

Growing a village

Permaculture design by Barbara & Peter Scheltus, summer 2021 – spring 2022

Dreaming a village, a hamlet in nature, a place for people to work together, making beautiful things, live life, learn and celebrate. A story to create in the world.

“The best way to predict the future is to design it” – Buckminster Fuller



This is a picture found on the internet. It appeals to us, it shows beauty and scale, an eye for details with craftsmanship, and lots of possibilities for a village-community style of living

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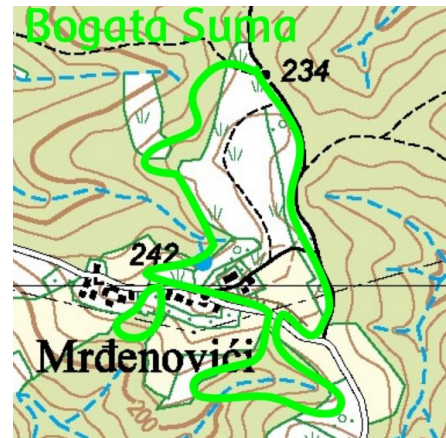
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Context

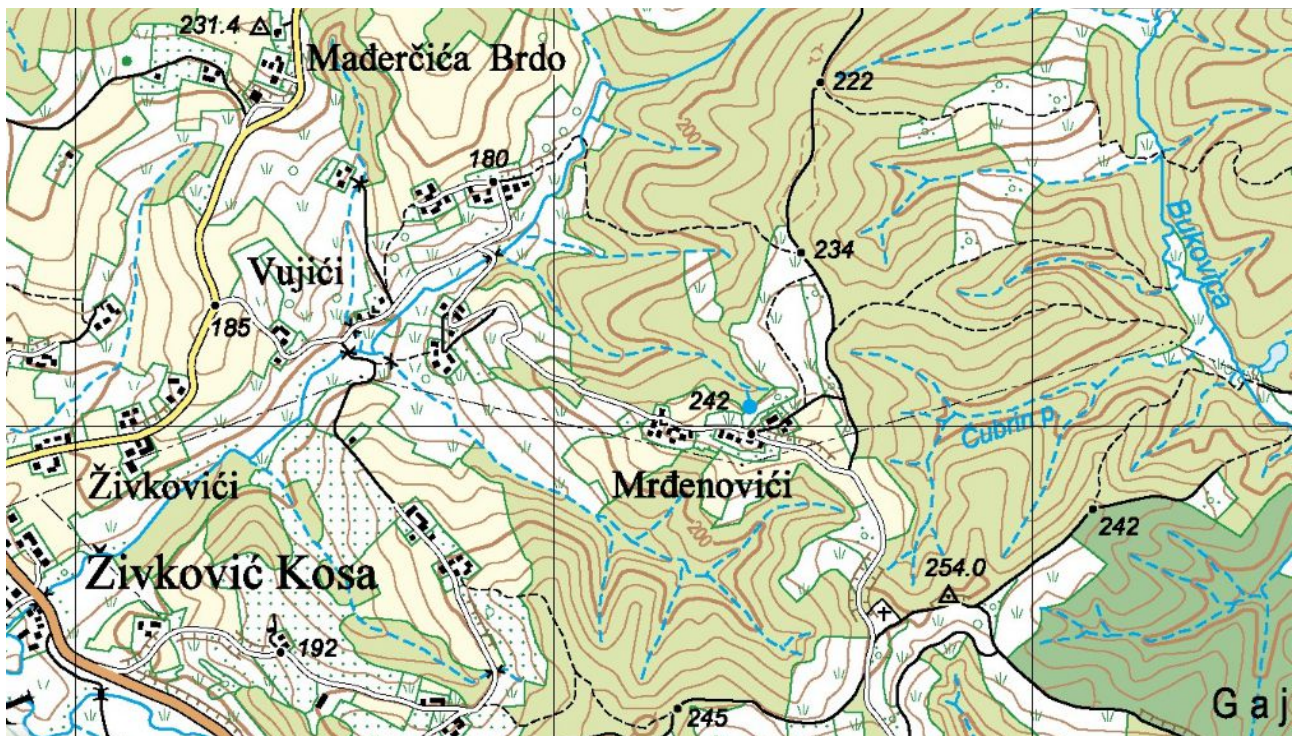
Where cities in our opinion are un-sustainable, destructive wastelands designed to accommodate political and economical power and to control people, our village aims to be the opposite. Sustainable and regenerative for people and for the land, where vision, openness, drive, dedication and celebration rule. Living with stuff and money is not wealth; a healthy life in harmony with nature and in cooperation with friends is.

In 2009 we (Barbara, Peter and son Nol Scheltus; daughter Fleur is born here) moved from city life in The Netherlands to country life in the heart of Croatia. We named our land “Bogata Šuma”, “Rich Forest” because it was already a very fertile and edible landscape. We have lived here since 2009 with temporary guests and volunteers. Now we want to live with more permanent people.

This design is the fundament of growing a village at Bogata Šuma. What kind of people would fit in, what culture do we want to grow, what to build and how to get to an ecosystem of low maintenance diversity in self reliance.



In green our land Bogata Šuma



Our hamlet Mrdenovići in the bigger area

Our “hamlet” (a few scattered houses) at the end of a dead end road, on the top of a hill, surrounded by forests in the heart of Croatia, is called “Mrdenovići”. It is named after the original families who lived here since the 16th century.

To reach Mrdenovići you take a small road going up the hill from the main road. It leads you through the forest, past a graveyard on the highest point, to the next hilltop where you find 5 houses.

We're situated 2,5km from the main road, 5 km from the village of Vojnić (school, supermarkets, bars, post office, doctor's office, police station, fire brigade) and 25km from the city Karlovac.

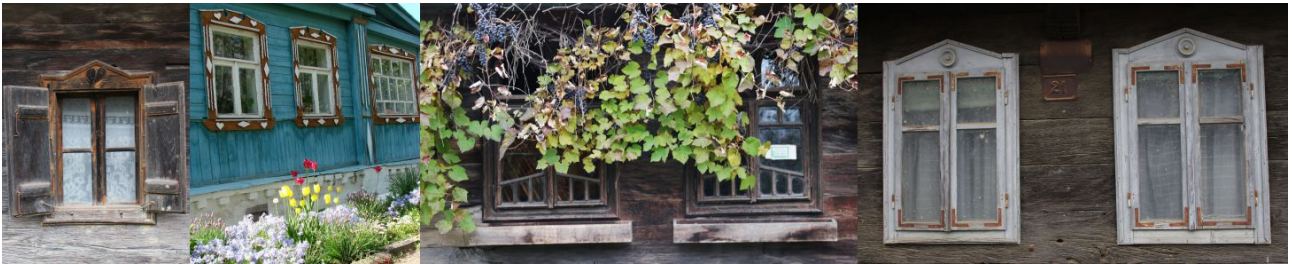
Our terrain (called “Bogata Šuma”) is 12 hectares (30 acres) of woodland, orchards and fields. 8 Hectares in 1 part and 4 hectares scattered in the area.

The time is ripe to grow a village

We are growing a village because we love this life and we want to share it. Our aim is to live more self-reliant and celebrate life in freedom and cooperation with like-minded people. People who want to live a healthy, independent life, eat from the gardens and celebrate Mother Nature. A caring village where you can grow old, where people look after each other and everyone has a purpose and a good quality life. A community designed for current and coming generations.

The village area is like an ecosystem with people, structures and nature. There is food security and biodiversity in a smart and low maintenance system.

The village is beautiful and fairy tale-like, a joy to live in. It is built with wood and other local, natural materials. Simple but comfortable, cosy, low maintenance, regenerative, with future generations in mind. It fits in with the Great Turning: the transition from the Industrial Growth Society to a Life Sustaining Society - the Work That Reconnects.



A selection of windows from local traditional wooden houses

About this design

This village design was our anchor during the Covid19 period (2020-2022) in which our critique of the world grew and we were looking for an even more harmonious way to live life.

In this period we also met an increasing number of people who fled the city or even their country because their freedom was at stake.

It is about *creatively using and responding to change* in this economy driven world where the trend is to detach from ourselves, each other and Nature.

This design is written up with the help of Looby Macnamara's **Design Web** as a framework.

