

Common resources and their management in closely-knit community with explanation how the system works

ZEGG is an intentional community of 110 members (adults, youth, children) and a big international seminar center on 14 hectares of land in Germany.

The system we run by has grown organically as we would say. It was not pre-planned in a masters plan on a designers desk and then implemented, but it developed as best practice in the course of the growth of the community and seminar center that we run together. This process of empiric finding has been going on since the founding of the intentional community in 1978.

Right from the beginning we shared a lot. This was important for us to break the logic of market enterprise. In the beginning of ZEGG in 1991 it was clear that we buy the land and houses together and each one of us would hold a share of the limited company we formed. During the course of the years there were moments when this concept was threatened in times of low economic income, when a member offered to buy a house for example. Wisely enough we resisted the temptation. In the following years I visited many communities and saw that the common ownership of the land and houses seems to work better than not.

At ZEGG we share a heating system for warm water and room heating in all our houses which exists of several units using different technologies and resources. We have 260m² thermal solar panels, three co-generation plants using gas (producing both: electricity and heat), a wood-chip burner of 500kWh and a wood log burner of 350kWh as backup system. About 90% of our electricity we produce in 450m² photo-voltaic cells and the co-generation plants.

We have our own high quality water from a well and clean the waste water in a very low maintenance and low energy planted soil filter.

We shop (food and basic household items) and cook cooperatively. We have our own 1,5 ha vegetable garden and many fruit bushes and trees planted in a permaculture edible landscape. We can and store fruits and vegetables for winter. We have an efficient recycling system set up and a car sharing. Most tools and machines are used and owned commonly.

For every one of these things a team of a person is responsible to direct and maintain it. This proved important to keep things in order. There needs to be some personal responsibility involved. If we live by the notion: all belongs to all of us and we just use it, it easily results in tools in bad shape or in places where nobody finds them when needed. As we could not solve this problem of responsibility differently there now are guardians for each area.

Work is done on the basis of a kind of internal barter system that works by the hour of work done.

So there are gardeners in charge with the garden and the harvest. The kitchen team processes and uses the produce from our land and someone orders the shopping we need to do besides this. All the things are in a cold store in the basement of our guest house where the kitchen is located and where most of us share their meals also with the visitors to the seminar center. All members can decide to eat at home and freely take food from the store or eat the cooked meal in our restaurant.

All of the members share weekly cooking and cleaning shifts in the kitchen and in public spaces. This is organized in small self-responsible groups of 10 to 14, who have the duty to

fill the rota on a specific day per week.

This sometimes becomes tiresome for people, as it is perceived as an interruption in my other daily duties and work load. But in regards of the luxury of being served well cooked meals every day it is little effort to commit to a kitchen shift once a week.

The woodworking tools and machines of course are given out during office hours to members if they know the tool. We have a carpentry for repair and building wooden furniture, windows and doors. There is a maintenance team for all daily works and repairs on our big land.

All the teams have designated responsibilities and are coordinated in a management team. We use a sociocratic form of organization and decision making called Holacracy. There is a case study about this you can read.

The savings in both money and natural resources and energy is great when tools and equipment are used commonly. But it needs a mix of common resources and personal responsibilities, that makes the system work and functional.

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