data. Souls are sold to the highest bidder.

Integral Development Stage: Red Dominant

New Equilibrium Scenario

Neither Here Nor There – *Life On My Terms*

Balancing being in nature and simpler ways of living with the comforts of connected, city living. Transient, convenient.

Seeking Respite: Phone free retreats and events becoming popular. Going offline is supported by social groups in specific situations.

Voluntary Simplicity: Silicon Valley funnels enough money to slow climate crisis, but earth still seen as resource for humans to exploit.

Redefining Reality: Society becomes less judgmental, more open minded. Psychedelics legalized for medical purposes.

Families of Choice: Families opt to live in tighter knit, luxury eco-enclave neighborhoods. Hot bed living flourishes in co-housing.

Search for Meaning: Growth of Robot Buddha and AI-enabled religions. New forms of eco-friendly human disposal methods developed, but people still want to ignore death.

Quest for Perfection: AI and wearable data allow doctors to provide tailored care. Companies are changing their terms of service to limit how they can use customer data.

Integral Development Stage: Orange – Green Dominant

Capitalizing on Discontent – Baseline Narrative

What's In It For Me?

The counterculture movement has become the trend and continues to reinforce the status quo rather than challenging it. We don't want to be living in this reality, but we're too afraid to change it.

In 2035, there is a heightening tension as we become increasingly disillusioned with the ineffective systems of society. Tired and angry but unable to draw our attention away from our screens long enough to do something about it. Those in power have figured out how to capitalize on the dissatisfaction. The counterculture has become subsumed within the status quo. All of the escape routes are now just trick doors leading us back into the game. As we continue to seek deeper meaning in our lives, we are diving deeper into the hole of new-age practices and rituals, all available for the low, low price of our souls.

Many of us never moved out of our parents homes due to the insane costs of living, which has led to a population of emotional and mental teenagers walking around in adult bodies. Social and emotional intelligence are at an all time low; few people are capable of maintaining romantic relationships and we're not having much sex. The birth rate has been declining steadily and the US is now nearing a depopulation crisis.

Due to the abundance of data about each person, anyone can wrap our own ideas into shiny new packages and sell them back to us at a premium. Headlines are crafted with precision to grab our attention and take advantage of any shred of hope we might have left: get rid of that empty feeling at your core in 5 minutes a day; transform your bedroom into your dream tiny home using the latest AR technology; forget about dating, design your soul m-AI-te in minutes.

With every metric tracked and shared publicly, people have found ways to game the system. Why workout when you can hire someone else do the heavy lifting for you? Hire a social media manager for your personal life, automate all your interactions so you never forget a birthday or important occasion again, and have perfectly photographable meals delivered.

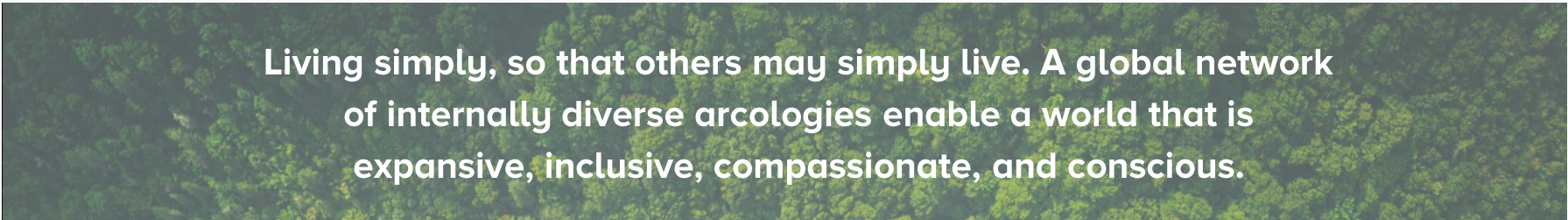
Nobody spends time with other people anymore, it's far easier to surround yourself with AI companions who will act and say exactly how you want. Still, there is something missing that AI companions can't quite satisfy – this is why people now opt to rent-a-best-friend for a day or an afternoon and the cuddle café industry is thriving.

