
MLT NEWSLETTER

SPRING 2020



Cultivating Resilient Communities

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You may have noticed that there was no issue last fall and that it wasn't a failure of the USPS. We miss Rita Bober, the depth of which dwarfs the value of her frequent contributions in maintaining this newsletter. Please contribute!

We are of course in the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic. A quarter of the US workforce is off work and millions have lost their health insurance. Full oil tankers are unable to unload their cargo. Food stores have had their supply chains disrupted and scarcity of some items are now prevalent. At the same time, air and water have noticeably cleared up and CO2 emissions have come down. If inclined, think about how this tragedy can reset the planet to favor resilience over wealth, then write something about it! Email to tomar@i2k.com

The first article is a recognition of the many years of contributions by Ken Dahlberg to MLT. Mike Phillips continues with a Covid-19 update from the perspective of an epidemiological nurse. Maynard follows that with a book review.

A Change in Leadership

In 2019 Ken Dahlberg relinquished the chairpersonship of MLT after 34 short years. Prior to 1986 he served as MLT director since nearly its beginning in the late 1970's. Throughout these years, all MLT co-directors and members have thrived under his gentle

but purposeful direction. Michigan Land Trustees of America may have never seemed destined for monumental achievements, but achievements nonetheless were many and opportune to other organizations and events and were not insignificant. Ken oversaw much of the homesteading program, a permaculture design course and a multitude of educational events that have affected positively a multitude of lives. One example, an MLT event organized by Ken in concert with other groups, that was a conference in 1982: “Condos, Cornfields and Homesteads, the New Rural Residents and Land Use” with the Institute of Public Affairs at Western Michigan University along with the Van Buren Soil Conservation District as a cooperating organization. A significant early effort over a couple of years by Ken, Maynard Kaufman and Paul Gilk that did not come to fruition also comes to mind. The Eutopian Journal was to be a dialogue of agrarian culture and exploration with a paid editor and authors, financed by subscription. Lack of initial funding and an editorial board, stymied this worthwhile venture.

Following this time period Ken led MLT through a few years focused on permaculture and later into a more general and continuing focus on networking, education and promoting local foods and local food systems, in many cases by providing key seed money. He oversaw the sale of the Land Trust Homesteading Farm in 1994 with some of the proceeds going to the formation of Michigan Organic Food and Farm Alliance (MOFFA), an organization that is still going strong. Ken and MLT helped lay the groundwork for the Kalamazoo Community Gardens Initiative, Fair Food Matters, and the Harvest Festival at Tillers International. He has maintained a steady commitment to the ideas and goals of MLT including increasing access to land, providing education about sustainable agriculture, and the promotion of healthy and sustainable food systems. He has written many position papers vision statements, attended conferences, and submitted grant proposals some of these under the auspices of MLT. His associated activity in the Kalamazoo community, area food systems (foodsheds), along with advocating for MLT has made him well known and sought after with the side effect of generating respect for our organization. Not trivially, he has supplied many articles over nearly 40 years to the MLT newsletter which can be accessed at <http://www.michiganlandtrust.org/Newsletter.html>. Some issues with his articles are: Feb 1981, Jan 1983(Condos, Cornfields, and Homesteads), 10th Anniversary 1986, May 1988, July 1994, Winter 2000, Fall 2003, Spring 2006 and Fall 2012.

Ken retired in 2001 as Professor in the Departments of Political Science and Environmental Studies at WMU. Ken is the author of Beyond the Green Revolution of 1977, a critique of the exportation of the green revolution to third world countries. Applying “contextual analysis” he concludes that introducing modern technology, chemicals and hybrid seed to 3rd world subsistence farmers ignores cultural differences with their minimal exposure to the monetary economy and is like applying a square peg in a round hole and expecting success. He has edited and contributed to many other books. His extensive resume that follows is taken from: Strategic Analysis of Food Systems and Climate Change: Fundamental Elements (2019) at <https://works.bepress.com/kenneth-dahlberg/> This pdf is definitely worth a read as are other writings at this site.

It will be difficult footprints to follow for Co-chairpersons Michael Phillips and Michael Kruk (that’s why we need 2!). Seriously, we wish all the best to Ken Dahlberg. He will continue to attend MLT meetings and advise directors.

Jon Towne

Kenneth A. Dahlberg

Policy and Institutional Resume

International and National:

Presidential address to the Agriculture, Food, and Human Values Society: "Democratizing Society and Food Systems: Or How Do We Transform Modern Structures of Power?" June 3, 2000 in New York City.

