PLEASE READ THIS

by Michael Würfel

No preface…

A directory doesn't need a preface! A directory is a listing of data, a sober, factual thing.

No. The eurotopia Directory is not a sober, factual story at all. In this book you will find hundreds of idealistic life designs, hundreds of examples of people trying to get on with one another and create a reality to suit their character and needs. And therefore hundreds of inspirations that really exist - emulation (and often participation) is recommended! The eurotopia makers cannot really be described as sober or factual either – data entry overflows into baby time and when the office space in the trailer gets too hot to bear, there is naked running to the delightfully cool outdoor shower. Various community entries are discussed over lunch and the epiphany about the right symbol for "working in community-owned businesses" happens in mid-sleep. The voluntary data entry helpers also didn't just gain sobering and factual impressions at Sieben Linden. The work on the eurotopia Directory combines fun, hope and invariable challenges, both for its makers and in terms of the printed projects.

Aside from the very first edition, this edition of eurotopia (spelled without capital letters for unknown historical reasons that we're willing to respect) is the first not to be published by the "Club99" collective. The first eurotopia book was pretty much home-made in 1996 by Silke Hagmaier, the subsequent initiator of the Club99 group. The Sieben Linden Ecovillage didn't even exist then. It was founded shortly afterwards, with Club99 as a resident group with their own shared economy, plot and fields of activity. This group researched, created and published the second to fourth Eurotopia editions (2000, 2005, 2009). I was already working with Silke in 1996, when the database could not exceed 1.4 megabytes or else it wouldn't fit on the disk… Since I had already participated in the other editions, and Club99 disbanded at the end of 2010, the former publishers and I agreed that I would take over the next edition. Volker Peters was on board again, he had already automated countless processes for previous editions. Communi-

The team members' pictures were made with webcams at their respective workplace. Above: Publisher Micha in his winter's office in spring (under the roof in the top floor - too hot in the summer, when he moved into a trailer. For layouting in fall he moved back up). Middle: Ines volunteered in Sieben Linden for one year. She mostly researched (email) addresses. Below: Felicia heard the call for help in Brithdir Mawr (Wales) and translated 35.502 words into English for this book...

ties in our database can therefore more or less be contacted at the touch of a button (okay – several buttons, after finding the correct document which explains which buttons exactly), and they mostly register online too. I've got more to say about the "online" thing, see below.

eurotopia, I must let this be known, is not a registered charitable association. eurotopia is not institutionally funded either. At the end of the day, eurotopia is a private enterprise. Many thousands of Euros are invested in the book and (hopefully) the sales return even more thousands of Euros. There should be a profit. If this is the case, the earnings are to be used for the construction of a house at the Sieben Linden ecovillage, and thereby contribute a little to the creation of ecological living spaces.

…but a short instruction manual

We use the term "community" when a group of people live together intentionally in order to pursue ideological (and also material) goals together, be it explorative or fulfilled. That is, when these people care to abandon a little of their individual privacy in order to communally create personal aspects of life. This can occur by reaching joint decisions, but also in terms of communally created fields of activity, a joint economy, shared education for the children, and much more. So much for our approved definition. In the article entitled "Who is Community", I write about the difficulty in classifying projects and groups accordingly, and how it was dealt with in this book.

In the main section, the communities describe themselves. The book therefore offers an overview of the community scene as well as many inspirations for your own community, your own search for a community, or your own community creation. Settlements and co-housing projects that may not be considered to be close communities are not necessarily represented more often than in previous editions, but they are more clearly marked.

The book is not produced with the intention of promoting community tourism, a demanding, expectant approach or an all-inclusive holiday mentality. A diverse, inspiring and constructive process of making acquaintances and creating networks, however, is very much what we hope for. We like to serve a self-conscious, stable and therefore "successful" community movement. Please always bear in mind: If the community did not explicitly invite you, it should be taboo for you to just turn up on their doorstep. It might help to think of communities a bit like the relationships of lovers, just with a few more participants: there is a familiarity that cannot spontaneously be applied to any visitor, particularly when thousands of guests come along every year (as is the case, for instance, here at Sieben Linden). With prior arrangement, however, most communities are very open to visitors and interested parties, and many even offer room and board in exchange for work (in the main part of the book, this is indicated with the following

Volker Peters (above) is our IT person. He has been helping to design the various editions of the book for years. He lives in Schloss Glarisegg community in Switzerland. Right: Astrid came from Kommune Niederkaufungen and helped to research for one week. We got a picture only from the back of her head.

