

WE ARE BUILDING AN ECOVILLAGE

**One family's experience of moving from the city to the Altai ecological
settlement**

by Alexander Ivanov

Siberia, Altai, 2013 - 2016

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*Devotion to my Father, who always dreams about village life;
to my Mother, who still can't understand what's peculiar about this;
to my Wife, Son and Daughter, who live in the village together with me;
to our Village with all its settlers and sympathizers and to Granny Toma with
gratitude.*



Our home – 2015-2016 years

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Foreward

I first met Sasha in 2007 when he had spent 3 days hitching across Russia to get to Moscow from Tyumen, his then home town. Contact Moscow is a Dance festival of Contact Improvisation and I was on the team of organisers. We spent 10 days teaching, dancing, researching and performing aspects of this form. Sasha joined my performance group and participated for the first time as a performer, dancer and creative thinker in this Improvised Dance context. We struck up a friendship and I was happy to listen to his extraordinary tales of the way he navigated the world. Traveling simply with his camera to take photographs of war torn and intense human environments. He said you only need to know 10 basic words in each language to get by. And this he did.

Sasha is a man of deep intelligence and fearless gentle intensity, who does not set problems in front of him to dissuade him, but merely to find a way to solve and continue. I traveled to him the next year as part of my first tour of Siberia. He welcomed me into his home and we spent days discussing the world, our place in it and ways of being, as well as creating dance workshops and performances. It was no surprise for me to hear that he was embarking on a new adventure, to build an Eco village in the Altai Mountains. Altai those deeply mystical, beautiful and at times inhospitable mountains.

'I am writing a book' he says and asked if I could help with reading the English translation. I was honoured when Sasha asked me to read his account of his first steps towards making his dream a reality. To read through his philosophies and processes is an inspiration. I was humbled to read the way he strips down his thinking, to figure out the bare necessities and to take it from there. I can not speak or understand much Russian, but have spent many years working, dancing and traveling there. So my approach to the editing was to find an authentic voice, more than exact correct English. The Russian language is so much more poetic than my practical native tongue. So I checked the translation more for understanding, than perfect English. And here it is. The beginning, the start of a huge life journey. An explanation of how he came to be there with answers for his young family who might not quite understand why he decided to take this huge leap and come from the city to the mountain village. But here it is. Part one..enjoy. I look forward to the next installment.

Caroline Waters

Independent Freelance Performer,
Organiser and Arts Educator
currently based in Brighton.

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ADDRESS

Dear Friends! There are a lot of English books devoted to the eco-settlement theme, there are also different books about garden, communities and building process...There are books about the experience of various people who practice «low impact» life-style. «We are building an Ecovillage» is a book about Siberia. It's about our experience of the moving from a city to «virgin lands». This book, written in Russian language, has already been reprinted twice and has good references among Russian readers. Now you have its English variant in your hands and I hope that it will be interesting for you to read about our Eco-settlement life in distant Siberia. Enjoy the reading! You are welcome to send your comments, opinions and letters back. With our best wishes!

A. Ivanov

INTRODUCTION

I'm going to the village to get closer to the earth...

Boris Grebenshchikov

I tried different ways to write about the ecovillage. And everything I managed to write was featureless, in the third person. With a pretension to be wise, mentoring. But this is a type of text I can't produce, probably because I am not a professional in any area; the only area I'm more or less competent is my own life. So I decided to write about it. It will be more honest and sincere.

Right now I'm sitting in front of the furnace, I see trembling flames through the open door. The kettle with tea is boiling on the stove. My lovely wife Natasha is sitting next to me, holding in her hands our quietly grunting daughter, who is just over a month old. White covers everywhere outside, it's February; snow. Grey outlines of birches on the mountain slope. Grey, lead sky. That it is. On the day like this I started writing about the process of developing the ecological settlement in Altai in which we participate actively, with full immersion. Because as for today, we're the only family that continuously resides here, far from civilization.

Why am I writing this?

Firstly, it's our story, which, perhaps, will be able to help us to understand what's happening with us.

Secondly, this text can appear useful for somebody, hence I know, that a lot of people are thinking about moving to an ecovillage, but don't risk to do it. This can be not so easy – leaving the more or less customary regular life in a flat, for an absolutely vague outlook of country life, about which you have no idea. So for many

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people the experience, described here, may become an answer to questions which can arise regarding this subject.

Thirdly, this text is for the future. In case our daughter will wonder about how did it come about, that her parents, the city dwellers, go to live in the mountains, without electricity and warm lavatory. She'll be able to read this book and find all the answers, which by that time we'll have probably forgotten ourselves.

Fourthly, this is an unofficial history of our settlement, which sooner or later will become living and real.

This book is dedicated to the very first stage of organizing and setting up the ecological settlement. Thus don't try to find any practical advice about how to build a house properly, how to lay out a kitchen garden... Because we don't know all that ourselves yet. But today we can share whatever we have: the experience of moving to virgin lands. The real experience of how we began the settlement, including all the difficulties and mistakes.

First of all I'm going to focus on our «philosophy», the way of thinking, which led us to this probably strange experiment, as a result of which we, the city dwellers, found ourselves in the Altai mountains.

So, how did it all begin?



Tepee's Life

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The brook

I never have a thought that a brook can have so many voices. Sometimes you do something for your house or are simply walking and suddenly hear – it's like somebody's voice call you. You try to listen to it but it's just the gurgling running water. Then again distracted you hear the brook speaking, mumbling to you already in the other voice. And if you go behind the hill – there is the silence everywhere, just if there was nothing noisy next to you.

PART ONE THE ODE TO THE RESPONSIBILITY

Roots down or some history

A good friend of mine once said: «You know, I think our Earth is the best place in this Universe. And there is nothing more wonderful... At any price we have to settle down here, on this land. We must not fly off from here, we won't find a better place, but we can lose this one. A lot of people among my friends wish to fly away of here. This is like trees starting to grow their roots upwards in the wrong direction. We have to turn over, and start to grow roots downwards, in this Earth – the best in the Universe». I liked her words very much. Exactly this metaphor about the tree roots expressed the feelings I have been having these past few years – I want to grow roots downwards like trees do.

My desire to move to the ecological settlement appeared about five years ago. And since then it has been sluggishly developing: I visited several settlements, read a lot about this subject and was looking for like-minded people and the land... I examined also the geography of ecological settlements – the place for living drifted from Europe to the Far East, then shrunk down to Siberia, and after that localized in the Altai. It's been three years since I knew I will live in the Altai. In the spring of the year 2011, I heard rumours, that the people I knew (some of them I knew personally, some only «virtually») started to organize a settlement and gathered people who wanted to participate in this project. Then I felt that this was what I needed, I checked out some photographs, looked at the maps and read the description. Then I called to one of the coordinators and asked only one question: are there any mosquitoes in that area? (The memories about a place in the Tyumen region were still fresh, where, after we got out of the car, we'd been almost eaten alive by mosquitoes; we left alive, but the desire for ecological life went down). After getting the answer, that there are few mosquitoes, I told them I was participating. I did believe myself and in my feelings and the people who started this «venture».

So, at the beginning of May 2011 along with the representatives of several cities our delegation of the «to-be-settlers», came to the regional administration centre to legalize the land ownership. It was a long process. An unhurried one. We again were reassured that the bureaucracy is the greatest science on Earth. But everything resolved in our favour. About 120 acres of land, the first part of our lot, was registered to our shared collective ownership. This was the official beginning of our eco-experiment.

While looking for a place to live I have had a lot of changes as to say, on the personal front. I had different relationships, visits to civilian registrars' for sometimes even opposite purposes. But be that as it may, up to the moment I'm writing about, I was living in the settlement with Natalia in the first more or less suitable building for living, thinking about what part of the valley where we going to start building our house.

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I think it's a very important factor that the family should be unanimous in the issue of moving to the virgin lands. Anyway, I will write about it a bit later, and now another important question: «What for?»

Winter

In winter while going on snowdrifts you hear just yourself: snow crunch under the legs, rustling of clothes, thoughts inside the head. You need to make a stop to hear something else. And listen to carefully.

«What for?»

The question «what for?» was firstly asked by my mom, and then by another 1,000 "not indifferent" people including the locals from all the surrounding villages.

And the first answer that comes into the mind of those who ask this question is very simple: «Sect!» Allegedly only being in a sect you act in a such foolish manner, as starting to build your own village on virgin land without any infrastructure and without lots of money. Perhaps it's strange, but we have no shared ideology. We don't belong to the fancy modern Megre`s «Anastasia's» movement, which sets the idea of the «kin estate» in settlements, faraway from civilization as fundamental, and lots of people in our eco-settlement haven't even read Vladimir Megre's books about this Anastasia. Also we don't have any religious fanatics that in all times were known for their striving to build hermitages close to nature for praying and meditation...

The second answer that comes into the mind of all interested people is that we are crazy. And even among the local village people who were slightly scared at the beginning by the fact that in their mountains the sectarians (oh, horror!) have settled, slowly started to regard us as non-hazardous, but a little strange people. Wacky. Who now play in the ecological life, taste all the troubles (the local farmers know about the difficulties of country life not by hearsay) and the next season they will roll back into their city and will continue to go for a work to their office and live in their apartment, remembering how it was cold, hungry and hard to live in the mountains.

These were the most widespread versions that could explain our viewpoint – the sect and madness, after that guessing came to an end.

But we are just building the village, our own HOME, in which we will have silence, fresh air, tasty food, pure water and beautiful views from the window. This was enough to reach a decision. Perhaps this decision about the moving was formed by lots of other earlier reasons, for example some childhood`s fantasies stirred up on the fertile soil of the adventure stories by authors like Daniel Defo, Jack London and Ernest Seton-Thomson, those people who wrote about real life outside.

Perhaps this decision was the echo of many hiking trips which were made in my life, many travels during which I saw people living in different, sometimes difficult conditions and managing to be even more humane than those «civilized» urban men.

Maybe it is the realization of our parents' dream. For example my father always told that he wanted to leave in a village and draw pictures when he will become a pensioner. That is why there were three houses bought by our family in the different parts of Russia. To tell the truth, that was the end of our family's ecological experiment. Still we have one house in one of midland villages, which is empty for many years.

Who knows what really moves us? But the fact remains – It's already the second winter I've been sitting close to the furnace, listening to firewood cracking and looking at the grey outlines of birches which cover all surrounding mountains.

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In fact, it is a real experiment, and no one of our settlers knows for sure how it will end. It occurred that all of us are the city dwellers, and the country life is a mystery for us, the salvation of which is the aim of our experiment. An equation with multiple unknowns. But it is interesting, and the process is inspiring.

Of course some settlers have already found their answers, and quit from the project, some people arrive and understand that such «exercises» are too tough for them. We, for example, are still solving this issue. Each getting their own answers in their own time.

It should be good to have an idea which can unite all of us in a single space – religious, ideological, or any other... but it happened so, that we couldn't find a good one. One thing we've come to together for is that we are interested in the process of creating an ecological settlement itself. One in which we'd be able to realize our ideas, develop ourselves, do creative work. We are interested in the creation of our little society, one we could tell others about.



Summer Kitchen

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The Prince

Once a boy came to us. Like a prince – in a white cap, white suit, 20 years old. Very-very light boy. How did he appear there in mountains? He asked: «Do you aim at self-enrichment here»? We said: «No, we just live, eating borsch now, you see?» «And do you practiced yoga maybe?» – he inquired. We responded: «No, we chopped firewood, brought water, no time for yoga, really!»

So the prince didn't manage to find self-enrichment in our settlement.

Well, what we've got:

Introductory chapter: the conditions

Nobody's place and everybody's place. Mine, too. What shall I do?

Tove Jansson

The valley about 250 acres, registered to collective shared ownership. Altai region, Altai foothills. Climate: extremely continental.

Agricultural land category: tillages and meadows.

There are brooks and springs in the valley. No cellular networks, no electricity. Last 1.5 kilometers to our land is a country road for tractors, barely usable in off-seasons.

The closest village is 3 kilometers far from us, the closest shop – 7 kilometers.

There are about 15 families of settlers and only one* now lives here more or less continuously – it's three of us: me, my wife and daughter.

(* **Update:** in 2016 we have already 3 families in Valley)

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Everything has been already said

I write here in the sweat of my brow and then think: «For what?» In any case I have written nothing new, everything has been already written before me. And all words are already created, I only shift them from one place to another. Then in the new order the thought appear: «Probably it's something new?» And after that you open some book and there is the same thought and even said in better words...

I had a friend – a little odd sculptor, uncombed, lost in some reverie. I came to his workshop and saw him reading Plato. He said: «Plato is a good fellow. He said everything. And there is nothing to add». I didn't start to read Plato, what if he really had already said everything? What will I do in winters then?

About responsibility

Since we've left for Altai, we've been receiving a lot of questions regarding different aspects of our living: health, education, food... In fact, I'd unite all these questions in the one theme – they all are about responsibility. Therefore it should be considered in more details. This theme is very important.

The modern society to which we are accustomed to usually thinks that responsibility is transferred from an individual to the certain impersonal governmental or commercial structures. For example, one plans a journey. What does he do? He turns to a travel agency and for a certain sum of money all the responsibility for his trip falls on their shoulders – no need to worry anymore. The same is for a pregnant woman who transfers her responsibility to an antenatal clinic and then to a maternity home.

And the list is endless: our safety is the concern of the Police, our retirement is in the hands of the pension fund, the health service must care for our health, schools – for our children's education, and so on and so forth. We get light and heat through pipes and wires. Food is delivered directly to the shops... Thus we can say that the responsibility for all basic human needs nowadays belongs to anyone except the persons themselves. It was never observed in the traditional society – many spheres of life, especially basic ones which are crucial to success and well-being, were always under a person's control.

On the one hand, it's very comfortable. Society in our cities has become specialized to the most extreme degree: one may do something specific and never guess about the source of light in the bulb or especially about vegetable cultivation technology – all these things deal with specially trained people.

On the other hand, such types of society are extremely unstable: any system failure causes a real mess and elementary human needs are affected. It's also interesting that a crisis appears instantly and without any apparent prerequisites.

Actually I can't call myself a number-one fan of any conspiracy theory, but sometimes I guess that many processes seem too unnatural to be accidental ones. And I feel that these periodic crises which happen from time to time are really controlled and even profitable for some group of people. Moreover these very crises are a very convenient non-military form of population management.

During my not so long lifetime lots of crises have occurred: small strange deficits for some groups of goods and extremely big letdowns that have led lots of people to the huge jitters, hunger and even suicide.

So, speaking about an ecovillage the main question is: who will bear the responsibility for everything necessary for survival and fully fledged life? And not everyone is ready to take the idea that for a successful living in the independent self-sufficient settlement the responsibility should fall on their own shoulders. But that's true.

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Nowadays more and more of my acquaintances are becoming really independent; they take responsibility for many spheres of life. Some families give birth at home without any maternity hospital service, some others practice healthy way of living and as a result they almost cease to turn to clinics. Now I already know several families in which children are homeschooled. And of course the majority of my friends work for themselves, they don't take loans and prefer backpacking instead of organized tourism.

People leading such a lifestyle seem to be not so handy for the «system». Moreover if we recall about the conspiracy theory, they become a real headache for the «conspirators»... Moving to the land and switching to the natural economy people become more and more independent. It means that they're almost completely separated from modern life in the consumer society.

It's extremely important to ask yourself what you're ready to be responsible for and which spheres of life you'd like to commit to social structures. For what responsibility I'm ready now and for what I'm not ready yet.

The resolution to move to an ecovillage depends directly on the answers found.

If a family decide to take the responsibility for the major part of their life it means they're ready to move, if no then it's better for them to stay in the habitual environment. The connection here is the following: the more spheres of life are supplied by the family itself the farther from the civilization they may settle.

The arithmetic is very simple. For example, if a family decides to bear responsibility only for heating they move somewhere to the suburbs into some private house without central heating while all the rest things they still got from special institutions. If they additionally decide to undertake for their own healthcare they can easily settle in some place without hospitals, clinics, ambulance, etc. If they're even ready to provide children with secondary education on their own they can live much further, away from schools and especially kindergartens. The same refers to working for yourself. We've got into the habit of muttering about my bad boss and negligible salary, but it's quite another matter when you understand that your salary depends only on you and nobody else. It's both about the size and its existence. It's a radically new level of the responsibility and not everyone is ready for it.

I can tell my story. It wasn't the easiest way. Especially at first. At the beginning when I understood that I wouldn't be working at the hospital as a doctor for «normal work» even I didn't believe myself. And by inertia still I went to get a job in different structures. And then I understood that having now settled, I would remain without the next journey which I had planned for the near future because nobody would give me a holiday after only several months of work. This understanding prevented me a lot to begin a «normal life». The stable salary always lost out to the opportunity to go somewhere I want at any time. Thus I didn't even reach a human resources department.

