

## Executive Summary

In order to clarify the meaning of ecovillage and determine some of the challenges facing its implementation as an innovative development concept, this thesis has two main purposes. First, it establishes a working definition for, and the discursive independence of, the ecovillage concept in the context of four related community types. Second, the understanding of ecovillage derived from the literature is compared with the manifestations of these communities in British Columbia and Ontario.

To begin with, a literature review of ecovillage and four related community types (green city, healthy community, intentional community, and sustainable community) is presented. With the exception of healthy community, the review of the literature of each of the community types follows the same structure, in that each community is introduced and the terms that have been related to it in the literature are discussed. Then, the theory of each community type is discussed in the context of environment, community, and economy. Where present in the literature, the connections among these three components of sustainability are also examined in a subsequent section. Issues in the literature that did not fit easily into the discussions of environment, community, and economy are then assembled in a separate section.

The healthy community section of the literature review, on the other hand, begins with a description of history of the healthy communities movement. Then, since the healthy community literature does not distinguish among the environmental, community, and economic components of healthy community, these components of healthy community

are discussed collectively in a single section of the chapter. Following that, the practical manifestation of healthy community, healthy community projects are detailed, and five components of these projects are discussed, including intersectoral action and citizen participation.

Following the review of the literature of the four other community types, the literature on ecovillage is examined. Beginning with a characterisation of the history of the ecovillage movement, this section of the chapter continues by discussing the community types that the literature associates with ecovillage. Then, 'Definitions of Ecovillage' details the centrality of the environmental and community components of sustainability to the ecovillage concept, including principles such as the minimisation of environmental impacts and the inclusion of a consensus-based model of decision-making. The issue of economy is also discussed in the literature, but is relatively less prevalent than the environmental and community components of the ecovillage.

Connections among environment, community, and economy are then discussed in the context of the ecovillage as well as planning and the ecovillage, wherein the arrangement of physical space common to all ecovillages is detailed. Finally, 'Issues in Ecovillage' are presented, including each community's possession of an intention or set of shared values that define it as an intentional community.

The review of the ecovillage literature facilitates the establishment of a working definition for ecovillage, as follows:

*An ecovillage is a full-featured, human-scale human settlement that minimises its environmental impacts and conserves natural heritage, works toward self-reliance, supports healthy human development, is created by its residents, and employs a consensus model (or other form of direct democracy) in making decisions.*

In the Synthesis section, each of the other community types examined in the literature review is compared to the ecovillage concept in order to determine its discursive independence. Following that, two tables further compare the five community types, considering the relative emphases of environment, community, and economy in each, as well as community size, prevalence, age of concept, and relevant texts and individuals. These analyses enable me to conclude that the ecovillage is discursively independent of the other community types reviewed by explicating the differences among them.

Chapter 3 explains and justifies my methodological choices. The chapter begins with the identification of the three goals of my research. In discussing my first goal as achieved through my literature review, I provide the bases for selecting the community types that are included in the review. My second goal is accomplished through data collection. In this regard, I discuss my use of the comparative case study method and my selection of the ecovillage cases. Using key informant interviews as the major means of data collection, I discuss the legitimacy of this tool in the context of my research. Following that, I discuss the development of my interview guide, its structure, how I prepared for the interviews, and their completion. My data collection was supplemented by document analysis, namely the review of the Communities Directory (FIC, 2000) and the web sites of the ecovillages surveyed. Chapter 3 concludes with discussions of data analysis, the challenges in generalising my research, and the limitations of my method, such as my

inability to complete site visits and my heavy reliance on key informants in my data collection.

In Chapter 4, the results of my data collection are reported. In developing a comprehensive understanding of the manifestations of ecovillage in British Columbia and Ontario, general information about these communities is provided first, including their location, status, and area. Second, relevant years in the history of the ecovillages are presented, including, for example, the year the community formed, and the year the residents began living on site.

Comparing data from primary (key informant interviews) and secondary (document analysis) sources, I then discuss each community's description, and defining purpose and/or focus. Following that, the chapter reports key informants' definitions of ecovillage as a concept and whether they consider their community to be a healthy, intentional, or sustainable community. Then, the data on the ecovillages' physical structures are summarised, including the organisation of energy, water, and food systems, and transportation. In illustrating each ecovillage's social structures, the next section reports resident demographics, which demonstrates a relative lack of diversity in these communities. The 'Social Structures' section concludes with an examination of the spirituality, traditions, and celebrations, sharing of meals and income, employment and health care, and new resident selection processes.

Then, the chapter focuses on two components of ideology that were not covered in the discussion of community descriptions, focuses, and purposes, namely each ecovillage's ideal social community, and the importance of self-sufficiency to each community.

While effects of planning policy and legislation are discussed in the final chapter, Chapter 4 (Results) concludes with an examination of issues of land use planning and the ecovillages, including site selection, land ownership, land designation and plan presence, and taxes. In addition, the key informants were asked to report any government and/or non-government programs from which they are benefiting, and their opinion of governments' progress toward sustainability.

Chapter 5 begins with a comparison of the ecovillages surveyed, an identification of similarities and differences, and intra- and inter-province comparisons. The congruence of the ecovillage concept contained in the literature and the ecovillages surveyed is examined next. Overall, there is agreement among the theoretical and empirical understandings of ecovillages. However, deviations of the ecovillages surveyed have been attributed to the challenges of implementation, including the limitations of time, finances, and location. Finally, the effects of planning policy and legislation on these communities are discussed. Intra- and inter-province comparisons lead to explanations of the disparate realities of the ecovillages in this context. This thesis concludes with the description of the status of the ecovillages surveyed and recommendations for further study, such as the need for a nation-wide survey of Canadian ecovillages and a clarification of the meaning of full-featuredness in the context of the ecovillage.