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Cultural Emergence

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I live with my family on a 12 hectare homestead in the heart of Croatia. Yes 12 hectares is a lot, so we're growing a village. During the Covid 19 period we saw an increase of people who wanted a lifestyle like ours, so now we are encouraging some of them to come and share our abundance. Here at Bogata Šuma in the heart of Croatia we are growing a beautiful, sustainable, caring village, fun and supportive, self sufficient and independent. I really enjoy facilitating courses for people who want to take steps in care of their land and their life, designing for it, and growing towards self sufficiency/self reliance/independence in their lives. Here on the land – and in our lives – we practise permaculture and, more recently, 'cultural emergence.'

Cultural emergence is a toolbox for permanent regenerative culture. It is based on permaculture ethics (care for the Earth, care for people and care for the future). Where permaculture looks at patterns in Nature, cultural emergence looks at patterns in behaviour and thinking. With permaculture you do your best to make powerful combinations between a plant and the soil and between plants themselves. In this process, we humans are like a conductor of an orchestra: we help the whole by creating a balanced system. Cultural emergence is about personal leadership based on permaculture ethics and systems thinking.

How do you make effective connections between people or even between groups? How do you learn from the natural world and connect with it to strengthen your own

foundation? How do you become aware of a culture and what can you do to influence it positively? Culture has a visible part – in music, stories, celebrations, symbols, rewards – and a less visible part such as our values, ethics and morals.

By the word 'emergence' we mean the appearance of something new and unexpected, as a result of things coming together. Think of butter, sugar, egg and flour that, put together with a teaspoon of baking powder, becomes a delicious and airy cake. Or imagine moving a pile of stones. Annoying and hard work on your own, but with a group it could be fun! Singing or joking together at work, exchanging stories...

Cultural emergence is a collection of tools to create a culture of personal leadership, collective wisdom and care for the Earth. The 'emergence' part initiates breakthroughs that expand our thinking and enables us to build personal and collective resilience. The tools help us to embody new ways of being and interacting and to design a better world.

One of the most important tools in the toolbox is the 'design web', which allows you to design anything. For example, Looby Macnamara, author of *Cultural Emergence: A Toolkit for Transforming Ourselves & the World*: (Permanent Publications, 2020) wrote a design for 'regenerative arm movement' when she had RSI. The positive renaming of 'Repetitive Strain Injury' to 'Regenerative Arm Movement' was an important aspect of this design.

I myself have designed small and large projects with the design web, such as 'Speak Fluent Croatian'. At first I called it 'Learning Better Croatian' but what is better and when does learning end? In the design, apart from choosing wise wording, I also use another tool from the toolbox: 'pattern disruption'. I always automatically asked Croats if they speak English and I stopped doing that to give my Croatian a chance. Now I discourage Croats from speaking English with me. That forces me to make my mistakes and learn.

The smallest design is probably for my clothes. I had a closet full of everything, and now I only have clothes that fit me, that are comfortable, have the right (natural) fabrics, colours and patterns and are repairable. I went from a chaotic heap of clothes to a collection that fits together and is to my taste. I used the 'emergence happens in relationship' principle, i.e. something new arises from the merging of elements, and came up with the idea of a 'capsule wardrobe', where six pieces of clothing can make up to 30 different outfits. Here, one has many connections between the elements (items) and the stacking of functions. A small change has a big effect.

The biggest design I made with the design web was for our village. We want to develop it as an ecological and sustainable village in which not only Nature and buildings, but also the relationship between people needs little maintenance because it has a good foundation.

To achieve that, there must be systems set up that work clearly for everyone. Awareness of your own culture or the cultural values of your background is step one. You realize that there are multiple communication styles, and many ways you can express yourself. As soon as people talk about 'normal', you hear their culture speaking. How enriching it would be if there was no 'normal', and everyone took the freedom to choose what suits the moment!

Connection is another core value within the cultural emergence movement – connection with yourself, with

the people around you and with Nature. It works like a three-legged stool; if a leg is missing, it's not easy to sit. A good connection with yourself is a lot easier if you ground yourself with a good connection with the rest of Nature. A strong Nature connection also strengthens your feeling of connection to our planet and the wisdom of evolution.

Another tool is deep listening, which is different from hearing someone's words. Sometimes listening seems like 'waiting to tell your own story' but active listening means letting the other person express themselves without entering into your own thoughts, without your own assumptions or expectations. It gives the other person the space and freedom to go more deeply into themselves.

Awareness of systems is another feature of the cultural emergence toolbox. With a different way of looking, you see systems everywhere. Traffic is a system, and so is an office, a garden, or a chicken coop, but we humans also have different systems within us, such as our respiratory system and blood circulation. Our Earth has its weather systems, water systems and many others, and is also part of a larger planetary system. With systems thinking you grow your awareness of connectedness and processes. The processes can be a flow of information, of materials or nutrients or emotions. Which elements are there in a system and where are the boundaries?

If you recognize those processes and patterns, you will also see exceptions or changes – the edges. And who knows, with the right timing you can bring change in a seemingly stuck system.

You may tell yourself that you don't have the energy for something because you didn't sleep well. Is that really so? Is sleeping the only source of energy? Maybe the activity will give you new energy. And what happens when you tell yourself that there is an abundance of energy worldwide that you can tap into?

The mission of the cultural emergence movement is to create an effective toolkit that challenges and awakens; that moves, nourishes and invigorates us and one that empowers individuals, groups and communities to accelerate global cultural transformation towards a peaceful, connected world. Our vision is one of a world in which humanity and the Earth align for a positive and regenerative future.

The Cultural Emergence website is at: <https://cultural-emergence.com>. The website for Barbara's 'Forest Garden' project in Croatia is at: <https://bogatasuma.eu/>



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