My imagination switched on when I heard about a **Permaculture Design Tree**. I used it as the summary of this design.

Another summary of this design is Looby Macnamara's poem "Growing Home". **Poetry** as a tool.

We used **mind maps** as a tool because it is a great way of working together with more people in a more creative and visual way. Under Ideas is one of them.

Ethan Roland Soloviev's "**8 Forms of capital**" was a helpful tool to discover a wide array of Helps and categorise them.

Peter and I made **vision boards** with big pieces of paper and old magazines, and we collected inspiring pictures on a shared board on [Pinterest](#). Both to capture a look and feel.

I used **zoning** for the village and terrain, and zoning of like-minded people.

I used **PMI evaluation** (Plus Minus Interesting) under the Reflection anchor point.

After spring 2022 I added more to this design, in **green**.

Summary



THE BEST WAY TO PREDICT THE FUTURE IS TO DESIGN IT - BUCKMINSTER FULLER

Growing a village is like growing a tree. It starts with a seed of inspiration: "The best way to predict the future is to design it" - Buckminster Fuller. This seed lies in fertile soil with the permaculture ethics Earth care, People care and Fair share/Future care. Out of these ethic some strong values grow as roots.

From the trunk 4 main branches form: land, structures, people and culture. All 4 subjects branch out in smaller elements.

The fruits of the tree are meant to be shared and enjoyed. They also naturally return to the ground and cycle 'nutrients' back into the system. Growing a village is never a finished process; it keeps needing fertile soil.

Growing home

Home grown rage, sitting in a cage
Freedom trapped
It's just not fair
Polar bears,
Ice caps melting
Dissolving
 Collapsing
 Evolving
 Forgetting
Every pain inside
For all that hurts on the outside
Genocide
 Ecocide
 Suicide
I am beside myself
I am beside you
Next to all the daughters, sons, mothers, fathers
We are all connected
It is in this one home we live and grow
We are breaking the world
We want to remake the world
We want to remake our home
We want to grow our home.

Looby Macnamara
(From: Strands of infinity, Poetry to reconnect)

Permaculture ethics as the basis

Fair share: the whole idea of creating a village is based on fair share. At the moment it is only our family of 4 who is living on 12 hectares of beautiful, fertile soil. Sharing this land and it's abundance with others would only be fair.

We want to live in a fair sharing village-community where people share fun, ideas, knowledge, vehicles, tools and devices.

This design has made us aware of ethical principles of *voluntary simplicity* and *share surplus to need*.

People care: one of the main reasons for growing our village is that we want to live in a caring, people based culture. Not the "what" but the "who" is most important.

With our life sustaining village culture we are an island of a possible future. With walking our talk, we can ignite hope and inspiration.

Earth care: our eco village can act as an example of sustainable development for society. It is a village that can sustain itself for future generations.

We care for a smaller footprints through practices such as self-sufficiency in food production, low tech solutions that can be repaired, sharing cars, tools and devices, and attempts to create independent energy supply through renewable methods.



Drawing of our future village - by Floris Beijer

VISION of a beautiful village

We live in a community on our terrain with fun, like-minded people in a helpful and cooperative culture. It are people that like to share and make each other stronger. People that care for themselves, for each other and the earth. Harmonious people that connect well to nature, to themselves and each other and *strive to make their hand print bigger than their foot print*. The people in our village ask themselves how they can contribute their best in our culture of support, inspiration and celebrations.

There is an abundance of:

- inspiring and fun people,
- good food,
- celebratory moments,
- support for each other,
- care for nature,
- renewable energy,
- beautiful passive houses

It is a beautiful and sustainable, independent village where all resources are local. We can keep on living like this because we have well established independent systems.

PRINCIPLES to live by

Design for resilience and creating *social - economic autonomy* are 2 principles that this design is based on.

Mollison's principle of "*Cooperation, not competition*", is the very basis of future survival and of existing life systems. If we focus on systems and relationships, we grow in resilience and autonomy."

Macnamara's Cultural Emergence principle *Use the intelligence of co-operating hearts* sums it all up: to grow a culture, a way of living together that comes from love for life, for people and for the earth.

Holmgren's principle *Small & slow solutions* is a good operative principle. "Rome isn't built in a day" and if we grow our village slowly, step by step, we grow our resilience, our autonomy, we grow our cooperation and mistakes cannot be big.

More principles in the text in *italic*.



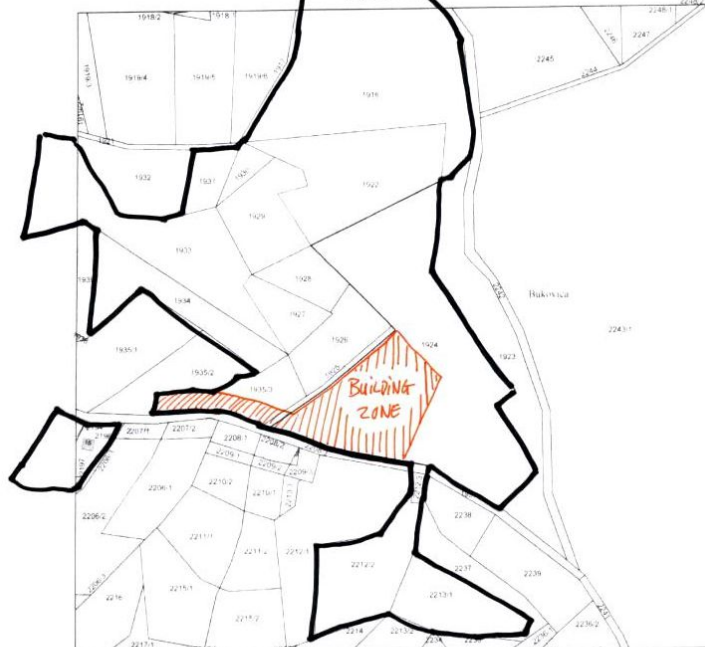
Peter's scetch of what is now the garden area and will be pond and restaurant area



REPUBLIKA HRVATSKA
DRŽAVNA GEODETSKA UPRAVA
PODRUČNI URED ZA KATASTAR KARLOVAC
IŠPOSTAVA VOJNIC
KLASA 935-06/13-01/1
Urbroj 541-13-02-02/2-13-296
Vojnic 25.05.2013.

