

# THE NEW VILLAGE GREEN

*living light,  
living local,  
living large*

STEPHEN MORRIS  
AND THE EDITORS OF  
GREEN LIVING JOURNAL

## The Voices ... on *The New Village Green*

What if we change the story? What if, instead of the landfill being the place we take our garbage, we make it our repository of wealth?

— *from the Preface*

Man is a part of nature, and his war against nature is, inevitably,  
a war against himself.

— *Rachel Carson, Silent Spring*

A small shift in one thing can produce big changes in everything.

— *Donella Meadows, scientist, author, and cheese maker*

But even the widespread adoption of solar power would not put an end  
to the threat of global warming.

— *Bill McKibben, author & activist*

When a decision is made to cope with the symptoms of a problem,  
it is generally assumed that the corrective measures will solve the  
problem itself. They seldom do.

Bioregionalism, in combination with deep ecology, is the most  
important ecological idea of our time.

— *Kirkpatrick Sale, author and director  
of the Middlebury Institute*

All historians understand that they must never, ever talk about the future.

— *Stewart Brand, jack of all trades, master of more than a few*

The anti-nature attitude in our culture comes from some very  
respectable sources.

— *Euell Gibbons, forager*

*The New Village Green* is a testament that life endures, even flourishes...

Do we know the factors that support community, enhance civility,  
and achieve sustainability. Read this book and find out.

— *Paul Freundlich, Founder and President Emeritus of Co-op America*

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NEW SOCIETY PUBLISHERS

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*To Donella Meadows,  
who took complex ideas  
and gave them a human face,  
and it was a face with a smile*



## acknowledgments

*The New Village Green* is a unique intersection of many places and communities. I look out my window to the left of my laptop and see a squabbling flock of bluejays. The birdseed they squander will be cleaned up later by the chickadees, juncos, and doves. Through the window on my right I see tracks where a flock of turkeys marched up the hill and into the woods. There were no wild turkeys in the state when I moved here in 1979. Now there are almost daily stately processions.

I gaze back into my laptop and wonder who might show up today. Will it be a high school buddy with a new joke? A YouTube.com video from my son in New York? An updated tour schedule from my son, the musician, or an email from my partner, Sandy Levesque, working out of her own home office on the other side of the house, wanting to know when we might break for a walk or a ski. I wonder if, besides her, I will talk to another human being today?

The day will have its share of small dramas as I connect with other citizens on the New Village Green. I am thankful for all of them.

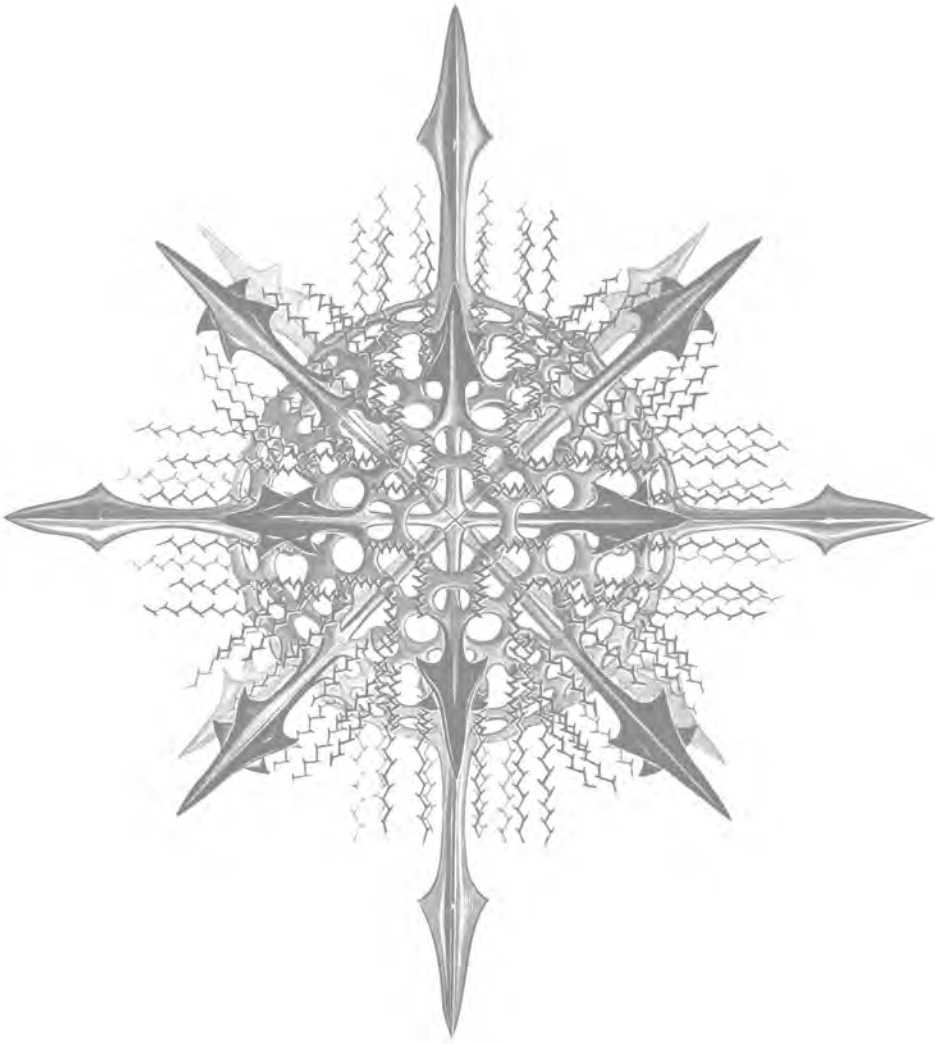
My *Green Living* associates are regulars. I thank Amelia Shea, Dede Cummings, Carolyn Kasper, Linda Pinkham, and Kathleen James for keeping this light boat afloat. A tip of the hat to Marshall Glickman for launching this enterprise in 1990 and steering it so ably for many years.