It was morally hard time. I didn't get permanent job, but also didn't learn to earn independently yet. At that time my classmates had already become managers of offices. I remained faithful to myself: as well as in my student's years, I continued

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hitch-hiking, photographing and writing about it. At the same time I began to advise and teach bit by bit. I had already had a certificate to be a psychotherapist, but had no experience. That's why I started collecting this experience. My first clients were my friends, I worked free of charge, simply for study, then I began to take for the work small sum of money. After some time I started advising more actively and even got a job in one private clinic, but to tell the truth with a very free schedule.

At the same time I began to teach contact improvisation – the very thing that I liked most. Then I began to teach applied psychology – the course «NLP-Practitioner», in « Tyumen NLP center». Also I gained more or less stable salary and what's the most important – the understanding that I can supply myself with everything necessary and be able to keep my full freedom, without reporting to anybody and not depending in anyway on days off or holidays.

Now we live in Altai. I hardly ever work as an adviser because there are no people for it, seldom do I teach when I visit the city. But I have the confidence that if necessary I am always able to get any resources which are necessary for me. Now I have no constant income, but I completely **bear the responsibility** for my activity. For me it is very important. Here of course appears the question about the economy: where can you find the resources for living? It is the important question I will write about it a bit later. Now I will tell in more details about my creeds.



What is first? Chicken or Egg?

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Creeds, or what is my faith?

*I believe neither in the cuckoo call
nor in daisy divination and I don't go to the Gypsies...*

B. Okudzhava

The adoption of any decision is based on a certain set of creeds and values and is the important point. In other words it is necessary to answer the question in what must the person trust to decide to move from the city to mountains?

I thought a lot about it and today I understand that the process of the inner search of the mind is rather difficult process, because as a result it is necessary to select only what is related to a studied subject. As Robert Dilts, the creed specialist spoke: «*When working with the beliefs of an individual it is like trying to roast a tiger. The most difficult thing is to first catch it!*» It is true, the move to mountains changes the way of life of the city dweller rather strongly, and creeds which force the person to do that must be very powerful, such that lie in the very core of the personality, in the depth of «I», the way to where is not so simple for a «tiger hunter».

I decided to go a cunning way: to begin not from myself but from those people who had strongly affected my outlook, became a source of creeds for me therefore as it seems to me, we live as we live now. At first I wrote names of people, and then understood which experience they had given me.

There are people with whom I didn't get acquainted and about whom I know according to their books in the list below. And there are also those whom I know personally.

The first important creed sounds approximately as: **any person, it doesn't dependent on the experience and the financial position, can build their own beautiful and comfortable house. It will be possible to live in this house being in a harmony with the surrounding nature.**

I read about it in books of:

Henry David Thoreau, the American philosopher well known because he lived for two years in loneliness on the bank of the Walden pond in the hut constructed by him. His book «**Walden, or Life in the Woods**» became the result of that experience. Thoreau was the minimalist and the opponent as now can be said of the «consumer society». He in details describes his life and thoughts which visited him during this two years experiment.

It is interesting that a lot of things which he wrote in the 19th century are quite up-to-date now in the 21st century. Henry is a classic writer. The quotations from his books were and are used by many people who are interested in the «eco-theme». Even Lev Nikolaevich Tolstoy quoted Thoreau.

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Bill Mollison. The Australian father of «permaculture» - an applied science, any mention of which causes nervous excitement in «eco» - societies. Mollison is a good author because he united traditional and modern knowledge about agriculture into one harmonious beautiful system by means of which it is possible to create very harmonious managing, such which would be ecologically competent. The Permaculture (permanent agriculture) is a system of design and applied science about the connection of different elements, for example houses, greenhouses, kitchen garden, garden and any hen house for the creation of the closed autonomous cycle with the most efficient use of energy. I think Bill's book «**Introduction to permaculture**» though being full of information about various tropics and bananas must be read by any villager. I've read this book several times and then someone took it without return. It proves how interesting it is.

Ianto Evans, Michael G. Smith and Linda Smiley with their book «The Hand Sculpted House, A Practical and Philosophical Guide to Building a Cob Cottage». It is an unique book which can become essential one for anyone who wants to build their own house. After reading this book I personally believed that I am able to build my own house for my family. It is very inspiring and practical even if you want to build the house not from cob but from any other material. I reread it many times and still sometimes remember about this book.

Simon Dail is known on the Internet for his «Hobbit house». Now he lives with his family in the Lammas ecovillage, in Great Britain. On his site there are a lot of interesting thoughts about «**low impact**» - the special lifestyle which has the minimum impact on the environment. Also there was an article about Simon in the first issue of the magazine «Ecohouse».

One more person is **Tony Wrench**, the Englishman too. I even correspond with him sometimes. He is known for his «Roundhouse», also in the «low impact» style. He wrote a very interesting book: «**Building a low impact roundhouse**».

All these persons and their experience are the successful stories about how is it possible to live closer to nature, rendering minimum influence on it. How to build your own inexpensive but beautiful and cozy houses. These stories are about the possibility to organize the economy in such a way that it could bring pleasure.

These are the stories about the ordinary city dwellers who changed their way of life, having successfully moved into nature. If one person once made something it can be repeated by another. I'm inspired by these stories.

These people, first of all, I consider to be my «eco»-teachers.

The second creed: **It is possible to grow up independently the majority of the basics for your family requirements. It is normal for all people and isn't some supernatural thing. It is possible to do it naturally, without use of equipment and chemicals.**

There are the «preachers» of the thoughtful and more careful lifestyle on the nature. Their works are more directly about garden and farmer affairs. I love these

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authors too and I consider them to be my inspirers. Here it is possible to remember **Bill Mollison** again about whom I have already written and there are also the others.

Sepp Holzer is an Austrian farmer who lives on his estate Krameterhof in the Alps and amazes everyone around him with his wonders of agricultural success. It's interesting and useful to read about it. But Sepp first of all is a successful and rich farmer, who is very good at large-scale agriculture improving the surrounding nature at the same time. This is a rare experience that Sepp shares actively in his seminars and books. Personally I take interest in Sepp, but he's a farmer. And we are not. The main thing that I find worth learning from him is global and systemic thinking. Sepp creates monumental projects. They're worth reading about.

There is **Nikolay Kurdyumov**, who actively writes about «smart» gardening. He's good, but is more oriented towards summer residents in the country and is valuable as an inspirator and a distributor of the ideas. And his ideas are good. Most of all I appreciate his «trilogy»: «**An art of fertility**» (**In Russian: «Masterstvo plodorodia»**), «**Defence instead of a fight**» («**Zashchita vmesto borby**»), and «**Peace instead of defence**» («**Mir vmesto zashchity**»). These books describe how you can reorient from the conquering to the collaboration with the thoughtful observation of the nature in your small garden eco-system. The book «An art of fertility» is the collection of the classical works about different approaches to soils in an easy readable narration by Nikolay. Thanks to him I learned about **Ovsinsky, Faulkner, Fukuoka** – the classics of natural restorative agriculture. I'm very grateful to him for that. To tell the truth, after Kurdyumov I've read with a pleasure the whole book of Japanese farmer **Masanobu Fukuoka «The One-Straw Revolution»** - very absorbing reading. Masanobu is very wise, and it is worth to learn from him. In his book he's not only telling about agriculture, but also about the human, his way of thinking, happiness, about natural food and ecology.

Boris Bublik is a good guy too. He's the Ukrainian preacher of the «nature-wise» agriculture. His «**Melange garden**» and other books of his are also quite interesting.

That's regarding gardening.

But living in nature is not only living in nature. Not only the garden and the house. If it was so, we wouldn't look for a community, but just moved to a village. And in this sphere there are also mentors I can name. The people who have influenced me.

The third belief sounds like that: **People can live in a healthy community having lots of common business based not on the financial relationships, have common property and live a common rich creative life.**

«**Beyond loneliness and institutions: Communes for Extraordinary People**» – the book by **Nils Christie**, is very useful here. It describes the life of communities in the interesting settlements, so called «Camp Hill». It's an alternative European form of mentally unhealthy people maintenance. These are villages, in which people live as true communes, and their example is an interesting way of

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researching the sense of the communal co-existing of people. All aspects of the person's life from birth to death are described in details. It is very interesting if you want to learn something about the **real communism in the separate village**.

I know about the life in the communes not only from the books, I had my own varied successful and unsuccessful experiments. For example for several years we lived together as a commune in Tyumen, I lived in communes in St. Petersburg and Moscow not for long, but still. Before that I've been living in the student's dormitory for about two years. The experience I got was very diverse, but mainly pleasing enough. Probably I'm a communist at heart.

There is another, fourth belief: **the Universe is kind and plentiful. It has all resources that are needed for life.**

The source of this belief is Anton Krotov indeed, a very important person for me who in the past influenced my outlook a lot. He pushed me into hitch-hiking. Amongst his numerous books I'd recommend **«Practice of Free Travels, or Free Travels in Practice»**. Like in others Anton's books there is a lot information about people's relationship, freedom, love and trust in the world, not just about how to thumb a ride or find yourself food and shelter in different places on Earth. He also was one of the people who had shown me with his own example that you can live «out of the system», working for yourself, doing what you like instead of what you have to. He also helped me to publish my first book about my travels – **«Dromomania»**. Thanks to it I started to write more and am writing now.

By the way another very important belief has just arisen, the fifth one, that **you can live «working for yourself»**.

Besides already mentioned **Anton Krotov** I met a lot of people who work for themselves: do creative work, handcrafting. Here I can remember all my teachers on psychotherapy which had personal practices, held trainings and educational seminars.

And the sixth belief, practically following from the fifth one: **money is not a goal, but just a tool. You can have everything you need without having money.**

Here I want to mention **Heidemarie Schwermer**. The German, who is well known because for about 15 years she has lived without money. She had previously been seen as a «normal» successful woman, but decided to hold an experiment under the motto: is it possible to live without money in the modern society? As a result, Heidemarie became the biggest specialist in this area in the world. She preaches that money is not a goal but just a tool. If you need something you can get it easily, for example, by changing. You can work in a cafe and get food. Work in a clothes store for a sometime and get dressed. Change service to service, replacing impersonal money relationships with more priced human ones. Heidemarie had already written several books about her way of life, she conducts seminars all over Europe. And though earlier she was considered to be a crazy, now she has disciples and followers.

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I will add one more statement, the seventh one, a lot of the aforementioned people are preaching exactly the following: **if we continue to live in the thoughtless over consumption we will simply destroy ourselves. The main condition for saving our planet is rational, deliberate Simplicity. Simple life in nature. Simple food. Simple human relationships. Simplicity in consumption. In all spheres.**

Heavy consumption and irrational usage of resources are the things various ecologists constantly speak about. And that is what we already can see around us. We live in the society where a lot of factories work. We live in the society which consumes an incredible amount of energy. We destroy a lot of resources... And as a result of that 99% of the things produced in a half of year are going to landfill. Landfills are growing, resources are destroyed, nature dies, natural products become a rarity, and in this very moment we buy 3 cars for our family because we can't walk 500 metres on foot to our work. Each couple of months we buy a new mobile phone because the old one has already got out of date...

Alright. We can talk about that for a long time. I recommend you watching the very interesting **short movie «Story of Stuff»**. It can be easily found on the Internet (www.storyofstuff.com).

What concerns ecology, here is the eighth belief: **you should start from yourself. To low your consumption level, to recognize your wishes. Produce the natural food by yourself and support those who already do that. And in general consider that each of us affects the planet.**

Honestly, it's difficult for me to emphasize any other particular beliefs but I can't forget the following people. I consider them to be my teachers too:

Steve Paxton – the person who was one of the fathers of the **contact improvisation** which is the corporal practice I have being using and teaching for more than five years now. CI is a kind of art which organically combines the beauty of contemporary dance with plasticity and the physical power of Aikido. For me Steve is a symbol of the experimental approach to the life, of the courage and the ability of asking yourself: «and what if?»

Because of this question about 40 years ago this interesting style of practice has appeared which nowadays has its followers almost all around the world. By the way, as far as I know, Steve also lives in one ecovillage today.

Lev Tolstoy is a person, who is famous for his massive and quite boring novels, for example for «War and Peace». But few people know that there are many other works by this author, which are not included to the school curricula. These are his essays about vegetarianism, morality, religion, labour, pedagogics. It will just suffice to mention his «**The Gospel in Brief**». But I'd like to draw special attention to his fairy tales, for example to «**The Story of Ivan the Fool** (a character from Russian folk fairy tales) **and his two brothers: Simeon a soldier and Tarras-Briukhan** («Tarras the fat belly», a merchant)», «**What People Live By**», «**The Three Hermits**» and the book which was written directly before the death – «**Way**

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of life». I strongly recommend it to you. Tolstoy was a man of great strength, he was an innovator and a rioter (by the way the title for this chapter «What is my faith?» I took from his work). He was a man, who rejected his rich Counts life and became a simple farmer.

One more person is **Richard Bandler**. He is the founder of the NLP which is one of the systems of the modern psychology. I took a great interest in it and even taught it for several years. For me this person is first of all the symbol of an irrepressible energy and of the question «HOW?». HOW can I accomplish one or another task? HOW can I learn to do something new? If somebody can do something, HOW can I repeat it?

Now I've written these three names and then I realized what unites them all.

FREEDOM. Bandler even said once: «**Freedom is everything and love is all the rest».**

Another thing they all have is **PASSION**. Passion for life. Interest, energy, enthusiasm, ardour... I could make up more synonyms. And now if we join them all and take away the unnecessary, there will be only these two words left: **FREEDOM** and **PASSION**.

FREEDOM from housing utilities, from mortgage, from a job you don't like, from money, from fear to be fired, from fear of a crisis, from fear to have the electricity cut for nonpayment, from fear not to have enough food, from... Freedom to be who you are.

And **PASSION** for life. The life that you like, the life that you choose yourself. Passion to do what you want to do. Passion to be who you are.

There are two main convictions which constitute the base of my life. They are the main reasons why we live as we live. Now here, in the ecovillage.

Finally I will enumerate some more writers which we are fond of and which are not mentioned above. They are not directly connected with the ecovillage life, but nevertheless during long winter evenings they are our company and undoubtedly our important teachers.

Yury Koval
Stepan Pisakhov
Boris Shergin
Tove Jansson
Sergei Dovlatov
Vladimir Mayakovsky

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And the series of **Tachibana Akemi`s poetry called «Reciting Poetry for My Own Pleasure»**, I share with you some here:

* * *

It is so nice,
when after long-term labour
you shut down the book
and sit admiring of the bulk
of rewritten treatise.

* * *

It is so nice,
when noisy guests
leave you early
and nobody disturbs you
to dive into the book.

West and East

The theme of ecovillages is popular nowadays. There are many books, films, talks. It is interesting to compare Russian and European films concerning this topic. From those I had seen ours are too smart, while being interviewed all the characters are tidy, sometimes in embroidered «Russian» shirts. In houses there is an order, the flowers on the table. Idyll in other words. People live in the paradise. And the European settlers in films are in the stretched pullovers, scruffy jeans, there is a «creative» mess in the houses... But there I believe the Europeans more for some reasons.

Decision

*In a week I had been packing my things.
And suddenly I realized that only one suitcase
could be enough for me.*

S. Dovlatov

Now I would like to reflect on the next phase: what happens in the mind of a person who is going to join a community and how the settlement is organized. As I've already said before, the only sphere I'm competent in is my own life, that's why I'm going to describe this process being based on my personal experience. Before making the real decision to move into nature I had passed some smaller tests.

1) The first question for me – for a true «genetic citizen» – was: do I really want to live in the city. I guess that it sounded actually too general because the majority of the settlements are first of all citizens. My answer was «no» and that was the beginning of the search for a place to move to, other than a city.

Actually there was another moment, on the Kurils, about 6 years ago: suddenly I understood that I wanted to live close to nature. That desire had appeared prior to the desire to escape from a city. It's an interesting point, because there're two types of motivation: «to» something and «from» something. Some people have such a strong aspiration «from» that they even forget where they really want to go «to». But a purposeless escape is like trying to buy a ticket «somewhere from here» at the station. «Somewhere» may turn out not the destination you dream of... So, the best way to get what we want is to understand our desires clearly.

2) Finally all these scattered thoughts had crystallized into the idea about a community. Life in an ordinary village didn't seem very attractive for me, though it was easily realizable. I even had a house: just come and live! And there was one more question. I should decide: whether I wanted to arrange something by myself exceptionally or join an already existing community. Firstly I had an idea to find some land and build a new ecovillage there – but, thank God, it was no more than a sudden whim. And I began to search for some place or community that has at least some basis.

I guess, most people also dream to join something already finished, because not everyone is able to organize the whole process and not everyone even needs it. Otherwise the amount of villages could become too large.

3) Next I started an evaluation of different settlements and a search for an answer if they suit me or not. It was not easy. I've spent about 5 years trying to make the right decision. During that time I explored different settlements and constantly answered to myself: «NO, it doesn't suit me!» and finally I understood, that I didn't want to live in a settlement. At least in those ones, which I had visited. I think this is one more step, where some dreamers are weeded out and return to the ordinal life. I would return too, but the idea held me hard.

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4) Fourthly, I understood everything and stopped to look for anything and started to wait for some sign, which could clarify to me the situation. As a result I got the information that there was an organization of some village. So I went there. And at that time I was prepared literally for everything.