One of eighteen people worldwide asked by Maurice Strong, Chairman of the Consultative Group for International Agricultural Research (CGIAR) System Review Committee to contribute their personal vision for the future of the Organization. 1998.

Received two Kellogg Foundation grants (\$193,000). The first for "Building a National Network of Municipal Food System Policy Groups" and the second to increase the project's outreach and technical assistance capabilities. 1994-1997

The first set of different level/scale graphics of "food systems" I'm aware of were created for a poster session—"Local and Regional Food Systems: A Key to Healthy Cities"—presented at the International Healthy Cities Conference, San Francisco, December 1993. Received a National Science Foundation grant (\$69,605) "Local Food Systems: Policies and Values Influencing Their Potential," to research and analyze five early food policy councils, June 1991-November 1993.

Elected Member of the Commission on Environmental Strategy and Planning of IUCN (the International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources), 1986-96.

Member of the Advance Technology Alert System Network of the U.N. Center for Science and Technology for Development (UNCSTD), 1986-90.

Invited expert and Rapporteur for the "Ad Hoc Panel of Specialists on Science, Technology, and Food Security," Harare, Zimbabwe, January 7-13, 1986. Sponsored by UNCSTD.

Chairman of the Advisory Panel for the Office of Technology Assessment's two year study: "Technologies to Maintain Biological Diversity," 1985-87.

Member of the International Committee of the Sierra Club, 1980-82; 1984-1986.

Fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science (elected 1982).

"Global Dimensions of the U.S. Food System." In Proceedings of The Cornucopia Project Symposium: Planning a Sustainable U.S. Food System, edited by Brenda Bortz, pp. 37-40. Emmaus, PA: Rodale Press, 1981.

Testimony before the U.S. House of Representatives, Subcommittee on Department Investigations, Hearings on H.R. 999: Plant Variety Protection Act Amendments. 1980.

State, Regional and Local:

Advisor to the Michigan Food Policy Council in its early years.

Served on the Agriculture, Forestry, and Waste Technical Work Group of Gov. Granholm's Climate Action Council 2008-2009.

Chair of the Michigan Land Trustees—which over the past decades helped create the MI Organic Food and Farming Alliance; the SW Michigan Fall Harvest Festival; the Greater Grand Rapids Food Council, the Good Food Kalamazoo Coalition, and various other local organizations, including several "Transition" communities. Also, I've sought to educate the Michigan Environmental Council on regenerative organic farming's central role in rebuilding lost soils while sequestering atmospheric carbon dioxide.

Kenneth A . Dahlberg

Research and Writing Resume

Education: Northwestern University B.A; Stanford University, M.A; University of Colorado, Ph.D. (Political Science), 1966

Experience: Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo, MI, 1966-2001. Professor of Political Science and Environmental Studies; Director 1998-2001. Since May 2001: Professor Emeritus:

Dept. of Public Health & Nutrition, University of Wollongong, NSW, Australia, October 1996 - May 1997.

Visiting Research Professor, Dept. of Horticultural Science, Massey University, New Zealand, May - August 1989.

Visiting Research Fellow, Institute for the Study of International Organization, University of Sussex, UK, 1972-73.

Fulbright Fellow, Brussels, Belgium, 1965-66. Dissertation research.

Major Writings—Books:

New Directions for Agriculture and Agricultural Research:

Neglected Dimensions and Emerging Alternatives. Editor and author of two chapters. Totowa, NJ: Rowman & Allanheld, 1986. Pp. xi + 436.

Natural Resources and People: Conceptual Issues in Interdisciplinary Research.

Coedited with John W. Bennett. Author of the Introduction and one chapter. Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1986. Pp. xiv + 394.

Environment and the Global Arena. With Marvin S. Soroos, Anne T. Feraru, James E. Harf, and B. Thomas Trout. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1985. Pp. xix + 188.

Beyond the Green Revolution: The Ecology and Politics of Global Agricultural Development. New York & London: Plenum Press, 1979. Pp. Xiii + 256.

Major Writings—Articles and Chapters:

"Sustainable Food Systems and Rice: Exploring the Interactions." In Sustainability of Rice in the Global Food System, Noreen Dowling, Stanley M. Greenfield and Kenneth S. Fischer, editors. Davis (Calif., USA): Pacific Basin Study Center and Manila (Philippines): International Rice Research Institute, 1998, pp. 67-92.

"Renewable Resource Systems and Regimes: Key Missing Links in Global Change Studies," Global Environmental Change 2 (2) (June 1992), pp. 128-152.