I thank my various mates from Co-op America with whom I have been aligned for so many years. Alisa Gravitz, Denise Hamler, Dennis Greenia, and Paul Freundlich have been parts of my world for many years and will continue to be, hopefully forever.

A new sphere of associates are the folks from New Society — Chris and Judith Plant, Ingrid Witvoet, Sara Reeves, and others — who have made the distance between Gabriola Island and Vermont seem very small.

I thank those who have been willing to play along with this venture by sharing their ideas, words, opinions, Rolodexes, and address books. Insofar as this book is successful it is due to your willingness to play along. Rochelle Elkan deserves thanks for her stalwart role in seeking permissions and preparing the manuscript. Special thanks to Michael Potts, co-founder of The Public Press and co-conspirator in so many ventures. Michael wears so many hats — from data wrangler to designer to writer — that it is difficult to cite his single most important contribution.

These are but a few of the characters who are part of *The New Village Green*. Many more will appear on the following pages.



Radiolarian

The images between articles (except where noted) are the work of Ernst Heinrich Haeckel (1834-1919). A meticulous scientific illustrator as well as a philosopher-biologist, Haeckel held that all life is continuous and related.

introduction  
**My Friend The Beast**  
by Stephen Morris, Editor

**D**an Chiras lives in Evergreen, Colorado. He doesn't have a Wikipedia page (yet), and Oprah has never featured one of his books, but quietly and methodically over the past 20-odd years he has churned out more than two dozen environmental books, including *The Homeowner's Guide to Renewable Energy*, *The New Ecological Home*, *The Solar House*, *The Natural House*, *Superbia! 31 Ways to Create Sustainable Neighborhoods*, and *The Natural Plaster Book*. Within the world of green building he's a superstar.

I first encountered Dan when he submitted a proposal to Chelsea Green, where I was publisher, for a survey book on green building techniques called *The Natural House*. This became a successful book that was named Book of the Year by our state publishing association. Dan's next proposal was quickly accepted and resulted in a second successful project.

Although no one at the company had met Dan in person, he quickly acquired the nickname, The Beast, in recognition of his prolific output. He came East on a family trip, and we finally had a chance to meet The Beast in person. It was clear from the moment he arrived that Dan was a card-holding member of our little clan. In addition to our intertwined business relations, he shared our beliefs, our attitudes and values, even our companywide love of music. It was my personal pleasure to host Dan and his sons at my home overnight.

Not all of Dan's projects were dead center for us, and inevitably he submitted something we had to reject. We suggested a rival publisher, New Society Publishers located on Gabriola Island, British Columbia, and even offered to put in a good word. It wasn't needed, and Dan soon found himself with two publishers.

My relationship with Dan continued on a professional and personal level even as I moved on to new ventures. When I sent him a copy of *Stripah Love*, the inaugural offering from my experimental publishing venture called The Public Press, I was gratified when he responded with genuine enthusiasm and even agreed to write a review on Amazon. I was even happier when, some months later, Dan approached The Public Press about publishing his first venture into fiction, a novel called *Here Stands Marshall*. This book was published in 2005.

By now Dan and I were colleagues, with an established relationship that had roots in producing successful products, exchanging money, and (all too

infrequently) breaking bread. Our personal encounters were few, brief, and warm. We connected briefly at events like SolFest in Hopland, California, and it was always like encountering a long-lost treasured friend.

I am fortunate to have other professional connections where the contact is as much about collegiality as about business. Two people with whom I always enjoy crossing paths are Chris and Judith Plant. When they came to Burlington to attend the BALLE Conference in June 2006, we huddled over lunch to swap industry gossip, exchange notes on common acquaintances (such as Dan Chiras), and exchange publishing war stories. I told them about my recent acquisition of *Green Living Magazine* and my goal to merge it with the interests of The Public Press. They mentioned casually that if I ever wrote a book that explained the ideas and practices of “green living” they’d be interested in seeing a proposal.