It is interesting which influence on the society people have who started organizing something. As the result they set the tone and direction for the whole future team. They openly or secretly are the bearers of rules, culture and they translate to everybody how the society should look in the future. Whether they want it or are aware of it or not, but it is a very important thing, especially at the first stages of creating of any settlement.

That's why it's a good way to know «the truth» about any society: to get acquainted with its founder or founders. It can be enough to understand if this company would suit you personally or not. It often happens this way: you can communicate with many participants for a long time, talk with them and then see the founder and understand all at once. This exactly how it happened for me.

In our case the founders were first of all those, who found the land and decided that «it would be a good place to create a village»! The other strived after them. Then the main active core around these first followers appeared. I can't explain why, but a couple of seconds was enough for me to understand that I was ready to do anything with these people. For example to build a village and live there.



Women's Club in the Wild

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Knowledge

The more I've study our area, the more names and properties of the Altai plants I've learn, the more local names and stories I've memorize...the less I've started recognizing the nature around me. I just stop «seeing and feeling», and I start «knowing». Sometimes you want just look at some birches without knowing that these trees are birches. You want to hear the knock of a woodpecker without the idea, that it is this bird. You want to see a hare and don't know that it is a hare. You want to wonder every second and don't want to get used to what you see, hear and feel. The natives say: «We ourselves are not able to see the beauty of our place!» I want to remain a newcomer for good, in order to save my attentiveness.

Male and female deals

*The wives followed the Decembrists to Siberia...
and ruined their penal servitude.*

Folklore

Remember, I promised to tell you about the family consensus in details, i.e. about the consent between a man and a woman and the way they look upon the question of moving from the city to the mountains? It is the high time for it.

One summer our guest was Tobi, the Austrian student, who came to Russia within the students exchange program. Tobi was a carpenter, very hard-working and a good fellow. We communicated and worked together a lot: mounted the lags for the floor. I asked him: «Why do you like living in Russia»? Tobi said, that we had everybody on their places: women are women, and men are men. Everybody did their own work and had their own roles. I was a bit surprised: «Was it not so in Austria»? «No! Well, if I said there was anything like that I'd be called a sexist and nobody would talk to me. We had no division of labour; we could have both men and women at a building site, as well as in the kitchen». Then, for some reason, I was glad for my country, where everybody is in their place. And I think, the more we live in a traditional society the clearer becomes this sexual division of roles. Earlier, when people lived in caves, this differentiation perhaps was even more obvious.

In the country it's still clear: a man is associated with firewood, building, maintenance, defense, hunting, fishing. A woman busies herself with children, house, food, clothes, ordering, kitchen garden... A man obtains resources, and a woman transforms them, redistributes and develops them. A man brings water in buckets, and a woman uses this water for food and laundering; a man brings firewood, and a woman controls how much heat she wants from the furnace; a man brings a bag of potatoes, and a woman decides what to cook out of it.

If we speak about single persons or incomplete families, we understand that people there have to play the missing roles. A woman brings water, splits firewood, or a man does everything by himself, cook or keep an eye on children. Of course it's possible, it happens everywhere, especially in our modern industrial society, in which all resources narrow down to money. You don't have to work physically, you can do whatever you can do and don't think about your kitchen garden, firewood and lack of water. You have only one resource which easily transforms to everything: to heat, shelter, food, etc. In this situation gender division of labour doesn't have such meaning as in traditional society. And the more industrial, money-oriented the society is, the less it has strictly male and female roles.

No matter how we had been living before, after we moved to nature we willingly (or not) started to create very definite roles in the family, it becomes a daily necessity. It seems like some instincts which can sleep during our life in the city starting to wake up. And there is some suspicion that the return to the natural clear roles is very important both for the survival and for the normal comfortable life of the family, which live in nature.

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Speaking about seasons in a village, the summer undoubtedly is a more female time (but it is not about the period of base building, when there is a lot of building work, which mostly takes place in summer time). The winter is male time. In summer there is no need for a man to lug so much water and firewood. In winter a man traditionally takes upon himself most part of work on the farm. It worse to understand it clearly.

As for the male-female roles in the process of moving to a settlement and in general decision making process, there are some patterns too. It has to happen according to joint desire and joint readiness or the whole of the idea is ruined. It is difficult for a woman to survive in a settlement by herself, so as for a man too. It is also very difficult to find a «spouse» if you already live in a settlement, at least because the circle of contacts is confined and there is no way to choose. Then on different settlements` forums in the Internet begins active and not very perspective search for partners, various «marriage meetings» are organized, where the «spouses» must meet with each other. But there is no guarantee that it will happen.

I think that the best variant is a moving when you are already a married couple. And if both partners are agree and ready for it. Then there will be less questions later.

It happens that some potential settlers complain that their spouses don't share their dreams about «forest» life. The variant: «My wife will never agree to live in the forest, but I want it very much». Or another one: «I'll buy some hectares of virgin lands now, I will built there a hut on the sly, and my wife will instantly understand her love towards the eco-life and we'll move there», but suddenly it all doesn't work. I have a question: who did choose this wife (or husband)? You should gain an understanding of your own criteria of what is important in your partner, because sometimes people find the wife at the disco or in an expensive restaurant and then they are surprised, why she doesn't want to live in the forest and be occupied with a kitchen garden.

It is exactly like in medicine: there is a clear and very useful phrase on all cabinets for medicines in all hospitals: **«See what you take!»** This phrase should be on all registry offices of the country, in all mass media resources and then probably people would have fewer questions about family life.

From the other hand there is also the issue about unclear role position in the family. A man shows the direction and a woman fills this direction with her energy and supports her husband, on conditions that he fulfills his function well: provides the wife with resources, gives her the clear direction and safety. If a woman on her own starts choosing the direction, where the family should go, this means that she starts drawing on the functions which are not properly done by her husband, or she is too «manly».

It returns us again to the question of sex differentiation in the family. In other words if all roles are clear: a man is a man, and a woman is a woman, the main decision in such conditions belongs to the man. If he is ready, he is self-confident - then the move to nature will happen. Because of it, probably, I narrate by myself to a greater extent, as the man.

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The main idea: the life in traditional natural conditions is a big challenge and a checking of male-female relationships both inside a person and in his\her family.

I had finished writing it and began to hesitate. I asked Natalia what she thinks about what I have written above. She said: «If you were not so sure in the moving I would go nowhere».

Just as I'd expected.



Man's Club in the Wild

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Women's club

The Men's club is the building site. There we gather together, communicate, make something in common. We feel there, that we create something and we do it all together. It gives us power. But we do not have the women's club yet. In summer the impromptu role of such a club played the entrance room to our banya: there the sewing-machine was found and our women gathered there and did SOMETHING IMPORTANT. In summer we decided, that one of our first common building would be a workshop for the women. For them to make THIS SOMETHING IMPORTANT in comfort.

Ecology as a brand

We use the phrase «ecological» settlement, but now I reflect on the fact, that nowadays this word becomes too obscure, too general and very shabby. Initially the word «**ecology**» denoted the science, which investigated our habitat and the relationships inside it. Gradually, this world began to gain popularity, because we started to understand, how the influence of the humankind breaks these relationships. And that ecology stood up in defence of our planet. Bit by bit the word started to denote something, which is natural for a human being. An ecological house is good, and an unecological is a bad one. Healthy ecological food is good, ecologically unhealthy stuff is not good. In such a way people understood that everything, which contains the prefix «eco» is better for a human than anything, that doesn't contain this prefix. Although it is a surprise.

A good natural cucumber - it is obvious anyway. Frankly speaking, it doesn't need any additional names like «ecologically clear cucumber». It's quite another matter about a «plastic» cucumber, grown in some hydroponics. This very cucumber is less natural, and it's better to invent different epithets for it exactly, for example: the «hydroponic, artificial, hormone-containing, without the smell» cucumber.

But in reality it is upside down: an ordinal natural cucumber, grown in the ground in natural sunlight in the most primitive way according to the laws of nature, becomes something unusual. It gets a special name and is sold under a special brand «ECO» and is extremely expensive.

The same happens when you speak of a place for living, about air and water. Theoretically water is water. But we live among thousands of offers: drinking water, treated water, ecologically clean water...which is quite expensive. The same situation is in every sphere.

This process can indicate only one thing: nowadays there is a smaller number of simple cucumbers in comparison with the quantity of artificial cucumbers. Drinking water is hardly available and the air suitable for breathing is in 100 km from the city. You may continue this tendency.

Today you go to a shop and see that expensive ecologically clean foodstuffs are sold there. In newspapers estate agents tell about ecologically clean regions. It seems that today almost every cottage settlements with helicopter landing site are considered to be an ecological settlements. The ecology turns to a brand, which in the modern money world often increases the price of goods and services a lot. The words with the prefix «eco» have worn out quite long ago, their sense blurred in our speech and some new specified words started to appear: for example the word «**organic**». Organic food, organic clothes, organic farm...It begins to indicate something more specific, more than a fact, that these very food and clothes are produced without the use of chemical ingredients.

It is interesting that all words, which are used in connection with the ecology theme, are foreign ones. There are few Russian popular words concerning it and all streams go mainly from the West. Among the Russian eco-progressives Lev

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Nikolaevich Tolstoy can be mentioned, as the person, who actively propogandized the «ecological» ideas. Probably after his highly exact word «**simplification**» (which means deliberate decrease of consumption, in other words - tend to a simplicity) nothing new has appeared in the Russian language about this theme, and even this word is practically not used today. But again and again new terms appeared abroad. For example recently we began to say - «**low impact**». This term means that a human influences the environment at the minimal rate. Maybe it is the most definite word combination for today, much clearer than the words «ecological», «natural» and «organic».

If you don't have a car – it is a «low impact». If you use a hand-labour – it is a «low impact». If you are using natural and organic system of agriculture at your farm you have a low impact on the environment.

One more popular term in the English language sounds as «**sustainable**» and for me it's better to call it «**self-sustaining**». I like these words, they are close to my view of the world.

I am fond of all the terms mentioned above, as I think they are very close to the main sense of the ecological settlements. But for the time being it very difficult to make a brand from them. Because when use these words, we speak not about the environment («ecologically clean region») but mainly about our own influences. About our manner to live. Although, who knows? Modern marketing experts are too ingenious. And maybe we will soon see this word combination at the market: «**Simplified self-sustaining cucumber with low impact**».

That's why, speaking that our settlement is an «ecological» one I have in mind exactly these meanings. Our settlement is the place where we try to live our simple life, which can have minimal impact on the environment and which would be sustainable at most. Of course it doesn't forbid us to use cars or electricity when it is necessary. But there is always a great sense to reflect on the thought, how the deal which I want to do now will influence the Nature in future. It is good to aim at attentiveness, awareness and simplicity. Probably exactly for this we started to experiment with our village life.

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Community

Many times I have mentioned the word «community» in this book. And when I had already written all the chapters I understood that this theme requires an individual explanation. What is a community? What I mean? Now I'll try to reflect on this subject.

In this text I use the words «community» and «commonalty» as synonyms. Both of them descend from the word «common», which means: «relating to everybody or everything, concerning everything», a «collective» one. According to the etymological dictionary of the Russian language this word appears from the word «to pass around»* and have the meaning «the thing, which was passed around», «an area, a plot, the borders of which were determined by this way», and further - «people, who used the definite plot of the land in common».

**In Russian the words «community» and «commonalty» sound like «soobshchestvo» and «obshchina» correspondently and correlate with the common word «obchodit'» – «to pass around»*

There are also the versions that primary the word «common» could denote the settlement, «round village».

In fact, now I can't say that I write about the settlement. Because there is no ready settlement for the time present. But there are «people, who used the definite plot of the land in common». There is the banya where one family is wintering; there are tents, where we live in summer; there are different unfinished buildings; there are common events and common labour; there are constantly coming people from various cities; there is a web-page on the Internet and user accounts in social networks, where some video and photo appear; there is a common property. In other words there is a Community which builds its own village... its own eco-settlement.

So then, the common resources which we have:

Land. For the agricultural purpose. Officially it is registered for common share ownership of 10 people. The other participants for today don't have legal confirmation of their belonging. But in plans we have to create accepted in Russia form of «non-profit partnership» which allows giving equal rights to everybody and at the same time can exclude the opportunity of land speculation (nowadays this variant is used by most settlements as the most convenient, I will not go into juridical details).

Property. We have common instruments, buildings, constantly updating library and the warehouse with clothes and shoes of every sort and kind, which can be used by everyone who needs this.

Economics. We have common money which we use for common needs. We have common incomes and expenditures.

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Events. We organize together different actions (for example festivals, training workshops). They can bring profit, give us the opportunity to grow in cultural experience and learn something new. Also, if there is a necessity, we solve together some personal problems (for example, a building of somebody's house).

Management. We have got a conventional form of self-management which helps us to solve all current organizational problems. We consider «the settlement council» to be the main management organ. All decisions are accepted on the assumption of 100% agreement of all council participants. There is also «the Council of Elders» which covers more technical questions, for the solving of which there is no need of participation of all settlers.

Self-consciousness. Certainly, I would write that we have an «idea», but, as you remember, I have already complained that we do not have any special idea. That's why the word «self-consciousness» suits here well. I mean that we are aware of our belonging to this deal. We feel that we do something common.

I can not ignore the fact, that today the word «commonalty» has, as I consider, not a very good reputation. And in general, things that seems to concern different ideas about something «common» often triggers people's nervous buzz. It's because in our country people still can not understand: what does to who belong and who is for what responsible? Historically either all belongs to the rich and nothing to the poor. Then all was otherwise: all belongs to the poor, and because all people are poor, then all things are common. Then everything became private again. There is nothing common. Well! How can you not get confused in it all?! Then there are innumerable communes: religious, idea's ones, without ideas at all...Various. As well - commonalities. The one thing is said, then another. In short, many generations of official figures have done their utmost to make people lose clear understanding of the word «commonalty». Although, it is said, this idea and way of living is one of the most ancient.

I will not discuss this theme a lot. I'd better focus your attention on the next thing: how the majority of the eco-settlements is organized from this point of view. I think that only healthy enlightened people can live in the commune of pure form, otherwise there will be chaos. Otherwise there is a need for some totalitarian leader, who will manage everything, but then it is not the reason, why we've gathered together. As a right decision we've come across the idea to make the form, which is the most widespread in the settlements today: «ancestral home» + «commonality». It means, that besides the common life mentioned above, there is also an individual life. It gives the opportunity to combine strong points of both constituents. There is a sense of all modern eco-villages in this combination.

I dislike the word combination «ancestral home», because at once it reminds of belonging to the followers of the Anastasia's movement (see books of Vladimir Megre). We don't belong to this movement but now I can't find the better synonym for this word combination. But the most important thing is the sense of this phrase. According to our regulations this phrase means that besides the common territories every family of the settlement has a right to use from 0.3 to 3 hectares of the land for personal life: for a garden, for building of the house, for getting animals, in short for everything (which is not in conflict with regulations and with somebody).

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An ancestral home denotes the presence of an individual space, which is necessary for most of the people for a happy life in the commonality. The human is arranged in such a way that he or she needs to have something private, there is even a special instinct. We, Soviet people, still have the memories about the consequences which had our grandfathers, when somebody tried to deprive them of their private property.

Well, we've got in individual use the following:

Private property. If you've built your own house or something else it is yours or your descendants, the only restriction is that you could not sell it freely.

Property. Every settler of course has its private things.

Economics. Every family independently determines where it will take money for its own maintenance.

Events. Every family can shift freely and determine what to do.

Management. Every family solves its own internal problems by itself, if it doesn't need any help.

Self-consciousness. Every person chooses in what he or she do believe.

As you see, all is natural and reasonable. I have enumerated it mostly for the emphasis of attention to the fact, that in all aspects of human life we can find two points of view: common and private. And it is very good when the person has access to both of them.

At present people are more or less OK with property, but the commonality life is poor, and probably nowadays we have the increase of the interest towards commonalities because people have got one more instinct called «common», which is not least important than the «personal» one, and we shouldn't forget about it.

I have already told that the community is the necessary condition for the eco-settlement, and it is simultaneously the main distinguishing feature. For example, there is no real community in a dacha community: everybody there lives separately. In a village there is also no community, people are isolated, although everything there is not in such disrepair as in cities, where people don't even know the names of their housemates.

Frankly speaking, I've engrossed in conversation so much that became tired. I played the ocarina (it is a clay flute), drank hot tea, read what I had written to Natalia, went out for firewood...And there were such stars in heaven! Very deep cupola. A lot of constellations. By the way the Orion has greatly moved to the west. It is because the spring is coming. There are no frosts during nearly the week. And today the whole day is the real spring drip of thawing snow. It's no accident: the March has begun. My psychotherapy teacher used to tell that the physician must be

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weakly clever, in other words – clever, but not very much. Slightly. And now I've remembered him...And understood that it is bad to put on airs so much.

Community is when you are here, the phone is ringing and you are asked what tasty thing to cook, when you will make a visit. Community is when you can go traveling somewhere and somebody will settle in the banya and will read the book instead of you, which you were reading yesterday.

