A Vision for Olinda Commons
By Peter Gringinger (last modified on 19 May 2016)

A Vision to create a future world which is socially just, culturally rich, thriving and enriching, spiritually fulfilling, and ecologically sustainable and a restorative and regenerative human presence on this planet and wellbeing for all sentinel beings indefinitely

Preamble: using the words of Theodore Roszak: There is one way forward: the creation of flesh and blood examples of low-consumption, high quality alternatives to the mainstream pattern of life. This we can see happening already on the counter-cultural fringes. And nothing – no amount of argument or research – will take the place of such living proof. What people must see is that ecologically sane, socially responsible living is good living; that simplicity, thrift and reciprocity make for an existence that is free.

Vision: “A day in my life in let’s say around 2030 to 2035:

Waking up at dawn through the colourful calls of the birds just outside the window of my bedroom to what it seems to be another glorious sunny, but almost too warm a day for this time of the year, well some climate change is still with us. Jumping into my new, locally grown and handmade clothing, made largely of hemp it is time for some meditation and Yoga first as on most days to connect to myself and the world around me. Then out into the kitchen which we share between eight of us humans, one couple and two families of three, and of course a bunch of beloved pets. One of my mates hands me a Dandelion roots coffee with some fresh raw milk of the day from our communal cows from down the hill, but soon getting into my new leather boots I recently made myself, to collect a few eggs from our chooks and some green leaves for a delicious fresh breakfast accompanied with a few slices of wholesome and fresh, and of course locally made sourdough bread with fresh cultured butter and cheese again from our own communal production. Briefly chatting to a couple of the other adult dwellers before they head off on bike to the nearby town hub where they do some paid work for the day. And I warmly welcome to leave the dishes and cleanup of the kitchen to the two teenagers still around before they head out into the community orchard for work and permaculture training for the day. I myself have a brief look around the beautifully hand crafted energy positive house made of straw-bales, locally produced of course, with massive recycled timber beams, timber staircases and floor-boards and many other recycled and repurposed and reused materials, thanks to the skills of our local crafts people.

But now time for me to head out as well into the emerging warmth of the day, first going across our little eco-village, and trying not to get tied down in too many chats with other villagers many of who go about their things to do outdoors. Our village is one of many communal living spaces and of various types and sizes near the urban fringe and surrounding retrofitted sustainable suburbs and local activity hubs, ours with sufficient land for intensive semi-rural farming activities created based on permaculture design principles, and including communal, bio-intensive veggie areas, food coppicing and timber as well as wildlife forests, chook tractors, bee hives, mushroom logs, aquaponics, foraging cows, goats and sheep and much more, together not only providing for a large part of our villages own food supplies, fresh, fermented and preserved, but also contributing to some on-site food production enterprises and expanding trade and barter with surrounding village areas further afield, most of which goes without the exchange of money and if so using mostly local currencies. Arriving at my first meeting, the village own
cheese factory, where we produce most of our dairy needs, and provide for other villages, local farmers markets and hospitality businesses. I have a discussion with our head cheesemaker about putting on some more cheese making training opportunities in surrounding areas and also into the closest city, due to ongoing demand, as well as tonight’s upcoming discussion in the local community assembly about a community grant for getting more cheese making equipment, so we can fulfil rising demand for our products.

After the meeting I am heading just across the street to our local community bakery, to help our baker with a training session of a group of teenagers learning sourdough bread making as one of their many “Skills for Life” training days. Just before lunchtime I pick up some supplies I will prepare later to bring along to the local community assembly event from our community run grocery store, where we barter all what we produce or forage on our turf of land, but lucky enough I still have plenty of time share credits from my teaching work so that local currency is not even needed, and of course it’s still all electronically recorded. And luckily the working bee crew on a nearby house construction site, where they are in the process of building another amazing Earth Ship, big enough for two to three families, they invite me to join them for a really hearty (of course vegetarian) lunch provided by the host, to have a chat with them about details and issues for the upcoming installation of the rainwater collection and re-use system, composting toilet and greywater system and we are also joined by a nearby working bee crew, who are doing a radical retrofit of one of the older houses in the village, with high quality upgrades to insulation, windows, solar and geothermal heating and cooling system, sustainable water and waste cycling system, needless to say all sustainably designed and largely from pollution free, low energy and low impact production, which normally achieves at least 80% reduction of energy and water use and practically no waste production anymore and significant improvement in comfort, with materials largely produced locally in the many workers coops and B-Corps and other forms of thriving social enterprises, and much of the materials are endlessly recycled or often also repaired and repurposed stuff, so getting close to a circular or cradle to cradle materials systems in many things we need and use, large and small.

