

How I spent my summer vacation

Written by Geoph Kozeny
12 August 2008 16:50

The writer, Geoph Kozeny, was a well-known American communitarian. The highly acclaimed double DVD, "Vision of Utopia: Experiments in Sustainable Culture", was lovingly made by Geoph, a veteran community networker, author, and former FIC board member. Though Geoph died before he could complete the editing of Part Two, FIC has completed that work with his blessing. The article is taken, with thanks, from the Fellowship for Intentional Community Newsletter, Fall 2001, Issue #26.

ZEGG, a community, of about 80 residents living 50 miles southwest of Berlin, hosted an impressive series of networking events this summer.

The International Communal Studies Association brought together about 200 scholars, networkers, members of intentional communities, and seekers of community for three days of talks, workshops, networking, and socializing. The program featured 66 interesting and informative presentations on a wide variety of topics, however the most noted conference highlight was the unplanned bonding and healing that happened between the Israeli kibbutzniks and the various German participants, especially ZEGG members. The magic that catalyzed this healing stemmed from the ZEGG choir's longstanding tradition of singing folk songs from around the world, including a number of Hebrew songs of peace. This was the first time ICOSA's triennial conference had been hosted at a real live contemporary community, and there's now widespread enthusiasm for finding other intentional communities to host future ICOSA gatherings.

In a chartered post-conference tour, we visited three other communities: UFA-Fabrik in Berlin (a live/work urban commune focused on social, cultural, and ecological innovations); Kommune Niederkaufungen (located in the middle of a small town, it's the largest secular income-sharing community in Germany); and Okodorf Sieben Linden (a new eco-village being built outside a small village that claims to be the center of the world). It was a great tour, and many strong connections were created.

ZEGG next hosted the weeklong fourth annual International Communities Meeting (ICM), an intentional formal gathering of communities from all over the world. Representatives from about 40 communities, plus a dozen community networkers, experienced a good mix of sharing, brainstorming, organizing, and socializing.

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The following week, five of us carpoled to Wolimierz, a formerly abandoned railroad-station-turned-community-culture/art center in the southwest corner of Poland. There we were greeted by a rag-tag collective of artists and their friends who were hosting the annual meeting of the Global Eco-village Network/Europe. Among other things they celebrated a \$70,000 grant from the EU (European Union) to support eco-village education and development in the coming year, and agreed to convene, probably in Germany in the fall of 2003, an international gathering of communities and networkers.

The next day, 200 visitors converged on ZEGG for their annual tradition of 2-week "Sommercamp." We were subdivided into about a half dozen dorfgroups (village groups) of about 25-30 participants who met regularly for check-ins, discussions, and forums-the process at the heart of ZEGG's cultural experiment. Each morning featured a plenary talk and discussion, and the afternoons and evenings included guided tours, nature walks, women's groups, men's groups, children and youth camps, music and dancing, choir performances, meditation and yoga groups, kitchen shifts, slide shows, star walks, volleyball, a talent show, a swimming pool scene, and late-night hanging out at the village pub.

All in all, my time at ZEGG was stimulating, thought provoking, and inspiring. The fact that they have the facilities and energy to host three back-to-back networking events speaks volumes about their vision and dedication. And the experience, insights, and enthusiasm of the many participants at these events promises great hope for the role of communities in creating a positive future for the planet.