

FROM AWARENESS TO ACTION: A CASE STUDY ON APPLIED  
ENVIRONMENTAL VALUES

by

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## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this thesis is to understand the link between the values of individuals taking action towards sustainability and how their actions are guided by a social movement organization. Guided by the literature presented in new social movement theory I began to investigate the cultural aspects of a contemporary social movement. As my research evolved, new social movement theory provided me with a context to better understand the role of the social movement organization in promoting awareness and activism.

My research took place at The Aprovecho Research Center. Aprovecho is a research and educational institution striving to provide techniques for simple and cooperative living. Using qualitative research methods I interviewed fourteen individuals at the Research Center. The work that follows is a case study of Aprovecho, a social movement organization. I found that as a social movement organization Aprovecho is actively shaping the culture of activism revolving around sustainable living. This thesis will illustrate some of the ways Aprovecho is affecting change by promoting awareness and action.

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## INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this thesis is to understand the link between the values of individuals taking action towards sustainability and how their actions are guided by a social movement organization. Guided by the literature presented in new social movement theory I began to investigate the cultural aspects of a contemporary social movement. As my research evolved new social movement theory provided me with a context to better understand the role of the social movement organization in promoting awareness and activism.

My motivation towards this project has been guided by my personal and academic journey. As a first generation Pakistani American, raised in an urban area, sociology provided me with a language to articulate experiences and exchanges I had felt and noticed yet was unable to address. The decision to pursue an advanced degree in sociology provided me the opportunity to expand my knowledge of sociological paradigms and experience living in new surroundings. Following my acceptance into Humboldt State University I relocated from an apartment in Northern Hollywood to the Northern Coast of California. This transition was a slight culture shock. In addition to the beauty of the natural environment I noticed a cultural shift towards ecological consciousness and alternative lifestyles.

This cultural shift is only a part of a larger movement taking place in the culture of the United States. Small pockets of creative and concerned individuals are taking action to establish change in their lives and in doing so are affecting the culture that surrounds them. Many of these movements converge around the ideology of

sustainability, simplicity, and community. Participating in and learning from local movements for environmental and social sustainability has led me to challenge my ideas, my actions, and my cultural paradigm.

Sociology provided me with the insight to translate meaning into context. Realizing that the ideological systems listed above operate in symbols, personal philosophies, and deep-rooted idealism, I found the context of social movement theory to provide an ideal framework to guide this project. Using the theoretical paradigm of new social movement theory I will explore the work of a social movement organization working to affect cultural and environmental change by enacting the principals of sustainable living.

I feel this study is valuable for several reasons. First, it is essential to promote awareness of the intellectual principles and perspectives held by individuals seeking to improve their lives through sustainable practices. By exploring their values which accompany action, I hope to facilitate an understanding towards the intent and goals sought by the participants in this project. It is an unfortunate reality that often the actions of such individuals are quickly dismissed as radical, “hippie” behavior, and their beliefs deemed impractical. In fact many participants revealed that they were dismissed in these ways when relating to their peers and relatives. For these reasons I intend for my thesis to offer insights into the intimate beliefs and values of these individuals, and in doing so, provide validity to their goals and struggles.

Second, there is appropriateness in addressing issues of alternative living, social ecology, and social movement activity, in contemporary society. The rapid changes in our modern world have created new aspects of social, political, and cultural life, which

need to be addressed. As a social scientist, I feel an enthusiasm and responsibility towards exploring contemporary questions with new approaches and critical responses. Third, numerous references towards sustainability, in practice and development, are made in political, as well as popular, culture. The term sustainability has not only become ambiguous, it has been co-opted. With such ambiguity, much can be gained by examining the definition and meaning ascribed to the term *sustainability*.

At the same time I was exploring these ideas academically I was searching for a deeper understanding of the philosophic and practical incorporation of sustainability into day-to-day life. Following my personal desire to gain the efficacy and skills to connect my values to my lifestyle, I came upon the Aprovecho Research Center. Aprovecho is a center for research, experimentation, and education on alternative technologies that are ecologically sustainable. The name Aprovecho is rooted in the Spanish verb *Aprovechar* meaning “to make best use of.” Aprovecho is the personal conjugation meaning “I make the best or full use of.” The Center was founded in the late 1970’s with the mission to “provide a basis for scientific research on appropriate technologies and techniques for simple and cooperative living.” In addition, Aprovecho works towards the distribution of knowledge, technologies, and techniques, through community based workshops and internship programs.

The Aprovecho Research Center served as a dynamic environment to explore my personal and academic interests. Guided by my interest in ecologically based lifestyles and the culture of small, locally based social movements, I decided to join Aprovecho’s community for three months. What follows is an orientation to the lifestyle I discovered

there, narrated by fourteen individuals that I had the pleasure of working with during my time at the Center.

The following chapter will focus on Aprovecho and the setting where this exploration took place. After introducing the setting I will discuss the ideological basis of new social movement theory. The theoretical ideas presented in my literature review will lay the foundation for the sections of analysis that will follow. The analytical sections will provide readers with an understanding of Aprovecho as a social movement organization and the diverse ways Aprovecho is affecting change on cultural and personal fronts.

## THE SETTING

Aprovecho is a non-profit member supported organization, formed “to provide a basis for scientific research on appropriate technologies and techniques for simple and cooperative living, and to serve an educational role in disseminating information on such technologies and techniques”(Aprovecho’s Intern Flyer 1999). The organization’s initial mission has expanded to emphasize sustainable forestry, food production, indigenous skills and crafts, as well as appropriate technology. Aspects of life that are focused upon at Aprovecho share the common theme of relating to ways in which individuals learn to live together in an ecologically conscious and sustainable manner.

The organization is rooted in a long history of developing appropriate technologies for disaster relief in developing nations. The term appropriate technology refers to efforts to seek out the most suitable method to fulfill a particular function. Appropriate technologies generally refer to products or systems that use low impact methods, produced with locally made and/or available products, which are simple and resource effective (Schumacher, 1977). Using the philosophy of appropriate technology, the founders of Aprovecho developed simple efficient cooking stoves as a disaster relief aid to victims of Guatemala’s 1976 earthquake. Demand for the cooking stoves quickly created an opportunity for these individuals to continue developing appropriate technology stoves as international stove consultants. After a year of consultation work in Central America, the group developed a vision to create a space for the experimentation and development of appropriate technology. During this time period the West Coast of

the United States was identified as an area with a growing tolerance for alternative and innovative ways of life. Having found a location with a cultural tolerance to social experiments and alternative living, the group of three stove consultants pooled their money and settled outside a small rural town of approximately 7,000 residents in Oregon. With funding provided by a non-profit environmental protection agency, the 45-acre plot now known as Aprovecho was purchased and established as a land trust.

Through the years the center has evolved in its vision and methods used to maintain a balanced community. The goal of the organization has developed over time in a process of trial and revision beginning with attempts to achieve total sustainability and self-reliance to the present-day model of interdependence and reliance upon selected products and services. Today the center focuses on two main components; the research aspect of testing, consulting, and disseminating appropriate technologies, and the internship program.

### The Internship Program

Throughout Aprovecho's history, individuals from various backgrounds have become involved in the organization's development. Seekers of alternative knowledge, affiliates from research Universities, and others, have been attracted to the center. The Center's internship program was established as a means to incorporate individuals from varied backgrounds into the center while remaining an efficient and cohesive community. Beginning in 1981, The Aprovecho Research Center established their internship program. Today internships are conducted three times a year, each lasting for ten weeks.

Beginning every March, June, and September, groups of up to fourteen interns join ten staff members to engage in an intensive experiential learning experience.

The educational component of the internship program focuses on three core subjects: Organic Gardening, Appropriate Technology, and Sustainable Forestry. Classes are held Monday through Friday, and are broken into morning and afternoon sessions. The weekly schedule gives eight hours of class time per subject. Each week the subject matter is broadened to expose interns to a variety of skills. While the topics introduced are *vast*, each topic explores an aspect or approach to self-sufficiency. For a list of class topics and schedules see Table 1(pg 8).

As described by the center,

At Aprovecho we encourage a holistic understanding of each subject area that is grounded in specific experience and enhanced by the broader intellectual perspectives available in our diverse learning environment. Newly learned skills are applied everyday, cooking with food from our garden, heating and building with wood and other materials from our forest, utilizing native plants species for food, medicine and crafts, and using various appropriate technologies to meet our basic needs.  
(Aprovecho Intern Flyer, 1999)

Engaging in activities that require hands on experiential learning intensifies the experience interns receive. Nearly all activities, from personal and group chores, projects, and farm maintenance, reaffirm Aprovecho's ecologically orientated mission. Participating in activities that are valued at the center allows interns the opportunity to gain new experiences and approaches towards fulfilling the needs of daily life in an ecologically and socially sustainable manner.

Internships are open on a space availability basis to applicants. There are no formalized education or work-related prerequisites. Applicants expressing an interest in sustainability and cooperative living are invited into Aprovecho's community. Tuition is

on a sliding scale basis, ranging from \$1800 to \$2100, participants determine their payment based on their means, and compensate the center accordingly. Tuition includes a shared room in the straw-bale dormitory, all-organic meals, and instruction for the term. Arrangements can be made for students to receive undergraduate or graduate credit for their participation in the internship program.