K. o. Vojnić
Broj katastarske čestice
1924
Mjerilo izvornika 1:2880

IZVOD IZ KATASTARSKOG PLANA Mjerilo 1: 2880

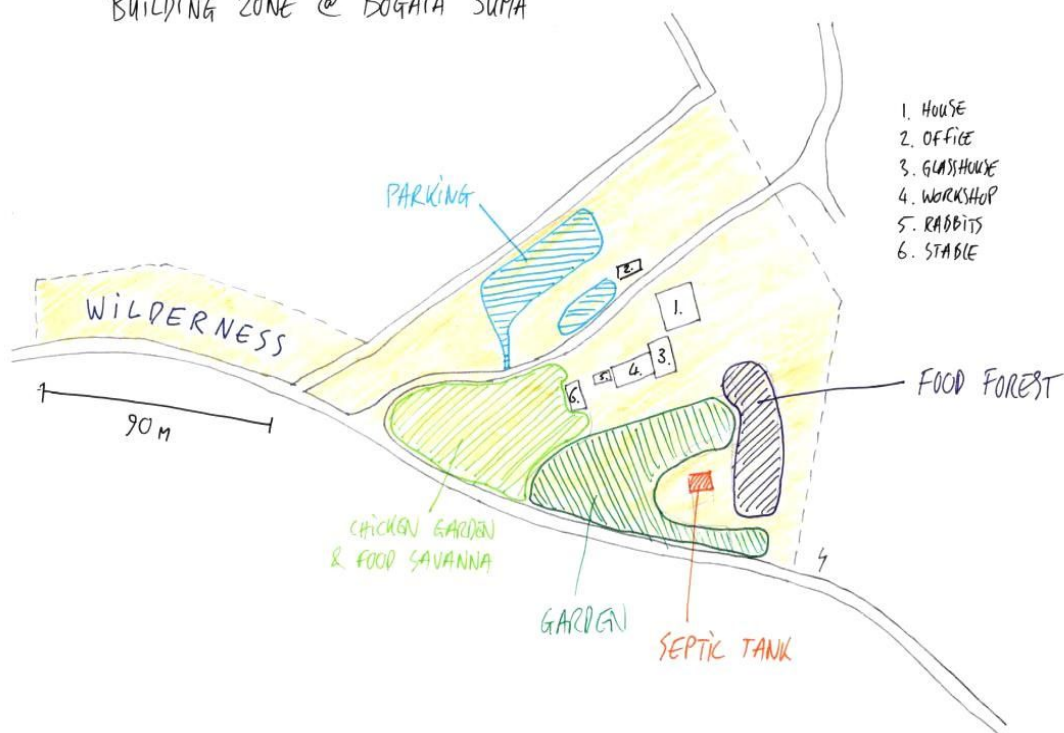


Uč. 1924/1 površina prema posjedniku po katastru iznosi 1.177 m² a to su: 1.177 m² u vlasništvu posjednika
od č. 1.177 m² na posjednika: 1.177 m² na posjednika posjednika
Nacionalni brojevi prema posjedniku i odrednima: 1.177 m² u posjedniku posjednika
dijelovi zemlje u katastru neke druge: 1.177 m² u posjedniku posjednika
posjednik: 1.177 m² u posjedniku posjednika

Obradio: Rade Graković, geod. teh.
Overava: Dami Krić, geom.

The building zone (marked red) on the terrain

BUILDING ZONE @ BOGATA ŠUMA



LIMITS – what is not there yet

The building zone (see the maps on the previous page) is now in use as the garden and also has the greenhouse & stables, the garden shed and the septic tank on it.

We don't have an integral design of our property with infrastructure and new solutions for garden, animals, water, electricity and sewage. This needs a separate "Bogata Šuma overall design".

No one can start living here if there is nowhere to live. We need funds because we need housing, to pay for the architect, paperwork, materials and construction workers.

There is almost no infrastructure on our terrain; we need water and electricity lines beyond the main house and better roads/paths.

We have only fantasies and a few unclear sketches about the look and feel of the village-community. We need beautiful images that inspire.

We do not have fun, active & inspiring people living here permanently now.

We don't have clear expectations for people who want to live here, on routines for handling conflicts and define what is unwanted behaviour.

We don't have a system to check if someone fits in, and to check limits. Like: if someone eats vegetarian, how will they react to us butchering a pig in November? Or yes we want to share our car, and also the responsibility for keeping it in good shape.

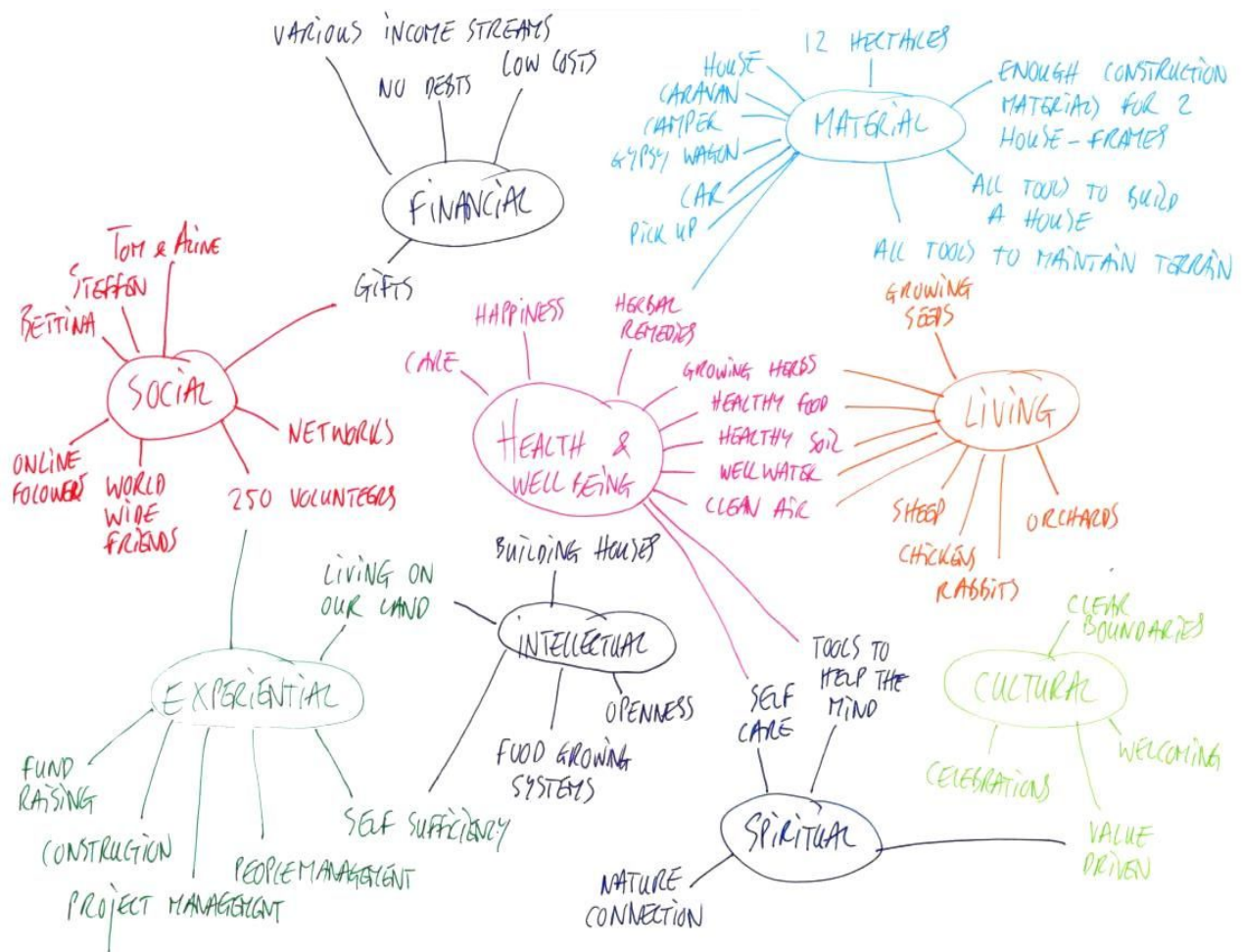
A limit for us would be to start with finding people and become a receptacle of idealists who disagree with society and are looking for unrealistic Utopia.

Our cooperation is now limited to neighbours who don't need us as much as we need them. They have established their systems of working together, helping each other when it is needed and spreading tools over the various families already hundreds of years ago. We are newcomers in this area.

Limits:

- no overall design
- no housing
- no infrastructure
- no visuals
- no villagers

What HELPS on our path



Mind map of the 9 forms of capital (after Soloviev's 8 forms of capital)

Financial capital

We live debt free and our costs are relatively low.

We are sharing and exchanging with neighbours and there is a lot (more) that we (could) barter with people around.

We got substantial financial gifts from 4 different people to buy construction materials.

We are developing and expanding our various income streams.

Material capital

We own 12 hectares (30 acres) of land with a 7.000 m² building zone around the main house.

Around our land there are more pieces of land (and forest) for sale; it is possible to expand the area.

The main house is big, has all facilities and 2 spare rooms.

There is a glasshouse/hall, a workshop, two small stables and a small office/reception.

We also own a camper (unregistered, for on our terrain), a gypsy wagon and a caravan.

We own a few hectares of forest (robinia, beech, oak, sweet chestnut) for timber and we have all construction materials (oak beams) to make 2 barns.

We also have all the tools to build a house: various types of saws, planers, milling.
We have all tools to maintain the terrain and garden.
We own a vehicle for transporting people and another to transport people or stuff.

Living capital

Our land is fertile and the garden is big enough for year-round food for a small village.

We have several animals helpers that act as a door bell, catch mice, create compost and turn it, and provide us also with meat. There is enough annual rainfall for household water and creating a water reservoir, 4 well water spots, heaps of trees for food, timber and fire, active compost heaps...

The animals need to be moved from the building zone (village) to an area closer to orchards so that they can graze free and fulfil more functions (like catching bugs and larvae and fertilizing on the spot).



Part of the garden with greenhouse

Social capital

Our network is big and world wide, and growing. It can be of help, including the volunteer organisations we have experience with.