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symbol ❦❦ – please see legend). It is perhaps also useful to note that "a community" is not the same as an individual: "The community thinks…", "The community does not want...", "The community said…" – these are impossible statements, no matter how the sentences end. Especially where negative encounters are concerned, it is useful to remember that a community always consists of people who respectively "think", "(do not) want" or "said". Please do not apply an individual's point of view to the whole group (e.g. when someone has had a bad day), and conversely, do not assume that communal decisions always reflect the opinions of every individual inhabitant.

It is always challenging for individuals to engage with a group. Just like "not being part of it" can bring up a feeling of exclusion, "commitment to a community" can entail a great feeling of belonging and that fabulous "sense of community". That is the whole secret of groups and communities – and not least of all, this book shows how many possibilities there are to participate in communal life in some form or other.

The great offline adventure…

Further tips for "handling" communities can be found in the bibliography and the self-descriptions in this book. It is most certainly an adventure to launch yourself into the world of communities and away from a medial all-encompassing mainstream culture. By "all-encompassing" I mean to say that actually, all sorts of possible (and impossible) situations of mainstream culture have already been worked out in some form or another – in books, TV, pop songs. Where people live closely together, they can reinvent culture, and many further constellations of encounters and interactions are awaiting discovery. And that is the most fascinating thing about it. Community Fiction ("Com-Fi") could be the name of the genre. I don't know whether I'd like US-style TV series in community settings, but even that couldn't spoil the real adventure of communal life, far removed from "like"-buttons. It's about real encounters and also about the realisation that most people function differently from you. Important: If you want to live in community, those people are there too.

The fact that eurotopia is a book as opposed to an app, web service or WiFi data cloud, fits in quite nicely with this offline adventure idea. Of course there would be advantages of the abovementioned: A database, like the one we manage, belongs inside a computer, that's what the things were made for. A search for vegan communities in Bulgaria would be much easier with a eurotopia-app than with a book. But there are reasons for keeping our content offline:

The third most important reason is that we know how to make books, and with the use of recycled paper, eco-electricity for our computers and CO_2-compensation for the print run, we feel that it's an OK thing to do. For a serious online service, we'd need program-

Stefanie (above) actually inquired for a list of ecovillages which she wanted for her study. We could convince her to come and help us for a week… Irmgard (below) used to live in in Findhorn (Scotland). She helped us to process data for almost two weeks.

mers, and these are rarely found in communities. If they do drop by, we need them to fix our internet connection.

The second most important reason: We finance our work by selling the book. We keep getting emails (yes, we do have Internet!) with ideas about creating an online-presence financed by crowd sourcing, by expensive registrations, by donations or whatever… but up until now we could not be convinced. What's published on a website is all over the Internet in no time. For a little while, that would be nice – but it would be the last time we'd collect all that information. We just can't do it on a voluntary basis. It's beyond 1,000 hours of work for every edition. So it wouldn't be sustainable.
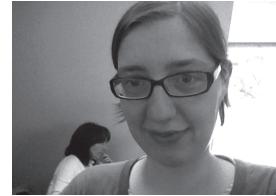
The most important reason is simple: We really like books. More than websites. Being able to leaf through the book, all the community designs side by side, mobility, no need for batteries – we find this unbeatable.