Table 1: Classes Offered at Aprovecho

Organic Gardening
Appropriate Technology
Sustainable Forestry
Cooking – Making Bread, Soy Milk, and Granola
Animal Care
Carpentry
Medicinal Herbs
Introduction to Permaculture
Felting
Indigenous Skills
Food Preservation
Blacksmithing
Introduction to Fermentation
Ecological Art



## The Interns

Aprovecho's intern program attracts individuals from diverse backgrounds and interests. Interns range in their level of familiarity and experience with the ideological basis and skills involved in sustainable approaches to modern life. Thus interns share in their desire to expand their knowledge of ecologically sustainable practices. Aprovecho's program has been designed to provide practical and intellectual skills that will aid them in this process. This immersion into a sustainable and communal living environment presents outsiders with a cultural experience. Many interns expressed feelings of uncertainty regarding participating in the internship. For some of the interns interviewed visiting Aprovecho was similar to entering into foreign setting. By presenting values and approaches to life that diverge from the mainstream Aprovecho presents a unique paradigm and culture for others to explore, and/or adopt.

A significant characteristic shared by participants in the intern program is the desire to gain experience and intimate knowledge. At Aprovecho interns are immersed in the culture of sustainability. Through the process of learning, practicing, and internalizing experiences, interns relate to the features of sustainability on a deeply personal and intimate level. The practical emphasis of the internship program is enhancing participant's skills and awareness. Therefore the internship program is a resource for individuals seeking personal change through enhancing and acquiring skills. As a result, Aprovecho's internship program creates a space for individuals to experience profound growth, realization, and long-term change.

The organization attracts individuals based on its ability to enhance skills, knowledge, and lasting change. The following excerpt was taken from Aprovecho's informational brochure:

Whether attempting to ground their academic studies in real-life experience, to learn for the first time or to further develop ecological-living skills, to explore more deeply the principles of appropriate technology, sustainable forestry, organic gardening, or indigenous arts ... interns cannot help but be changed by their experience here. Some return or stay on, and eventually become staff members (more than half of our current staff were at one time interns). Others continue their self-education elsewhere, but carry with them the groundwork they've laid here, the new insights they've acquired, and the experience of living in a dynamic learning community that they themselves now have the power to spread (Aprovecho Intern Flyer, 1999).

As an organization, Aprovecho is mindful of the transformative potential of the internship program. The educational aspect of Aprovecho's internship program enables the organization to continuously disseminate information and promote awareness. The research aspect of the organization enter contributes to advancing the field of appropriate technology. As a research and educational center that is gaining recognition, Aprovecho is affecting social and cultural change.

The dynamic environment provided at the Aprovecho Research Center cannot be captured on the pages before you. Their work extends out in vast areas promoting growth and development, however three times each year individuals come together to learn from one another and ultimately reinforce their values and ideals with the resources needed to manifest their reality. For the purposes of this thesis I shall expand on Aprovecho's features as a social movement organization. Applying the theoretical perspectives offered in social movement theory I will illustrate the ways in which Aprovecho is a social movement organization affecting social and cultural change. The following

section will provide an overview of social movement theory. This summary will serve as a foundation to the research that follows.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Early efforts to understand social movements offered varied theories attempting to classify movement activity by particular characteristics. The term classical social movement theory refers to the paradigms, which emerged between the years 1920 to 1970 (Halcaia, 1982). The theoretical explanations offered in collective behavior and resource mobilization theories dominated this period. Each paradigm resulted from research attempting to explain the rise in social movement activity during a transformative period in world history. Global factors such as Nazism, Stalinism, and McCarthyism, as well as national concerns regarding race riots and lynchings, led analysts to be deeply concerned with mobilization and the individuals pursuing collective action (Ganer and Tenuto, 1996). The ideas set forth in classical social movement theory were responses to unprecedented collective behavior.

The collective behavior approach represents an early effort to explain the origins of collective action such as crowds, panics, mob behavior, and mass movements. Within this approach acts of collective action were perceived as sporadic, unorganized, and deviant. As stated by Blumer (1946) this view explained instances of collective behavior as resulting from heightened emotional states and irrationality, creating situations whereby individuals suffered from a distortion and loss in their ability to think critically. Emile Durkhiem suggested that social movements resulted from the experiences of anomie and a lack of social order (Tarrow, 1989). Thus mass mobilizations came to be seen as pathological outbursts resulting from the intoxicating effects of collective experiences. Durkhiem's perspective was shared by social scientists who approached

collective uprising as forms of upheaval, disorder and chaos. As a result, social movements were considered 'outside' what was functional in a stable society. This simplistic model did not account for the organizational work and structure of movements, not to mention their potential links to larger political movements (Halciá, 1982). Thus, collective behavior theory lacked in the ability to connect acts of collective mobilization to the networks and social movement organizations they relied on. During this period social movement organizations were disregarded as a part of social institutions. In addition this paradigm contributed to a negative perception of collective behavior and activism (Garner and Tenuto, 1996).

Emerging in the 1970's resource mobilization rose to dominate the study of social movements in the United States. Following a larger intellectual shift in the field of the social sciences from an individual focus of explanation, to a larger structural approach, resource mobilization provided social theory with a deeper insight into the mechanics of social movement organizations (Garner and Tenuto, 1996). The rise in resistance movements (i.e. civil rights, women's rights, peace, etc.) created a need for deeper explanations of social movement behavior, which addressed the structural ties and legitimacy of protest activity. Resource mobilization theory approached social movement activity from a functionalist perspective, considering movement organizations as a legitimate and inclusive component of society. With a new framework of analysis sociologists began to ask *how* movements existed, as opposed to *why* movements existed (Melucci 1988; Tarrow, 1998). In doing so, social scientists examined the components and resources, which comprised social movements. Accesses to finances, human labor, organizing space, media and communication, became significant components worthy of

analysis. In addition, focus was placed upon the connections between social movement organizations and the political and structural institutions they challenged (Tarrow, 1998).

The structural emphasis of resource mobilization theory is expanded upon in the work of Sidney Tarrow. By examining the role of contentious politics, Tarrow sets forth a comprehensive synthesis of the theories of collective behavior and resource mobilization. In the following passage, Tarrow draws attention upon the point in which collective behavior becomes contentious action.

The irreducible act that lies at the base of all social movements, protests, and revolutions is contentious collective action. Collective action can take many forms – brief or sustained, institutionalized or disruptive, humdrum or dramatic. Most of it occurs within institutions, on the part of constituted groups acting in the name of goals that would hardly raise an eyebrow. Collective behavior becomes contentious when it is used by people who lack regular access to institutions, who act in the name of new or unaccepted claims, and who believe in ways that fundamentally challenge others or authorities (Tarrow, 1998).

Tarrow's statement redefines the act of participating in contentious action into a rational behavior. This can be observed in social movement organizations' strategic use of action, whereby contentious action becomes a deliberate resource, such that when it is used effectively it will draw in other resources (i.e. media, public interest, participants, etc.).

However as Tarrow states, "movements do more than perpetuate contention". Critics of resource mobilization theory argued that the emphasis placed on organizational and political factors neglected the cultural and ideological work involved in social movements (Halciá, 1982). It seemed that yet again a crucial piece was missing in the dominant theoretical paradigm. Resource mobilization theory failed in addressing the work dedicated to sustaining an organization, building ideologies, networking, and

constructing ideological framing (Tarrow, 1998). With the rise of movement activity during the 1960's through the 1970's, individuals who had been involved in social movement activity questioned the validity of a theoretical discourse that overlooked the social processes involved in mobilizing and sustaining movement activity (Tarrow, 1989).

Coinciding with the rise in criticism to the resource mobilization approach, critical theorists in Western Europe began reacting to what they considered to be a new type of social movement activity (Halciá, 1982). Changes brought about by globalization, access to information, and expansive forms of communication enabled new social movements to expand their values, action forms, and constituency. Departing from the traditional values of capitalistic society, countless new social movements focused on establishing different relationships to nature, consumption patterns, work, the body, etc. Employing grass-roots models of small-scale decentralized organizations, many new social movement organizations favor anti-hierarchical models and direct democracy. Utilizing models that are characterized by face-to-face organizing and micro-mobilization (gaining adherents at an individual level), contemporary movements offer support towards self-actualization and individual participation. Though many of these characteristics were evident in movements of the 60's era it is significant to recognize the new expressions of dissatisfaction that contemporary movements voice. Whether it is a longing for a re-appropriation of time, space, and of relationships in the individual's daily experience, new social movements operate within, and are reacting to a very different world than that of the classical movement era.

Following the contentious period of the 1960's and 1970's the understanding and expression of the potential an individual possess in enacting social change was redefined. Using the "personal as political" for example indicates the maximization of individual action with regards to social movement activity. As a result, a greater agency was placed on the role of the individual and his/her place in managing and changing society. Charged by disillusionment and dissatisfaction with the rapid changes of modernization (Habermas, 1985), individuals were drawn to organizations that provided meaning and restored community. The theoretical shift that followed in social movement theory embraced the feature of *culture* and *field*. New social movement theory shifted focus from structural factors to the social psychological processes involved in social movement activity (Freeman, 1983).

The basis of contemporary social movement theory, as stated by Tarrow, can be traced back to the work of Erving Goffman's concept of framing (1974), Bert Klandermans's work on "consensus mobilization" (1988), and Gamason's idea of "ideological packages" (1988). Each influence pushed social movement theory towards a social psychological approach concerned with the examination of movements in terms of their ability to construct a collective reality.

The perspectives offered in new social movement theory place an emphasis on the social psychological processes by which individuals identify with, and participate in, social movements. It is significant to recognize that in contemporary society social movements disseminate a culture of their own and in doing so offer a cultural paradigm to others.