With our current neighbours we are already living in a village-community. We exchange knowledge, tools, animals, ideas, we help each other and buy from each other. This cooperative culture is embedded in the Croatian culture.

We know some amazing people who we would love to live with. We can rely on several people that we have gathered around that help us, the volunteer system that we have setup and our skills in living together with others. We have an effective system for the selection of volunteers that we can use and expand for living together for a longer period.

(Add 2024) Peter and I have gathered lots of knowledge and experience in “reading people” over the years while hosting guests and volunteers. We developed the ability to quickly sense if people have openness, drive, vision, their values, do they come from victimhood or are they taking responsibility, are they stuck in expectations or are they free, do they come from lightness/can they have fun or does it all have to be correct, what is their flexibility... This doesn't mean that we judge people (and give up on them); it means that we try the openings and see where we can get with them.

Intellectual capital

Our ideas, knowledge about designing and building, knowledge about living together, self sufficiency, what we have learned over the last 13 years living here and how fast we learn from our mistakes.

Our library with books about permaculture, personal development, group processes, conflict management, cultures is a great resource for setting up a village-community. With our village in mind, we can find new resources in the books that we already have.

Observe and interact can be of help: there are many examples to learn from like – intentional [communities](#) and [ecovillages](#) that already exist, the knowledge base of the [Global Ecovillage Network](#) and the [Foundation for Intentional Communities](#). How did they start, how do they live together, how do new people fit in and stay, how is ownership and responsibility handled?

Experiential capital

We have experienced periods with floods and periods with draught and now we designed our garden for all extremes, we have worked with kids, teenagers, young adults, families and even with elderly

people, with idea/detail/result-minded and people-people and we learned to address all of them. We learned skills to inspire, to include, to speak gender-free and in a non-violent way.

We have 12 years experience with growing towards self sufficiency. We know how to grow food all year round, how to calculate and plant an abundance and how to preserve the harvest. We also know what *not* to grow (because of impossibility or it is not worth the effort). Self sufficiency (for the village) will be a separate design.

Cultural capital

We are defining and detailing the culture we want to grow in our village, the things we want to celebrate, stories we tell. People tell us that we have a welcoming culture. Our culture isn't fixed; it evolves with us (and future village members).

Spiritual capital

We are a family that connects well to ourselves and the people around us, we are well connected to nature and natural ways. We live value driven instead of money driven. Peter and I have defined a set of clear values for living and working together with workers and volunteers. We do our best to be an example of how to live them and we would like to apply them for the entire community: openness, a growth mind set, including, solution-minded, using loving words, being truly helpful, being positive, curious, grateful, genuinely interested, have a learning attitude, being respectful of the other's resources and choices.

In our family life we like to celebrate seasons, first days of a holiday, work well done... We also celebrate the week by closing it on Fridays, and we celebrate weekends by eating chips and cooking special meals.

Health & well-being capital

Living this lifestyle makes us happy and gives us fulfilment and joy.

We have established physical and mental routines to stay healthy ourselves and to keep our animals and soil healthy as well. We live with clean air, clean water and healthy food. We have knowledge about and experience with local herbal remedies.



The dinner table

PATTERNS to learn from

We can start growing our village simple & *small*. *Use slow solutions*. Design the project from big to small, *from patterns to details*. "Rome wasn't built in a day" and it seems a good pattern to take it slow.

Our family pattern of living with young adults as volunteers, to teach them about and give them experience with living sustainably and self sufficient is a pattern to keep. It teaches us to live together and share with others and to find ways of handling issues.

Our weekly feedback pattern of "closing the week" on Fridays is one to keep. In a group meeting with everyone in the household we do a round of what didn't work/can be better, solutions, and a round of successes. It celebrates the week.

The pattern of growing food in an ecosystem like a forest garden, can be a productive and low

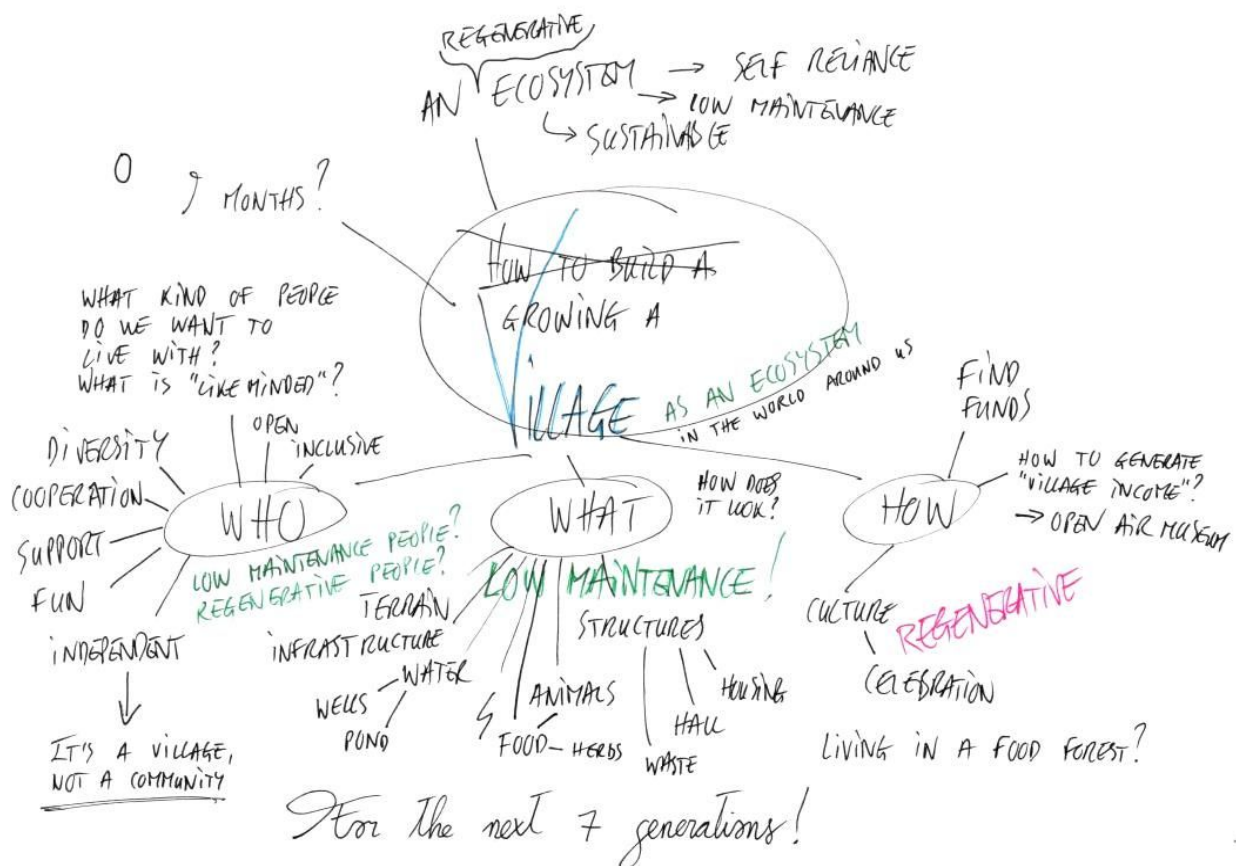
maintenance option to implement also in the village.

Local patterns in beautiful wooden houses, natural construction materials, protected courtyards between a house and its barns.

In our area there are inspiring local patterns that bring resilience because of multiple generations living in one house with a few hectares of land around. Neighbors exchange tools and goods, and work together as a community.

Strong Balkan patterns of cooperating with neighbours, spreading and sharing tools, helping hands when they are needed. This used to be a socialist country and people still value the good sides of socialism.

IDEAS for culture, people, land and structures



Mind map with ideas for Growing a Village

Living in a community, sharing resources, knowledge, tasks, seems to be a more sustainable way of living. People live longer, healthier and happier when they have a purpose in life. Like caring for animals or other community members, cooking the food, creating things...

Our village culture is an inclusive and nurturing culture, full of fun and celebrations, open for diversity and limited in the way that these people need to be open, inclusive and nurturing as well. We need to find the right people to build a regenerative future with.

At the same time this village culture isn't limited to our 12 hectares; it can include all local people.