“Who’s got time to write a book?” I protested. “I’m already the busiest guy in the world!”

It took several weeks for the extent of the opportunity to become apparent to me. Maybe I could take on the project if I could enlist a little help from my friends. Towards that end I contacted a number of friends and friends of friends, Dan included, and asked them to jumpstart the process by identifying the seminal books, ideas, events, and people that have defined our current world view.

As usual, Dan did not let me down. He wrote back:

I don’t believe that any single book or idea has influenced the human-environment relationship — how we think about our place in the natural world and how we act. Rather, it seems to me that our understanding, and to a lesser extent our way of life, has evolved over time, thanks to several key books and seminal ideas.

Rachel Carson’s *Silent Spring*, of course, had a profound influence early on. It helped us understand just how dramatically humans could influence the environment through the application of pesticides. This book was a wake up call that many claim gave birth to the environmental movement.

Then came Paul Ehrlich’s *Population Bomb*. This book broadened our understanding of another key issue, notably overpopulation. I think that it started an important debate and considerable action throughout the world.

Then came Schumacher’s *Small is Beautiful*. This marvelous book got many of us to begin thinking about technology, notably appropriate technology. This idea helped sow the seeds of sustainability.

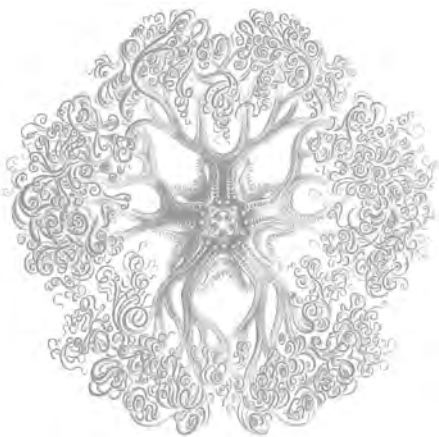
*Limits to Growth* by Dana Meadows, her husband Dennis, and Jorgen Randers, arrived on the scene with much fanfare, and deservedly so. This seminal work showed us that our current way of

thinking and our current patterns of growth and development had no chance of success — that they were fundamentally unsustainable. It showed us that our future was profoundly influenced by pollution, resource demand, and population growth.

*Our Common Future* by the World Commission on Environment and Development was yet another influential book that raised the level of discussion on the human-environment interaction — specifically outlining a hopeful strategy for sustainable development. It has sparked a considerable amount of thinking and action aimed at creating an enduring human presence.

Thus, an organizing principle was born. Although our book list and sequence differs from Dan's, the principle remains the same. This new Village Green is just like its predecessor, but in a constant state of evolution. It extends from Vermont to Gabriola Island to Evergreen, Colorado to parts beyond. It is joined by electrons and personal connections. It features colorful characters from Chellis Gendinning of New Mexico, who inquired if I had run into her ex-husband in my Vermont travels, to Albert Bates of The Farm in Tennessee, who extended my regards to an old mate who lives there.

*The New Village Green* proves that the world is a small, but beautiful place. It's a place of colorful characters, interesting ideas, and even delicious food. What has been lost as the human species careens forward has found a new expression. Let's hope the best ideas are likely those still to come.



Gorgon-headed starfish

## About this book

This book is designed to be read in any order. Our goal has been to enlighten and entertain. There has been thought given to grouping and sequencing, but sometimes the rationale for including a specific piece in a specific chapter will be not be apparent. This book is a reader, bringing together many voices from a wide range of individuals. Some are famous; some are being published here for the first time. Some are academic; some have dirt under their fingernails. The goal is not a symphony, but the harmonious cacophony of coyote pups baying at a full moon or a chevron of honkers in flight.

### Typography

Ragged-right text (like this) is written by us — the Editor or one of his collaborators at *Green Living Journal*.

Justified text (like this) is previously published material, contributed by others, that deserves, in our view, renewed exposure.

### Terminology

We use the latinate version of the neologism *locavore*; it means “eating locally.” In Vermont, this is unaccountably spelt “localvore.”

Since neither “starfish” nor “jellyfish” are fish, we use the preferred terms sea-star and sea-jelly.

We use the initials BCE (Before Common Era) rather than BC.

preface  
**A Landfill Fantasy**

**W**elcome to *The New Village Green*, or ... A Landfill Fantasy.

Methane, a simple hydrocarbon consisting of one atom of carbon and four of hydrogen, is a greenhouse gas that is more than twenty times more damaging than carbon dioxide in terms of its impact of global warming. It is formed naturally whenever organic matter ferments anaerobically, that is, in an environment that contains no oxygen. Methane is created when ancient forests decompose deep beneath the earth's surface, when last night's dinner is digested in your intestines, and at the local landfill when the community garbage is mixed together and buried.