Community is when your friends prepare to make a visit and ask what food-stuff you need. It's when suddenly you receive a letter or a parcel with something funny. When you know that if it will be need, somebody will water your flowerbeds in the garden. When you are sure that despite your present loneliness in summer everything will be filled up with children's voices and laughter. Something like that.



Community life. Stove is center of our Home.

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PART TWO PRACTICE OF LIFE

Winter in the settlement

*In our paradise life is happy, life is happy
life is happy... but nobody lives there.*

Spiritual verse

It is February now, and it's already my second February here. Last year we just experimented with winter life, made some attempts. Natasha came only for two weeks. I had several flying visits. Last year only the banya's entrance room was ready for winter life, which was badly cold-proof, the banya itself was all in chinks. In short, the banya – our single building for this moment – was absolutely not ready for winter living. But I managed to live there a couple of months. I slept in a warm down-filled sleeping bag, fired a furnace actively and drank hot tea. I warmed myself as I managed to do. It was not comfortable. It was interesting.

Now it's February, it's about - 4°F outside, but I am sitting reclining on a pillow, bare-chested, writing this text. Natalia and our daughter are sleeping close to me, covered only with a thin bed-sheet. It means that a life takes a great turn for the better. It becomes more comfortable. It's interesting too. We have had many improvements in this year: we got electricity from the solar batteries; we need to sleep in sleeping bag no more – we have a normal trestle-bed with mattress bedclothing. We brought lots of books, various stuff for creative work...Also our daughter was born and she gives us no time to be bored.

But the essence remains the same: the winter outside is the big trouble for all the settlers. And also it is the main local life indicator. If a settlement has perennial life, it means that this settlement is viable and not only a holiday village. Notice, that it is also great when there live more than 2-3 families, then it is not a reclusive khutor and hunters lodge anymore.

Winter tests everything: buildings, humans, clothing, relationships, skills and moral readiness. Everything. This is the test of a settlement as a locality.

It is simpler in summer, as in the proverb: «where he fell, he slept», it is easier to admire the beauty of nature, observe birds and bugs, rejoice at mice and rain. It is really a good mark, if feelings of admiration and happiness remain during winter: it means that the conditions are comfortable, there is warmth, a store of food and firewood, a house is well build. If there is a lack of something most likely that it would be more difficult to observe birds and «feel happy about them».

What's more, the winter is a time, when you can meet yourself. In reality and without embellishments. Because there is no one except you in winter. There are almost no jobs, no people, no special entertainments and a winterer must face the

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situation that he simply does nothing and nothing happens around him. This often becomes a hard test. Everything around comes to a standstill, nature has a rest, sleeps and really nothing happens around you. And when happens nothing around the head, then many things begin to happen inside it... All fear, paranoia and debt come to light. All your inner dialogues and parts of the personality starts to recall everything which was in your life and especially what is still worrying, and moreover you begin to feel anxious about the future. Your brain starts planning and meditating. Lots of things occur inside the wintering head, when the nature around it is calm.

That`s why there are as usual two contrasting ways: the first - to face all your deals, debts, expectations and fears in the city and only after that go wintering (but it can be long and difficult process). The second way is to go to the forest and there face up to all self-analyses and soul-searching. Struggle with yourself and emerge victorious or die (in other words, to give up living ecological life if not for good, then for a long time). This way is for really «tough guys».

Of course, in reality you get something between these: you can be prepared and gain an understanding of everything. You come for a wintering very enlightened and relax but later «smash the rats which run out your attic» during long winter evenings. Those ones that you have still not worked through. And you will have lots of work. It`s good that in winter there is enough time for this.

Interested people ask two main questions about the wintering.

The first: «Describe your day, please»? or more specifically: «Are there really any deals?»

And the second: «Isn`t it cold there?»

That is all.

There is the fear, frozen in the first question, that you will have to meet with yourself, I have written about this already. The second question, I think, is asked mechanically, and is the stereotypical one.

As for the first question, the answer is: if the self cultivation and the maintenance jobs (firewood, water etc.) don`t occupy the whole short winter day (don`t forget, there is much less light in winter), then for sure you will have time for creative self-expression. That`s why it`s a good idea to stock up with stuff for this. Many things there depend on the person because everyone makes it in their own way: these are instruments, paints, threads and many other things witch help you create something. A good thing is that we have a great choice. Especially in winter, in the period when nothing draws us away, there are no TV-sets and summer labor, and exactly at these moments many talents were discovered. This is a plus of winter. For someone it is also a source of income - people make creative hand-made stuff in winter and then sell them in summer at festivals.

The second question is about **the cold**. This is a stereotyped question and it also shows an absence of knowledge that: firstly, the life in winter in the countryside is more spent in the house, then it happens in the city. I mean you don`t have to go

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somewhere or go to work. Everything takes place in the house or around it. Secondly, in the countryside you control the house heating by yourself - you stoke a furnace. If a house is good (without any doubts this is the most important thing for the wintering), it is more comfortable to live there than in many urban flats.

If the wintering takes place in temporary and unready conditions - in a banya, in a shack or yurt, then the main trouble will be the huge temperature drop: you've stoked a furnace - it becomes hot; a furnace cools - it becomes cold. Of course it exhausts you. But the decision is simple: at night you should sleep under some blanket, and in the morning a man gets up, stokes a furnace and makes the heat. In this case there are two constituents that turn the life quality to a better one: to fall asleep and to wake up in warmth.

One more important question «about warmth» is the question about a **lavatory**. In summer it's OK, but in winter? This is also one of the basic factors which has a great significance in a city. One day the book about the experience of one Ukrainian family, which independently lived in a village near Kiev strikes my eye. There the author writes about a lavatory in a very funny manner. He says that he «can't understand why there are so many questions about a lavatory». And then he writes the explanation which I now will tell in my own words with a little addition, because I absolutely agree with this person. Maybe the matter is that in a city a lavatory is like a cult construction. It gives a person at least some time for being simply himself or herself. It is a place where you can legally retire from everyone, relax your muscles, smoke, read your favorite book, ponder about important things, just make a pause at least. There is no necessity to do all the things mentioned above in a village and a lavatory is used only for its intended purpose. It is normal «to do number two» once and «to do number one» several times a day. It is not dangerous for health; it's even good no matter what the weather conditions are. For the situations when you are too lazy to go out in freezing temperature many generations ago villagers had developed an amazing in its simplicity and efficacy device - a bucket (a chamber-pot, a night-vase...), which is poured out in the morning. Today a modernized variant of a bucket with a seat and a lid is on sale, and it's a very useful thing in the household, which fulfils its function 100%.

There is one more nuance, particularly about winter alternative energy. In winter all kinds of energy sources essentially lose their efficiency in comparison with summer (probably only the thermoelectric power generator can be more productive). There is less water in a brook...The sun light is not enough, and also solar panels are dumped on with snow. There is less wind (at least in our area). This is sad, because especially in winter there is not enough daylight but there is the greatest desire for creative work. It is like in one old joke about the Sun: «What is more useful: the sun- or the moonlight? Without doubts - the moonlight, because the Sun shines when it is light already».

A person has to get out of this difficulty somehow - to burn candles, to economize. I have such thoughts concerning the winter.

Probably if a settlement is active and at least several families winter there, a wintering goes simpler: there is a possibility to communicate more, to sledge down

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hills, to play music...To do something together. But now I can't write about this. I'd better share with my thoughts about the comfort.

But before it I'll tell you the next thing: despite the fact that we are wintering in the valley alone we can live there due to the help of a great amount of people, all our settlers, friends and sympathizers. Our wintering will be not so comfortable without their physical and moral help. All together we stored up the firewood, prepared the winterplace and organized a living space, and after the childbirth our friends came to us to help looking after the house...

There I again want to note that an ecological settlement is first of all a community, and only after that – a life within the nature.



First Winter. Neighbors from village help us to bring our stuff.

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Comparison

Sometimes, when I come across with the thought that the weather is not perfect today, or that there are difficulties, cold and wetness around me, I try to remember the first days, when we had just started living in our valley and the life immediately goes brighter. At that time we were satisfied with a minimum: lived in tents, got wet under rains and became frozen sometimes. Now it's a sin to complain: we have already had the first buildings, electricity from the solar batteries, a banya and a gas-stove. It's absolutely another life now.

Our winter

Just now I have understood that this book is about wintering. Because it is written in winter. And also because I think a wintering to be the most important thing in settling. The wintering gives an opportunity to experiment with ecological life «maturely». Life goes totally differently in summer: everything is in movement, there are lots of people, guests, parties, work, company, in other words you even have no time to understand something. And in winter we sit with Natalia and ponder: what are we doing here? What are we here for? And what is the sense? The second winter here...All the time the two of us together on fifteen square meters. Now the three together. Sometimes someone arrives. Sometimes we feel very sad. Other time - all is gaily, calm, all-sufficient. I don't know what it depends on. Maybe on the day length...On the weather...on the magnetic waves...

It is interesting that we always are in the oppositional phase with our friends in the city. For example we are sad, feel melancholy, we call them up to complain about it...And there life is pulsing, things are humming. They support us, tell something calming. Then after some time we feel good. We are happy and live our fulfilled life...At that moment our friends call up us, saying they feel sad. Something won't get going. Then we invigorate them. It seems like an interchange.

Before the wintering we went to the city for a month, solved some bureaucratic questions, communicated with relatives. We send some parcels with things to the village, the main part of which comprised different stuff for creative work and books. Then all these things we delivered into our mountains on a horse-drawn sleigh. And the sleigh runners droned vastly. They said that it's because soon there will be frost.



Chazaevka Post – our post office project.

Paper letters

Long live the post! Now many people don't even remember that the post still, like many years ago when we used it, keeps on working, pleasing people by delivering some important things from one person to another. It continues distributing real and alive letters in envelopes with stamps to people. The post keeps on doing it even though almost everybody today has access to the telephone and the Internet, and electronic mail and digital postcards, even the farthest ones, can be delivered in seconds. Today we started to forget how pleasant it is, when you find a letter in your postbox. When you take it, scan it briefly and sometimes dying of impatience, tear the envelope, take out sheets of paper, covered with pen writing and start reading just while you go up the stairs to your flat, stumbling upon the steps.

In autumn I began asking my friends for their addresses. More than a half of them gave me their E-mails, when I asked them «to send their address». Then, when I specified my request, they tried to remember the post code and the flat-numbers. In winter our letters went to different corners of Russia and Europe. Frankly speaking I personally haven't written a normal paper letters more than ten years, and there I felt a strong desire to. But even now we rarely have excess to the Internet. But the desire to communicate is present in any case. So we started writing letters.

I think that paper letters are like my favorite natural cucumbers instead of some cucumbers without the smell. It's like vinyl records instead of mp3, like a samovar on firewood instead of a plastic electric kettle and like live music instead of a CD player. It is like a flame of a candle instead of electricity. It is something alive, Book from ivanovishe.ru/eng If you want to support our project – please donate!

beautiful...Well, it can be not always fast and convenient...But it is something really qualitative, containing the life and something from the people who are involved in the creation of it.

Our friends call us, say that they have received our letters and post-cards; they are pleased because they get them and thank us. They say that their children, who are already good computer users, have got the paper letter for the first time in their life and are very inspired. And we started to get little letters from children. Not all of them can write and we get just pictures. Genuine, alive, childish.

And we continue to write. It is the spring already. I ring to the post-office; we live in 7 kilometers away from it. I ask to send letters with someone. The next day an old man carries our letters on the sledges with houses. The letters become nearer. I go, cover the last kilometers, lag through snowdrift...And get the letter. Like in childhood I tear the envelope straight in the street, go along the road and read while going. Then reread, sitting on the stone near the brook, read and smile. After a while I come into the village. And we read the letter once again with Natalia, feeling happiness together and write the answer.

How many happiness is in a couple of pieces of paper full of notes. Long Live the Post!

Probably it is one more reason why we are here now. For this simple happiness. Here it is in full view.



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Comfort and energy balance

Nowadays we can hardly understand what the comfortable life consists of. The comfort becomes too routine and normal. All its material constituents are thought-out by someone long time ago. Now, mostly, we are anxious about how to pay the work of this someone, who has invented everything for us (I've already written about the responsibility). Plus, of course, we solve for ourselves a few problems concerning qualitative and quantitative stock of basic comfort components: warm, food and water.

Comfort in my understanding is first of all a word that describes the ways and means for energy saving.

Comfort implies an optimum temperature in the dwelling, when you do not have to make any extra effort (in the city it is done with the help of air conditioning equipment and heaters). It is when you have food and there is no need to go hunting, fishing, picking mushrooms and so on every single time when you want to eat (in the modern world there are refrigerators and supermarkets nearby). It is when there are special implements which help you to complete different tasks (cooking food, laundry, repairs etc.) applying minimum physical efforts (it obviously includes different domestic appliances).

It can be said that there is also a psychological or soul comfort, which is more difficult to describe because these factors are very subjective and depend on the way «the human has both feet on the ground». In other words it depends on the external conditions marginally. There is the suspicion, that the «healthier» the person is the more quantity of the «self-maintenance» he has, the fewer things he needs for his satisfaction, still having absolutely wholesome and comfortable life.

The comfort is also the level of pleasure, which the person gets in the course of his life. For some people it depends on many factors and they also use a great quantity of energy; the other people are satisfied with a little (the level of power inputs is minimal, even if there is the absence of different material devices for the labour process alleviation).

As Aldous Huxley had already forecasted in 1932 in his anti-utopia «Brave New World» nowadays is the period, when comfort is one of the humanity's main cults. And all people sometimes poorly understand how it looks like trying to reach it by any unimaginable means. And the ways of increasing the «comfortability» become more and more sophisticated. While talking about a settlement many people say: «No, it is without doubts not about me, I love the Comfort» !

But I can say that I live in comfort. Well, let's analyze the comfort's anatomy in the way I understand it.

The first leap towards a comfortable life is surely the building of the **banya**. When it appeared our life started to become better right away. The questions of hygiene and the heat were solved. Our health became better (we often caught cold living in the tent). Banya is washing and hot water. The children are clean and warm!

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Wintering and living in the cold season – yes, it can be done! The place for the cultural and social life – also yes! And the women's club where there was a sewing-machine in summer and other stuff for creative work – undoubtedly! The banya is undeniably a leader in its deposit to the piggy bank of a comfortable life.

I'll name the **gas chainsaw** to be in the second place in the order of importance. It is the most often used instrument in the household. It allows you to stock firewood fast and without big costs both for a bonfire and for a stove, and it is an irreplaceable thing for building. Of course we also have a two-handled saw, hack-and-bow-saws, and often, when we need to make a little saw cut it is better to choose hand tools, saving clear air and silence, and also gaining the safety from possible traumas. (For more information on this theme read the chapter from the book «**The Hand Sculpted House, A Practical and Philosophical Guide to Building a Cob Cottage**» called «**Hand Tool Reflections**»). But if we speak about the stock of winter firewood, the gas chainsaw here is a victory and a triumph of the human genius. It lightens man's burden by many percent. It is undoubtedly a vital step to comfort.

One more factor of a comfort life is a **gas-stove**. I for example use gas rarely; I like to cock over the fire. But for our women in the settlement cooking over the fire for many mouth becomes quite hard work, because it needs a lot of attention. Of course we have cocked over the fire, for example when the gas was over or just for the economy, but it denoted that there was one man in the women's team, who supplied them with firewood and a fire. But this means taking away two hands from the process of building. Often the women coped with it by themselves, but it was difficult for them and the time of dinner or supper was postponed. Of course if there is a stock of good dry wood, which is prepared in advance, it requires no magic to organize a fire – everything is simpler and it can be easy to manage without gas. But we have never had such a stock. That's why you can manage without a gas only if this question is properly organized...For the present we use gas if we have it.

In nature without good dry firewood stock the gas-stove lightens life of the woman and marginally life of man too.

The next thing is **electricity**. We refused to install wire electricity (read the separate chapter about alternative energy) and get the electricity by two ways: from the sun (mainly), from the wind (in a less degree), and if we require a lot of energy we start little petrol generators. Electricity provides lightning, recharging of various instruments and gadgets (from a screwdriver to laptops and mobile phones). It is also films, sewing-machine...many different bonuses. Electricity gave us an opportunity to install the **telephone**. At once it allowed solving many problems remotely, without running to the next hill where is the cell radius, without frequent departures to the area center and surrounding villages. For working people it is also a big help. Plus, of course, it puts the relatives at ease.

It is good to have the comfort of electricity (within reasonable limits).

Before the most important thing and continuing the electrical theme, the **laundry washer** should be mentioned. In the previous year I asked people, what did they need for a comfortable life? (It was in summer). Men said that «they had had

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everything», and women declared with one voice that «the washing took much strength and energy» and they lacked a washer. Mainly it is because of children; they provide a big quantity of dirty clothes: babies do a poo and those who are already grown just get dirty. If you have no children it will be easier to do without a laundry washer...