## The Role of Culture in Contemporary Social Movement Theory

New social movements incorporate different levels of action to reform society. Theorists take into consideration efforts ranging from political conflicts to challenges of everyday life. If choices, actions, and decisions in everyday life are channels to express contention, then the ideological basis or 'frame' that guides these choices must be taken into consideration. New social movement theory turns to the role of culture to provide a forum to discuss these factors.

Culture refers to the context, structure, and circumstances a social movement operates in. Culture provides a legacy, and with it, carries the history as to what is possible, and the "repertoires of action" (Melucci, 1989) that can be used. Culture dictates what is possible, and offers many resources to a social movement organization (Tarrow, 1998).

According to Melucci:

The concept of a social movement belongs to culture, as it is embedded in concepts relating to freedom, progress, possibility, and so forth. As these concepts evolve, and boundaries of time and space disappear, the nature, purpose, and understanding of how social movements operate must expand to include the multidimensional forms in which individuals and groups in contemporary culture engage in contentious acts. (Melucci, 1989)

Reformative in nature, social movements develop strong ideologies defining what is just. As Melucci asserts, such ideals are bound in culture for they are embedded and perpetuated in social exchanges.

The changes associated with globalization contribute to the changes in participation, influence, and scale of contemporary social movements. As social scientists in all fields are shifting their perspectives to adapt to the transformations in

society, contemporary social movement theorists have determined that their discipline must take into consideration such changing realities and in doing so look towards *culture* to accurately appreciate and identify the forces influencing and affecting by social movement organizations.

In addition to the emphasis placed on culture, contemporary social movement theory explores the process underlying ideological systems. As previously stated the concept of “framing” is used to explore the ways in which individuals interpret and perceive their world, and justify their actions. In the article, *Frame Alignment Processes, Micro-mobilization, and Movement Participation*, Snow defines frame alignment as:

The linkages that bind individuals to Social Movement Organizations through interpretative orientation, such that some set of individual interests, values, and beliefs and Social Movement Organizations activities, goals and ideology correlate and complement one another.  
(Snow, 1986)

Frame alignment refers to the social psychological processes in which individuals identify and align themselves with social movement organizations’ ideologies, actions and goals. The process of frame alignment occurs through interaction. The term micro-mobilization refers to social, interactive, and communicative processes that effect frame alignment (Snow, 1986).

The concept is built upon from the work of Erving Goffman (see ethno-methodology), which addresses the features of identification whereby individuals interpret, perceive, identify, and label occurrences within their lives. Snow bridges Goffman’s work to social movement theory by exploring the progression in which individuals perceive and give meaning to their world and react to it accordingly.

By rendering events and occurrences as meaningful, frames function to organize experiences and guide action (Snow, 1986). Frame alignment is a necessary condition for movement participation, whatever its nature or intensity.

In a typology of frame alignment processes, Snow describes four types of frame alignment, each placing emphasis on *how* the interpretations of events and experiences becomes relevant to individuals participating in social movement activities. Each process addresses an aspect of the complexity of group identification. Therefore the processes listed in Snow's typology address the interactive roles and relationships built between organizations and individuals.

The first alignment process is *frame bridging*, where focus is placed on the linkage between two social networks that are ideologically similar but unrelated. Through this process individuals who share ideological perspectives are connected and brought into social movement organizations through information networks. In the case of frame bridging, peoples' perspectives lead them into an organization that maintains similar opinions.

*Frame amplification* concentrates on redirecting and defining an event or situation to relate directly to a participant's life in a manner that promotes support and dedication towards the social movement organization. Social movement organizations raise identification and commitment through the amplification of values and beliefs. This is extremely apparent in collective experiences. Additionally, belief amplification can occur when determining the seriousness of a problem, the direction of blame and probability of change.

The reality of everyday life in the modern world, however, is such that the relationship between an individual's beliefs and actions may not be readily apparent. This creates the need for issues to be framed in a manner that connects values to actions. Therefore belief and value amplification are extremely relevant to institutions of communal and intentional living, where the connections between belief and action are maximized through continual focus on day-to-day activities and their relevance towards a larger ideology.

Through the process of *frame extension*, social movement organizations extend the boundaries of their primary framework to include points of view that will broaden their ideals and/or objectives to resonate with potential members. The final area of *frame transformation* addresses the redefinition and interpretation of events and situations. In frame transformation new meanings are developed to define injustices. According to Snow, an overarching interpretive frame develops and is applied to numerous problems or events. This causes participants to perceive the features associated with the problems and solutions with greater clarity and certainty. Frame transformation is characteristic of movements with aspirations towards global and social change. The theoretical model of frame alignment processes will become extremely relevant in the work that follows.

The evolution of social movement theory illustrates the progression of thought: how social scientists perceive the social structure, how social order is defined, and how change and contention are viewed. In contemporary theory social movements are seen to provide individuals and groups with a stronger sense of meaning, culture, and identity. It is significant to recognize that social movements provide individuals with a strong sense of meaning and grounding in our postmodern era.

## Additional Key Concepts

This section presents additional key concepts that will be used throughout the following chapters. By exploring these concepts further I hope to provide readers with a summary of key terms that have already been introduced and an overview of the environmental philosophies that will be discussed. The concepts that will be discussed in this section are, new social movements, social movement organizations, social action, activism, and sustainability.

New social movements contain different elements and levels of action ranging from political contentions to challenges in everyday life. As a result, participation can be achieved through various degrees of individual and collective action. In addition, new social movements possess an understanding of the global dimensions of modern society. As a reaction to the changing nature of modern life, new social movements work on many fronts to spread information and increase participation. This is achieved in part by a social movement's organizational structure.

The function of the "organization" in contemporary social movements plays a crucial role in a movement's ability to sustain action. Developing an organizational model enables a social movement organization to occupy a place in the public sphere disseminating information, engaging in the negotiation and development of new ideas and definitions, and creating a space for individuals to develop solidarities.

Social movement organizations serve as a structural body reflecting the values of the social movement. Developing an organizational structure provides social movements with resources and political strength. However, structure does not imply hierarchy. Many new social movements are developing unique models for managing their

organizations. For example the method used at Aprovecho is referred to as a *consensus plus one* model. This model was designed at the Center to combine consensus-based decision-making with the democratic model of voting. If a decision cannot be made through consensus a vote is used to reach a result. Regardless of how the organization is managed, it is the structure that enables movement groups to work within the political structure. Working within the political system grants many new social movements the opportunity to acquire resources needed to sustain action.

Social action is an indication or measurement of how individuals and groups react to the circumstances and situations affecting their lives. Individuals participate and act in the world based on their perceptions of the world they occupy. The spectrum of action is vast and can include peaceful activities to contentious direct action. It is the perception and meaning that accompanies the action that is significant in determining the extent of social action. Activism occurs whenever an individual or group confronts powerful systems with the goal of altering policies, practices, and paradigms

### Defining Sustainability

Aprovecho, as an organization, bases its work on the principals of sustainable living. The internship program is referred to as education in “sustainable living skills”. However, definitions of sustainability are emerging from many economic and social sectors. The range of these definitions encompasses bio-centric conceptions that consider environmental impact the key for maintaining balanced ecosystems as well as product-centered definitions that seek to uphold a constant flow of output from ecosystems.

Amidst the numerous connotations implied, sustainability is used as a positive philosophy, which presents optimistic solutions to social, environmental, and economic conditions. The environmentalist philosophy places an emphasis on sustainability in terms of stewardship methods (Wackernagel & Reese, 1994). Stewardship methods focus on establishing equilibrium with multiple life systems. This is achieved by drawing on appropriate forms of technology and indigenous knowledge to develop systems that maintain a low environmental impact.

This section will present respondents' interpretations of the term sustainability. The statements below are derived from interns who have had exposure to the philosophy and practice of sustainable living. Therefore I have relied heavily on their words and descriptions. The interviewed participants shared the following interpretations of sustainability:

Deena:

Sustainability for me is, existing in your environment without damaging that environment. And to a lot of people this means isolation, going out staking your claim and never having to leave that plot. I think that people need other people to live, so I see it as an interlocking community, as large as you can get it.

Don:

The idea of appropriateness, certain things are good in some places, yet others may be more sustainable. It is finding the balance between the both and yourself and your lifestyle, and increasing the way you can be sustainable, and not just reducing what you use, while that is important, one must go through a paradigm shift.

Molly:

...(Sustainability) goes beyond that notion of "reduce", before reduce is the idea of "create for yourself". It involves thinking outside. I think I equate it more with creativity. I think it is more of a value for myself and other people here.

Jack:

Trying to live your life not depending on society, using local resources, and minimal resources.

Lisa:

Sustainability is a way of living; a way of existing that promotes environmental integrity and personal autonomy and a deeper questioning of how things are, and living in a way where your impact is as minimal as possible so that the natural world will be able to continue in cycles. A big part of sustainability is, not interfering with the changes in the natural world and allowing those changes to perpetuate themselves.

Allison:

The idea extends out to the mindset used to carry something through. Sustainability defined through the Native American use of the word is thinking in terms of the future and how an action will affect seven generations ahead of us.

Phoenix:

I see it as a separation of the adjective of sustainable and the concept of *sustainability*. Sustainable has been attached to many things like sustainable development, sustainable agriculture, and so on, and at a base level, it means something that can be perpetuated. This can be taken in many different concepts.

In the subsequent excerpt Faith reveals her frustration regarding the co-optation of term “sustainability”.