Together we can grow food that has much more nutritional value than vegetables from the supermarket. It also saves driving to the supermarket, and you can spend your money more wisely. Growing your own food makes you independent, it is a free gym and it gives a sense of purpose.

We need to write inspiring texts and start a fundraiser for growing our village. With a good story we can attract attention, get media behind us and maybe even have a positive influence on the local culture.

Start with a small, strong core group, to ripple out the culture

For the start of our village we're looking for engaged, passionate people with a shared vision. People with a drive and dedication to cooperate towards a thriving community. People that are good in starting, pioneering, growing/expanding and preferably have great skills in construction or in growing food.

Yes people who want a better world, but not a judging extremist. Yes people who want to live a healthy live but not someone that is disgusted when we order a pizza if we feel like it. Yes an activist but not a warrior who doesn't live the example.

To find people or families for the village, we have to setup a good communication plan and get media attention. We can start with writing about this kind of life, maybe write a blog or article(s) about it, maybe a "solar punk" book (fiction) about us in 7 generations, make a YouTube film, start asking for community members on social media, get media attention for this way of living...

Special attention for couples or families, where 1 person might fit in really well and the other(s) don't necessarily.

We need to find a model for participation and ownership. How do people get in?

We can ripple out our group in the wider area. I can imagine that some people that are interested in our village, still want to live outside of it.

How to attract or find "the right people" and how to make things work with them, is such a wide subject that it deserves its own design.

Village culture ideas

In our village culture we can encourage recycling, reuse, repurpose, build your own, buying second hand, hacking, fixing, window farming, voluntary simplicity and a time bank. *Be the example.*

Celebrations bond people. Family brainstorm about what is important for us to celebrate. Make sure there is something to celebrate at least once a month for our family, and once a month a village celebration.

Regular check-in with village members during an informal joined meal (lunch?) or coffee break? Or a weekly joined meal? Wishes need to be addressed with village members.

Communicate house rules for each house/area visually, so all visitors and village members can know about them. Like: phone free area, shoes off inside, leave preferably cleaner than you found it...

There should be communal space where we can come together, like a tea pavilion or bigger hall, but also benches next to foot paths.

Communal areas for sports, a swim pond

We can set the big chunks of our needs and limits in the village culture; finetuning can be done when there are people to live with. The village culture and how to maintain it deserves its own design.

Ideas for sustainable housing

Define a building style with traditional wooden houses (with modern comfort), with local, natural materials, according to local, traditional techniques. *Stack functions* by cooperating with a local carpenters school and create projects about traditional building techniques here with them.

The houses are well insulated so it is cool in summer and warm in winter. *Catch and store energy.* If we position them well and use techniques to catch winter sun and keep out summer sun, store warmth, use air ventilation systems and natural, "breathing" materials, we can save a lot on climate regulation energy.

Create off the grid systems for water, electricity, gas to cook on and waste.

Sustainable gardening and terrain maintenance

We can create well designed permaculture gardens and *integrate rather than segregate* animals. Well designed with the users and visitors (and functions) in mind. Gardens and orchards to *obtain a yield* for a self sufficient life and maybe some extra income by selling or trading produce.

For general maintenance of the village (like mowing grass, repairing roads) we need “village income”. Ask all villagers for a contribution in money or time.



Some examples of traditional wooden houses in our area



REPUBLIKA HRVATSKA
DRŽAVNA GEODETSKA UPRAVA
PODRUČNI URED ZA KATASTAR KARLOVAC
ISPOSTAVA VOJNIC

KLASA: 935-06/13-01/1
Urbroj: 541/13-02-02/2-13-296
Vojnić, 25.09.2013.

-  ZONE 0+1 - VILLAGE IN EDIBLE LANDSCAPE
-  ZONE 2 - CAMPSITE
-  ZONE 3 - ORCHARDS
-  ZONE 4 - FOREST FOR FUEL, TIMBER, MUSHROOMS
-  ZONE 5 - WILDERNESS

K.o. Vojnić

Broj katastarske čestice
1924

Mjerilo izvornika 1: 2880

IZVOD IZ KATASTARSKOG PLANA

Mjerilo 1: 2.880



1:1. Izvod iz katastarskog plana po katastarskoj čestici 1924, u sklopu
proj. 541/13-02-02/2-13-296, na području područja Vojnić.

U skladu s podacima iz katastarskog plana, izdano na temelju podataka
državnog geodetskog katastra, izdano 25.09.2013. godine.
Izdavač: geodetski

Obradio
Rade Grjasković, geodetski

Ocjelava
Dane Kirić, geom.

M.P.

Zoning for the village and terrain

INTEGRATION – bringing it all together

1. We should start with designing the land, so that we have solutions for what goes where and where can we build.
2. Fundraising to get the project rolling is step 2.
3. Next is the paperwork before we can start building.
4. In the meantime we communicate the culture to find the right people for this lifestyle.
5. They can live here when the first house is constructed.

If we would start with finding people and living with them, they might come with temporary housing (like teepees or yurts) that influence the culture and the look and feel of the village. That feels like starting off on the wrong foot and when does “temporary” stop; when will it be cleaned up. So we're open to finding people. Living together comes when there is housing.

Although during this design process we developed ideas about connecting more with the local community, this design is focused on setting up a new community on our land.

Development of the land

We need an **overall design** for our 12 hectares of land. I have collected and drawn bits and pieces over the last 13 years and now I will make this overall design as a next design on my Diploma pathway.

We need to make the **building zone available for building**. Once we have an overall design for our land, we know where to move the garden, the greenhouse, how to repurpose the stables, the garden shed and the septic tank of the house.

To guarantee fresh and healthy drinking water at all times, we clean and repair the local **well water sources** and connect them to the houses.

With extra foot paths and **hiking trails** we create more opportunities to meet each other and stay fit. They can make new connections and also make camping guests stay longer. *Stack functions* and get subsidy to make it educational trails with explanations about trees, plants, fungi, landscape elements, wildlife, a bird house, bat box, insect hotel...

These hiking trails are important because they will also make camping guests stay longer: they generate income.

Create a **natural swim pond** with water cleaning plants so it can function as a filtering system. At the same time it is a (backup drinking) water reservoir for dryer times, to water the garden(s), and a place for wildlife to drink and to bring diversity in the landscape.

In hot months we have a spot to cool down, in swimmable months we have an extra opportunity to stay fit and to meet each other in sports and leisure.

A swim pond might also be a reason for camping guests to stay longer so we have more income to invest in growing our village.

Fairytale structures in a “dumb” food forest-village

The **look and feel** of the village-community is like a fairytale for practical realists. Low maintenance and easy to repair passive houses, made in local traditional style from local materials.

Having a style guide for constructions also prevents unlocal and inharmonious excesses in constructions (like this fashion of using nomadic solutions from other continents).

A fairytale-like look and feel in the village will attract a kind of people in the village and on the campsite that like to dream of a beautiful new world.

As opposed to “[smart cities](#)”, this has to remain a “**dumb village**”. Designing for the future is designing for anything that can happen or change.

Low tech, not even street lights, so there will not be an electricity-dependency or light pollution. No

internet-of-things. No digital payment in our village but a local, physical exchange system for goods and services and (preferably) barter deals. No access with codes and smart phones, but access on a base of trust by looking each other in the eye.

Cycle and recycle energy: have compost toilets and using compost warmth in the house and/or to warm shower water. Shower and wash with rain water and water the garden with shower water.