When burned in the presence of oxygen, methane releases one molecule of carbon dioxide and two of water. At the local landfill, especially if it's lined, society's refuse is transformed by wild yeasts into sludge and methane that is often flared off (ignited). Although it seems wasteful, the rationale is that we are better off with carbon and water than methane.

The last time I recycled, the "eternal flame" of flared methane struck me as a monument to our ability to create malodorous trash, I had a thought: What if we changed the story? What if, instead of the landfill being the place where we take our garbage, we make it our repository of wealth?

It can become our own "locavore" Saudi Arabia, teeming with riches below the surface that improve life above. Through the miracle of anaerobic respiration, we could enjoy a new resource for food, energy, and community.

The penny dropped, and I was seized by a big picture solution to planetary problems. Let's begin by building a greenhouse over the methane flare. Voila! Heated greenhouse. The north side of the greenhouse could be constructed of straw bales to improve the R-value. We could then lease out greenhouse space to the local, organic farmers and gardeners who could cultivate seeds much earlier, preserve late season harvests, and supply us with fresh greens year-round.

What the heck, since we're at the landfill anyway, let's start a composting operation next door. People are bringing their wet garbage and lawn clippings anyway. We could give people an incentive for bringing their organic waste: one pound of finished compost for every fifty pounds of raw material.

As people flock to the landfill for free compost, we've got the traffic for a farmers' market where the community gathers for fresh produce, yummy foods, and demonstrations by local craftsfolk. We could build a little amphitheater out of straw bales to listen to local musicians. And, of course, there would have to be one of those outdoor bread ovens for making flatbread pizzas.

In fact, we should have a complete community kitchen to encourage small-scale food ventures.

And a root cellar. We definitely need a community root cellar.

And a masonry oven for making breads. Now should the masonry oven be inside or outside the greenhouse? And if it is inside, is it too fanciful to imagine a related sauna? A sauna will necessitate a pond with all the related aquaculture, but why wouldn't we want a pond?

While we're at it, we need one of those "living machines" that processes toxins by using natural systems to extract nutrients that can be used to nourish crops of flowers and medicinal herbs. Imagine giant, fragrant tropical flowers growing by the edge of the small pond that doubles as the fish farm for Tilapia and brine shrimp, which will eventually be harvested and served at the barbecue stand.

Is a banana plantation out of the question?

I forgot the barbecue. In addition to the grilled fish and shrimp, the barbecue will serve the free range chicken and grass-fed beef that graze on the hill-sides of the landfill. We'll also need a few sheep and goats for milkers to provide material for the local cheese makers and ice creamery. There needs to be an outdoor pond for ice skating in the winter and swimming in the summer. As opposed to the interior pond, this one will be populated by crayfish that keep the waters pristine, while providing culinary focus for both the annual Crayfish Festival and the signature Landfill Bouillabaisse.

"Landfill Bouillabaisse" doesn't have quite the right ring. Let's change the landfill to *The New Village Green*.

This will quickly become THE place to be. Teenagers will hang out just to be seen by members of their own species. Singles will abandon MySpace and Match.com in favor of taking their pets down to *The New Village Green* for a stroll.

Dads will bring their meticulously sorted recycling, while Moms will use their skills and resources to launch fledgling businesses selling innovative products ranging from horseradish jelly to doggy bandanas. Thanks to free community WiFi, they can process orders from all over the globe in between chats with the neighbors.

Such a confluence of humanity will, in turn, attract local politicians who will be confronted with the overwhelming community fabric. As they stroll from booth to booth, enterprise to enterprise, they suddenly understand their dual duty to lead and represent the interests not of special interests, but rather of the commons.

By this time I can barely see the flared methane in my rear view mirror. How difficult could it be to get from here to there?

— Stephen Morris  
Editor

foreword  
**The New Village Green**

by Paul Freundlich

**E**ven in ancient times and the most primitive villages, there was a place where commerce and community met: the crossroads, the commons, the square, the piazza, the village green. It was a place for the exchange of goods and gossip, the mix of classes, strangers and neighbors, entertainment, public speeches, courting, market day.

In a world where it seems there is a Starbucks on every corner, and the internet only a WiFi'd laptop away, it is easy to ignore the billions who lack electricity, with potable water growing scarce. For them, the explosion of expectations and affluence that seemed about to rescue humanity from grinding poverty in the 19th and 20th centuries remains a dream denied. For them, it still matters that there is a crossroads, a commons, a square, a piazza, a place where there is a bench and a patch of green that all can claim as their right.

Yet this book will argue that for all of us it matters. Just the rush of events and distractions compromise the choices we make. Years ago, I briefly lived on a one-block section of Court Street in New Haven, Connecticut. Some of the first federal rehab money had been distributed. What they simply accomplished was to widen the sidewalks so that there was only one lane for traffic, with a few wider areas for cars to drop off groceries. With safe sidewalks and no parking, the life of the neighborhood moved from the backyard to the front stoop. Folks visited, kids played.