With most people living at home, it's no wonder the demand for escape has been skyrocketing and there is a proliferation of activities designed to help you forget your reality, and advancements in technology means you can stay distracted literally 24/7. Most young people have opted into unlimited monthly memberships to a club of their choice that not only gives them access to all types of distractions – spas, hyper-realistic video games, sensory deprivation tanks, sensory overload tanks, round the clock music festivals, etc – but they can continue the fantasy at home by slipping on a VR headset.

We are experiencing a severe mental health crisis, with many young people struggling with narcissistic personality and delusional disorders. Suicide attempts and petty crime rates have been soaring, but why would the private sector care? Discontent, after all, is great for business!

Live the Ancient, Today – Transformation Narrative

Enough Is As Good As A Feast



Living simply, so that others may simply live. A global network of internally diverse arcologies enable a world that is expansive, inclusive, compassionate, and conscious.

In 2035, most of us live in one of multiple arcologies around the world, which are all connected to each other through a vast virtual network where conscious communities (CC's) serve as the hubs of innovation. CC's are seen as centers of excellence conducting cutting edge social research and experimentation informing new ways of being.

Each community accommodates a few thousand people, who are grouped into 100 – 150 people (a la Dunbar's number), and then further organized into family pods of 20 – 25 people to create best conditions for building strong social networks. Out of compassion for others, we eat light, eat fewer meals, and live by a philosophy of enough-ness – this was fundamentally a shift from “I” to “We”; eco-systemic thinking.

This transformation resulted from a confluence of factors: the end of work as we knew it, gen Z and gen Alpha becoming old enough to take office, and the inability of the economic system to meet the needs of a society. As younger generations took leadership roles, the government made a near 180-degree flip towards flexible, responsive laws that take the uniquely human factors of each situation into consideration to create an equitable society. The economy has re-balanced into a hybrid system that prioritizes ensuring a decent quality of life for everyone. Pure for-profit companies have become extinct, with B-corps and hybrid for-profit / non-profit structures becoming standard.

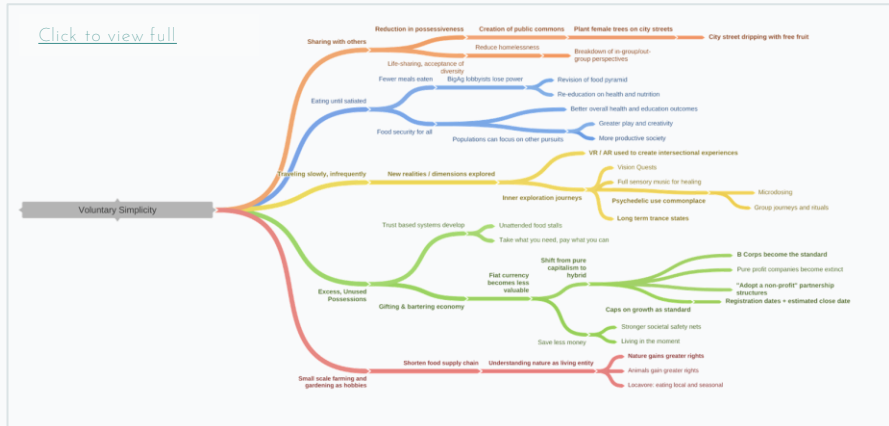
A significant turning point was when researchers figured out how to safely use IV infusions for controlled, prolonged immersive DMT trance states. With options that transport you to new dimensions, nobody misses the old, carbon-intensive forms of travel. But it goes well beyond mere entertainment, shifting our attitudes and practices around death and significantly improving the state of mental health in the US.

EmpatheticTech was a game changer for communal living. Each community came to agreements on shared values and highest collective goals, which were then integrated into the algorithms for robot companions. This ensured that AI assistants could help each person live according to their highest and best ideals without infringing on other people's rights to the same.