John W. Bennett and Kenneth A. Dahlberg, "Institutions, Social Organization, and Cultural Values," in The Earth as Transformed by Human Action: Global and Regional Changes over the Past 300 Years, edited by B. L. Turner, II. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990, pp. 69-86.

"Ethical and Value Issues in International Agricultural Research," Agriculture and Human Values, Vol. 1, Nos. 1 and 2 (Winter-Spring 1988), pp. 101-111.

Mike was Nurse Epidemiologist for the Kalamazoo Health and Community Services department for eleven years until Spring 2017. His job was to spearhead reportable infectious disease investigations, including public health outbreak response and case contact tracing.

Michigan Public Health COVID-19 Case Reporting

By Mike Phillips

It is the end of April and people are insular and adrift in a protracted state mandated stay-at-home order. This is to remain in effect at least through the middle of May. The COVID-19 pandemic is the worst health threat in a hundred years; and every day is peculiar and unsettling. Despite state and federal efforts that include the suspension of non-essential services and implementation of social distancing guidelines, the number of cases in Michigan and elsewhere continue to increase.

Since the onset of the disease, the nation and the state have been ill-prepared and slow to respond. There are many problems diagnosing the disease due to the lack of lab test kits. Without testing it is difficult to determine disease distribution. State and local public health officials have reported that more people are infected than are being diagnosed. In Michigan, there are multi-tier testing criteria that categorize people depending upon the severity of symptoms and risk of exposure—patients with more severe signs and symptoms get laboratory workup. When more test kits become available and prioritizing set aside, more people can be tested and the extent of the disease burden will be better understood.

As more is being learned about the virus, the criteria for medical diagnosis has been frequently revised and updated. The State of Michigan has working guidelines that are revised and updated every two weeks. Between the Centers for Disease Control and state public health departments, case diagnosis determination is methodical and evolving. According to current Michigan Department of Health and Human Services documents, case diagnosis is specific. The COVID-19 case definition:

- a patient has at least two of the following symptoms: fever, chills, myalgia, rigors, headache, sore throat, smell or taste disorder, and
- at least one of the following: cough, shortness of breath, severe respiratory distress, clinical or radiologic evidence of pneumonia, and
- there has been confirming or presumptive laboratory evidence from a clinical specimen obtained from the patient

The patient also has to have epidemiological linkage:

- close contact to a COVID-19 case or close contact with a person with clinically compatible illness that was linked to a confirmed case*
- or, a patient that traveled or lives in an area of sustained, ongoing transmission
- or, is a member of a high risk cohort

Optimally, every case gets both medical care and public health disease surveillance. Concerning the latter, patients can be infectious and capable of transmission and not show any signs or symptoms. Case investigations and contact tracing attempt to identify distribution and determinants spreading the disease. Moreover, contract tracing is an effort to identify and quarantine and isolate exposed and asymptomatic persons. If effective, this prevents further transmission and the number of new cases will, at some point, decline. Understanding the epidemiology will also help develop better Interventions and strategies to limit further transmission.

*Defining a “close contact” is specific: being within 6 feet for at least a period of 10 minutes to 30 minutes or more depending upon the exposure. In healthcare settings, this may be defined as exposures of greater than a few minutes or more. Data are insufficient to precisely define the duration of exposure that constitutes prolonged exposure and thus a close contact. (Reference: Michigan State and Local Public Health COVID-19 Standard Operating Procedures Interim Guidelines, 4/14/2020)

BOOK REVIEW

Civilized to Death: The Price of Progress by Christopher Ryan New York: Avid Reader Press, 2019 288 pages

Maynard Kaufman

The main idea in this book is not new. It is a new book based on an old topic: that around ten thousand years ago agriculture was developed in several parts of the world and as it spread it gradually replaced a vastly longer prehistory based on hunting and gathering, or foraging, for food. This had long been observed by anthropologists as a change in how people lived on earth. Since this change was so far-reaching, it has been evaluated differently by different writers. As the title of the book under review implies, this author is more polemical than most in his opposition to the civilization that developed with the change to agriculture.

Other treatments of this cultural shift include *Guns, Germs and Steel* by Jared Diamond (1977, 1999), *Stone Age Economics* by Marshall Sahlins, (1972, 2004), *After Eden* by Kirkpatrick Sale, (2006)), and *A Short History of Progress* by Ronald Wright, (2004, 2006). Sale and Wright agree with Ryan that civilizations are inferior to foraging societies and subject to collapse. Sahlins and Diamond try to be neutral and objective in seeking to understand how societies function, though Sahlins recognizes that foragers were “the original affluent society.”