On a larger scale, shopping malls and superstores have destroyed too many towns. Corporate decisions about pricing result in virtual slave labor in the southern hemisphere so we can save a few pennies in Northern countries. A drug war against marijuana has had the unexpected consequence of elevating crack cocaine.

When I traveled as a filmmaker for the Peace Corps in the 60s, I documented the lives of entitled young Americans, who via a government initiative, found themselves teaching and learning in barrios, slums, and outlying rural areas. What did they learn? What did they accomplish? Who did they affect?

Whatever happened occurred because the program was in place, because the US had accumulated resources and political capital. We are always making choices as individuals, as communities, as nations.

In the 70s and 80s, many of us struggled against a rising tide of what we perceived as greed. I was editing *Communities* magazine for a decade, then founded and led Co-op America for another. It looked to me as though a set

of values focused on cooperation, community, social and environmental responsibility were being undercut by exploitation.

In the 21st century, with privatization and pollution made synonymous with progress, where is our village green, and what worthwhile do we hold in common? The Romans respected private property and public structures, yet recognized *res communes*: “that there was the air and water, flora and fauna which were no one’s property.”

Not too long ago, I attended a meeting at a modern crossroads, the United Nations. Present were leading environmental groups, and representatives of pension funds and financial institutions holding more than \$3 trillion in assets. The subject was climate risk, and INCR, the Investor Network on Climate Risk, committed itself, far beyond the resources of the usual demonstrations and campaigns, to preserving the health of this planet.

These are strange days for those who knew which side we were on. On the Stakeholder Council of the Global Reporting Initiative, as we struggle with defining the guidelines for worldwide corporate accountability, my fellow travelers include business, labor, public interest groups, and the financial industry. Whether from Europe, Asia, North and South America, Africa or Oceania, the common specter of the disaster we face is more compelling than our differences.

The time for platitudes and greenwashing is past. For too long, the basis for accountability has been too short: Companies valued on the basis of the next quarterly earnings; politicians by the next election; media by ratings and advertising; education by test scores; health by insurance premiums. We need practical answers to compelling questions, answers that are more than Band-aids.

The ability to extrapolate from present circumstances and trends gives us an ability denied to other species. We can see the future and prepare for it. We have the capacity to look at the past and learn from it. We can look around at the many varieties of human experience and select the best and most relevant.

There is a city in Brazil that has made public transport so attractive and easy that the absence of cars in the central area is judged a benefit by most of the population. In Chinese hospitals, families of the ill camp on the grounds and participate in the care. Fed up with excuses about a badly educated citizenry? Headstart demonstrated four decades ago the cost-benefit of bringing children into a supportive, educational environment early.

There are hundreds of towns, even a few cities, that are high on any measure of livability. How do they do it? Ask them. Can we deliver health care and social services efficiently to all? There are hundreds of community health centers that provide excellent primary care at a reasonable cost. How do they do it? Ask them.

When the survivors of Hurricane Katrina visited Holland, they were embarrassed, shocked, and angry to see what serious preparation for flooding

looked like. Thirty years ago, Francis Moore Lappé wrote *Diet for a Small Planet*, explaining how starvation and malnutrition were artifacts of bad habits, not necessary consequences of human population.

Every epoch has its challenges. As with those who have gone before, we will be defined and judged by the creativity and diligence with which we craft our response.

If we start with an addiction to maintaining a status quo which gives so much to so few, we should expect a century of despair for the many, and violence for all. Human beings need structure to bridge the gap between mortality and hope. Structure means practical solutions to the issues we face. At the root of any redefinition is the ability to value what gives meaning to life.

*The New Village Green* is a testament that life endures, even flourishes. It is a compilation of reports from crossroads as new as the internet, old as the paths that lead to community gardens. They stretch from the smallest transactions of micro-enterprise lending in Bangladesh to the struggle for corporate accountability and sustainability in the board rooms of North America, Europe and Asia.

The ties that bind us to each other are either strengthened or weakened by the choices we make as individual and as societies. Do we know the factors that support community, enhance civility, and achieve sustainability? Read this book and find out.

*Paul Freundlich is currently Chair, The Stakeholder Council,  
The Global Reporting Initiative. He is Founder and President  
Emeritus of Co-op America. His novel, Deus ex Machina: What Does Time  
Mean to a Pig? (The Public Press, 2005) explores the possibilities of time travel.*



## But, Why Garlic?

Stephen Morris

When it came time to choose a visual symbol for *The New Village Green*, we scarcely hesitated before choosing garlic. Here are a few reasons why:

Garlic is the first green you see in the spring. Even while the crocuses are rubbing their eyes, garlic is pushing its way skyward through the mulch that kept it warm through the winter. Garlic is delightfully quirky. You plant in the fall, harvest in mid-summer, and enjoy all year long.