After lunch it’s time for me to head out of the village into the nearby town-hub, where one can get most of the supplies and necessities not produced in the village, much of which is made fairly local hence not much need or desire to travel or transport far for anything and so low energy transport is fashionable and desirable, which has dramatically decreased transport needs and energy use, and car ownership is basically unnecessary for most but various integrated forms of transport are still available on demand, fully integrated between, walking, cycling (including e-bikes), e-buses, trams, trains, car sharing and much more. The village hub is only a short electric cargo bike ride away, hence I am taking some of our village produce, cheese and bread to our market stall in town and to a couple of restaurants as well, which gets me a few time share credits. For much of the afternoon I cruise around various areas and green leafy, ecovillages, apartments and single dwellings, which were called suburbs in the past, now they are self-contained villages and towns and more rural communities. I am to check on and do some maintenance of peoples and communities composting toilets, greywater and other water and waste cycling systems so they function well, and provide training and advice to dwellers, which is the work I do for a salary mostly in local currency, doing this for about two days a week around the whole district. But I also teach water and nutrient cycling technologies, at local and regional community run vocational training hubs but also teach about circular economy, sustainable heating and cooling systems and the area I am really passionate about, systems and integral thinking and living. But there is no need for more paid work, partly because we have universal guaranteed income, interest free loans, affordable housing, education and free decent welfare services in order to be able to afford a dignified life, but there is no marketing, consumerism, owning things for the sake of owning the latest gadget, things are
designed and made locally, last long, are repairable, repurpose able, transferable, and of course fully recyclable, hence waste has been reduced by some 80% now with aims of 90% in coming years, the same what we have achieved with overall energy use which is now able to comfortably be provided by local renewable energy.

There is no need for lots of money, because there is not so much stuff around to begin with but we have a conscious, caring, compassionate and sharing and truly and deeply connected community, and competitive, combative and greedy economics are a thing of the past, since growth based capitalism was dismantled and with it many multi-national corporations lost their license to operate. They were disbanded some time ago and replaced with a steady-state or better described as degrowth participatory economy based on real needs, simplicity, frugality and most of all of on one planet living. But getting torn out of my thoughts about how dramatically things have changed for the better, by the presence of abundant nature even within our relatively densely populated neighbourhoods, by a Koala seemingly yelling at me from the majestic Redgum tree right next to where I walk, through local bushland, resembling more and more a restored regenerated rainforest along the local river, which was a dirty, heavily polluted and eroded drain abutted by a major highway in the past and heavily degraded by livestock, all of which has been restored to nature corridors with thriving biodiversity and abundance of wildlife or some for productive agricultural uses, but nature connection is one pillar of our strength in thriving again with nature which is up close and personal everywhere.

Time to get to the local community assembly, which has largely replaced the role of local government, with many locals actively participating and contributing and have the time to do so. This came about because our lives are deeply local and deeply connected to community, hence the drive to create an even stronger and thriving local community for all, but unfortunately there is no time now to think about the rest of our highly participatory and real democratic systems at all other levels of governance, even though less important than in the past due to radical re-localisation of our lives, least to say no more career politicians or lobbyists to see far and wide. Also to say international relations are largely peaceful now, of course with much less trade of tangibles, but more so free exchange of knowledge, skills, culture and more, not hampered by any IP restrictions and there are few violent conflicts due to the end of fossil fuels and most of trade globalization is history, poverty alleviated and we have equal development opportunities everywhere, which has taken the wind out of fundamentalism and extremism.

Anyway after getting the community grant approved for our village it’s time to head back to our village home and enjoy some quality time and some philosophizing about the world and then later playing some music together, singing and dancing with our fellow house dwellers and some friends, over a cuppa of foraged herbal tea or better some of our hallmark fruit wines and ciders, cherished and in demand far and wide, before its time to head to the dream world with some ideas about where to head for an upcoming camping and deep nature immersion trip with a group of the village next generation."

"Another world is not only possible, she is on her way. On a quiet day, I can hear her breathing"
Arundhati Roy