…now partly online too

After having stated that, let's go back one step. During the creation of the directory we noted hundreds of times per day how practical it is to be able to search the computer's database. So we sought and found a way in which these practical searches can be offered in spite of our reservations about an online database. A monster appendix with keywords would have been one option, but the book was meant to stay slim and light. There was a better idea: on www.eurotopia.de/booksearch you can search our database for communities' keywords as well as for words and phrases in their descriptions. The results give the numbers of the pages in this book on which you can find the communities that correspond to your search. A search for "mobile phone free" spits out the page number on which the Sieben Linden Ecovillage is listed. Therefore the Internet complements the book and not vice-versa. We will test this offer after publication and will develop it according to needs and practicality.

Reading matter
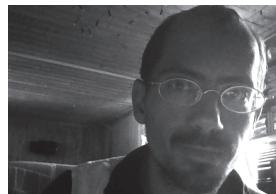
In this edition we have tried to concentrate on listing as many communities as possible, as well as listing networks and initiatives which can help you find even more communities. We restricted the editorial part in order to make the book as compact as possible. Although we firmly indicate that the book is not a travel guide, we know it will accompany many people on their paths and travels. We did

Kata (from the planned German ecovillage Keimblatt Ökodorf, above) helped to submit data for almost four weeks. Which is a good opportunity to say that all our team members were phantastic and will be welcomed back for visits! Martin (middle) writes his Ph.D. thesis on "Usage of Time (within intentional communities)" and used his eurotopia volunteering as a vehicle to research Sieben Linden people. Immo (below) paused his great bicycle journey for four weeks of eurotopia…

consider the articles on the following pages to be important, though: they all deal with the reality of communal life and the integration of communities into the surrounding world, and are therefore hopefully useful to communities, people interested in community, as well as community researchers and sceptics.

For this edition I aimed to keep the editorial part more pragmatic than visionary, even somewhat self-critical. The brief for the authors was also to reflect on the fact that "community" as a way of life, no matter how rewarding we may find it, does not spread across the planet as quickly as one might expect after e.g. reading the articles in the last eurotopia edition. Community seemed pretty much like the only alternative when you heard us jubilating about it like that. I myself sometimes ponder more on the problems of communal life than on the beautiful aspects of it, which can certainly be felt in my articles. Diana Leafe Christian, the author of our "leading article", also describes herself as "not exactly optimistic. I don't believe", she wrote to me, "that communities have much influence on mainstream culture (…) However, some (…) have had enough time and history to create really amazing things in some areas." Her article does in fact gush with enthusiasm for the work and successes of communities. You're not an optimist, Diana? I don't believe it.

When the descriptions of the communities started arriving, they did infect both myself and the whole editorial team with their idealism. Now, faced with the finished book, my own enthusiasm very much overpowers my desire for self-criticism. And this is just right. It's fine for this book to enthuse – even if things in and about communities are not always easy and if the state of the world still seems completely hopeless. I'm happy to be inspired by eurotopia work and wish the same for all those who read it.
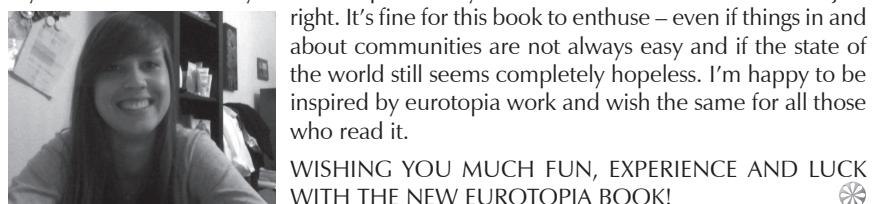
WISHING YOU MUCH FUN, EXPERIENCE AND LUCK WITH THE NEW EUROTOPIA BOOK!

P.S.: Let's add a very sincere plea to all our international readers: Please help us to present even more communities from all European countries in the next edition. Especially communities that have existed for some time. If you live in a community or if you stumble across communities that are not listed in this book, please let us know! Thank you!

Sally (above) was recruited as English proofreader when she participated at an Ecovillage Design Education course in Sieben Linden Ecovillage… Satoshi (below) just moved to Sieben Linden and helped to layout the directory section. Beke (left) proofread part of the book and will help to ship it (at least until the fall of 2014).