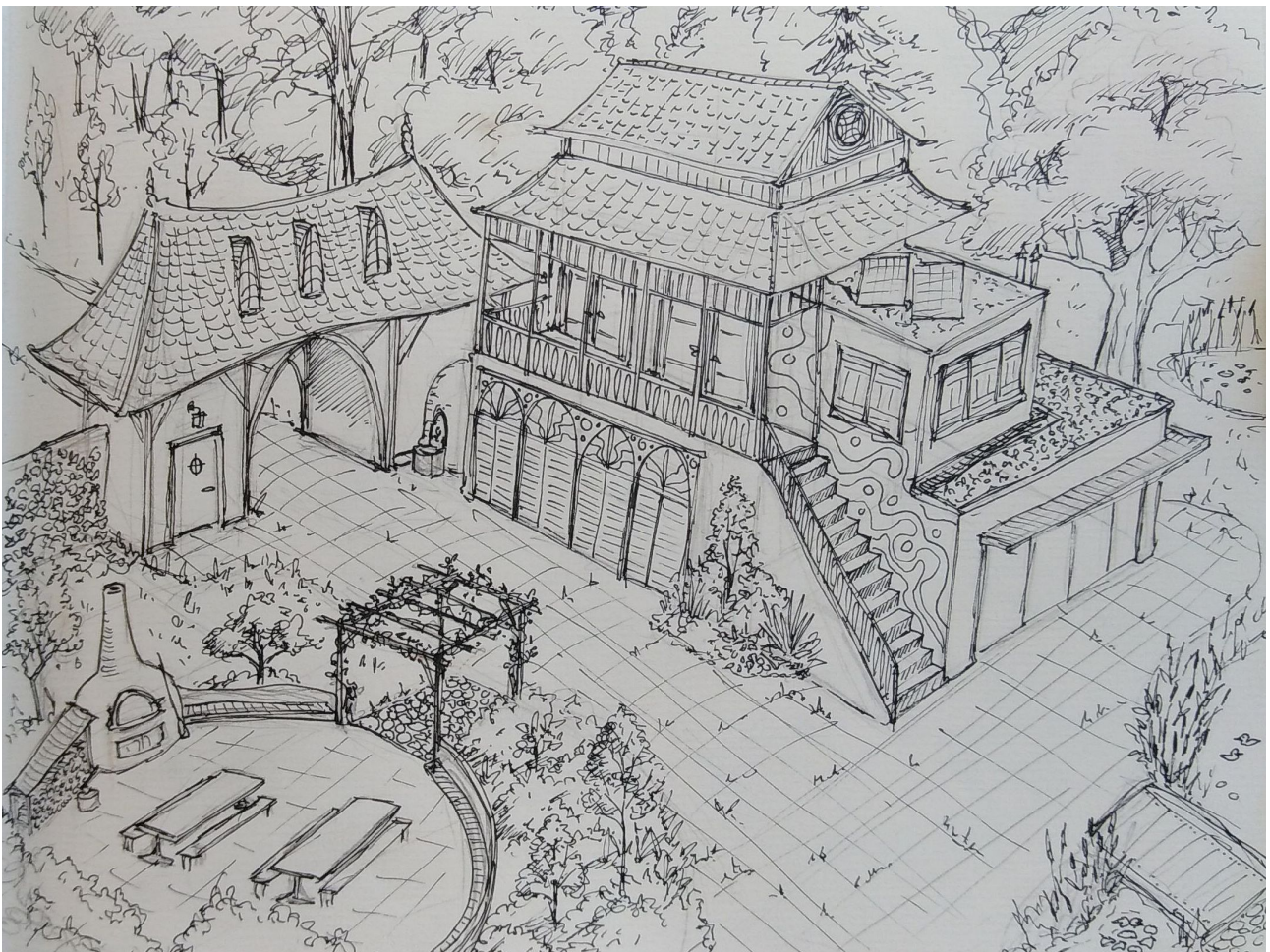
The electricity to the main house and the camp site can come from the local power company and/or our own source, to guarantee facilities for camping guests..The village is powered by off grid sources to bring more independence and resilience.

If we follow local patterns of beautiful wooden houses made of local oak, we can rebuild the past way of living (off the grid) and become an **open air museum**. This gives opportunities for "village income", subsidized constructions, employment and local construction students to learn old techniques. A fully operational open air museum also gives various opportunities for generating income for people living in the village. Someone needs to be at the entrance (stack functions with campsite), there can be a shop with home made products and souvenirs, there is guiding, maintenance, PR and administrative work...

If we make the structures in the village in a traditional way with "local" and renewable resources, we can cooperate with local schools for construction work. With this approach we develop a local network and we create jobs for local young wood construction workers.

This approach might even be a good strategy to attract subsidies.

With building **homes** on our terrain we can rent them to aspiring villagers or we can rent it out to tourists. Villagers can use it as a start while they build their own home, and when the home is vacant we can use it as an income stream from tourists.



An artist's impression of a fairytale-like house – drawing by Floris Beijer

A food forest is setup as an independent eco system so why not design the entire **village as a food forest** with houses, to have food security in a low maintenance system. It makes it easy for people to get extra vitamins and it gives shade and cooling in summer.

Funding and financial systems

We need strategies to find funds to pay for architect, paperwork, materials and workers. When we write down an inspiring vision to communicate through our newsletter, network and social media accounts, we get attention for our village. Visuals are important here too. Once our audience gets enthusiastic, we start a fundraiser to materialize the plans and ideas.

When the village is raised there are bills to pay for communal services. Money that goes out of the project should be avoided or as low as possible, in order to be (more) independent. *Small, slow and low tech solutions* are usually more sustainable, and being independent or self sufficient saves bills. Grow and forage your own food, animals and animal food, and sweep, scythe and bike.

Growing a nurturing village culture

It will be called a “**village**” and not a “community” because of the kind of people we want to attract. We can behave like a community while people still have independent households.

It is easy to create ideas for our village-community and a limit can be that others feel less welcome if everything is already defined. So there needs to be *space for emergence*, within the values earth, people and future care, openness, drive and vision.

From the need of setting limits, we can define a clear set of **values** to live by, so people adopt a different way of thinking rather than setting rules. Subjects that need attention are smoking, drugs, alcohol, mobile phones, quiet times, animals, hobbies, responsibility.

As soon as there are more people starting living here, we need to install a communal space where people can meet, hang out, have lunch, celebrate or find a listening ear.

Once the village is growing, we can use the [Living Design Process](#) (Dan Palmer) to develop our village culture together. This process works organic, like how things grow in nature.

So defining our village culture needs its own design.

Food as fuel for body & mind

Sharing meals is *stacking functions*: a joined meal and evaluation of the week on Fridays is likely to keep us mentally sane and physically healthy (because of the good food and celebratory moment). If we would install a daily lunch together or a weekly pizza party, we would grow connections, grow safety because there is a check-in. Eating together makes sure that people have a healthy meal and it gives a platform for exchanging thoughts and ideas, asking for or offering help.

We need to grow enough food for the village so we need a design for self sufficiency. I already made a quick self sufficiency design and will build it up for my Permaculture Diploma portfolio in spring 2023.

With healthy food (and healthy water from our well water sources) less external health care is needed. With herbs from the land we can make teas, tinctures and syrups to take care of inconveniences. In this way we can apply more self regulation of our health.



A bird's eye view impression of a village on the terrain – drawing by Floris Beijer

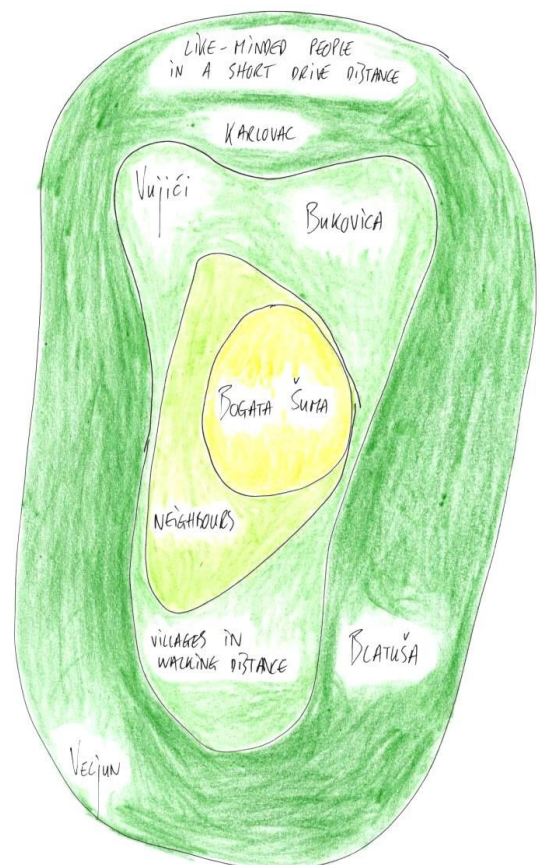
Rippling out the culture

It doesn't all have to only happen on our land; we already saw our network of like-minded people growing in the area. When we meet people that are like-minded but not necessarily fit in our village ideas, we can point them to neighbouring villages or communities like Vukomerić, Bukovica or Blatuša.