Garlic is a model of efficiency. The young, green shoots are edible, as are the corkscrew “scapes” that the plant shoots out as it reaches maturity. At a recent workshop I learned that the root tendrils from freshly picked garlic are highly prized by knowledgeable chefs.

You can cook garlic nearly every way, from the frying pan to the grill. The classic start to nearly everything I cook is garlic cooked to translucent perfection in olive oil. You would be amazed what you can elevate on the culinary scale with this bodacious beginning.

Garlic has powerful, slightly mysterious medicinal qualities. On one hand it boosts the immune system, and yet it is also a pest deterrent both in the garden as well as on the body. Eat raw garlic and you will not have to worry much about mosquito bites. Or vampires.

But you may not have to worry about being kissed, either. Garlic, especially eaten raw, produces notoriously malodorous breath that is undetectable by other garlic eaters. Ironically, the clove’s sulphurous compounds are released only when it is crushed.

Human beings are the only species in the natural world that eats garlic. That tells you something, but I’m not sure what.

Garlic is a most sensuous creation. Its shape evokes the graceful curves of the female anatomy, and it is covered by layers of delicate skin that peel away like filmy negligee. Ooo-la-la.

And finally, garlic is not afraid to be controversial. Throughout history cultures have either violently opposed it (Victorian England) or ardently embraced it (Native Americans).

We know which side we are on.

You’ll find garlic lore and legend in tasty factoids throughout the world of *The New Village Green*. It’s our vegetable of default. Why have white space when you can learn something new about one of nature’s most intriguing creations ... garlic! Garlic information was provided by Zel and Reuben Allen, publishers of *Vegetarians in Paradise*, a monthly internet magazine ([vegparadise.com](http://vegparadise.com)).

foreword

## The New Village People

Frances Moore Lappé is the author of fifteen books, including the 1971 best-seller, *Diet for a Small Planet*. A graduate of Earlham College and past recipient of the Rachel Carson Award from the National Nutritional Foods Association, her most recent work, *Democracy's Edge: Choosing to Save our Country by Bringing Democracy to Life* completes a trilogy which includes the 30th anniversary sequel to *Diet*, and *Hope's Edge*, co-written with her daughter Anna.

Currently Lappé and her daughter Anna lead the Small Planet Institute, based in Cambridge, Massachusetts. The Institute's purpose is to help define, articulate, and further an historic transition: a worldwide shift from the dominant, failing notion of democracy as a set of fixed institutions toward democracy as a way of life, a culture in which the values of inclusion, fairness and mutual accountability infuse all dimensions of public life.

foreword

## The New Village Library

The New Village Green is a collecting place for ideas, and ideas are most concisely and eloquently formalized in books. The Village Library is where we highlight some of our favorite books.

*Diet for a Small Planet (20th Anniversary Edition)*. Ballantine Books, 1992

*Hope's Edge: The Next Diet for a Small Planet (20th Anniversary Edition)*. Tarcher, 2003

*Democracy's Edge: Choosing to Save our Country by Bringing Democracy to Life*. Jossey-Bass, 2005.

# 1 THE GAIA HYPOTHESIS



*“Although nothing we do will destroy life on Earth, we could change the environment to a point where civilization is threatened. Sometime in this or the next century we may see this happen because of climate change and a rise in the level of the sea. If we go on burning fossil fuel at the present rate it is probable that all of the cities of the world now at sea level will be flooded.”*

— James Lovelock

**T**he penny dropped for atmospheric scientist James Lovelock in the mid-1960s upon viewing the first pictures of the planet Earth taken from outer space. The Earth is not an orb of inert minerals inhabited by a few living organisms. The Earth is a living organism with all its components connected through a bewildering but awe-inspiring series of interwebbed connections.

The Gaia Theory, articulated in a series of books and articles by Lovelock over the next four decades, often in collaboration with widely respected biologist Lynn Margulis, is either the breakthrough perception of our time or, as critic Massimo Pigliucci describes it in *The Skeptical Inquirer*, “a hopeless mix of pseudoscience, bad science, and mysticism.”

The hypothesis, named for the Greek goddess of Earth, was new enough and dramatic enough that even Lovelock admits that for the first ten years after the penny dropped he could not explain it. Over time and through repeated iterations of articulation, however, it has evolved into a theory, still controversial, but credible enough to frame important debates such as the one currently raging over global warming.

The relevance of Gaia is this: If the Earth is a living organism, then it will behave as one and will seek to maintain stasis or balance. As expressed by Lovelock, “The Earth is a self-regulating system made up from the totality of organisms, the surface rocks, the ocean and the atmosphere tightly coupled as an evolving system.” Accordingly, the planet will “regulate surface conditions so as always to be as favorable as possible for contemporary life.”