I first encountered sustainability as a term with a definition when I took environmental science in the 12<sup>th</sup> grade and it was defined as meeting the needs of the present generation without compromising the needs of future generations to do the same. That has been the textbook definition and now there are variations on that between how the world bank views it and how other groups see it. But I’m quite sick of it to be honest. The word sustainable I almost use jokingly now, like, “its not very sustainable, or we’re so fucking sustainable” But it is not something that speaks to me, I mean the concept, like what it means to me to be sustainable is to be creative, to make the best use of every resource you can, every situation, every person and companion or enemy. Just in general making the best use of everything.

In recent attempts to incorporate the term sustainability into industry and development policies many different groups use the term for their purpose. Faith’s comment illustrates



how the term sustainability has been assimilated into various fields sectors become a slogan used to imply environmental protection and social and economic equality.

Throughout the excerpts key commonalities repeatedly emerged. Multiple quotes alluded to the virtue of creativity as a necessary element in finding an appropriate and sustainable approach to fulfill a task. Several interviewees approached the concept of sustainability from two perspectives, the philosophical and everyday applications. Aprovecho's internship program is designed to build upon participants' philosophical understanding of the term sustainability by teaching practical skills and methods that increase individuals' sustainability.

In each excerpt, many overlapping themes emerged indicating commonalities between the meanings and values held by participants. As indicated by Snow, social movement organizations build upon shared ideological backgrounds to align and amplify experiences. It is significant to recognize the symbolic aspects of the term sustainability. For many participants their ideological stance on sustainability becomes a foundation for action.

## METHODOLOGY

This study explores the role Aprovecho occupies as a social movement organization in relation to promoting activism and awareness. My interest in this subject developed from my exposure to small pockets of local movements working to redefine reality and culture. With an interest in environmentalism and intentional living, I focused on Aprovecho's internship program as a contemporary social movement striving to redefine cultural practices through educational and experiential learning. The discourse presented in new social movement Theory provided me with grounded research theory and sharp analytical reflection. Snow's work on frame alignment processes became extremely relevant in relation to the symbolic construction of environmentally based activism.

Using the qualitative research methods of interviews, narrative analysis, and participant observation I joined Aprovecho's community for three months. I designed an interview questionnaire that was used for all interviews (see Appendix A). Access to interview respondents for this research was approved by the Human Subjects Committee (IRB Approval Number 02-154, May 2002). My role at the Aprovecho Research Center was two-fold. I enrolled in the internship program and was part of the cohort. I participated in all aspects of life at the Center. Simultaneously I was involved in gathering data for this project. I disclosed my identity as a researcher immediately to members of the internship group. Participants were cooperative, accommodating, and interested in my research.

During my stay at Aprovecho I conducted fourteen interviews. The number of participants involved was limited by the size of the intern cohort and the availability of the staff. While this presents certain limitations to the conclusions that can be drawn, I consciously decided to stay within the parameters of a site-specific case study. This decision was based on my desire to assess the changes that individuals were experiencing during the time of my research. At the time of gathering the research included in this study I did not conceive of extending my study to include past interns. However, after concluding this study I am interested in a long-term assessment of Aprovecho's affect upon interns.

The fourteen interviews were typically conducted in the evenings, nights, and weekends. A majority of these interviews were conducted outside, which I believe increased respondents' comfort level. Conducting interviews outside added a feeling of informality to the interview. Following my first two interviews, I adapted my interview questionnaire to allow respondents to share and express their ideas in a more conversational manner. Adapting my questionnaire and interview style gave respondents the freedom to share information I had not expected. As a result I received data indicating commonalities I had not anticipated. The most significant data I received regarded participants' views of activism. This will be discussed in chapter six.

#### Demographic Breakdown of Interview Respondents

A total of fourteen respondents participated in this study (see Table 2, pg 28). Eight were part of the intern group. Of these eight, seven were students pursuing their undergraduate degrees. The remaining six participants were made up of staff and a

visitor at the Center. Allison and Deena were once interns at Aprovecho and decided to stay in the community following their internships. The final respondent Lisa was visiting the center for a brief period during which she was conducting interviews for her senior undergraduate thesis on intentional communities.

Table 2: Demographic Breakdown of Respondents.

Interns	Age	Occupation	Involvement to activism prior to Aprovecho	Expected involvement in activism following the internship program
Eden	21	Student	No	No
Faith	19	Student	No	Yes
Phoenix	25	Student	Yes	Yes
Molly	21	Student	No	Yes
Amanda	20	Student	Yes	Yes
April	26	Unemployed	No	No
Amber	24	Student	Yes	Yes
Jack	20	Student	No	No
Staff				
Allison	24	Office Manager	Yes	N/A
Don	56	Research Director	No	N/A
Michel	31	Staff	Yes	N/A
Deena	28	Staff	Yes	N/A
Tim	55	Instructor	Yes	N/A
Visitor				
Lisa	23	Student	Yes	N/A
Total = 14 Females = 10 Males = 4				

Of the eight intern respondents, five reside in the Eastern United States, the remaining three live along the Northwest of the United States. Three of the interns that traveled from the East Coast learned about the Aprovecho Research Center through word of mouth or postings at their University. The Internship Coordinator stated that generally half of each intern group is comprised of individuals living outside of the Pacific North West.

Of the fourteen respondents interviewed ten were female and four were male. Eight of the nine interns interviewed were female and one intern was male. The gender breakdown of this internship group is atypical. Staff at the Center commented that generally intern groups are more gender balanced. An aspect worthy of further exploration is the frequency of female participation in locally based activism. Access to the breakdown of previous intern groups was difficult to obtain during my time at the Center.

The socio-economic background of the participants was an additional demographic consideration. While I did not ask specific questions regarding financial matters, it was apparent that the cost of the intern program (\$1,800- \$2,100 sliding scale) was a determining factor over who could participate in the internship program. Six of the participants received financial support from their families to attend Aprovecho's program. It is significant to note that numerous participants in the internship program were seeking out knowledge and skills that are not valued by the majority of their social class. Three respondents referred to this issue during our interviews. However, in conversations interns frequently mentioned this topic. In addition respondents

commented on the difficulty they experienced when attempting to access information related to self-reliance and sustainability prior to their internship at Aprovecho.

The Aprovecho internship program has been a gathering place for individuals from varied backgrounds to gain numerous life skills. The nature of their work attracts individuals who have been involved in activism and have had exposure to the philosophy of sustainability. In order to protect the confidentiality of the members involved in this study I have altered the names and locations mentioned in the following narratives.

The subsequent chapters will reflect the data I gathered during my time at the Aprovecho Research Center. The first analytical chapter will explore Aprovecho's role as a social movement organization. The narratives included will indicate how participants in the internship program perceive Aprovecho's role. Comments included in this section provide a context to understand the nature of the organization's activism along cultural, social, and political, platforms.

Next, in the chapter entitled *Activism* I will examine respondents' perception of what it means to be an activist. The third chapter "*It's a different type of movement*" will focus on the features of personal activism that are associated with small-scale, locally based movements. In addition this section will explore the unique forms of activism Aprovecho as an organization is engaged in. The fourth chapter, *Living with Intention* explores personal activism in daily life. The final chapter, *Changes in Consciousness* will reveal the transformations and insights participants underwent during the internship program. These final narratives present powerful descriptions of the life changing effects Aprovecho's program had upon the respondents.

Throughout each of these chapters reference will be made to the important aspects of new social movement theory that are relevant to respondents' comments.

## APROVECHO AS A SOCIAL MOVEMENT ORGANIZATION

*Social Movement Organizations and their activists not only act on their world or segments of it by attempting to exact concessions from targeted groups or by obstructing daily routines, but they also frame the world in which they are acting (Snow, 1986).*

A significant aspect of this study is recognizing Aprovecho as a social movement organization. In order to measure the extent to which Aprovecho operates as an agency for social change, participants were asked to share their impressions of Aprovecho and the organization's involvement in social movement activity. The following narratives specify how Aprovecho is affecting change on social and cultural fronts.

In personal reflections, participants expressed the ways in which Aprovecho has promoted change in their lives. When asked to share her thoughts Molly stated:

To me it (Aprovecho) is a base. I had never been exposed to anything like this. I have never been exposed to any of the skills that we use here. I think that for me, it has given me a good foundation to build off of. I see it as a place for people to come together and gain foundation for going out and doing their own thing. It is not a place that tells you how things should be done, it is definitely a place where people can come together and get a good idea and get comfortable with the subject and with their knowledge, and then go out and explore more.

Phoenix described Aprovecho as a place:

...bringing together eight to fourteen people from all walks of life, and you have a chance to make a huge difference. If you impact one person's life and they go back and impact three people's lives, and the chain keeps getting longer and longer.

For another participant, the Center facilitates individuals in their activism. When I asked Amanda to share her impressions of Aprovecho, she replied:

I see Aprovecho as a learning place. I see it as a place that lets people out to do what they will, but I see a lot of those people turn around and make it a movement.



These accounts portray Aprovecho as an organization dedicated to enhancing the knowledge and skills of interns. As stated by Alberto Melucci, research and educational establishments serve as integral institutions of representation for social movement organizations. The forum created by public institutions provides spaces and outlets for transfers in information. This also increases the representation of new ideas to the public. Among the most important, according to Melucci, is the development of knowledge-producing institutions, such as universities, cultural centers, and research institutions. New social movements dedicate a significant amount of energy establishing institutionalized forms of organization. This allows individuals the opportunity to experience collective action without taking part in contentious action (Tarrow, 1998).