Something like sugar you borrow from the closest people, something like a special saw you borrow from neighbours, something like strawbales you can get from neighbouring villages and a distiller to make rakija can be shared with people in a wider circle.

Meetings about cutting grass we hold with people within the Bogata Šuma circle, meetings about picking up trash can be held with neighbours, meetings about subsidized hiking trails and arranging bicycle trails is good to have with like minded people from villages around, and parties include (like minded) people from the wider area.

With regular **exchange with people** in the wider zones around Bogata Šuma, like our current neighbors or friends in close by villages, we can ripple out a culture of cooperation and care for each other. We could share knowledge by organizing regular meetings about subjects like gardening techniques and solutions, animal care, self sufficiency, herbal health...



Zoning of like-minded people

People

We need to find people who want to fit into this way of life and our preferred culture.

We will base our communication and the selection of people on the values openness, drive and vision. When one of the 3 is missing, we cannot work or live together.

With the **selection of people** to participate in our village, we can introduce a “route”:

1. Enthusiasts can start here with a course or a paid stay for a month or longer.
Next step: the masters route.
2. Masters can live here alongside the family and work on a project for a month to get to know each other.
Next step: 2 or 3 months stay.
3. When we live a good life together, we can agree their long term stay.

The checklist for people to grow our village with:

- ✓ fit in this lifestyle,
- ✓ are living according to permaculture values,
- ✓ take responsibility for their lives and actions,
- ✓ can be inspiring & fun
- ✓ have good neighbourly behaviour,
- ✓ want a healthy life in nature,
- ✓ know how to keep a balance between giving and taking

The ideal roles in the first group of people to start the village:

- fundraiser organizer coordinator,
- one or more creative & skilled builders,
- an animal developer caretaker,
- a permaculture food grower,
- a kitchen magician,
- a forest elf tree caretaker and forest expander,
- a hospitality worker of miracles.
- a personal development facilitator with humour and a keen eye

Find a subsidy writer, ideally someone that we can also hire for a business plan and communication plan and do administrative paperwork for the NGO. Someone like Ana Mihaljevic or Kaja Dombaj. This might be a full time job that pays itself with subsidy.

Finding people to co-create our village with is a much bigger subject than written down here. It needs its own design. This chapter is just an indicator.

ACTION to get it done

Finish the Bogata Šuma overall land design by mid September '22. Start a pond design in winter '22-'23.

Peter and I collect images, drawings and other materials to create a complete enough “style guide” for the architect and future villagers who want to build. This can be finished in summer 2022.

Peter will ask the architect in July 2022 to setup a project with drawings, paperwork, permits.

Make a communication plan by early September '22, write texts and collect images in summer '22, plan social media posts over September – November '22 to start with. Evaluate, adjust and run the communication again.

Define projects and their costs, write a story about it, create images and setup a fundraiser for 2023 to make it happen.

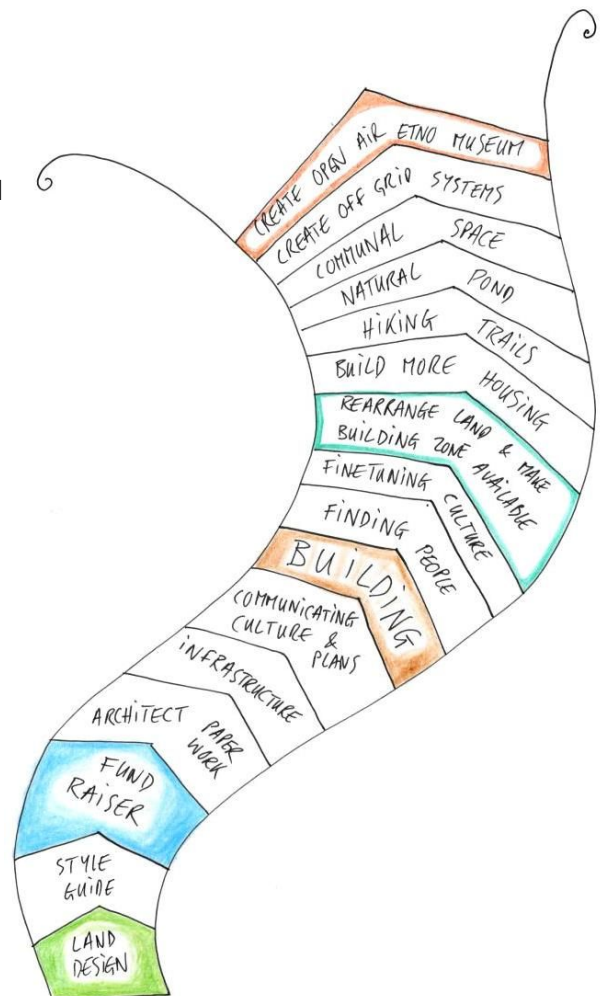
Find a subsidy writer who can help defining projects in a creative way.

Start building a house for the village. Rent it out to tourists to earn back (some of) the costs, before a family moves in permanently.

Move the workshops to a new location as soon as we need the current workshop as kitchen for Nol's restaurant. This is a growing process: we need a bigger camp ground first, for more people.

Move the stables and the garden to a new location as soon as the available building sites are used. There is still space for 2 or 3 more houses in the current situation.

Make a plan to turn the village into an ethnic open air museum. This becomes an option when there are several families living here and we do live a lifestyle that would fit with the open air museum.



MOMENTUM – vision for the future gives energy in the now

When a first house is built, we invite the possibility of a family moving in and we can start calling it a village.

With more people living here, we can handle a few more volunteers (currently 6-8 is our max) to work on more projects to keep more momentum.

Choosing what we do ourselves and what others can do better, can give momentum. We don't have to live our entire vision yet; there is space for growth.

Create feedback loops to check if we're still on the path, within our values.

How do we maintain our own village culture when the world around us changes to a high tech QR-code society (Germany, Austria) with social credit systems (China, Italy) where your entrance ticket is a chip in your hand (Sweden, US)?

One way of keeping momentum is to use the [Living Design Process](#) to continuously develop and adjust our village culture together.

APPRECIATION for this pathway

We appreciate our life, our land and our hamlet on the top of the hill. We appreciate the lovely hilly landscape, the nice and fertile climate, the sun and the rain.

We are also grateful for this shift in time, in which we meet so many more like-minded people! They come to us for a holiday in nature and they leave as friends, funders, investors, maybe even villagers.

I really appreciate the Cultural Emergence toolkit as a rich set of tools to grow my personal development. Using the Cultural Emergence principles and core routines made me aware of culture and how I can have a positive influence. It helps me to think differently and it gives me a framework to design the world I want to live in.

Since I became aware of my old pattern of doing it all by myself, I gave space for *collaborations and co-creations* because *many minds are better than 1*. That idea we developed into growing a village on our terrain! A village in which we *appreciate and celebrate* life in cooperation. When you *use the intelligence of co-operating hearts* you *allow for the possibility of the seemingly impossible*. It just needs awareness to bring a big shift from doing it all by yourself to growing a village with like-minded people to cooperate and *discover abundance*!

We are very grateful for all the people that help us realizing our dreams! People who contribute financially, and people who contribute with their time and effort.

PAUSE to rejuvenate

Every Friday afternoon we close the week and use pausing to have a look at where we're at, to consolidate and find a bridge to the next level and then celebrate.

Village pauses like shared meals, storytelling, celebrations and rituals are great to connect and regain energy. Shared meals at least once a week, celebrations at least once a month.

To create possibilities for personal pause and self care, we can assign (hidden) areas for silence.

Benches along hiking trails will invite people to have a pause and (re)connect.





Peter Bettina Barbara Fleur, Aline & Tom, Steffen

REFLECTIONS on the design

This design started first as a design for a young & elderly care community in September 2018. The design was part of the facilitators training with Looby Macnamara and Peter Cow. It was the time that our elderly neighbours Stevo and Đuka started needing help. But things quickly changed when their son died of Covid in 2020 and they decided to sell their house and move in with their daughter in Serbia. Unfortunately we didn't have the funds to buy their house, which would have been a great step forwards in our village idea. The house is now owned by an Austrian man in his sixties.