Beyond this, integrated technology throughout each arcology automatically adjusts to accommodate not merely each person's environmental preferences but according to their moods and deeper needs. In a sense, although people are living in a communal space, they have personal “ambience bubbles” tuned specifically for them – including lights, temperature, sound privacy, and fragrances. We call these wise, not smart, homes.

Implications Analysis

Making Meaning of Transformation

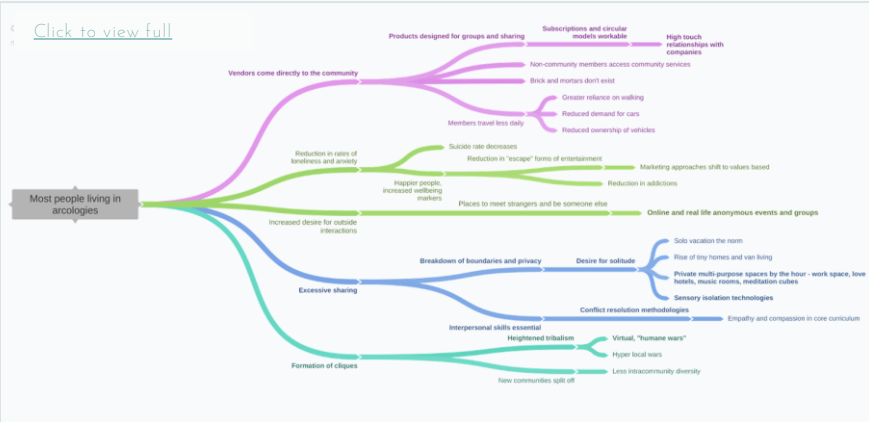
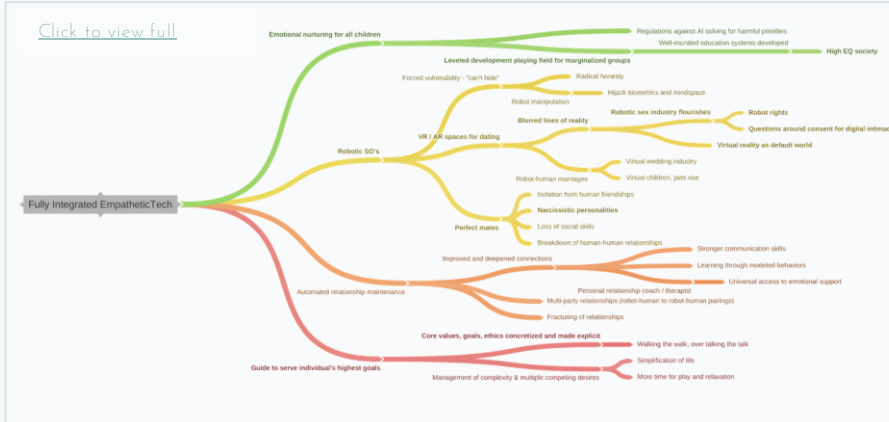


Most Important Implications

- Relationships shift from 1:1 to multi-party as a result of deeply embedded robot assistants
- Virtual worlds and other dimensions are increasingly areas of exploration
- Green, common spaces outnumber "grey", private, built spaces

Most Provocative Implications

- Organizations are expected not to grow continuously or exist indefinitely, they achieve their goals and then dissolve or maintain steady state
- Virtual world becomes the default world we operate within
- Spaces where anonymity can be maintained become prevalent
- All wars are conducted "humanely" by being fought in the virtual world



Opportunities

How can we help people expand beyond the paradigm of human exceptionalism to effectively respond to challenges of the future?

Why It's Important

“We cannot solve our problems with the same thinking we used when we created them.” – Albert Einstein

We are being called to respond to increasingly complex challenges and adapt quickly to incredible advances in technology. The current culture of privileging humans over non-human entities is no longer sufficient. Whether considering human-robot, human-nature, or human-animal relationships and interactions, the dominant lens of human exceptionalism creates a severely limited understanding of the world, thereby restricting the scope of our imagination, and the resulting solution possibilities.