I must admit to a prejudice I have had in favor of agriculture since most of my life I have been a farmer. But as an organic farmer I am no longer a partisan of agriculture. Farming is the beginning of a destructive technology, and even organic farming, when it relies on tillage, contributes to carbon dioxide in the atmosphere and thus to global warming. I see permaculture, which implies more trees, as a promising alternative to farming in a time of climate change. And it is the very real threats of climate change that now discipline my thinking about farming.

The new book by Christopher Ryan discusses so many different topics that it appears to lack an integrating focus. For example, a section of over 20 pages in defense of psychedelics is included even though it is not clear that they were a decisive part of the forager’s life. LSD was very recently discovered. The fact is that the shift from foraging to agriculture is so comprehensive that any discussion of it will be multifaceted. We can review at least some of these facets.

On the level of social organization the major difference is that foraging societies are egalitarian while agricultural societies soon became hierarchical. As agriculture provided more food the population increased. The more stable and simple life of hunting and gathering gave way to complex forms of governance. A peaceful lifestyle based on sharing, in a world seen as spiritually alive, gave

way to a competitive life based on private property and a war-like commercial society emerged. As food became a commodity money emerged as that which bridged production and consumption, and as agricultural societies became more complex and wealthy, they evolved into industrial societies and the nation-state. In contrast to the stability of foraging cultures, in which people feel at home and do not seek novelty, the many changes in agricultural societies were gradually understood and affirmed as supporting the idea of progress. This is our world, and it is very defensive about its alleged superiority.

Christopher Ryan spends much effort in refuting the defenders of civilization, such as Thomas Hobbes who said that human life before the advent of the state was “solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short” (page 14). Ryan’s criticism of this NPP (Narrative of Perpetual Progress) is, in fact, a tiresome theme in his book. He might have been more effective by showing how the defenders of civilization reflect their insecurity in their extreme defensiveness. He does, to his credit, cite increasing numbers of people who commit suicide (p. 208) as a symptom of cultural dissatisfaction.

Part IV of the book is titled “A Prehistoric Path to the Future,” which implies that we can move toward the future by giving up on civilization and accepting the way of living and dying that characterized our forager ancestors. But this final part of the book includes so many different topics that even the careful reader is confused.

Part IV begins with Chapter 10, “All’s Well that Ends Well,” and this begins with a review of how civilized people tend to deny death. Foragers, without medical technology, accepted death and even aided those ready to die. Chapter 11, “In the Absence of the Sacred,” begins by pointing out that happiness is no longer the normal condition of life but has become a goal. He asserts that we no longer live in a human world but in a world “created by and for institutions that thrive on commerce” (207). It is a world in which people get jobs and live by getting and spending. Even the use of anti-depressants fail as rates of suicide “jumped 28.4% in the first decade of the twenty-first century” (208). While this may be partly the result of living in an industrial society, I can imagine it could also be caused by the imminence of climate change and the prospect of the end of the world.

The conclusion of the book is a very brief chapter called “A Necessary Utopia.” The author begins by expressing ambivalence about the future and suggests he could live in either a forager or in a civilized society. But he then reminds us that the thesis of his book is that the way forward is, as Jung proposed, “reform by retrogression” rather than “reforms by advances” (242) and this certainly implies that he prefers a future in a forager society with a much smaller population.

Although Ryan recognizes that we face the destruction of our natural environment by human agency with industrial technology, and that the collapse of our civilization through climate change is planetary, (247-251) he appears to end the book by recommending a deliberate return to policies that could recover our foraging or hunter-gatherer past. Even he doubts that we would choose this path. He apparently lacks the courage to affirm what he describes in these final pages of the book: that human civilization is in process of collapse through climate change. Although humans started it with agriculture and burning fossil fuels, the process has now passed enough “tipping points”, such as forest fires and methane bubbling up from warming Arctic permafrost, that it is likely to continue in the destruction of civilization. After this collapse the survivors, if any, will be hunters and gatherers. But those few may be the beginning of a new cycle.

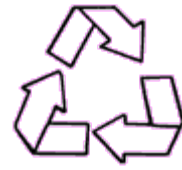
Please visit: www.michiganlandtrust.org for more information about us, along with previous issues of this newsletter. Inquiries (such as for a brochure) along with donations through PayPal (if desired) may be made:

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