Well, we found the washer. Firstly it was in the form of a washboard of 1976 production year and then after half a year it was in the form of a semi-automatic washer «Eury K500» (it is the up-to-date version of the old famous washer «Eureka», which was manufactured at the «Moscow Projector Plant»). Now this washer is produced by the firm «Aviamatika» at Moscow Aviation Institute, God grant them good health! Nowadays this washer is the single (probably even in the world!) washer which has not become fully automatic and at the same time hasn't turned into the plastic tub with an engine of little use, like the other semi-automatic apparatus have. This washer is sold only in «Aviamatika» but you can come to an agreement with them about the delivery to the regions. We managed to do it and they sent it for us into Novosibirsk.

It would be possible to write a whole book about the delivery of this washer into our village. It costs us a lot of mental and physical effort. The very single-handed dragging on snow of uncomfortable 80 kg box without handles, firstly across the brook, then up the hill, was like a war drama, thankfully without victims. I'd tried everything: sledge, ski, polyplast, ropes, spade... But what is the most important that the washer honorably endured all those transport malicious insults (look, what metal case and firm spare parts can do!) and our banya filled with pleasant sounds of the working laundry washer. It was one more important step towards the comfort. We use the soap powder «Ecover» for the washing which allegedly is fully biodegradable and doesn't contaminate nature. For the hand washing we use laundry soap. The only discomfort with the washer is the bigger (in comparison with hand washing) flow quantity plus petrol consumption and rattle of the generator. That's why we rarely use our washer, only for big clothes or when our daughter supplies us with dirty diapers too actively.

The last and the most important thing is certainly the **house**. Living in the house and in the swing space or in tents differs from each other like night and day. I will write about a comfortable house a little bit later in the individual book and when it will be built up to the end. This concept comprises a lot of things, so I will not dive into it now. I'll write simply – «the **House**».

All these components are directed to the main aim: energy efficiency. They give the opportunity not only to survive, spending all the resources on the maintenance of basic needs. It's also allows to devote some time of your life to one more nonmaterial factor – to the **ability of self-fulfillment**. It gives also the peace of mind. For me it's first of all the manufacture of something. The human is a creator who needs to produce something. It is something creative (we have potters, ceramists, fans of sewing, plaiting, embroidering, knitting and weaving). The self-fulfillment for me is that I can write. I'm also fond of painting and making photo and video. It is the important part of comfortable life, which can be simply realized if you have more or less organized life, the material components of which I have already enumerated.

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Thus the comfort is quite clear thing to me.

Maybe somebody can say that it is not comfortable at all. What's about a car and asphalt and so on? But I want to turn to the energy again and its rational consumption: for me a car is an energetic burden, because the expenses for its usage are higher than the advantages.

Of course I often use cars, buses and tractors but they are not mine. For me it is more effective to arrange for my friend or a taxi-driver, to buy petrol, or a bus, or train ticket, than to buy my own car and then constantly invest into it my money and/or energy for the repair, spares, consumable materials, petrol. And it is also rational with a point of view of the whole planet.

It is silly to buy two or three cars for one family and then criticize the traffic congestion and gassing air. We ourselves with our behavior make the contribution to the increasing of the vehicle quantity in the world.

Any material component of the «comfort» can be analyzed in such a way. What we spend and what we become with which balance. In this context a banya is energy efficient (100 litres of water for 4 persons at the least + warming, communication, drinking of tea), and lying in the bath is not efficient (more than 100 litres of water for a single person and for one procedure, plus you need extra water for rinsing and washing). For us hot water heating, even from the firewood, is less energy efficient than a good stove, at least because the first means that somebody needs constantly being at home. In winter a house can't stay without the regular heating. What if you have a desire to go on a visit or want to travel?

A big house is less efficient than a little one. Again because of the resources spent for the building and then lifelong over-expenditures for its heating. At the same time you need to understand that the house must be sufficient for your free creation and guests receiving, if it is important for you. And so on.

One more important thing is that many components of comfort are not «ours». They are external, imposed by society, by advertising. Many things are just status makers, but have not functionality...It is also interesting to realize it.

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Top of irresponsibility, or «childbirth on the field»

*In order to have new healthy generation of people,
we should give them a chance to be born of their own free will.*

I. Martynova

While I'm written this, our daughter is sleeping near me. She was born naturally here in the same banya where we are wintering, about a month ago without any medical assistance.

When I and Natalia took a decision to give birth to our child without medical assistance, in nature, we caused alarm among our relatives. We were told about «irresponsibly», stupidity and unjustified risk to which we are subjected ourselves. That time we didn't talk about this too much, avoided entering into disputes, turned everything into a joke but particularly we were sure of our decision and prepared for the up-coming event actively.

Firstly about «irresponsibly». I can't understand how it is possible to be «irresponsible», when you take all responsibility for your life and health, and moreover for the life and the health of your child? It was already written above. Well, I don't want to quarrel about it. I'd better quote Henry Thoreau from «Walden», and than tell how our preparations looked like:

«Sometimes we are inclined to class those who are once-and-a-half witted with the half-witted, because we appreciate only a third part of their wit».

Thus, firstly we started looking for people, who had already given birth at home without official medical assistance. Examples were not far to seek, the majority of our friends, who have babies, are so called «home parents». We asked them about their obtained experience. It turned out that everything is very individual. One bore easily, another bore a little bit more difficult, but in general everybody was satisfied with giving birth at home. And nobody wanted to bear their next babies, if there would be such a necessity, in a maternity hospital. We also asked those, who had both experience of giving birth at home and in a maternity hospital. Childbearing at home was recommended as more natural and smooth variant.

Secondly, we took part in a special preparation course for «Natural Childbearing». We listened to the lectures, we were told about childbearing, children, breast-feeding, maternity hospitals and midwives, about complications and postnatal period. They were narrated, showed films and gave various educational materials. We attended swimming pool lessons, bought the literature of all kinds, which we were recommended. We listened, wrote down, asked questions and spoke with lecturers after their lectures. In short we were rather involved learners. After the main course we attended some additional lectures «for the closest», which were devoted exactly to home birth. They turned out to be quite interesting too.

Thirdly, we found people, some professionals, who agreed to support us remotely, gave telephone consultations in the case we would require their services.

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We found neonatologist, pediatrician and some midwives, who in particular were specialized in home birth.

Fourthly, we gathered an enormous first-aid kit in which nearly everything can be found for any cases which could happen with us in the giving birth process and after it. This almost up-filled big bag still stands with different ampoules, phials, pills, dropping-bottles, bandages and syringes.

Fifthly, I started to study obstetrics actively. I recalled the information that was given to us in the Medical College, read different manuals, classical ones as well as unofficial, for those who wants to bear on one's own. Frankly speaking, when ten years ago I got a «good mark» at the obstetrics examination, I knew this subject much less. Then I couldn't imagine that this discipline would be useful for me in future.

Sixthly, I and Natasha had read all the books and watched all the films about home birth which we were able to find. Both Russian and foreign ones.

Seventhly, our friends and fellow villagers, who apart from the fact that they are parents of three children also had the experience of the self-dependent home birth, were ready to come on a visit.

Eighthly, we just lived in our relax way and experienced our ordinary life expecting the birth of our baby. Our preparation for a child's delivery was serious because in spite of the apparent formal carelessness and lack of tension, we are very rational people.

Why had we decided to bear at home, without medical assistance?

There are some answers to this question.

The most important thing was that we thought a child's delivery to be a natural and normal process, which is very ordinal but is extremely dramatized in modern society. For millions of years women gave birth to children through ordinary and peculiar to our biological species way. Why we consider the child's delivery process to be something supernatural and unusual today, and think that it must be accompanied with medical help? At least it is illogical. This conflicts Nature which, as we know, is much more rational than the most rational human. This is the main argument that supported our decision.

In the second place **we wanted to leave this event with us**, entirely go through it without delivering the responsibility to anybody else.

Also through the decision of home birth we displayed a **concern for our daughter:**

1. There is a lot of information about different psychological processes the natural course of which is broken at a maternity hospital. As the result, the human mental state starts to develop in not the healthiest way. I will not enter into details

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but give the references for the reader to numerous works by **Stanislav Grof** about the basic perinatal matrices and **Timothy Leary** about the imprinting. This theme (and not only this) is well and understandably described by **Jean Liedloff** in her book «**The continuum concept: In Search of Lost Happiness**».

2. Besides psychological problems there are more chances to get physical problems at a maternity hospital. There we can mention the consequences of the labor induction which many women undergo while delivery, complications after inoculation which take place right away after the birth and the possibility of the hospital acquired disease, which seems for doctors more terrible than "home" infection.

Through the decision of home birth we displayed the **concern for Natasha**:

1. There is no hurry and jitters which often accompanies a woman in staying at a maternity house.

2. Instead of «assembly-line» approach we get an individual, personal and because of it often more qualitative child's delivery approach.

3. The whole child's delivery process takes place in the presence and the support of the beloved person (people), but not among some unfamiliar guys who are to a large extent not interested in a woman who delivers a baby.

4. Again: the absence of unneeded risk of getting some hospital acquired disease...

5. Instead of the uncomfortable on-back position (which was invented for making better view for a doctor only) you can bear at your convenience, for example in the squatting or upright position...

6. As the result of everything mentioned above and some other reasons we get lesser traumatism, lesser pain without usage of healthcare products and lesser quantity of postpartum complications.

Of course some real problems exist there which are the absolute reasons for the delivery at a maternity hospital, for example the placental presentation. In this condition you can't bear without assistance and it is stupid to refuse medical help. But in general, normally, during normal pregnancy bearing at home is a normal occurrence. It was always the case. All our tsars and members of intelligentsia were born in that way. And originally and historically maternity hospitals were organized for poor, sick and stray people...

Certainly home obstetricians and midwives actively took part in the child's delivery earlier. They delivered medical care if it was necessary for the woman in childbirth. It is really interestingly described in the book by **Irina Martynova** «**To be born of self own free will. The chronicles of cannie moments**» (In Russian: «Roditsya po sobstvennomu jelanju. Letopis` povivalnogo dela»).

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Nowadays the institution of traditional home obstetricians is actively restored under the counter and many people have already fallen back to its help.

When we had questions we also consulted, because it emerged that no matter how many books you have read, everything happens in other way, and you need a real human experience, even if it is remote one. Something like that.

About home birth you can read in such books as **«Childbirth without fear. The original approach to natural childbirth» by Grantly Dick-Read**, **«Birth Reborn» by Michel Odent**, **«The Father's Home Birth Handbook» by Leah Hazard**.

We don't advocate for home birth, no. We just tell you about our thoughts when we took this important decision ourselves.

It's all very simple: if the woman wants to bear at a maternity hospital she should have such an opportunity. If she wants to bear at home, similarly, she could know that it is also possible. Only she can choose it. Someone is ready, someone is not. Like in everything.

The delivery started on the day when Natasha caught herself thinking that it is already difficult for her to be pregnant - precisely before one month of the definite date we got in the maternity welfare center. It was quite expected, because in our family this practice is very popular: to be born before its due time and with small weight.

The water broke in the evening. We started to prepare the banya and ourselves. We had no specially unrest, everything occurred calmly. Several times we thought that «it is beautiful that we don't need to go somewhere». There were no fuss, urgent preparations and excess bustle. More or less regular contractions started by the midnight. And by morning we met our daughter.

Everything happened very well. Calm and naturally. Now, when the delivery is already in the past I can't stop being amazed at all the beauty and the wisdom which this process contains. Yes, we risked but deliberately. We regret nothing about this, on the contrary we are very glad that we chose this way. But it turns out that the child means not only the delivery. It is something slightly greater.

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Our daughter

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On the Russian stove

We came to the village and aunt Lyuda asked:

- Where would you bear?*
- At home, in the banya.*
- Are you kidding?! Go to the maternity hospital!*
- Aunt Lyuda, and where you were born?*
- Well...Here in the village, at home, on the Russian stove...*

Child's question

Children's attraction compensates all their imperfections.

J. Liedloff

After the birth of our daughter a lot of people were expressing their sympathy to us. Many people constantly called us and asked: «Isn't it cold for the baby there»? or «Do you have milk»? But almost nobody asked what has changed in our life since the delivery.

Washing is the main thing in family life that becomes more strained after our daughter was born. There were some reasons why we refused the usage of disposable diapers: firstly, according to some data, that one child produces about 2.5 ton of stinking, poorly degradable waste during its usage while child can't go potty. Secondly, this is the best way to prevent every possible skin problems: intertrigo, inflammation and so on. Thirdly, it is expensive. That's why we use ordinal Soviet swaddling-clothes and German tissue multi-diapers. We have to wash almost every day. It's notable that the washing machine can't solve this question entirely. Children's doodies have some special consistency and they get smeared on all the clothes that are in the washing wheel (we have the semi-automatic washing machine and bring water by hand from the brook, that's why we can't afford changing the water too many times). Because of it even if we use the washing machine we wash main spots by hands first and it turns out to be more economical in water flow quantity.

The second thing that slightly has gone bad since our daughter was born is our sleep. The daughter has not yet understood what a day and a night is and how they differ in the consciousness of normal people. So, sometimes the idea comes to her mind that the night is an excellent time for training in something new, it's the development and games` time. It's inconvenient.

All the rest is normal. Since we have no special deals here, the washing and water bringing just flew into our daily routine.

Since we are not confined to any schedule, we could allow our sleep to adapt to the more spontaneous rhythm. We required a couple of weeks to adapt to our new family life. It is more interesting to live that way now.

Our daughter has enough attention. In general we strongly believe that her life is pretty good. She lives in comfortable temperature conditions. She always has the breast with milk nearby. In any moment. She is dry and neat. She gets a lot of new experience; we sing her songs and play musical instruments. We do special dynamics gymnastics for babies. In short: a bed of roses. There is nothing to be worried about.

She even doesn't know any unpleasant procedures: trips to the polyclinic, for example, to be overhauled by a doctor, doesn't know about weighing and

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inoculations... Sometimes we pour cold water on her and carry out from the house for tempering. But it is only for her benefit.

I will not speak much about inoculations, I will just say that all pediatricians and neonatologists familiar to me don't inoculate their own children because of some reasons. There is a great volume of information about this contradictory question. Someone is for, someone is against. We need to choose as usual.

One of the most important points in the child's question is that nowadays we are slightly perplexed children's needs. When you come into child's supermarket the first thought that crosses your mind is something like: «I don't have enough money to buy all these important child's accessories»! In reality normal babies in the first moments of their life need only one really important accessory – the mother. Everything else is someone's business.

It concerns everything. And especially it is about different jams with infant formulae. The ideal product for mammal's baby is his mother's milk. It always emerges after the child's delivery. It is ideal in order of merit and composition. Why only humans have discovered artificial formulae for their children? It seems strange. And some people really believe that formulae are better than natural breast milk, while wise multimillion Nature keeps aloof.

Also we have understood that children are free of charge and normally they don't require almost any financing. They need only the mother, which has all that they need. Especially at the beginning of their life. Children don't need beautiful new clothes (they overgrow them very fast and have no time to understand that these are clothes and they are beautiful) and there are many people who just dream of rid themselves of many kilograms of every possible clothes (which were presented for them previously). Children require no dummies because normally they have the mother, natural but not the plastic one.

The only thing that needs to be bought is the baby sling. If somebody doesn't know what it is – it is a piece of tissue of special quality which gives a mom the opportunity to live a fulfilled life after the delivery of the child.

Maybe if people have four hands instead of two then they don't require the baby sling. As it happened other way, mothers' life with it is simpler than without it. In the baby sling the child pretends to sit in hands. At that time mother's hands are free for any activity. It's very convenient. But it is again the matter of choice, it is not for everyone. Somebody will choose swaddling, give the dummy and lay the baby down to the stroller. It's a variant too. But we choose the baby sling. We have above ten reasons for it but this book doesn't have the task to describe them. The baby sling is not as simple in usage as the stroller, but it is worth the cost. If you are interested in it, you'd better read some special literature. It is easy to find the information today.

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Medical care

It falls out that I am a doctor by training. But I have never worked in our health care system for too long. Frankly speaking I dislike it. I have my own emphatic opinion that medicine must be firstly – preventive, secondly – emergency. Unfortunately preventive medicine doesn't work in our country. And the emergency one will not reach our settlement. But I'd like to write about it in details:

Firstly, preventive measures are the stuff that most depends on the person themselves. You need to take care about your health, eat good food, be physically active and keep going the activity of your brain. This is the base. It's amazing, when a guy comes to the polyclinic and declares: «I know you have your salaries to be raised, so you must make me healthy! Give me the magic pill that rescues me from all my diseases». And with all this, this person lives an unhealthy lifestyle, drinks the alcohol, smokes and has spent the last 20 years in front of the TV-set in evenings. And here you are: «Make me healthy»!

The health depends on many factors, but the person himself can take the responsibility for the most of them. It is more reliable. You can't say then that all your diseases exist because the doctors don't treat you. Now we have a lot of various systems of health recovery and support. If we speak about my example, I am fond of joint's gymnastics by Norbekov, respiratory gymnastics by Strelnikova, the complex «Eye of Revelation». I like tempering procedures. But again this is a very serious choice...which should be done solely by us.