The client has an opportunity to expand existing paradigms by offering programming built using diverse, alternative perspectives that de-center the human in favor of the broader ecosystem, inclusive of all types of non-human entities. Developing practices rooted in ancient, more relational worldviews can help us shift out of the hierarchical and exploitative lenses that have helped create the problems we face.

Although embracing plant and animal needs as important as our own is the first step, it will pave the way to contemplate questions around uses and misuses of Empathetic AI, the rights of robots and issues of consent – especially as it pertains to digital / virtual intimacy.

Response

Re-design curriculum using alternative lenses that do not assume human dominance over nature.

Project Plan

Resources: Head of Programming to shift focus to curriculum re-development

- Train junior support staff and delegate responsibilities
- Build multi-disciplinary team to explore different lenses and educational perspectives

Expert Research: Consult with AI experts, psychologists, relational therapists, ethicists, ecologists, to develop educational framework based on an expanded, ecologically informed perspective

Customer Research: Conduct focus groups to gain an understanding of members' inner landscapes, current paradigms, and level of awareness on this topic

Design: Build foundational framework on which all curriculum will be based

- Rollout initial program designed from new lenses to existing audience

Timeline

12 - 18 months



Opportunities

How can we play a pro-active role in bringing a shared philosophy of enough-ness into being?

Why It's Important

In a future where the majority of the population is operating from a Tier 2 perspective, companies will be held to a significantly higher standard than they are today. Organizations will need to justify their existence and the endless pursuit of profit will not be acceptable. If the client wants to be at the forefront of social innovation, they must become the change they wish to see in the world.

The best way people will learn to shift into a new, shared story is by experiencing it firsthand. By re-designing the organizational structure from a perspective of enough-ness, the clients audience will have the opportunity to gain an immersive, hands-on experience of how it feels and works. How do you define what is enough for you? What does it mean to use only what you need? How do you think about setting the “maximums” in your life?

In considering their impact upfront, defining a clear vision, adopting an aligned business model and making explicit the maximum size or profit at which they will dissolve or choose to consciously stop growing, they will be setting the tone for the future of business. It will position the organization to become a center of excellence.

Response

Re-structure the organization on a philosophy of voluntary simplicity to serve as the pioneering model.

Project Plan

Convene a team that represents all stakeholder groups, plus the executive team
Research any existing frameworks or innovative organizational, cultural, and financial structures to gain inspiration

Develop a vision in conversation with the entire organization, including adjustments to the business model and metrics to determine when the vision has been achieved and the upper limits of growth

Determine impact of this new structure on existing product / service offerings

Implement the new vision, aligning strategy and operations to the new parameters and mindset

Prepare and distribute public announcement

Timeline

12 months



Conclusion

Conscious Communities, by their very nature, exist on the fringes and have long been considered test-beds for the future. Searching for the fringe of the fringe to inform an exploration of possible futures was an exceptionally fun challenge.

If this project were to be expanded upon, I would recommend further exploration of the challenges and innovations of Conscious Communities around financial sustainability, governance structures, and physical infrastructure, and expand the geographic scope to explore CCs globally. Lastly, I would suggest conducting an expanded implications analysis to fully explore all four scenarios.

In my research, I came to understand Conscious Communities as socially conscious - or striving to be - microcosms of society, and as such, the topic demanded consideration of the full range of human concerns. Feeling a sense of connectedness in the world, developing the ability to think for ourselves and question what is put forth as absolute truths, prioritizing time for rest, having a sense of purpose, and the drive to do and be better are some of the fundamental experiences of humanness. These are what will drive the future of conscious communities, but which way it goes will depend on how we choose to do and be in the world.

On a personal note, going through this process was personally transformative. Coming into contact with certain concepts, ideas, and visions has shifted how I view and move through the world. Of particular impact was the concept of enough-ness. I have found that simply posing the question “what is enough for me?” when making a decision or before pursuing an opportunity creates a sense of spaciousness. In leaving more on the table, so to speak, I have found I am not left wanting, but surprisingly, that enough really is as good as a feast.

Thank you. Please feel free to reach out with questions or feedback at mjamaluddin@uh.edu.