Space exploration has been minimal in the forty-odd years since Lovelock’s initial observation, but Gaia Theory has migrated from the lunatic fringe to the borderline mainstream. Half a century ... that’s about right as a time frame for a revolutionary new idea to gain acceptance. As we learn more about “what man hath wrought” in his creation of the circumstances that have led to the creation of the condition known as global warming, the only certainty is that the answer for “un-wroughting,” if it is even possible (Lovelock himself thinks we are beyond the limits), will come from a deeper understanding of Gaia.



**James Ephraim Lovelock** was born July 26, 1919 in Letchworth Garden City, England, and studied chemistry at the University of Manchester and medicine at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine. A lifelong inventor, Lovelock has created and developed many scientific instruments, some of which have been adopted by NASA in its program of planetary exploration. It was while working for NASA that Lovelock developed the Gaia Hypothesis.

Lovelock developed sensitive instruments for the analysis of extraterrestrial atmospheres and planetary surfaces for NASA's Viking program that visited Mars in the late 1970s, motivated in part by the wish to determine whether Mars supported life. During work towards this program, Lovelock became interested in the composition of the Martian atmosphere, reasoning that many life forms on Mars would be obliged to make use of it (and thus alter it). However, the atmosphere was found to be in a stable condition close to its chemical equilibrium, with very little oxygen, methane, or hydrogen, but with an overwhelming abundance of carbon dioxide.

To Lovelock, the stark contrast between the Martian atmosphere and the chemically dynamic mixture of our Earth's biosphere was strongly indicative of the absence of life on the planet. However, when they were finally launched to Mars, the Viking probes still searched for life there.

Lovelock invented the Electron Capture Detector, which ultimately assisted in discoveries about the persistence of CFCs and their role in stratospheric ozone depletion. He is also credited with invention of the microwave oven.

Lovelock was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society in 1974, and in 1990 was awarded the first Dr A.H. Heineken Prize for the Environment by the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences. An independent scientist, inventor, and author, Lovelock works out of a barn-turned-laboratory in Cornwall. In 2003 he was appointed a Companion of Honour (CH) by Queen Elizabeth II.



Zoe Weil is the author of *The Power and Promise of Humane Education* and *Above All, Be Kind: Raising a Humane Child in Challenging Times*.

This is an excerpt.

## Above All, Be Kind

by Zoe Weil

**M**ahatma Gandhi was once asked by a reporter, “What is your message?” He answered, “My life is my message.” When I first heard about this response, I was struck by its truth and universality. I realized that my life was my message, too, and that nothing I said mattered very much if I wasn’t making sure that my life reflected my values. Gandhi had been a hero of mine for many years. His courage, self-discipline, and compassion had always been profoundly inspirational to me, yet the simple words “My life is my message” have become more significant to me as a guide for humane living than any of his heroic acts or compelling speeches. These five words are also terribly humbling. When I make an inhumane choice or treat someone with disrespect, I hear the echo of Gandhi’s words and realize that my life is not always the message I want it to be.

### Expanding Humane Values To Include Everyone

Below are some choices that we each make that can have an impact not only on ourselves and our children but also on others outside of our family:

- ☐ Choices about what our family wears
- ☐ Choices about what our family eats
- ☐ Choices about what kinds of entertainments we choose
- ☐ Choices about our vehicle(s)
- Choices about our homes, furniture, remodeling, and household repairs
- ☐ Choices about toys
- ☐ Choices about personal care and cleaning products

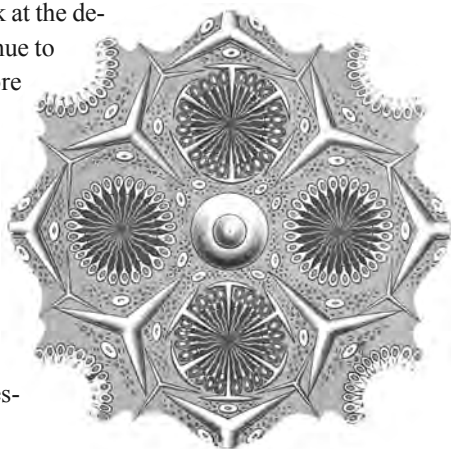
Hearing that these choices affect others, however, doesn’t really help us make kinder decisions. In order to make humane choices, we need knowledge that most of us just don’t have. We simply can’t tell whether any given production process caused harm to someone far away from us unless we have information that is not generally offered to us on product labels. For example, unless a product label clearly states that during the production process, no sweatshop labor was used, no animals were caused to suffer, and no environmental pollution took place, we cannot know who or what might have been harmed. It’s beyond the scope of this book, however,

to provide the detailed information each of us would need to make the most compassionate choices. Instead, this chapter will teach you how to use the Four Elements described in Chapter 2 as a method to assess any choice.