Secondly – about **emergency medicine**. Without doubts we live far from some medical institutions, and if, God forbid, something dangerous for life happens we will be in trouble. This is a fact. But we make efforts to take it into account and prepare ourselves in accordance with it. We always have a well supplied first-aid kit at hand, the phone numbers list of familiar doctors of various specialties. We can always ask them advice if it is required. I always try to refresh my memory about some emergency aid knowledge of various types. I hope I will never use this knowledge.

Every person and especially that one who lives far from civilization must have a clear idea about the first emergency aid. Often the outcome of many problems depends on how was the first aid on pre-hospital step provided - in the right or wrong way. So I strongly recommend books about the emergency aid to everyone.

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Wildlife

The fight of the fight with the fight.

Y. Koval

Nowadays it's very difficult to meet real wild nature and we live in not so far region to be able to speak about it. But nevertheless we have an experience of a permanent interaction with some representatives of this amazing world. I'll tell about it below.

Of course it will be the narration not about hares, foxes and roe deer which are still survived in our hunting region, but about our little neighbors.

So, our first guest is a **mouse**. We interact with it almost the whole year. I will not go into biological details but we meet there some different species of this animal, they all differ in size and colour, all of them have bead-eyes and are quite cute. But I considered them to be cute only at the first time, up until the moment they offended me, when in winter 2012 they had chewed my favorite down-filled slipping bag and made a nest of it. Before this event our relationships was rosy. During the first wintering when I was living in the cold banya entrance room for about two months, and from them more than one month I spent in loneliness, Musya (it is the collective name I gave to all mice which looked for the food in our shelter) was my faithful and mute company. We communicated a lot. At that very period a term «AntiMusya» appeared. It was a type of container where we hid all things that Musya could gnaw. Later when the offence became milder I started to be nice to mice again. Still they are God's creatures!

In the spring and summer time we continued the relations with Musya – we elaborated strict discipline, which even turned into the reflex: everything that can be eaten and bitten should be in «AntiMusya». Everything that can be the building material for the nest also should be there, or should be hung somewhere where mice could not climb. The discipline is the basis of our interaction with this part of wild nature. If you had a meal – clear away everything after.

I personally don't want to use poison, entrapment or something like that. Mice lived here, are living and will live. They are an important part of the local environment. That's why an extermination of them is a silly and harmful labour. We should just organize and limit their activity, protect ourselves. But these questions are just about organization. Like they say it is «paperwork». Undoubtedly the keeping of a natural mouse's enemy, for example a cat, is an important step in the restriction of the mice's kingdom. But for the time present we decided that we will have all animals after we've finish the building of our house. So now our choice is the «AntiMusya» and the discipline.

In 2013 we provided ourselves with an ultrasonic scarer. They say, to make it efficient a number of conditions should be met, which we can't perform. Maybe more or less clear opinion about this matter will appear with time, now we're just

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experimenting with it. The first experiments collapsed – the mice drag the food straight from beneath of the scarer without any embarrassment at all.

The second highlight of our program in order of importance and quantity of questions is, undoubtedly, a **tick**. These companions keep company with us approximately from April to July.

First of all these Arachnids are famous for their ability to transfer a lot of diseases, the most known of them are viral tick-borne encephalitis and Lymeborreliosis. Heh, that`s not quite a few. So, what to do? We have a lot of ticks in the season and the probability to catch a disease from them is quite high.

I can share my thoughts concerning this question.

Some theory about tick diseases. There are in our region:

1. **Lymeborreliosis** is quite widespread and sad because of its long-term effects (heart, joints and nervous system damage), which can appear after some weeks or even months after the bite, when people have already forgotten about the tick.

If the disease is diagnosed in time, it can be easily cured, so it is necessary to keep in mind the first symptom – the appearance of a red spot around the place of the bite after 1-4 weeks after the infection. If the reddening appears earlier than after one week – it is the reaction to the bite, but not the sign of the infection.

2. **Viral tick-borne encephalitis** is a very troublesome hardly curable disease, as many other viral infections. The disease proceeds with a cerebral and spinal medulla affections and can cause death.

3. **Tick-borne rickettsiosis of North Asia**. In general the disease is benign, but to have it probably is an unpleasant matter. It is produced by one type of rickettsiae.

4. **Other diseases** happen more infrequently than those, which are mentioned above. But they also are curable.

Thus, we can understand that the most dangerous disease in this list is a viral tick-borne encephalitis.

It is justly said that the only method of protection against tick-borne encephalitis is the special inoculation made in advance, or if there was no inoculation, then again the special immunoglobulin, which must be inserted in the course of the first week after the bite was done.

Thus probably in our case the most wise decision was to make an inoculation. But I personally have decided that I will not inoculate myself, I just don't want. Although I recommend it to everybody, it is quite effective.

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It should be mentioned that the boosted «Iodantipirin» is considered by many specialists to be a profanation and doesn't protect you from the virus.

For my own I've chosen the method of having more attentive attitude to ticks. I try not to be bitten at all.

How it is possible: first of all you need to understand some biological peculiarities of the tick well:

In the first place a tick doesn't jump from above. It sits quite low in grass and traps his victim. When the victim passes near a tick it jumps on it. Most often a tick can be found on legs. Then he starts to climb up along the clothes or skin, searching for the most tasty and soft place to stick. It is the simplest thing to detect and intercept it at this stage. Since we practically don't have gnats there, I don't wear a lot of clothes and on the contrary wear trunks only, so it is even simpler to detect ticks. During the period when ticks just appeared and you haven't yet grown accustomed to them, your organs of sense begin become keener to ticks bit by bit and it occurs according to the chain, which I as a joke call:

«The Ticks syndrome»

The first stage is called «paranoiac» –you fell like all your body is covered with ticks. Everything is itching, scratching, every body sensation is estimated as a tick's presence. There is one real tick out of a hundred scratches. After a time this stage is over.

The second stage is «amateur». The life becomes easier: about five out of ten scratches bring to the catch of a tick. In other words about a half of the feelings are interpreted correctly.

The third stage is «pro». The organs of sense are tuned quite precisely: almost all «false» scratches disappear. The scheme becomes very simple: to fell the climbing tick – to catch – to throw out. That's all.

The fourth stage is called «sage». He can wake up at night, feeling that a tick is crawling along his body. He can get it, throw it out from the tent or flatten with nails and then continue to sleep calmly. Such a perceptibility!

The perceptibility upgrade occurs very soon if you have a desire to develop it, and a short time later life with ticks becomes quite an ordinary one. You can simply avoid bites.

In the second place you should understand that ticks are not hares and they don't jump through fields. All the time they sit at one place. And if at one place you gathered all the ticks, then they can't appear there again. In order to decrease the probability to meet a tick in spring you should use one and the same path and forbear from going through virgin lands and bushes.

In the third place if a tick has already bitten you, you need to move it away as soon as possible. The less time there is after the moment of the bite until the

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moment of moving away the better for you. There is no need to drown it in oil and kerosene, cauterize it or do something else. Just throw it away without ceremonies. The simplest way is to do this with a help of pincers. The place of the bite should be smeared with antiseptic. If the head tears off – don't worry, the tick doesn't need it anymore. It is not dangerous for you, it is like a splinter, and all tick's microbes are in its intestines.

That's about ticks.

We have got snakes there too. People also ask about them very often.

Thank God we don't live in that very region where it brings great discomfort. But snakes are found. They like to catch some sunshine, to slug on rocks and in general they are quite calm. The only thing is that you should not disturb them, because they can be frightened and bite you.

There are three types of snakes in our area: two poisonous – viper and copperhead snake and one non-poisonous – racer.

The main problem after the poisonous snake's bite (I speak about the kinds which we have there and they are not very dangerous) is a wrong first-aid treatment. 80% of all complications and problems are happened because of some wrong actions and prejudices at this stage.

The most important thing is to place the bitten person in the way that the place of the bite was below the heart, provide the rest, give a great amount of water, cover with something and guarantee the immobility of the bitten limb. That's all. Further can be done if possible: you can make a sterile dressing for the place of the bite, give allergy relief medicines, and provide the transportation to the medical facility.

But the most important is as far as possible to avoid bites. To be attentive.

I started to write about the wild nature and get the hand-book about the first-aid treatment. But these are the questions, the answers to which should be familiar to everyone.

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Where has the garbage gone?

*It's wrong, that there is no garbage where people don't litter.
There is no garbage where is a street cleaner with a gun.*

Folklore

It has emerged that we produce an enormous quantity of litter. I have never thought about it before. And people around me also know nothing about it. For us the litter disappears in the minute we stop seeing it. We empty the waste bin into the darkness of a refuse chute and all litter with crash flies down the tube. Silence settled over you. The litter disappears from your worldview. And we think that if we discard rubbish in the special place it doesn't litter the nature. But what is the reality?

From the refuse chute the litter goes to the dumpster in the yard, then the dumptruck comes and the litter goes to the «solid domestic waste landfill», in simpler words – to the dumping site. There it lies in one big stinking mountain. Very long time. Because a great amount of the rubbish that we produce decomposes very slowly.

When we moved to the ecovillage we immediately faced with a litter problem. Because since that period the responsibility for our litter has fully weighed on our conscience. First of all we agreed upon the prohibition about burning of plastic on the territory of the ecovillage. The second thing was sorting. We started to divide all garbage for four parts:

1. **organic matter** (it goes for organic compost);

2. **matter, which can be burned without danger:** paper and tins (we made a special place for the burning and created an improvised furnace from the piece of galvanized sheet – the pipe covered by the lid. The furnace is filled up from above, and after the filling sets afire through the hole from below. After the burning tins are flatten and dug into the ground. When they are burnt they decompose quite fast);

3. **plastic** (for the time present we've decided to move it out because we have no thought what to do with it in the village). We transport postconsumer plastic to the regional centre dump;

4. **batteries.** They demand special utilization. We transport them into the special city receiving points.

But it emerged that it was not enough. Still there was a lot of litter. It turns out that the practice of a primordial decrease of potential litter usage is very important. Basically happens on the purchase stage.

It is not simple for a modern human to stop purchase litter. It is difficult nowadays to find products that are not packed up with plastic. But nevertheless we are trying to do so.

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I wrote this to help people who are going shopping:

The instruction for the «green» buyer or how to decrease the amount of litter:

Remember, that the most important thing in the «rubbish problem» is to stop using stuff which is not able to be used further.

1. Before you go to the shop think about the bag, string-bag, rucksack or something like that for not to take the plastic bag at the checkout lane.

2. The big packing gives less rubbish, than the little one (it is better to buy one bag of 50 kg, than ten bags of 5 kg or all the more 100 bags of 500 grams).

3. Nowadays it is considered to be a good service when the seller tries to pack everything that can be packed. This service is not obligatory. You can and should refuse excessive packing, apart from the cases when it is really necessary (for example if we buy raw fish and put it into the bag without a pack it will give a bad smell to the other products).

Many sellers insist on packing, thinking that in this case they care for the buyer. The frequent argument here is that suggested packs are «free of charged». But you'd better refuse, you can leave the things that you don't require.

4. Choose products, which are packed in paper wrapper or in something like that which is simple to utilize: for example eggs can be in a plastic flat and in a paper one. It is better to choose the second variant. Also you can buy juice in a glass jar rather than in a cardboard pack.

5. Earlier it was normal to use plastic bags several times. Today there are many jokes that some time ago Russian housewives washed plastic bags and hung them out to dry. But this is a good practice, there is nothing shameful in it: pick out some good thick bags and carry them with you, when you go shopping it lets you to decrease the quantity of new bags, which you bring from the shop.

6. Try to buy products without packing at all, for example from the private industry. Frequently these products have higher quality. It is better to buy tasty natural milk in the countryside in a 3 litre jar than to buy more expensive, tasteless, made from the powder milk in the shop and get three plastic bags as a present, which soon will go to the dump.

7. Choosing the product in the shop think at once how its pack could be reused: for example from the kefir cardboard pack the cup for some sprouts can be made. From two similar product you should choose that one, the pack of which can be reused.

8. Choose simple and cheap products, often they contain less useless wrapping and are much more wholesome and fresher (for example expensive sweets

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in the box have a lot of wrapping and few sweets, and simple sweets bought by weight contain more sweets than the wrapping).

9. Instead of buying some products (which at the same time are sold in the useless package), think about how you can cook it by yourselves. For example you can easily cook tasty, cheap and wholesome mayonnaise from simple products, which are in any kitchens.

10. The peculiarities of some products buying:

Cereals. Practically in all big shops there are cereals sold by weight. You can come with your own bag and pour in the necessary amount. It is very convenient.

Fruits and vegetables. It is not obligatory to wrap them into a pack in supermarkets. For example while buying apples you can just weigh them on scales, get the bar-code and stick it to one of the apples without the pack. Then explain at cashdesk that you don't take plastic bags. For example I tell that I live in mountains and «don't know where to put plastic after use». You can also put apples into your own prepared bag and stick the bar-code with the price on it.

Vegetable oil. The best variant is to find the place where this oil is produced and sold «on tap» to the buyers container. Or you can simply buy 5 litres jerricans instead of buying 1 litre bottles.

Bread. Choose simple fresh bread without a packing.

So, we started to go to the shop in a right way and began bringing less rubbish to the house. We reduce the quantity of plastic. But it was not enough.

The preparation of our rubbish to the utilization became the second stage. We began reducing its volume due to decomposition and pressing.

The third thing which for the time present we just investigate is a pyrolysis furnace. It is said that there are safe ways of plastic waste burning, but we have not checked it in practice yet.

About nourishment

- Are you a vegetarian?
- Yes, morally.

Interview with Boris Grebenshikov

Now and then I insert some thoughts about food into different parts of this book, but here I'm going to tell more. The main rural life revelation for me was that products have smells. Each vegetable smells in a special way. A vegetable marrow has a smell of a vegetable marrow. Cucumber smells as cucumber. Bread – as bread. Flour – as flour. Is it logically? Yes. But once after living in the village and after eating true meal I went to the city and realized that «urban» products at stores do not have a smell. When we'd bought a mill, we understood that flour have a smell of seeds instead of dust, and how much the bread baked out of such flour differs from a factory one.

This was an important discovery. Now, if I have to buy groceries at the store, I pay much attention to the smell of products, I think it is hard to fake it. Products in a store look excellent nowadays. But the smell is not in order. The smell tells the truth as yet.

The fact that in the city we never thought about the quantity of certain products became for us interesting and new. As we did no supplies, grew ourselves nothing we bought the food in the shop when it gone. In a village people clearly know what food and how much of it they eat. Well, it's certainly for that food that they grow themselves. It's interesting. And it is convenient. And the house is kept on the basis of these calculations.

Here, unfortunately, are no universal figures, each family has different preferences and appetite, so we all have different amounts. The most important thing is to calculate main specimens:

- potato
- carrot
- beet
- onion
- cabbage

These five vegetables basically «keep» the Russian village. Almost all people grow them in their gardens; they make up the basic food allowance all year round.

Then go tomatoes and cucumbers. Next - vegetable marrows.

And the rest is being planted for the «pampering», for the diversity and experimentation.

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We decided to make up some calculations too. Since in summer we always live in a company, only in winter there is an opportunity to consider the needs more or less precisely.

Now during a winter day we both eat on average about:

1-2 carrots

1-2 onions

5 medium potatoes

1 liter of milk (if we go to the village for dairy products)

300 grams of curds

100 grams of bread

200 grams of cereals

This is the base.

Approximate amount per month:

Carrots - 3 - 6 kg

Onions - 3 - 6 kg

Potatoes - 15 kg

Milk - 30 litres

Curds - 10 kg

Cereals - 6 kg

Bread - 3 kg

Also we eat: vegetable oil, honey, all kinds of candies, dried fruits, sometimes fish, eggs, mushrooms, sauerkraut, pickled cucumbers, jam. Our nutrition is quite diverse. Now we spend about 1000 rubles per week on food. This is despite the fact that we do not yet have our own grown products. By urban standards this is really modest. We buy up approximately once a week, for this we go to the district center.

In summer we consume much less dairy products, but we eat more greens, fruits, berries and vegetables. We eat well. A few days ago a friend of mine called me and asked: «Hey, what do you eat there? For example, what did you eat today?» I have listed. He said: «I've been in worse eat in the city than you there in the mountains». Well, we live here not for the starvation and asceticism!



Real Comfort – the fire Hell-Bath

Our own and our settlement`s economy

*For surplus cash you can buy only surplus things.
But the soul's needs can't be satisfied with money.*

H.D. Thoreau

This chapter, perhaps, is the most disputable and difficult. While I was writing it, I discussed a lot of things about life economics with Natasha, because the understanding about something comes while talking about it. I have never explored this subject so thoroughly up to that moment.

I have to say: I don't appeal you to asceticism, homelessness, poverty, mendicancy, freedom from your desires, hunger and refusal from medical assistance. But I call you to the healthy simplicity, to free travel, refusal from excessive consumption, conscious poverty, I call to healthy simple and natural food, to barter, gifting, and careful attention to your health instead of implicit belief in the medical assistance.

