



Ecovillages: New Approaches to Urban Regeneration CIFAL Curitiba Training Session December 5- 7, 2005

Curitiba, Brazil

"By the time this century passes its first quarter, more than a billion and half people in the world's cities will face life and health threatening environments unless we can create a revolution in urban problem solving."
United Nations Conference Habitat II

"The main task in the years to come will be to apply our ecological knowledge and systemic thinking to the fundamental redesign of our technologies and social institutions, so as to bridge the gap between human design and the ecologically sustainable systems of nature." Fritjof Capra

Nowhere on earth is the need for ecological understanding greater, and more urgent than in cities, where human activity is most intense. The majority of people in the world live in or near cities, and the percentage is increasing. Enormous amounts of energy and resources are concentrated in urban areas, creating unique ecosystems and causing innumerable impacts to adjacent and distant lands and waters. Cities built on only two per cent of the world's surface use up to 75% of the world's resources and discharge similar amounts of waste.

This is increasingly the case in the Caribbean and Latin American's cities that are adopting western models of development, which are alien to their traditional socio-cultural reality and beyond the carrying capacity of their ecosystems. These models need urgent transformation, or else they are likely to cause the destabilisation of our cultures and the increasing degradation of the main ecosystems on which our long term survival depends.

The CIFAL training session will present an integrated model for sustainability, as a resource to inspire the imagination of urban planners and mayors, encouraging environmentally responsible design and development of our Latin American cities. We will be examining a systemic new approach for addressing sustainable urbanisation, as promoted by the Global Ecovillage Network (GEN), a worldwide network of sustainable human settlements and initiatives. Topics to be covered will include:

- *Ecological building applied in popular housing
- *Renewable energy systems
- *Reduction of fossil fuels using biodiesel and biogas
- *Low footprint natural waste water treatment
- *Rainwater collection and use
- *Integration and biodiversity in cities as ecosystems

The framework of the seminar is the ecovillage concept, which offers an integrated model, with manifold local manifestations in both urban and rural contexts, and in over developed and developing countries. Ecovillages worldwide are designed in such a way that their lifestyle, businesses, economy, physical and social structures and technologies do not interfere with nature's inherent ability to sustain life.

Notable features of this model are that it:

- *combines a supportive social-cultural environment with a low-impact lifestyle
- *promotes eradication of poverty by supporting bioregional social economic systems
- *supports the new green industries such as renewable energy and creates jobs
- *strengthens the social self reliance of local communities
- *mimimises the use of natural resources and land
- *minimises and recycles waste and reduces emission of pollutants
- *enhances biodiversity and ecosystems.

In 1998 the first ecovillages were officially named among the United Nations' *Top 100 List of Best Practices*, as excellent models of sustainable living.

You are invited to join this exercise in urban redesign with:

Michael Shaw *The Ecovillage Institute, Ocean Arks*

May East *Findhorn Foundation, Global Ecovillage Network*

Jeff Clearwater *Village Power Design, Ecovillage Network of the Americas*

Marcelo Todescan *Ecovila Sao Paulo*

Miguel Sattler *Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul*

Otavio Urquiza *Ecoovila Porto Alegre*

Adelia de Melo Branco *International Rainwater Harvesting Alliance*

Élcio Luiz Karas *URBS*