When addressing the topic of Aprovecho as a social movement organization, I asked respondents if they thought Aprovecho embodied a social movement, and if the Organization was actively participating in one or more social movements. As a follow up question, I asked interviewees if they considered the Aprovecho Research Center to be a social movement organization affecting social and cultural change. Ten respondents indicated that they considered the Aprovecho Research Center to be a social movement organization and/or part of other social movements. The following six narratives reflect respondents impressions of the activism Aprovecho participates in as well as the degree of success the organization attains.

When discussing Aprovecho as a social movement organization Deena commented:

I like Aprovecho's activism, they are not so vocal like a lot of other places are, but I think that is good for them. I think they are a better type of activist because they are living it; they are doing it. They are not telling other people what they should do, and this is how everything would be

better. They are doing it. And they are saying, “Look, this is how we do it and it works this way, and if you want to learn we’ll teach you; were not going to make you feel like a bad person if you don’t live this way. Just come and if you agree with us great, and if you don’t, that’s ok too.”

This excerpt describes the approach taken by Aprovecho in regards to activism.

Aprovecho’s methods depart from the culturally defined methods used by social movements in the past. Through innovative approaches, Aprovecho is redefining activism by operating in alternative ways.

During our interview, Eden commented on Aprovecho operating as a continuation of the larger social movement for simplicity dating back to the 1960’s. When asked if she thought Aprovecho was involved in a social movement she replied:

Yes I do. I think they are a continuation of a social movement that started back in the 60’s. Aprovecho plays a big part in being an intentional community, in their development work in the third world.

Another intern Faith commented on the same question:

Yes, Aprovecho is definitely involved in the environmental movement, the appropriate technology movement, sustainable agriculture movement, and the intentional community movement.

During an interview with Allison, she commented on Aprovecho’s international work as a significant social movement activity. She describes Aprovecho as:

An activist organization that channels their energy and activism to places that are receptive and that want it and need it. In this country they are being active by not being as much of a contradiction, by focusing on themselves and being open to whoever is interested. (Aprovecho is) providing an alternative for making the world a better place, so when it is needed it will be here.

Aprovecho’s work in stove consulting and disseminating appropriate technology to developing countries is a central aspect of the organization’s mission. In this account,

Allison links Aprovecho's stove work to activism. In recalling a conversation with the main stove researcher at Aprovecho, Don, she explains:

Like what Don was saying, they go and build stoves for people in places where the biggest cause of children's death is the inhalation of smoke from wood burning cooking stoves; and it is so unnecessary to have children dying. And Aprovecho is changing that reality. They are saving lives, and that is activism. Saving lives is activism.

Each of these narratives provides an insight towards the multifaceted forms of activity the Aprovecho Research Center is involved in. As stated by Melucci:

Contemporary social movements display the seeds of new awareness of the global dimensions of complex societies. This planetary consciousness is broader than the more limited internationalism of previous movements.

By extending their energy to local and global issues, the Aprovecho Research Center has a direct involvement in many of today's larger social and environmental movements. As presented in Snow's work on Frame Alignment Processes, contemporary social movements are linked to numerous other social networks and causes which are ideologically similar. Thus by working on multiple fronts, contemporary social movements utilize expansive information and communication channels.

## ACTIVISM

As a social movement organization The Aprovecho Research Center provides a setting for participants to learn the skills and information needed to increase their personal sustainability. This is achieved through the education programs, classes, and activities. Aprovecho promotes activism by teaching individuals tangible skills in an environment that encourages the bridging of frames to action. In addition the environment at Aprovecho supports in linking their ideals to their actions. However, as indicated in Table 2 (pg 27) five out of the eight interns felt they were not activists at the onset of the internship program. Faith and Molly, who responded to having no involvement with activism prior to the internship program, anticipating being involved with activism after the internship program. The extent to which Aprovecho affects participants' involvement in activism is a significant aspect of Aprovecho's work as a social movement organization. The following chapter addresses the responses participants shared when asked if they considered themselves activists. Issues that will be addressed are respondents' perceptions of what it means to be an activist, problems with activism, and identification to activism.

During our interview I asked April if she considered herself an activist. Her response indicates that the association she makes between herself and the label *activist* is complex.

I see myself in two different ways. Myself personally, I do not consider myself to be an activist, but I also see the other side. I see myself as more of an in-between as to how I put myself out there. When I come to where

I put myself in the world and what kind of role I am going to play, I try to bridge the gap between people that understand what environmentalists are doing and the ones that do not. This is because I understand both sides.

The distinctions April makes in relation to herself as an activist are based on her perception of how she “puts herself out there.” April mentions her connection to understanding the environmentalist position however, does not think of herself as an active member or activist for the environmental movement. At the same time she discusses her role as “bridging the gaps” which does constitute a form of activism. Overall April’s role may be as a passive activist, yet it is key to consider that today’s activist has a wide variety of choice in the levels of participation they wish to take. Furthermore activists may engage in contentious politics without engaging in contentious acts.

When asked if she considered herself an activist Eden responded:

I don’t think that I would call myself one...it all depends on who is using the word and to what context. Being an activist is something that I like and am drawn to...Sometimes I would surround myself with activists and there were “activist posses” that I thought were going to beat me up because I was not “activisty” enough. I think that is the problem that I usually have, I feel like if I were not totally as involved as others are, then that was not good enough so I would just back off. There was a lot of judgment placed on people whose involvement was not as high as the ideal. I know that that is not a characteristic of people working for all causes but that really turns me off of organized activism.

Eden’s response also emphasizes the connection she holds between activism and aggression. Her comment regarding being totally involved or not being good enough is a powerful indication of the perception she has towards organized activism.

The following excerpt reflects Jack’s perception of his relationship to activism.

I would like to consider myself an activist but at this particular moment, no. I don’t think I have a strong enough role. I guess in my own life I see myself leaning more... I just feel that I am being drawn into it. I am just

following what I feel I should do and what my opinions are telling me to do. I feel really uninformed, I listen to other people talk and I don't know as much about things as other people do. I feel that information is vitally important, and I fear speaking about anything without completely knowing everything about the subject.

Jack's response is extremely mindful of the responsibility he associates with being an activist. Jack views an activist as a spokesperson for a particular cause. Having the skills and knowledge to articulate information is of central importance to his perception of being an activist. The educational dynamic of Aprovecho's internship program enables participants to develop a deeper understanding of major environmental issues. During classes questions were posed by instructors such as, "What do you think about industrial agriculture?" Responses prompted discussions and enabled interns to develop their ideas and learn from one another.

April's response focused on the direct action aspect of protesting as activism. She stated:

My problem with being an activist is that it creates a divide, and that's why I don't think of myself as one. Generally when people are out protesting that's hard for me and feels uncomfortable so I tend to do other types of things. And for some people that (protesting) is where it is at, and that's great and they should follow that. But I think it is dangerous to create divides that are already there and make them larger. Saying us versus them on issues does not heal things. But if people are working for what they believe then that helps explain and bridge the issues.

As a follow up I asked April if she considered working for what she believed in as a form of activism. Her response indicated that she considered it a form of value action consistency, not really activism. Here we see a distinction made between value action consistency and activism. The obvious association April makes between activism and protesting is similar to the statements by other interns. However, April's comment introduces another side of activism, expressing activism through daily life and life style

choices. In the following responses we will see how lifestyle choices and actions are a key component to new social movements.

Amber's excerpt illustrates how she perceives activism. When asked, "Do you consider yourself and activist?" Amber replied:

I would hope so, though it depends. I am a passive member. Not in the sense that I am not involved, I am active but I don't go to the meetings. I do it all but I don't count on others... Yes, I am a member of a mixed movement branching from environmentalism. I am involved in something but it is on a simpler level than what I associate with activism, I don't try to actively convert people.

Faith commented:

I think I could be more, I do consider myself one. An activist... takes a lot of time in their own lives to do what they see as just. When people have to get out there and do something, I'd stay home. I guess I am kind of an activist. I think activism needs to be more of a part of my life now.

Both of these excerpts address the different levels of activism taken by Amber and Faith.

Their involvement in movement oriented activities link their action to the larger movement. Yet they both do not involve themselves in the aspect of "converting people". Thus far several narratives have touched upon this subject of passive or alternative activism. New social movement theory points to differentiated levels of activism as indicative of contemporary movements. As our society evolves into an information driven era, new forms of "protesting" and voicing contention are inevitable to arise.

Lisa and Phoenix both had prior involvement in activism and identified themselves as activists. Lisa commented:

So from a young age I just got involved and it felt right. From then my interest in science and the environmental world continued to grow. Since then it has just been a progressive development and I have just continued to make choices to enhance my understanding and my effectiveness.

Lisa has a very personal connection to activism and possesses a strong sense of her identity as an activist. She approaches activism as a skill that she is working to enhance and improve.

Phoenix's association with activism is partially based on the perceptions and judgments of others. When asked if she considers herself an activist, she comments:

I think so. When I tell people what I want to do they respond "Oh your part of that group", and it is never really defined. What I hear a lot is "Oh your one of those tree huggen hippies." I hear that from so many people, those same three words and I don't know what that means to them. But to me it means being down to earth and valuing simplicity. I look at it as part of a movement because I get told, "Oh you are part of that group." But being an activist, I am doing it because it is my passion.

Phoenix's comment is a classic example of Charles Cooley's looking glass self model (1902). Phoenix is extremely aware of how other people perceive and evaluate her, and uses that as an indication of her identity.

The final excerpt in this section is taken from an interview with Amanda.