I do not particularly like the word «work». Human beings are the only animals who have to work, and I think this is the most ridiculous thing in the world. Other animals make their livings by living, but people work like crazy, thinking that they have to in order to stay alive. The bigger the job, the greater the challenge, and the more wonderful they think it is. It would be good to give up that way of thinking and live an easy, comfortable life with plenty of free time. I think that the way animals live in the tropics, stepping outside in the morning and evening to see if there is something to eat, and taking a long nap in the afternoon, must be a wonderful life. For human beings, a life of such simplicity would be possible if one worked to produce

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directly his daily necessities. In such a life, work is not work as people generally think of it, but simply doing what needs to be done.

M. Fukuoka

Not without purpose I quote here some words from the book «The One Straw Revolution». It's one of my favorite thoughts of this book. And now I read this quotation and understand that I live exactly the author said, working when it's necessary, without permanent «official» employment.

This morning while lying in my bed, I was thinking: How is this possible? Why the work causes so many questions and bothers people so much? Why many of them are ready to spend most part of their life doing things they don't really like?

Without going into details the major reason which causes them to work permanently is that they must pay different regular fees. And commonly these fees aren't directly concerned with peoples' basic needs, more often they are artificially created.

There are two kinds of such regular necessary fees:

1. **«Public utilities services» or «accommodation payment»**. It's hard to understand from what urban utility bills consists of now. They are huge. Some people must give away most part of their earnings just «for live», getting only minimum heat, water and electricity. And if we speak about rented apartment then the prices rise up to the space.

In a village and concretely in our settlement everything is different. Recently I've learned that the tax on my land for this year totaled in 118 rubles. I can say that's my rent. And it seems to me quite adequate. I bring water in the buckets, cut firewood at the forest (or buy it). The stove gives me heat and warm water and we have our own electricity... In that way, our fee for utilities is almost equal to zero.

I have never got my own habitation: firstly I lived with parents, then in the dormitory, then with fiends. In my life I have got some attempts to hire a room or a flat, but soon I was tired of it, because every month I had to look for the money to give it practically for nothing. Thus I have no habit to spend my money for the habitation. I consider it to be very strange to pay somebody because you just live. I will better slowly build my own simple habitation.

2. **Credits**. I like an old joke about debts: it says that you borrow somebody's money for a some time but then give your own money for good. People buy something unnecessary and expensive (although while buying they think it is very «necessary» and «cheap»), and then they are obliged to work more and worry how they will pay this debt back. One of my friends worked in the big company and had to motivate the staff to work. He developed methods of every sort and kind for the encouragement and punishment in order the stuff to do what they must do. One of the methods of holding the person in work position was that he boosted and encouraged all kinds of credits. If the person takes the mortgage for 30 years he

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becomes very stable employee. He doesn't want any changes. He values his work place and the salary.

Bank workers are very kind and amiable when they offer some no-interest loan, but they behave themselves in a different manner when you detain your regular payment. I have got credit experience twice in my life. I don't want to do it again.

My American friend Rick said once: «In America if you are 18 years old already but you still have no credit history, you are considered to be a «shady character». He told that all his family is «normal» and only he doesn't take a loan in principle. He has not got a car and a flat but he doesn't worry at the end of the month that he needs to pay something. He travels freely, enjoys his life where he wants. I understand him very well.

Well, enough throwing words around, the idea is clear, I think.

As soon as all necessary payments are disappeared (which moreover give us nothing special in return), the anxiety, based on the financial question about the next day, decreases also. And working for money becomes only by perforce. If you need to buy something you will go for a work, exchange one of your skills for money. If you want to travel you work again, collect some money. Each according to his needs, as it is said. I write here the word «money», although there better suits «resources». After all we need money only to exchange them for some goods. Often these goods could be got straightly. For example sometimes I act as a country doctor. Without doubts I don't get any money for the consultation of old country women. But instead of it we get some potatoes and unions for example.

The theme of food is very simple. We live in the world where it is very difficult to die from hunger (of course if we are not citizens of some super-poor desert African country after the war). Practically every person can earn for the simple nourishment. Potatoes, carrots, unions, macaroni are quite cheap. We always are able to provide ourselves with base, no matter which income we have. If you want to eat something unusual you'll just require doing more work.

It will be good if you'll understand that the wholesome products are always the cheapest. And don't forget about seasonality. Every type of food has its own time. People always lived like that. Nobody ate fresh cucumbers in December. It is time for pickled ones. (I think I have written about it three times in this book).

But there you should remember that this book is more devoted to the rural life than to the urban one, and in the rural area you can get products even much simpler than in the city.

The clothes as well as the food should be simple too. It is done, first of all to protect the human from environment factors. There are no other functions. For example, I just can't understand why people kill 200 little animals to make one uncomfortable and expensive fur-coat, which will become old-fashioned next year? The clothes should be durable and fulfill their major function.

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So, I had already written that in general my «work» are: teaching, medical consultation and selling of my own books. For example this one. I do it by perforce and don't depend on somebody. But what I tell here is only about our personal finances, about our choice.

Now I will try to explain our common village economics system, which has been developing for two years of our lands settling.

First of all we gathered the money for the land purchase. On the first stage we required about two million rubles. On the meeting of the first settlements we decided to make an entrance fee in an amount of 150 thousand rubles, which became something like club membership fee. Later it was renamed to the «infrastructure fund». The first participants determined their positions, first money were collected and all started from that. We moved to the Altai for the legal paperwork. At first that «infrastructure» money was our single common money.

After the purchasing of the land, our first team went to the territory of our prospective village and began work: they laid out gardens, started first building sites, created our public infrastructure. In the village council we came to the decision that while we had no money except «infrastructure» fund, mentioned above, we would feed in the common kitchen, using those resources.

Now this fund is spent only for the village development: for common buildings, big purchases, legal paperwork, road reparation, connection maintenance and so on.

In the second season appeared the need to make a distinction among financial inflow and we created two more funds: «food» and «domestic» ones.

The «food» fund began to support the common kitchen where we eat all together. Everybody makes deposits: 50 rubles per day for settlers and 100 rubles per day for guests. If the family of settlers doesn't have any income in the city it has a right to feed on in the common kitchen free of charge.

«One more purse is the «domestic» one or the «fund of recurrent expenses». It is for various instruments, fuel, wash-basins, soap for the banya, in general - for some trifles. This fund is filled up with the dues of all settlers, 300 rubles from the family per month.

In the settlement we also have some kind of magic box «for the development of the settlement», and everybody who wishes can put there their donation. This money is used in any of the funds when required.

Thus we have one big fund which is spent very attentively for the various important deals and two small funds which support simpler requirements.

Besides the sources mentioned above, the funds are sometimes filled up due to some arrangements - seminars or festivals, organized in the settlement. Sometimes we sell the hay from our land, and it also gives us some income.

Well, I think that's all about economy.

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Building Community Dome

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Electricity

The idea to wire a valley for electricity came down: firstly we had understood that it is too expensive, and then decided that we can simply live without it. From this moment the investigation of the alternative renewable energy sources was started. We ordered Chinese solar panels with 550 watts total capacity, and it visibly reduced the price of the equipment, though we were waiting for the order about half of a year. For these systems some accumulators which were written off from a diesel locomotive were obtained (each with 132 A\H capacity).

We use petrol generators for construction tools (we have a circular saw, a power planer, a drill, an angle grinder) and for a washing machine. Now there are two Chinese aggregates in our ecovillage of 600 and 3000 watts. They work properly but we do not use them often.

In summer we assembled two solar systems with the panel's capacity of 90 and 120 watts. They were enough to provide energy for telephone, lighting of the cookhouse and the banya, for the phones and note-books recharging and for two screwdrivers.

In autumn we assembled in the banya one system of solar panels for 320 watts and a windmill for 300 watts for the wintering.

Our windmill was already assembled on the makeshift mast made from 4 meters pine-tree and it turned out to be too low for it. I think on the higher mast it will work more stable and catch more wind. Besides it was found that we have not got normal permanent wind in our valley. It is very rare and gusty. As it is said - stuff today and starve tomorrow. Only in these extreme days when rubberoids pieces fly away from our roof the windmill is buzzing gally. But in general it seems to me that there are not many windy days. In February our single hybrid charge controller which had worked with windmill burned out, and it began to run free. To say the truth we didn't notice this loss. During the winter we charged our accumulators fully only a couple times, in December. Starting from the second part of January there was more sunlight and we ceased to economize the energy at all. Thus practically all winter we didn't experience the electricity deficit. We use diode lightning, we charge computers, pocket torch accumulators, camera. Sometimes Natalia sews on her electric sewing machine.

I didn't manage to put in order the accumulator charging from the petrol generator, therefore when we used the washing machine, the system accumulators got the power supply only from the sun as usual.

Alternative energy is quite interesting theme for investigations. Many people ask: is it real to provide electricity using sources of alternative energy only? The answer is yes! But in order to realize it you must entirely revise your consumption. It is impossible to move from the flat to the house with solar panels and to take all the urban customs (and all electrical appliances also). Maybe if only you have got a lot of money for the big system, but I think it is unnecessary.

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I advise you to read a good article devoted to this topic written by **Valery Chobyk** which is called: «**The wind and the sun – what a wonderful day**». It is Internet-accessible. (In Russian; «Veter i solnce - den chudesnyi»)



Community Sauna (Banya) – place of our living in firsts years.

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About the house

It is interesting to observe our house growing. Here we see some pegs and rope on the ground. Then suddenly the pier foundation is already visible... The construction begins to look like a house more and more. It's amazing. I feel like I see the magic in my presence.

But I must say that the building process is not simple. On the one hand it's physically hard. On the other hand it's intellectually intensive. Sometimes it seems to me that my brain is not able to think over all these rafters, logs, lathings, boards, nails and screws anymore.

Sometimes I'm tired emotionally.

But I refuse to exchange it because I like it so much.

Our phone is ringing

Initially we didn't have the telephone at all. We had to go to the top of the nearest mountain and call there. This provided the more conscious approach to chatting. «Should I give a call to X»? – the thought crossed your mind. You grabbed your phone then looked at the mountain and thought: «Actually, I had nothing to say right now». And your desire to chat vanished. Naturally that helped saving a lot of money. If for the each phone call people had to go to the top of some high mountain we'd be an athletic nation. Or the mobile providers would be very poor. Of course the lack of communication facilities was the source of the certain inconveniences: if you needed to order something (building materials, for example) you had to go to the nearest village. And more: the workers couldn't be in the settlement for a long time. Their relatives worried because they couldn't connect with them and so on.

For about a year we tried to solve the telephone question. Some variants were offered but they were too expensive. But then we found a suitable solution. An antenna was installed on a telecommunications workers` booth in the nearest village and then it was directed towards our location. In our settlement another antenna was hanged and the small box with the accumulator. It worked out. The radio extender was in 10 times cheaper than up-link. Now we have intercommunication. We still don't have the Internet access. But we can have a chat. When the telephone appeared everyone started chatting. Isn't it joyful to tell everybody that now we have the phone? Then we got first telephone bills. Immediately we reduced the number of calls.

During the winter we switch it off sometimes when we don't want talking to anyone. Sometimes we talk a lot when feel the need in contacts. It's convenient to have a phone. It creates an illusion that everything is next to you. Civilization.



Horse -drive Mobile Internet

The locals

I'm absolutely sure that the creation of a new community is impossible without warm relations with the neighbors from the nearest villages. The relations with the neighbors create resources, security and company... It is a lot of things. And thanks God if these relations will get on track. Many guys who tried to create a settlement in different regions told me that they failed to establish good relations with «the locals» and then they had a lot of problems. Or they just didn't have any support. This support, by the way, especially at the beginning, can be crucial.

Gradually, meeting by meeting, we develop relations with the whole surrounding community on different levels. It includes the relations with all kinds of sawmill workers and brick sellers. It also includes meetings and negotiations with administration and postal and telecommunications workers, with road menders and police, with doctors and teachers, foresters and herdsman, tractor drivers and excavator operators, old men and children from the nearest village. The list can be long. Some relations stay formal and some can transform into the real friendship, almost family relationship. All these relations are very important.

During the first year we just came to feel at home and became acquainted with the neighborhood, we nurtured the relationships. In the second year we became well adjusted to the environment. We got used to the people and the people got used to us.

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Being loved by everybody is impossible. But it is possible to develop good and honest relations with everybody. This matters a lot. Because your neighbors are a part of your Home. So let these neighbors be your friends.



Students from ISE-project help to make Cob

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I'm more local than you are

It happens in May in my first «garden» visit, when I lived alone in a tent and tried to construct first beds in my life. The locals knew nothing about us except some rumors. That time the delegation of local guys on horses came in order to fix some cultural exchanges. The guys were tipsy and firstly started saying rude things to me but then we got into conversation and became friends. They sat around my fire and while drinking beer started a hot discussion about the quality of my beds (which according their opinion was «not up to the mark»). Meanwhile I rode their horses across the field. The «ambassadors» from the next village made certain that I was not a member of a sect, but just a strange city inhabitant, which had nothing to do. After some time I got tired from the riding, the beer was gone and we started to discuss the questions of the Universe. That's happens often in such cases. Having heard the words: «All normal people wanted to live in a city and we came into a village» I offered to my new neighbors the priorities which were absolutely unexpected for them. I said: «Did you know why I was more local than you»? The interlocutors were surprised: «Why then»?

«Because I was here with all my thoughts, and you were in a city all the time». It was hardly arguable thing.

Still we are not villagers

Working for agriculture we don't have weekends.

I. Skoblikov

Once Natasha got worried about our involvement into the village's everyday life. «Look at real villagers, – she said me. – Look how they live. They awake with the dawn and up to sunset they work without cease. They plant plenty of vegetables (enough for all relatives, guests and for us) and have a great variety of cattle (cows, pigs, horses). Our attitude to country life is too relaxed: we wake up when we've had enough sleep, sometimes read books all day long or take days off anytime we want to».

After a long discussion we decided that even if we live close to nature now we're still more «citizens»... We do nothing we can't explain to ourselves. For example, why should we buy a piglet if we don't eat meat? Or why should we buy a cow if we even physically aren't able to drink all the milk? But required amount of care for the cow is huge. We don't have a dog now as we have nothing to guard. Why should we buy a herd of horses if we don't need to sell them as meat like many locals? Do we need a huge vegetable garden? Actually not. But at the same time we dream about a telescope and a library. About a workshop. About a pond. We've begun to produce a line of herbal tea. We travel any time we would like to. Maybe if we grew in countryside, now we could have another way of thinking. But to all appearance we're still citizens... citizens who decided to live close to nature.

Of course, we would like to buy some animals, but we approach the issue very thoroughly, weigh all pro and con: how much resources are required for the keeping of this animal, what it can give in return and do we really need this. For example, we would like to buy several laying hens because they don't demand much care, and we like eggs. We think about a couple of horses, we have enough grass and free space for grazing... Maybe one day we'll keep a dairy goat... Or maybe a couple of bee families. But not more.

These questions are very important for me personally: What do I need? What am I ready to do to satisfy my needs? How could these needs be satisfied with the least effort? What does it give to me: freedom or bonds?

Once I decided that I don't want to make some things automatized just to leave myself a possibility to work physically. For example, we may bore a hole and pump water from under the ground – but I don't want it. I like to carry it in buckets despite the fact it's so hard. And I choose a work consciously. But such labour doesn't limit me. And as for several cows, for example – they will really limit us. You must milk them. You must feed them with the hay in winter. You can't leave them unattended even for a day. Am I eager to work? My answer is «yes». Nowadays I work with hands even more than I ever had during all passed life. But I try to avoid such labour which could become a load.

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Seasons: time goes round

Russians don't have history. History exists for tsars, patriarchs, aristocrats, and even for workmen, if you wish to know it. History is a passage of events. Russian people, in opposite, remained the same as they used to be during the time of Vladimir the Red Sun. The faith, the language, the clothes, the harness and the cart stayed the same. The knowledge and the culture are the same. Damn the history!

Ivan Kuprin

For some reasons at the countryside a traditional greeting «How are you doing?» sounds silly. It's because there is nothing to do here. Well, more precisely, there are lots to do, but the essence of the business never changes. It repeats as seasons pass. There are spring things to do in spring, summer things – in summer, autumn – in autumn, and winter – in winter. It's the same every year, every century. I like the way Nils Christie writes about it in the «Beyond Loneliness and Institutions...». He recognizes two types of time perception. They are linear and cyclic.

The linear perception pictures time as a sort of motion from the point A to the point B. From birth to death. There are life and career development, passage of milestones: kindergarten, school, work and retirement in this motion. In this development one can change the pace; somebody moves quicker, another one moves slower; one has his/her life events, another one different events. Everything can differ. This time perception varies for different people. People have different lives. On the one hand it makes your life more interesting for the mind. On the other hand the life becomes less stable, because there is no straight movement without ups and downs: the career growth can be followed by the decrease and dismissal. It puts person into some stress. If there is more stress than one can bear, all sorts of problems come along. They are diseases, depressions ...