During the online Cultural Emergence Effective Design (CEED) course in summer 2020, I alternated it to a more general village design for our land and added a people and culture part to the design.

During the next online CEED course in Feb-March 2022 I worked on the village design again with the part about the structures, the look and feel and the next steps to make it actionable.

This design is "finished" as the second design on my Permaculture Diploma adventure. It gives us direction and it is an umbrella for many future designs, like a design for finding people to come and live here, our village culture, the pond, hiking trails...

REFLECTIONS on the implementation of this design

Since we first started talking about the idea of living here with more people on a permanent basis, not only our ideas have grown but also the village itself. We found Bettina, Steffen, Tom and Aline who would love to live here.

(Addition 2024) Tom & Aline bought a piece of our land this year. They were with us all summer. Their daughter Yunna is now our daughter Fleur's best friend and Tom & Aline are among our best friends. We helped them buying an old wooden house, de-montage it and transport it to their land.



Designing “our village” made us more aware and grateful of what we already have and how we do work together with our neighbours. We have exchanged a rooster for a litre of rakia, the use of a saw for a dozen eggs, honey or money for meat...

When we find the means, we will organize a party for all our current neighbours.

In spring and early summer 2022 we hosted Floris Beijer, a landscape architect who is also very skilled in drawing. He made some beautiful drawings of our land and future village.

I have started with a general design for our land and we collected maps and ideas. Barbara found a volunteer who will do an internship at Bogata Šuma in summer 2022 to help to complete the food forest design and the overall land design.

People check list

In summer 2021 we found 4 people who we see as avatars of the people we would like to live with in a village. Intuitively we knew, long before we made the check list.

Later in that year, another (Dutch) family contacted us. It took a while before we found out that we didn't match. They are living according to their values but it aren't permaculture values and they seemed high maintenance. They do take responsibility for their lives and actions that seem to only fit in a Dutch context. To me they didn't seem to be inspiring & fun so what can be expected from good neighbourly behaviour...

A general “fitting in this lifestyle” was added to the checklist and (living according to) “their values” was specified as “permaculture values”.

They wanted to come and live here in a yurt, which made us realize that that doesn't fit in with local culture, look and feel.

It also made us realize that we can trust the process of finding people; it is the other aspects (design, building, self sufficiency, setting a culture) that need the most of our attention.

The building of a first house in the food forest

Even before starting a fundraiser, we have raised € 13.000,- for our ideas to build beautiful housing for our village!

In spring 2022 Peter organized a “construction party” for 2 old friends who wanted to help us build the first building. Legally it is a barn and it can easily be transformed into a house. Half of the materials we had already lying on the terrain and the two friends invested their money in what we had to buy.

We started with the building of a 4x8 meter house on the north side of the food forest.

A very exciting project because when this is finished, we have the possibility for a family moving in!

This design helped us to be clear about the spot (at the top of the food forest) and the style (beautiful, traditional, wood and natural materials).



Building the 1st house in the food forest!

REFLECTIONS on the process of designing

Plus

As soon as we focused our energy and set a vision for this design, it came to life (in the writing up) and things started happening. The more we spoke about our village design, the more ideas we got, the more it became a clear vision. We naturally found people that are interested in living here.

I intended to have fun with the project, so I asked the help of my family and the volunteers at Bogata Šuma. I brainstormed many times about many related subjects with my husband Peter and I interviewed our 17-year old son about LIFE.

Volunteers came up with a variety of ideas, some helpful and some not so, and they helped us to stretch our thinking.

All these ideas kept me going, it showed me their interests and views and it is always a nice subject to discuss your favourite elements of culture or the village you would love to live in.

Mind mapping as a design tool worked really well to brainstorm with other people. In summer 2021 we made many mind maps with volunteers, friends and visitors.

It helped me to talk about the design with my husband Peter who has the ability to freely create a vision, skip all the limits, and think only in possibilities and opportunities.

I decided to use “looking through the lens of **permaculture principles**” through the entire text, to give the principles more context. For me they get more body like this. It makes sense to use them where they are useful.

When I was not in mood to write, I searched for inspiring pictures. Just to keep momentum. Peter and I also started shared [Pinterest](#) boards to collect images that represent our ideas. We both love it as a digital collection of pictures for a vision board. You can collect all kinds of images from

anywhere; it seems limitless! And working together on the online boards stimulates and helps to keep momentum.

What helps me with the Helps anchor point of the Design Web, is to turn "yes-but" into "yes-and", to think of all synchronicities and to think of the "**8 Forms of capital**" (by Ethan Roland Soloviev). I think that the 8 Forms of capital is a great tool to stretch the mind and think differently, and make you feel "rich". My gratefulness grew for what we already have.

Minus

When designing "together" it is a good idea to clarify expectations. In this case Peter did all the talking and I did all the writing up. I would ask him about his ideas for people, culture, land and the look and feel of the community, and then I would select the good ideas and write them down in my way.

After I wrote a few helps down, I stumbled upon a fountain of limits! Money, time, insecurity, more money... A lot of "yes buts". And the thing with limits is that it seems that some of them can scream really loud, and distract me from seeing possibilities and thinking differently. (Big plus: that were moments that Peter helped me to trust the process and keep on going)

This design started with only the people and culture part. Later the land and structures part was added. And because we (and our insights) keep growing, also the design kept growing. I wrote it up with future villagers in mind as the readers, and to create texts for fundraisers. That turned the design into a lengthy document that later I tried to make concise again as a Diploma design... (It would actually make sense to make a design for making designs!)

On a cold and dark winter day Peter and I found a pile of old magazines and we had fun making **vision boards** for the village. It was a nice process to find images that represent the look and feel, and at the same time it was annoying that I didn't find images of wooden houses, traditional buildings or even ecologically sound constructions. Making a vision board with magazines is a time consuming process and the outcome is not close to the wished-for outcome. Pinterest is a much better tool to collect images because the internet is a limitless resource!

We did find images that represented our values though, and with some storytelling the vision boards can be seen as a tool.

Edward de Bono's **PMI** – Plus, Minus, Interesting is known as an evaluation tool but I find it better as a brainstorm tool. I used it here under Reflections on the design process to categorize the plusses, minuses and interesting aspects. I think that this tool would work better to brainstorm about projects or ideas with more people because it can help to think differently. In this design it seems that I forced the tool into my content. It doesn't invite me to come with more plusses or minuses because most of them are not only plus or minus. They have more sides.

Interesting

It is an interesting journey to design something as big as a village! It forced me to think of the details of how we want to live our life, now and in the future, how we can create our ideal culture, how we want to connect and communicate, how the ideal village looks, the kind of people we want to live with, how we want to grow old... The design process kept us constantly aware of our values and choices in our way of life.

I found it surprising and inspiring to work with others on the village design to find more angles. It is energizing to work with others on this subject/creating an oasis in this time. It also makes a great topic at the dinner table.

It is very interesting that someone else's **poem** can be such a complete summary of a design and set the tone right! The poem is zoomed out to planetary level and us humankind being connected; we manifest the poem on a smaller scale here at Bogata Šuma by growing our home.

When I wanted to "finish" the design in spring 2022 I lost the overview (minus). So I started again and kept it concise (plus): what do we want, what do we have, what do we need to grow and how are we going to do that. It was an interesting process to bring it back to "simple" and more concise.

Some while ago I heard about a "**Permaculture Design Tree**". I couldn't find any documentation about

how to use it but I did find an [article](#) from 2013 by Aaron Jerad that inspired me. I adapted the Design Tree as a summary of this design.

One day I explained **zoning** to a volunteer and it gave me the insight that you can use zoning for almost anything. In this village design I used a more traditional zoning drawing for the terrain (page 16), and more interesting: I used zoning for like-minded people on page 20. It marks circles around us with like-minded people, to ripple out a culture of cooperation and celebration.

I planned to use the tool **SMART goals** under Action and found out that if you want to let things grow organically with the input of more people, you can't use SMART. Already **S**pecific is hard with many opinions in the pool. **M**easurable could apply to things like "we're building a maximum of 20 houses" but we cannot oversee that yet. **A**ttainable and **R**elevant are easy, but **T**imely is in contradiction with the organic growth and doing things in "the right time".

It would be interesting to see in the future if we can set SMART goals for common projects in the village.