Amanda's statement illustrates the approach taken by many people involved in locally based activism. Amanda stated:

Living your life in a way that correlates with your beliefs becomes a really effective way of spreading solutions because people can see that. People need to be exposed. Exposure is key. People fundamentally want to be happy and they don't want to destroy the world around them, so people need to be exposed that there are other ways. By just showing one person the way you are doing things that one person is going to be more receptive. They may not accept it but next time they see it they will begin to pick up that there is another way...People need to share what they are doing and why they are doing it, and I think it will extend out from there. I am trying to figure out in my life how I can best use my skills to facilitate sharing. I realized that I am really not a confrontational person and there are other ways to use my skills. I am now open to being involved in other ways, because there are many means and ways to go about striving for change.



Amanda's comment indicates how the sustainability movement is taking place and transforming our culture. Movement is achieved through many different channels of communication.

Through this section we have seen that a great deal of thought and frame work goes into the distinctions respondents make in identifying with activism. Nearly all of the respondents have had some exposure and/or involvement in activism and therefore, the term *activist* is not used loosely, it possess intimate associations, ideas, and characteristics.

A common theme addressed was the association between activism and aggressive actions (i.e. protesting, always being involved). In many ways Aprovecho works to deconstruct this perception and replace it with a more empowering notion of personal action equating to activism. In Aprovecho's community all activities were valued no matter how small. As a result focus was directed to the individual and personal efforts that could be made to increase ones individual sustainability. Aprovecho's internship program combines methods of experiential living and learning to promote individual's efficacy and activism. The next section will explore how respondents describe the movement towards sustainability.

## “IT’S A DIFFERENT TYPE OF MOVEMENT”

New social movement theory stresses that today’s contentious activity takes on new forms different from those used in the classic movements of the 1960’s and 1970’s. By using new approaches and tactics, contemporary social movements can be characterized as multidimensional movements seeking to reform numerous issues through one expansive framework. In these movements the role of the social movement organization becomes particularly significant to direct and maximize resources. Through complex networks contemporary social movements display a new awareness of the global dimensions of complex societies (Melucci, 1998).

In order to discuss the environment, structure, history, and culture, a social movement operates within, theorists turn to the term *field*. Relating to social movements in terms of the fields they operate within offers a perspective that is sensitive to the particular forces surrounding contentious activity (Bourdieu, 1976). This section will examine the culture and field of sustainably centered activism. These excerpts serve as an orientation to small-scale, locally based social movement activity.

During interview sessions I asked respondents if they thought of themselves as activists, and if so, to define the movement they identified with. Several respondents indicated that they considered themselves as a part of “a different kind of a movement”. Generally participants referred to protesting and publicly active methods of contention as common or typical forms of movement activity. In the narratives below many respondents describe the elements that characterize the contemporary movement towards sustainability as distinctive from other “typical” forms of activism.

A common characteristic of small, locally based movements is the feature of personal interaction. The following narratives discuss why personal interaction is a key component of environmentally based activism. In our interview, Amanda shared her impression of the sustainability movement.

I see it happening small scale. I see it happening among individuals, small groups, and I know that is where it starts, and that is where it is suppose to get bigger from. But it is very frustrating because I don't see it happening in the government. The government unfortunately represents the rest of the country. I think what needs to happen is all of the gaps that exist in various cultures need to come together and focus our understanding. That's where we need to be figuring each other out, and I see it happening here, among people in Washington, and in other places.

In a follow up question I asked Amanda if she considered small-scale action a form of activism. She replied:

It is a different type of movement, when I think activism I think of more aggressive (actions). But when I think movement I don't think aggression, I think more of what I see happening. But yeah, the smaller scale thing is a movement and it is becoming bigger and the picture that forms in my mind is dropping pebbles in the water in different places around the world and the ripples are going to move out and all touch at some point.

This excerpt illustrates the subtle manner in which movement is taking place. Amanda's reference to smaller scale activism as a "different type of movement" is a poignant description of how sustainable living operates as a social movement. Diverging from more "aggressive" forms of activism, the movement towards sustainability operates by small-scale activism through individual and group efforts.

In an interview with Michel this insight was shared:

The magic of this place is that it is personal. It is rare for people these days to have such personal experiences. What Aprovecho provides is a place for people to get together and learn about sustainability through living it. A lot of the activism that goes on these days is all about anonymity, and that's cool, you can gain a lot from being in something that is really big.

But I find that people who come here are here to learn about personal activism.

A common interest shared by interns and members of Aprovecho's community was their desire to decrease the amount of contradiction they faced in their daily lives by using their personal actions and choices to reflect their values. A majority of the participants had been involved in various forms of activism prior to joining Aprovecho. However, for some participants gaining practical skills to live a more sustainable life became a vision that was integrated into their goal as individuals and activists.

The following narratives focus on using personal actions and lifestyle choices as activism. Personal actions are exceedingly significant in small-scale locally based movements.

When discussing how individual actions can foster change, Molly commented:

I feel that more people participating in Aprovecho have a greater collective sense of how the personal can be used, and that having consciousness of the *self and the individual*, forces me to ask, "What can I do"

Aprovecho's internship program provides interns with exposure to a vast variety of information and skills. Throughout the internship program participants enhance their sense of self-efficacy, and gain a greater sense of how the personal can be used.

During workshops and class sessions, participants focused their questions towards the ways in which new skills or practices could be incorporated into their day-to-day lives. As a result, one class session towards the end of the internship program was dedicated to discussing activities and practices that participants can engage in once they left the center.

Many of the ideas shared and discussed at Aprovecho were simple actions and practices that increase an individuals' personal level of sustainability. Suggestions such as reusing envelopes, walking or biking whenever possible, watering plants with dirty dishwater, etc. reflect a mindful dedication towards creating resources.

Conversations emphasizing how one can live in a more sustainable manner as a college student, or how to increase ones personal sustainability while living in an apartment arose frequently. During these discussions, participants expressed the challenges they faced when attempting to align their values with their lifestyles. The challenges individuals faced created feelings of contradiction resulting from advocating actions and solutions that were not yet a part of their own lives. For many, part of the solution towards resolving this dilemma was participating in Aprovecho's program and learning the skills to live a life more conducive to their personal beliefs, thus decreasing personal feelings of contradiction relating to ideals and actions.

Lisa stated her feelings succinctly:

It may sound like a cliché, but it is like the famous quote made by Mahatma Gandhi "You must become the change you want to see in the world".

Amanda shared her reasons for using her personal actions as a way to affect change.

I think first you have to show people; you can't tell them. For me it is what I can do to start spreading sustainable knowledge. It is important to invite people to witness it and show them that it is a reality ...composting toilets and solar power work. You need to show people, not tell them what to do, and that is, in my opinion, how you bring people in.

Displaying the practical innovations and methods that relate to sustainability increases awareness and exposure of movement goals. With exposure to working,

functioning examples outsiders are given the opportunity to learn from individuals who have knowledge and experience with sustainability-centered practices.

In addition to disseminating new ideas, participants in the internship group all shared a sense of personal fulfillment in learning the practical aspects needed to incorporate the change they desire in their own lives. During an interview Molly commented on her long-term commitment towards integrating her environmental values to her lifestyle.

This is how I want to live: seeing it; living it. Not just reading about it or hearing it, but doing it. Saying, “yes I used composting toilets”; not just saying they are out there. It is living it, and I wanted the experience because I want to practice it throughout my life.

Aprovecho as an organization and a site provides the public with vast exposure to practical examples of appropriate technologies. Through the internship program, bi-monthly open houses, and outreach efforts Aprovecho actively publicizes information and generates outsiders’ awareness and interest.

In addition to the exposure interns receive on site field trips and planned activities exposed interns to other sustainable living arrangements. Visiting an urban eco-village and two homes outside the area operating on alternative energy sources (i.e. wind and solar) enhanced participants’ understanding of the possibilities of living sustainably.

Reflecting on memorable experiences at Aprovecho Amber recalled:

The way we live - seeing that you can live this way. It gives me hope that it is possible. Being here and seeing all of these people who have a hunger for the environment encourages me to do what I want to do. This is a reality. Visiting the homes last week showed me that average middle class people can live this way. It gives me so much hope and energy to say, “I am going to do this and not let anyone stand in my way.”

Gaining diverse exposure to multiple alternative systems was extremely valuable and increased participants perception of what is possible. As Molly and Amber mentioned, witnessing functioning examples of appropriate technologies was not only inspirational, it affected their goals and visions.

In conclusion, many of the actions taken towards sustainability operate in the field of small locally based small systems. This allows participation in the larger movement towards sustainability to be continual through intentional activities and lifestyle choices. Numerous contemporary movements reflect different levels of action, ranging from political activism to reactions to everyday life. Interns at Aprovecho are engaged in questioning and challenging the assumptions and implications of individual actions in day-to-day living. Through living in an intentional manner, thoughtful consideration is given towards the methods used to fulfill matters of everyday life. The following section, *Living with Intention*, will explore how intentional living increases individual action.

## LIVING WITH INTENTION

Living in an environment in which day-to-day activities are conducted in an intentional manner generates awareness and prompts reevaluation of the underlying issues that are involved in daily matters. An integral aspect of intentional living at Aprovecho was reevaluating the common approaches taken to meet the needs of daily life. When approached in an intentional manner, each action (i.e. disposing of household waste, using electric items, etc.) provided an opportunity to utilize sustainable practices. Focusing attention on the basic functions of personal care, domestic chores, eating, and so on required critical reflection about the complex systems of modern life while emphasizing issues that are within an individual's personal control. Rethinking basic activities of daily life proved to be a powerful platform for the transformation of views and enhanced awareness.