At the countryside, the time perception is more traditional. It passes in cycles and is clearly linked to the nature rhythms. In all the seasons all the villagers have approximately the same things to do. Life may become less certain if somebody «comes off» the rhythms, begins different life. If one instead of earthing up potatoes decides to go for a trip, neighbors will disapprove it. There is no priority for individuals in traditional society, and the main fear is to be different: «What would my neighbors say»?

This style of life is less interesting than the urban one, but it's more stable and secure. People reach their targets; as the season pass, people know exactly that all their essential needs will be satisfied. They will get warm and fed. They could not take a step forward in their career, but nobody needs it here. However it happens sometime, that somebody find his way of life too boring and monotonous. Then they wish to move to the city. Alternatively, they wish to get drunk in order not to feel any repetition and monotony.

When we moved to the village, we discovered that our perception of time had to be changed to the cyclic, traditional one. Things had to become «monotonous»,

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boring. How can we do it? Perhaps, it's good to observe the nature, to watch the life of birds, mice, insects, spiders. They seek after nothing but keep working hard. The local people are always busy, but never too much in a hurry. They're always occupied but always and everywhere are in time.



Paspaulov's Home

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About the balance

In the first season of our arrangement we came across with the fact that none of the board suppliers was in a hurry to deliver us a timber. We made an order and got it after some weeks without any haste. Firstly we exerted ourselves and amazed at the fact why those people didn't want to make a mint of money.

Then we started to think about the balance. The locals there had they own rhythm and we came from the city and began to hurry them. We being full of ourselves considered that our materials and order had a crucial role...The people here live according their own rhythms. It's better to pay attention to it.



Kugel-Kultur

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PART THREE LAYING OUT A KITCHEN GARDEN

The triumph of the agronomical thought

*The mistakes which were made in the course of many years
and decades can't be corrected in a short term.
The nature should regenerate bit by bit anew.*

S.Holzer

When I'd cultivated my first marrow, ten tomatoes and two peppers it was the real triumph of the agronomical thought. In the next village people may cultivate turnip in size like a bucket and pickle cucumbers in barrels. Well, let them be. Let the skilled farmers, who live not far from us get water melons, grapes and pears. No matter. But it is important to do something in life at the first time with the help of your own hands and get real product of your labour.

Farm deal is one more cause for mockeries of locals towards us (the first cause is that we build strange houses, not as ones which are customary in their village). We also stand out in the farming. And for the present moment we stand out not in the best sense: now we can't boast of our harvest.

What is different in our gardens?

Many things differ.

For example this is the refusal of ploughing. Everybody around us ploughs but we don't do it.

This is the usage of strange instruments like subsurface cultivator for example.

These are unusual techniques of growing potatoes in straw.

This is a hay covering of all surface of the garden.

This is odd experiments with beds.

This is the planting of some plants which are not eatable and not decorative too.

I'll explain in short why we do it as we do, but I will not write a lot because for the time present there is almost nothing to write about. You can read works by **Ovsinsky, Fukuoka, Holzer, Kurdyumov, Bublik, Faulkner** which were already mentioned above...Everything was written long time before us. I'll just place a couple of quotations, which I'm fond of. Mostly I like the Japanese Fukuoka.

While reading his «**The One-Straw Revolution**» I was inspired by many moments, for example the author tells about his initial experiments with the soil the following: «*My conviction was that crops grow themselves and should not have to be grown. I had acted in the belief that everything should be left to take its natural course, but I found that if you apply this way of thinking all at once, before long things do not go so well. This is abandonment, not «natural farming».*» Fukuoka spent

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about 30 years to obtain the results and develop his own method of natural management. So we still have time.

Edward Faulkner writes in his book **«Plowman's Folly»** (free translation): *«Finally the improvement of soils, which today are still miserable, will depend not on fertilizers or some additions from the outside. The fact that we use them shows distinctly that we constantly spoil our soil. The matter is in the method of cultivation, which is designed only for the present day convenience. My own experience shows me that I am right and I just offer to refuse the tillage. I can't imagine more reliable way. It is not easy at the beginning. First 2-3 years the soil is still hard, the organic matter is added with difficulty and mainly stays at the surface. But then everything goes right and soil becomes more soft and fertile».*

I decided that we were not starving and there was no need to grow up something promptly. We can easily devote some years to the slow, thoughtful development of our area and to the studies. For a what? It is again about the «low impact» practice and philosophy. It is about the fact, that if there is the way of existence with full respect towards all alive species in the land, it is close to my way of thinking. It is about the fact that we will leave after us alive and fertile environment, which will be able to give the healthiest and the most full-fledged products. It may look like an utopia for somebody. There are also many people who cultivate potatoes, carrots, onions and many others cultures many years using traditional method. And it is difficult task to find the practicing followers of the natural recovery farming... But if there is at least one person in the world who shares with his experience of the complex farming perception and creative agriculture, which takes care not only about a human and his harvest necessities but also about the whole diversity of living beings...then this resonates with my heart and I'm ready to side with him. I like the idea to think about lives of frogs, insects, microbes and mushrooms.

Many things which I observe in the farming upset me. I don't see any rationality in the poison, herbicide or fertilizer usage. They are the offence against the Nature. In case you just stare ahead it lightens the hard labour of a farmer...But if you raise the eyes, even now you can see the consequences in a global scale which are caused by this farming method. That's why I want something else.

Without any doubts I can't speak about it as long as I'll get enough experience, with which I will be able to share. Now I stand at a crossroad. I can try any methods because thank God my parents and I are not farmers. Thank God I have not got corresponding education or just a grandmother, on whose dacha in childhood I would weed a garden. That `s why I have an opportunity to start from the very beginning and find various variants which finally will suit me. Not only to my mind but also to the heart. This is the reason why on our land we do what we do. Yes, it is not simple. Yes, the results are minimal. But something arises and develops bit by bit...

Certainly, besides «classical authors» there are other materials, and they give power and hopes. For example I found a good film about the development of virgin lands soil without technical equipment **«Land creation by Victor Schastlivcev»**. (in Russian: «Zemle tvorenie Victora Schastlivceva»).

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There are interesting articles written by our countryman **Aleksander Kuznecov** about the «**Technologies of Natural Farming**» (in Russian: «Technologii Prirodnogo Zemledelia»). To tell the truth I didn't manage to find a personal contact with him, but I read his works with great pleasure. Also there are many subject forums in the Internet, where you can find something about this theme...

Without doubts our friends and neighbors also give us great support... They patiently observe our experiments. Thank you very much! We could do nothing without your nurslings, seeding and pieces of advice!

In many languages the word «ogorod» («garden» in Russian) first of all is connected with a concept «ogorajivat» («to enclose», «to bound» in Russian), but not with a concept of growing something on this territory. It is so from the ancient prehistoric times, when a human enclosed a lot of the territory, where wild edible plants were growing and protected it from some monkeys, who also had no opposition to eat those plants. Much later a human began to observe and explore how he could interfere in the natural plants life in order to get more food. He began to transplant new edible plants from other places to his «ogorod» one by one. First garden techniques appeared at that time. The agriculture began to develop. We, like in ancient times, have enclosed our lots with wild grass and are observing, watching and protecting it from village horses, who graze on our territory. Step by step we learn the science which is new for us.

Inconvenient things are the next ones: the experiments with it closely connected with seasons, and if you have "understood" something in this year, you will be able to prove your guesses only next year. That's why the process is very slow.

I will note a couple of moments which nowadays for me personally gives the direction in garden experiments:

-In my lot I want to develop a hand work and a natural farming only.

- The developing must be gradually: it must widen from the house to the sides. (See the idea about 4 Zones in your lot in the book by **Bill Mollison** «**Permaculture One**»).

- The developing of a virgin soil must be carried out first of all with a full mulching of mowing, which we have got in a great amount.

The main course for the next some years is the activation of the soil fertility and recovering of it, and only after it we will think about growing.

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PART FOUR ENDLESS BUILDING

Our House: intuitively-nonproject building

*The idea came to me all at once, as is usually the case.
I just hear a faint 'click', and there it is.
Given a Moomin and a place, and there must follow a house.
I was going to build a house with my own hands, a house exclusively my own!*

Tove Jansson

I have already written that I am not a construction worker and before my life in the ecovillage I hadn't lifted anything heavier than a telephone and had built nothing. Only here in the Altai I got to know this field of human labour.

For the first time I started to think about building of my own house when several years ago I read the book «**The Hand Sculpted House, A Practical and Philosophical Guide to Building a Cob Cottage**» (for more details about the books which inspire me see above). After reading it I started sharing the idea of building my own adobe house with my friends. As a response I had a lot of jokes like: «Ivanov wants to build a house of crap» or like «all this is just a fairytale, to build a house you need several million rubles and a crew of workers».

So, that's why I stopped sharing ideas on that topic with my friends. I just started gathering information about subsistence building. I also started gathering information about those who builds houses for themselves without being professionals or rich people.

As a result by spring of the year 2012 I and Natalia had more or less clear project of our house. To speak more precisely, it was not a project itself but it was an understanding of the idea of our house. Key concepts. Because then we didn't have any experience and we didn't know how exactly we were going to fulfill our idea.

It may be said that our house is a conceptual and architectonic mixture of Wrench's house in Great Britain and the house of Evgeniy Shirokov in Byelorussia plus the impact of the local reality, our character and the presence or absence of one or another material.

We took the form as the basis. We were bent on the idea that our house should have the foundation similar to a round.

The second question which was decided by us was about the isolation material. We chose the straw.

The third element was the roof. We thought: «It would be good if our house had alive turfy roof».

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Our building is based on these three pillars. The rest problems are solved in the process, in on-line mode. That's why our building got the status of «intuitively-nonproject» one.

Probably this way of a building beginning is not very correct one. It's more expensive and more nervous from some points of view. Maybe it has more risks than the building with definite project and plan. But now I understand that it is the only right variant for us. We become to be too creative, inconsistent and immethodical to build our house in some other way.

I haven't told you about one more aspect – about the choosing of the house place. It emerged that this process is not simple. There are almost no questions when you have three hundred square meters, but it is absolutely different if you tried to find your place on 100 hectares. This is a serious work. Before we started the building we changed around six places. The first place I liked at first, but then it stopped being good in itself. I pitched a tent on the second place, but was not manage to spend a night there, I can't explain why. Then I picked out another place but it became too close to the settlement public buildings and we decided to move aside.

Then we determined more or less our territory but the house traveled along it several times. The first position emerged to be too far from water, the second one was too dark in winter...

In short, the place was chosen. Now I can put my name to the words from the book about the cob mentioned above, that **before you start to build you should spend at least one year on the settlement territory and understand perfectly how and what occurs on this land through all seasons.** Probably the place which appeared to be good in summer will be flooded in spring or something else will happen that can make this place to be inconvenient for the life. Thank God before the building we examined our territory well, and although we can't say for sure, now I'm quite confident about the choice of the place.

The next step was the materials delivery to the building place. It also emerged to be an independent adventure.

Firstly, I didn't know exactly what and how many materials I need (look: there are the charm of nonproject building);

secondly, the last kilometer of the road to our settlement is of bad quality and not all deliveries can reach us;

thirdly, some materials were not so simple to get: for example we can't get an ordinary clay for some weeks because of the bad weather. Due to it the walls construction came to a standstill for a long time.

What I want to realize in our house:

1. The maximum of naturality and material safety. The refusal from toxic substances and cement. (I even have a joke, which is not the joke already, but the truth: "We can eat our house").

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2. The correct windows disposition: the highest possible usage of the sunlight for the lighting.

3. The house disposition and form should be in a harmony with the surrounding landscape.

4. The house must be warm and the comfort temperature should be maintained there with a help of minimum of recourses.



Our roof frame

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About the estimate

Unfortunately we didn't take strict stock of means, which were spent on the building. That's why I can't tell the strict price of our house. It must be admitted that firstly I didn't take into consideration that in the estimate should be noted many other factors like: food for workers, price of the instruments, high price of the materials delivery. What's more, I didn't think that for building you must have so much nails, bolts and screws of various types. And they are amazingly expensive!

Approximately, today we can declare the sum which was used for the building: it's about 100.000 rubles. And we expect to spend about 50.000 more. It's not cheap. This sum is three times more than we expected in the first romantic estimate. But on the other hand I know people who buy a fur coat for 100.000 rubles. So in comparison with the fur coat our house is just free of charge.

Building of the house turns out to be not so simple ...
... physically.
... emotionally.
... intellectually.
... financially.

But it is realizable and very important. I recommend it to everybody. For the moment of the creation of this text we had built the house frame, made a roof, stored up all the materials, which were needed for the building, warmed the part of one wall. I'll write about the house in details when we'll finish it, but now there is nothing more to write about.



On the Stove

Spring has come

Strong wind with snow blew this night. All paths were covered with snow – no chance to pass through. But in the morning when I went for firewood I saw that the first willow bud was blossomed out. It means that spring had come. To whom I need to believe then?

The significance of hand tools

The building process is probably the most important thing that surrounded us during the developing of the house. Constant and different building: from sluggish to emergency one. From the small (equipping of the footsteps to the spring), to the global one (building of the house). It emerged that the building depends greatly on the good instruments. I would say: If you have got good instruments the process of the building becomes more effective and pleasant. I didn't discover that queen Anne is dead by saying it, everything is pretty evident, but frankly speaking we hadn't attach the significance to it, and what's more, it turned out that it's not so simple today to find good instruments.

For example, a mallet. One would think: what can be simpler – a piece of iron on a stick. But I don't know why many mallets which we had bought got out of order very fast: the handle flies off or the head splits up (!). Maybe the reason is in the so called «planned obsolescence», the theme of which is discussed in the film **«The Story of Stuff»**. I strongly recommend it to you.

Now we do ours utmost to gather good and old instruments from friends and relatives. People still have stocks of good and old stuff. It includes not only some building implements. For example recently my mother gave me her old mincing machine and hand-mixer having said that she lives in 21 century and I still in the Stone Age. But an old Soviet mincing machine is really eternal and new electric one is unfortunately not. In addition it consumes a lot of energy.

There are good modern hand-instruments but they are quite expensive though their price is justified. That's why we endeavour to buy them, it's a reliable investment.

Hand tools also mean the independence. Yes, we have petrol generator which gives electricity to various circular saws and drills, but sometimes because of some reasons it doesn't want to crank up and the work stops without hand tools. The petrol can run out also. Or something else can happen. That is why hand tools are one of the most important resources. I had written these words and went to the forest to fell a pair of deadwoods. Long time I swam waist-deep in snow, then found some deadwood, pulled out the motor saw handle and...it champed and died. The petrol which I didn't check before going into the forest run out. I had to row back through snow banks with nothing. So I sign to everything mentioned above one more time.

(You can find more information in the book «The Hand Sculpted House, A Practical and Philosophical Guide to Building a Cob Cottage» in the chapter «Hand Tool Reflections»)

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Hand tool and hand daughter

List of equipment

Hand Tool which we use in the garden:

spade
hoe
Fokin`s subsurface cultivator
rake
watering can
bucket
wheelbarrow
scythe
pitchfork

Hand Tools that we use while building and at home:

Axes: carpenter and wood-chopper
hammer
nail puller
two-handed saw
bucksaw
brace drill (hand drill, that I also use like a hand screwdriver) + drills and bits

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crow-bar
builder's level
screwdrivers
flat file
staple gun
border plane: flat and half-round
garden auger

If I would have to move somewhere to the nature, with the minimum of things, I would take with me the next tool:

Axe
bucksaw
Spade
Hoe
Bucket



Community Dome

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The feeling of the home

It's interesting that with the process of our settlement growing and our own with Natasha house construction, bit by bit we stopped to perceive Tyumen and Moscow as the places where we come after traveling. This process was gradual and one day I came into Tyumen and understood that I had nothing to do there. I stopped to consider Tyumen my home in 2012 on the 27 of April. Before that date this feeling became more and more and then suddenly the switching happened. And I had had already this feeling before. At first time the home in Murmansk stopped to exist. And now – the Tyumen one.

It's amusing that this time I have chosen the place for my home consciously.

Conclusion

I've read the whole text once again now and realize that the story hasn't turned very optimistic: lots of failures faced at doing, planting and building. My wife and I even called this book «100 ways to get problems in an ecovillage» in jest. Well. But every word here is the truth. Yes, not the most optimistic one. Yes, many things we were not able to complete. Some things go not as quickly as we have planned. But we know that everything is real, interesting and goes in the right way. We're still delighted with the taste of local food, we can't live without breathing in our clean mountain air and watching amazingly deep dome of starry sky. We have the incredible view from the window and the Freedom. And the passion. The passion to live the life we've chosen ourselves.

Once again I'd like to dedicate word of thank to our whole society: to all the participators of our experiment, to our wonderful neighbours and friends. Only due to you we can spend the winter here now.

And we have one more word of thank. It's for you, dear readers. Thank you.

From the bottom of our heart we send our word of thank to:

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All the settlers and the participants of the community!
Uncle Sasha and aunt Lyuda!
Anton Ivanovich and Tamara Vasilevna!
Nadya Soldatenkova and Marina Markelova!
Egora Lobusova!
Our neighbours and local inhabitants!
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All people who take part in the building site!
The Nature. The Altai. The Sun, the Air and the Soil!

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