## Steps To Using The Four Elements

1. **GATHER INFORMATION.** In order to use the Four Elements yourself, consider the list of choices introduced above (under Expanding Humane Values to Include Everyone, page 57). Do you have a feeling that some of your choices in these different categories could be kinder? Are there areas where you sense that a little more information would help you make more compassionate decisions? Have you heard or seen anything that calls into question any particular choices? Has reading any of the “Did you know?” boxes made you aware of the effects of a choice that you hadn’t thought about before? If your answer to any of these questions is “yes,” then you already know some of what you need to learn. In addition to more information about the issues raised in the boxes, the Resources at the end of this book also offer reading suggestions, names of organizations, and web addresses. As you recognize areas where you could use more information, you’ll probably be able to find a resource to help get you started.
2. **THINK CRITICALLY.** As you gather information, make sure to expose yourself to a variety of points of view in order to think critically and deeply. You can endeavor to obtain knowledge from reliable sources so that you are confident that your opinions are based on accurate and trustworthy information. Learning about different perspectives and struggling to sort through conflicting opinions will help you to become ever wiser.
3. **USE THE THREE RS.** The three Rs can be the guiding principles in your process of choice-making. By nurturing your reverence, you will be ever more prepared to respect others and take responsibility for your choices. As you seriously consider the effects of your choices, you will find that your reverence (for loved ones, for yourself, for people worldwide, for the Earth, and for other species) often inspires you to make more respectful and responsible decisions. Getting outdoors into nature, reading a biography about an inspiring historical figure, attending religious services, gathering with people whose company supports and nourishes you, creating rituals around meaningful holidays or events, or even making a habit of spending a few minutes simply watching your sleeping children can all nurture your reverence and deepen your respect for and sense of responsibility towards all that you love. But you need not rely solely upon reverence to determine whether or not you will be respectful and responsible. You can also rely upon your commitment to values of justice and fairness to help you make the most respectful and responsible decisions.

4. **MAKE POSITIVE CHOICES.** After you have considered the information you've gathered and used the three Rs as your guide, you can ask yourself, "What choice will be kindest?" While none of us will always make the most humane choices, good decisions will flow naturally from the first three elements. Although we will inevitably fail to live up to our own deepest values all the time, the best way to consistently make kind choices is to stay mindful. Choosing to be humane means lifting up the veil of denial each time it falls between our most enduring wish to do good and our most eager efforts to avoid fear or struggle. It is when we are willing to look at the destruction we have caused and continue to cause that we can choose to restore and repair. Sometimes the competing impulses may be too strong to outweigh your desire to be more humane, but the more you pause and consider your choices, the more often you will choose the one that is ultimately the most kind. As your choices change, your life will become ever more the message you want it to be.



Calcareous sponge



Some love it — some hate it! Countless disciples praise its merits, while its denigrators reject it in disgust. Poor, innocent garlic has been the victim of a love/hate relationship throughout history.

While one person wrinkles his nose up at the mere thought of consuming an offensive smelling food like garlic, others praise its mystical healing powers. Henri Leclerc, a French writer who publicly scorned the herb, referred to garlic as *rose puante*, French for stinking rose, in a 1918 magazine article. In support of garlic, the ancient Egyptian medical papyri, *Codex Elgers*, dated about 1500 BCE, contained 22 formulas for medicinal remedies prescribing garlic as a cure for heart disease, worms, and tumors. The Egyptian remedies may have actually originated as early as 3500 BCE, before written forms existed.



## Sine Quammen Non

David Roberts interviews David Quammen

**T**hough we do not, alas, live in the kind of world where science writers become celebrities, David Quammen has developed an unusually devoted fan base. As a young man he aspired to write fiction, and that sensibility remains evident in science writing that reads like literature – humane, absorbing, occasionally thrilling. His “Natural Acts” column for *Outside* magazine, which ran from 1981 to 1995, yielded two National Magazine Awards and a Guggenheim Fellowship, and more awards awaited the series of critically and popularly lauded full-length books that came after.

The latest focus of Quammen’s careful attention is Charles Darwin, father of modern biology and source of an idea so radical its implications are still only imperfectly understood: evolution by natural selection. Rather than the extensively covered journey aboard the *Beagle*, Quammen’s *The Reluctant Mr. Darwin* tracks the naturalist’s life through the 20 years afterward – 20 years when he kept his explosive idea under wraps, pondering when and how to release it to the world.

Since Quammen passed through town as we were putting together *Grist*’s God & the Environment series, I chose to push him into areas of religious, philosophical, and sociological speculation. The soft-spoken writer answered carefully.

QUESTION: *What do you think environmentalists have to learn from Darwinian evolution?*

ANSWER: If environmentalists are responsible for leading the fight to preserve species, to stave off the sixth great extinction, to prevent habitats from being chopped up into tiny pieces that can’t support viable populations, then they need to understand how evolution functions – the importance of variation within populations, the amount of time it takes to create biological diversity, the necessity of habitat diversity to create species. Anybody who’s arguing with the general public and politicians about things going extinct needs to understand where biological diversity, complexity, and adaptation come from, and how slow the process is, and how many of the things we’re doing on this planet prevent further evolution, further speciation, from ever happening.