The education received at Aprovecho was heavily based on the model of participatory involvement and experiential living. By engaging in activities that linked sustainability to methods under personal control, participants were both enlightened and empowered. Activities such as using wood burning stoves to create a meal, or planting a garden bed, built upon one another to extend the philosophy of sustainability to every matter of daily life. The interconnectedness and interdependence of every action and relationship at Aprovecho stressed holistic perspectives rooted in the values of social ecology, environmental justice, and sustainability.

During our interview Eden shared her impression of the mindset that accompanied the work done at Aprovecho.



A lot of what happens here is fun only because we make it fun. In reality we are doing chores most of the day. And a lot of that comes from the support we have here. A lot of the things we do depend on group dynamics and our general enthusiasm towards them, and it is something that is infectious. Like Juan built that appropriate technology washing machine and if no one had shown interest in it, it would have died; but one person got excited about it and more people got into it, and it became a fun social activity. It became like, "Why aren't we all doing this?" So it becomes easier. And most of what you do, whether it is doing your laundry in an intentionally mindful way or reading a book becomes for the betterment of the community.

This narrative discusses the elements of social support that are embedded in collective actions. In all forms of collective action there exist relationships that produce meaning and ascribe importance to particular activities. Collective behavior, regardless of its forms, is always to a degree socially constructed and meaningful to its participants (Melucci, 1988).

In addition to participating in activities that were made meaningful by members of the group, several respondents commented on the aspect of community they experienced at Aprovecho. In this excerpt Lisa discussed her experience of living in community:

I think it is crucial for people to have support systems. Human to human relationships are important and to have them healthy is emphasized in intentional communities. That element of having a support system that understands where you are coming from or is willing to try, is important. The essential aspect of community is giving support and energy for people to continue the work that they feel is important (and) to continue to stay motivated. This is especially important in environmental work. There are a lot of things that tell us there is no way in hell that you are ever going to change anything and so it is really crucial to have a support system that can give you some optimism, give you some hope, (and) pick you up when you are down and sustain you through those periods...Connections you have with people are really beautiful and it is in a community where those connections can build with each other and create a tight web that is sustainable and inspirational.

For many of the participants the subtle experiences derived from living in a community, became the prominent issues and experiences that resonated with them towards the end of the internship.

Amber recalls in the following excerpt:

I like the idea of considering education and people as resources. Everything has to do with community; like last night it was Jamie's job to take care of the chickens and she couldn't so Michel was asked to, then Mia was asked to, and I did it. Having community for support, for education, (and) for fun, allows you to do all these amazing things that require a group of people. I now equate people with resources.

Living in a community allows circumstances and situations of daily life to be met with a type of social action or involvement. In addition to the practical benefits of shared responsibility, members are extremely integrated, valuable, and necessary to keep the community functioning.

Allison shared her experiences in being a part of a community as:

I feel very stimulated by some of the stuff that they aim to teach but also I have learned a lot from some things, which are just like organic things that developed when everyone is just here playing around with an open mind.

For many, participation in social movement activity is based on or enhanced by the social aspects of group participation. Within social movement organizations members participate in interactive relationships that transform their own social action, and to a certain extent, their social environment as well. (Melucci, 1989). Aprovecho provides an environment that supports the development of relationships and social bonds.

Here Eden reflects on her experience at Aprovecho.

This is a very personally intensive experience. I don't sit and absorb all the info in the library here, because we are doing it. What I have learned is not book learning; it has been through taking time, spending it with plants, or having conversations with people who have lived a lot of the things that I have thought about. It is really what every person chooses to make of it.

The ideas are here and it sparks new things and can just explode out of here, taking aspects of this knowledge where everyone ends up.

Eden's comment is effective in describing the dynamic nature of the internship program. Learning can take place through every interaction and activity. The experience is very unique and therefore carries an infinite possibility to affect members.

Molly commented on the following realization gained from living in a community.

For me it is a combination of skill and resources. Communities come in all different forms. You know, I think I am a poor college student, what can I do? But I think it is the little things that add up: it is buying organic; it's riding my bicycle more than I did or riding in my car less. It is so much more. It is combining what you've got with what you aim to have.

Molly's statement describes her newfound sense of efficacy and empowerment. Charged with the motivation to see possibilities rather than limitations, Molly has gained a valuable awareness regarding resources and alternatives.

The excerpts presented in this section highlight key insights participants experienced while living in an intentional community. The majority of excerpts relate to ways in which participants experienced a heightened sense of self-efficacy. While living in the community each respondent became a contributing member and therefore was given an opportunity to identify with their personal ability to incorporate sustainable practices into their day-to-day lives. The process of self-actualization led to greater awareness of personal power. This resulted in a greater alignment with movement participation. The final section, *Changes in Consciousness*, focuses on the culminating experiences and thoughts participants held towards the end of the internship program. A number of the following excerpts were gathered during a group conversation that took place during the last week of the internship.

## CHANGES IN CONSCIOUSNESS

*I wasn't looking for an experience like this. It just felt right, in a stronger way than anything I had felt before. I knew that if I came here I would change, I would meet people that would change my life, and I would learn things that I will need later on in life.*

- Amanda

Involvement in social movement activities can be a powerful psychological and social experience. The paradigms offered in the discourses of collective behavior and resource mobilization offered varied perspectives towards the causes and effects of movement participation. However, among these theories there was a disproportionate level of attention placed on defining social movements as irrational pathological social acts, or as structural opportunities. A considerable emphasis of new social movement theory is the ideological work social movements engage in. As stated by Tarrow (1998, pg 94), "all movements construct meaning and meaning construction is a social movements primary function." The term cognitive liberation coined by Mc Adam (1982) describes the increased awareness associated with movement participation.

In addition to the work of Tarrow and Mc Adam, Snow's typology of Frame Alignment Processes directs attention to the amplification of awareness and consciousness that results from movement participation. One of these processes, frame transformation, describes the ideological changes that occur through movement participation. A characteristic of frame transformation is having everything seen with greater clarity and certainty (Snow, 1986). This process is illustrated in the excerpts that follow. Participants involved in Aprovecho's internship program unanimously commented on having experienced a growth in their awareness regarding the ideological

basis behind sustainability and its practical applications. Increased awareness often resulted in connections made applications of sustainable practices.

This section is comprised of excerpts that explore the changes in consciousness participants received through their experience at Aprovecho. It clearly highlights the construction of meaning and amplification of awareness that results from participation in a social movement organization. It is significant to recognize the instrumental effect Aprovecho's intern program has in elevating the participant's consciousness and dedication towards sustainable goals.

However, it is crucial to place the following excerpts in context. The narratives that follow indicate major shifts in perceptions and awareness, yet, as Amanda indicated in the opening quote of this chapter, the changes she experienced were changes that she expected to incur by joining Aprovecho's community. Aprovecho's potential to raise awareness and invoke change is a typical characteristic of a social movement organization. The extent to which participants experience change is dependant on each individual's readiness and willingness to approach the internship as a transformative experience.

During our interview Amber described her experience at Aprovecho as extremely life changing. The following excerpt from our interview illustrates how she interprets this change:

I have a feeling like my life is going to be changing a lot after Aprovecho. But I don't know (exactly how). I imagine a lot of specific things, like just going back to my parent's house, and maybe building them a solar shower, and going through the house... my life is going to change so much and I am still not quite sure how I want it to change. I definitely am really excited to learn more now, whereas before I was having so much trouble finding this kind of information, that it was really frustrating. After being

here I have new directions to look in to find information that I want, and that gets me really psyched.

A primary function of contemporary social movements is providing individuals with access to information and social networks. Information and communication operate as catalysts to movement participation and overall success. Acquiring access to information and networks of activism greatly increased participants' dedication and enthusiasm to stay involved in organizations working to build sustainable communities.

In this excerpt Phoenix describes the new possibilities she has become aware of. She explains:

There are so many directions I can go in, that I feel that I am standing in an open plain, where do I go? I am so glad that I came, and it has defiantly changed my life. And I can't wait to share the information that I have obtained. And at the same time I don't know what I want to do, there are so many new options now.

In a similar comment Molly shared the changes she experienced as:

Now that I have been here it has totally blown all the walls out of my house. Like I used to feel that things would come down to, "Do I do this? Or do I do that?" And it would be a fork; two directions. Now that I am leaving I think a lot of my ideas have changed, the way I see the world, the way I see, just, (and) the way I view things... My opinions have changed and my views have changed and they will continue to do so.

The exposure to new ideas and sources of information led participants became aware of numerous opportunities and paths they could pursue following the internship. With an elevated sense of what is possible, many respondents were eager to continue exploring alternative, sustainable communities. As Molly stated in an earlier section, experiencing life at Aprovecho as *reality*, and as a functional system became a source of motivation and inspiration.

As a result of increased awareness six interns gained new perspectives of life following the internship. In the following narrative Eden shares a realization that will greatly affect her day-to-day life.

My main thing that I come away with is that you don't have to live in an intentional community to live in an intentional way. One can always intentionally create community. My impression of life (and) what it means to be a family or even be in a group living at school has changed.

Eden's experience at Aprovecho has prompted her to perceive her actions as a valid and powerful means to create community. Having gained a greater sense of what is possible through personal action, Eden has established a new sense the agency she possesses in creating community.

In our interview April expressed what she has gained from the internship as:

I have gotten a sense of humility here. My views on my place in the world have changed. I see that I am in a position to do things that make a difference. Even if they are not going to fix the damage that mankind is doing, I can still do a lot of things that will improve my health and life and the well being of the environment around me.

April's narrative indicates an increase in self-awareness relating to personal activism. Here we can see how the use of meaning greatly affects perception and action. The emphasis of "living with intention" places significance on small daily actions and choices. When Eden and April connect their actions to a meaning system that places value on the intention with which an act is done, they are able to participate in *activism* without having to engage in contentious acts.

The success of a social movement organization is dependant on it's ability to motivate participants to increase their activity and dedication. This can be achieved through increasing members' concept of their agency. By placing value on the individual actions and choices that go into day-to-day life Aprovecho offered participants the

experiences to relate to their actions, no matter how small, as powerful and significant actions.

With an increased awareness and enhanced sense of personal agency, several respondents experienced a greater compulsion to increase their personal sustainability. Participants began perceiving lifestyle choices and day-to-day actions as a valuable platform for movement oriented decisions. As stated by Tarrow, contemporary social movements engage participants in new forms of actions. The following narratives illustrate the ways in which choices and decisions take on the role of contentious activities.

As Don describes:

I feel that I have been given a different glimpse on my own knowledge, and now I am working on integrating that, so it is not enough for me to be aware of it, *now that I am aware I have to do something.*

The opportunity to perceive his knowledge and values in a different light gave

Don the link to apply his values and knowledge into action.

When asked if she thought any of her values had changed Faith replied:

Some of my values have been redefined. They are things that I thought about but now I see them differently. For example the idea of eating organic, I can't just bring myself to buy non-organic vegetables. I was not like that so much in the beginning of this program. Now it is like the same way that people wont eat meat because the animals are not being treated in a good way, I see that the plants and environment are not being treated in a respectful way, everything from pesticides and mono-crops, and to me it is the same thing. So I take it on me that it is going to be more expensive and less convenient, and it is going to take a toll in my social life, but that is a value that I believe in.

In this narrative Faith provides a detailed description of the ideological work involved in negotiating new knowledge into a value and thus into practice. In this process we are able to see how new knowledge can affect action. Through this lifestyle and



consumption choice Faith is able to take action against a much broader system and institutionalized practice.

The ideological work involved in the process of associating new information to values which are then enacted upon by choices, reflects an invisible progression that social actors frequently engage in. Throughout this section I have emphasized the social psychological processes of perception, interpretation, and action. Whereas some of the assertions made may have been logically observable, it is significant to reflect on the unseen processes that emerge from participation in a social movement organization.

The first part of this section focused on the factors that contributed to increased awareness. The first factor frequently mentioned in interviews pertained to the accessibility at Aprovecho to vast resources and information regarding sustainable practices and networks of other organizations. The second main cause was the increased sense of self-efficacy gained during the ten-week internship. The second portion of this section emphasized the increase in personal agency to participate in activities that reflected new knowledge and values. The narratives throughout this section refer to Aprovecho as a catalyst in increasing their awareness and extent of action.

## CONCLUSION

This thesis serves as a guide into the world of Aprovecho, a social movement organization. The pages before you explore the ideological basis of sustainability and how this organization promotes activism therein. Throughout this thesis I attempted to provide a space for the participants I interviewed to tell their stories. The narratives presented in this thesis are insights into the ideals, motivations, experiences and challenges of individuals involved in small-scale, ecologically based activism. In determining the themes that I would explore, I relied upon common ideas and experiences that emerged from my interviews during the transcription process. The areas I chose to focus upon were simply the areas that my respondents valued; the ideological basis behind the term sustainability, environmental awareness, and activism.

This thesis addresses Aprovecho's activism along cultural and social platforms. In this study I found the Aprovecho Research Center to be a contemporary social movement organization advocating sustainability through the use of appropriate technology and cooperative living methods. The education provided in the internship program emphasizes small-scale, local activism and sustainability as a way of life enacted by lifestyle choices and daily actions. This is exemplified by the consideration given to individual action at the Aprovecho Research Center. Focusing upon individual action increased participants' self-efficacy and motivation to use their personal lifestyle choices as a reflection of their ideals, aligning participants ideological frame with their actions.

The sections *It's a Different type of Movement* and *Changes in Consciousness*, reflect participants' comments regarding the motivation they gained from aligning their ideological values and beliefs to their day to day decisions and actions. By emphasizing the areas of life that are within personal control Aprovecho became a catalyst for participants to use their daily choices as activism. Aprovecho's internship program provides participants with an immersion in sustainable living and an opportunity to live in an ecological centered cultural paradigm. For many an introduction to this paradigm generated new opportunities, relationships, and goals.

A pivotal theme that I have addressed in this thesis is the process by which social actors engage in small-scale, locally based activism. Relying on the work of Snow's *Frame Alignment Process*, I have emphasized the importance in meaning and perception in relation to activism. Examining the social and cultural process held by those aligned with an ecological consciousness has enabled me to experience the ways in which alternative cultures are transforming the dominant paradigm.

Everyone involved in this thesis, myself included, were searching for greater meaning, understanding, and happiness. Our time at Aprovecho was a brief moment in each of our lives where we explored a completely different way of life. For many this experience served as a catalyst to strengthen connections between their ideals and actions. Ultimately those involved in Aprovecho's internship program gained a lasting understanding of what is possible.

This last excerpt taken from a conversation with Rebecca reflects how the Aprovecho Research Center is affecting cultural change.

I feel like I am at the beginning of a new run at everything. I feel empowered by the knowledge I have. Just self-sufficiency, from self-cervical exams to growing your own food, providing for yourself in so many ways that I may have known were possible but did not know it could be applied. In the longer term I am more curious to see how it all pans out. The friends I have right now are not the most supportive of the decisions I am making, so what I am working on right now is how I can create balance in my social life, in my physical life, in my spiritual life, and how that will turn out, who knows? Right now I am starting out with a new effort and awareness.

The motivation, awareness, and *newness* Rebecca experienced are profound changes that will alter the course of her life after the internship program. An area of future research that I would like to explore is the extent to which long-term changes are experienced for participants of Aprovecho's internship program. I believe that much could be learned from the experiences, challenges, and progress made by individuals striving for environmental and social sustainability.

A significant emphasis of this thesis has been understanding the role of Aprovecho as a social movement organization. It is the organization that ultimately enables individuals to participate, experience, and connect with the ideas and practices of sustainable living. A great deal of the activism that occurs in contemporary society is a result of social movement organizations. It is necessary to take into consideration the dynamic role that social movements occupy in contemporary society.

*We live in an unprecedented situation. No previous form of society has exercised such power over itself. Our future now depends almost entirely on our own choices and decisions. Social life has never been so risky. That is why social movements are unlikely to disappear. They are a sign of the awesome power we have over ourselves – and of our enormous obligation to exercise this power responsibly.*  
- Alberto Melucci 1989

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## APPENDIX A

### Interview Questionnaire

## Interview Questionnaire

## Background Questions

1. Were there any experiences or aspects of your childhood that led you to become aware of environmental issues?
2. Do you remember a particular issue that drew you into environmentalism?
3. How do you define your relationship to nature?
4. How do you perceive the relationship mainstream American's have towards nature?
- 5.

## Identifying the Problems

6. What do you think are the major problems facing our society?
7. Can you identify some feasible solutions to the problem you mentioned?
8. If you could change one practice or behavior that American's engage in what would it be?

## Defining Sustainability

9. When did you first become aware of, or encounter the term sustainability?
10. How did you become interested in sustainable human systems?
11. What motivated you to participate in the summer internship program?
12. What are your impressions of Aprovecho?
13. Do you consider Aprovecho to be a social movement organization?
14. Do you consider yourself part of a social movement?
15. Have you been involved in activism? What have your experiences been?
16. Do you consider yourself an activist? Why/Why not?
17. Will your involvement in Aprovecho's internship program affect your activism? In what way?



18. What were some of the issues and ideas that you felt were most prominent in your experience at Aprovecho?
19. What are some of the changes you have experienced?
20. What are some of the activities you expect to participate in after the internship program?
21. Have your goals changed as a result of the internship program?

## APPENDIX B

### Additional Social Movement Organizations

### The Aprovecho Research Center

<http://www.efn.org/~apro/>

Aprovecho is a center for research, experimentation and education on alternative technologies that are ecologically sustainable and culturally responsive. Our fields of study include organic gardening, sustainable forestry, and appropriate technology. The center is located on a beautiful 40-acre land trust near Eugene, Oregon.

### The Campus Center for Appropriate Technology

<http://www.humboldt.edu/~ccat/home/home.html>

CCAT is Humboldt State University's demonstration site for appropriate technologies and sustainable living. CCAT is dedicated to showcasing technologies which contribute to a healthy environment. CCAT offers workshops, sponsors community discussions, and provides a forum for experiential learning.

### The HOPE Farm

<http://www.hopefarm.net/id36.html>

The HOPE farm is a collaborative research and education project, bringing together farmers, educators, activists and other community members to promote biodiversity and explore innovative options for sustainable living. The HOPE farm is a working organic farm, botanical garden and developing education center. We are located at River's Turn farm, 5 miles North of the town of Coburg, Oregon, near the confluence of the McKenzie and Willamette Rivers

### Lost Valley

<http://www.lostvalley.org>

Lost Valley Educational Center is an intentional community and nonprofit educational center dedicated to learning, living, and teaching sustainable, ecologically-based culture.

### Food Not Lawns

[www.foodnotlawns.com](http://www.foodnotlawns.com)

Food Not Lawns is a non-profit, avant-gardening collective based in Whiteaker, Eugene's lowest-income neighborhood. Currently, our efforts focus on rebirthing highly-localized food and medicine cultures; and the preservation and propagation of rare plants - and having fun!