

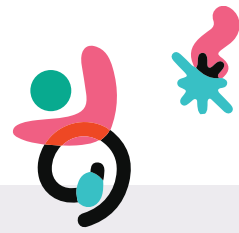
Building the Smart Village

Re-imagining how we live and work for the 21st century

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Introduction

We are in a time of rapid, wide-scale societal change with technology and globalisation transforming every aspect of work and life. Just as we begin to see the deeper impacts of the internet revolution the next wave of transformative technologies is upon us; artificial intelligence, robotics, bio technology, 3D printing, green energy and more. If we are to address our growing social, economic and environmental challenges we must break out of the status quo. The only way forward is to fundamentally rethink, redesign and reinvent how we do things in learning, health, business, society and beyond. As Buckminster Fuller famously said:

'You never change things by fighting the existing reality. To change something, build a new model that makes the existing model obsolete.'

This idea is at the core of our message.

Since the industrial revolution cities have pulled in people from the countryside with the lure of jobs, education, culture, shopping and ultimately a better life. As a result of this mass urbanisation, we have seen an exodus from the countryside which has left Europe with eleven million empty rural homes. Why don't we use this rural crisis as an opportunity for a creative renaissance? Why not transform these abandoned properties into cultural and entrepreneurial hubs? What if the best and brightest decided to leave the city and build their own communities and smart villages?



Today, much of what we call 'work' requires only a computer and an internet connection. Our ability to communicate and collaborate online makes it possible for much more fluid forms of organisation to exist. Designers, marketers, software developers, craftsmen, artists, creative and intellectual workers of all kinds now have access to an explosion of online sites which allow them to find work and sell their creations in the global marketplace. Increasingly it is becoming clear that project-based collaboration, self-employment, freelancing and the gig economy are the future of work.

We see an incredible opportunity to build smart villages for this emerging generation of entrepreneurial and creative professionals. To explore what makes this future feasible we dive deeper into the changing nature of work, the emergence of lifestyle design and the core drivers behind the inevitable entrepreneurial migration out of cities.

The changing nature of work

The industrial revolution gave us the paradigm of organisation as machine, scientific management with a few at the top doing the thinking and planning, and a large workforce of worker-cogs at the bottom executing their orders. Organisations were built on a rigid hierarchy with information flowing up and commands flowing down. This system worked well for a time enabling unprecedented production and economic growth, despite giving very little freedom or opportunity for creativity to most workers. However in the 21st century we live in a world with increasing volatility and change, which requires businesses to adapt and learn at a speed which hierarchical companies are incapable of. The reality is that many of the systems and institutions we have today have become too bureaucratic and are no longer fit for purpose.

In response to this new reality we are seeing the rise of the collaborative economy with thousands of distributed companies around the world. For example: [Automattic](#) which develops [WordPress.com](#) and is valued at more than \$1 billion. Powering 24% of all websites on the internet today with a 400-person team spread across 40 countries without an office or the use of email.

“This has been amazing for the company in that we can attract and retain the best talent without them having to be in New York or San Francisco or one of the traditional tech centers.”

- CEO Matt Mullenweg in interview with Glenn Leibowitz

Another example is Buffer, valued at \$60 million, who employ a workforce distributed across multiple time zones, which means that a team member is available to speak with customers around the clock, delivering real time customer service which is at the core of their values as a company. Removing the cost of a centralised office and trusting the team to self-organise and best respond to customer needs has enabled these organisations and many more to drive innovation and achieve a lot more with a lot less.

It is our belief that decentralised and autonomous work can be taken even further. There is an organisational model that has been developed by Anton Chernikov (founder of The Exponentials) called IO (Imaginal Organisation), which builds on the great work of Enspiral, Holocracy, BCorps, Teal and Semco. The IO model simplifies the process of collaboration in the complex early stages of launching a new project or venture. It offers a practical approach to governance and partnership building which makes it easier for more people to embrace decentralised ways of working. The IO principles of freedom, growth and action will be essential for scaling up the collaborative economies that are required for entrepreneurial and creative communities to thrive.

The early adopters of these new ways of working will be the millennials; a new generation of creative, socially minded and information-enabled young professionals and entrepreneurs. Millennials refuse to play by the rules of the past, using the internet and its opportunities for learning and growth to secure economic freedom. Millennials do not want to work in hierarchical bureaucratic organisations. They want to be in an environment that is creative, exciting, empowering, purposeful and passionate. They want to see the impact of their work and most importantly they want to have the freedom and autonomy to lead their own lives. As this generation grows in wisdom and influence, the economic models of the past—already in decay—will be replaced by a new collaborative and conscious economy. When this happens, what will be the driving motivations behind how we choose to live our lives and invest our time and money?

IO Collective

An IO is held together entirely through social capital and shared purpose. An IO makes it possible for networks to operate like organisations. It takes the concept of an organisation back to its fundamental roots, where the ultimate purpose of an organisation is to enable groups of people to work together to achieve outcomes and create value that would not be possible individually. When every individual within an organisation has their own ship, there is no reason to fight over the steering wheel. We all choose to sail together, sharing the risks and rewards as fairly as possible. Just imagine what would happen if the most talented young freelance engineers, designers, engineers and entrepreneurs came together and decided to work in these imaginal ways. There is no limit to what they could accomplish.

If you want to learn more about the IO movement and become a member of the IO Collective visit www.iocollective.xyz.



A holistic understanding of life and health

When we ask ourselves the question; ‘what do I value the most in life?’ the majority of us think about our friends, family, community and our passions. Mounting evidence points to happiness coming from a sense of place and purpose within a social network of meaningful relationships. Increasingly, more people are waking up to the fact that business, society and the environment are interconnected.

A more holistic understanding of value and what it means to lead a “rich” life is required for society to move towards a sustainable and thriving future.

Financial success is just one dimension of life, and if we obsess over it, we become disconnected from all the other ways we can fully-experience and deeply enjoy our lives. When we think about value more broadly our priorities change. What is the point of wealth and success if your health is ruined or you have no one you care about to celebrate with?

Ultimately, what we crave are more meaningful moments and life-experiences; more time to spend following our curiosity. Time to build nourishing relationships and friendships. Time to enjoy the simple things in life and really experience the world. Time to be present with our loved ones, our friends, acquaintances and the strangers we meet along the way. Yet too often our jobs starve us of what is most precious - the time and space to express who we truly are – social, curious, playful and purposeful humans.

We are describing here is the emergence of the concept of lifestyle design. What are the things that make life great? What would it feel like to create a daily life you don't need a vacation from? How can we create a home and a community where we feel safe to be our authentic selves and fully express our many skills and talents? How do we create great community and connection in our daily lives? These questions will be at the heart of the products, platforms and services that will be most successful in a 21st century economy.



Why move out of the city?

As work becomes increasingly digital and mobile, as cities become more expensive and polluted, as the cost of living in the countryside declines, an opportunity emerges for a radical transition. We call this movement 'entrepreneurial counter-urbanism'. Rather than investing into overpriced city life the creative class of 21st century professionals (entrepreneurs, designers, artists, developers, craftsmen, etc.) will move out of the city and build their own communities from the ground up.

Post Urbanism

When you have the freedom to work from anywhere in the world, would you choose:

- A small overpriced flat in the city?
- Or would you prefer to participate in the creation of a creative, entrepreneurial and multicultural smart village in a beautiful natural setting?

We believe that there is a growing demand for smart villages where we can design our ideal balanced lives. Places where we can live in harmony with nature. We can create a safe and happy home for our families. And we don't have to sacrifice our careers and dreams to make this happen. We can continue to build and participate in virtual companies, occasionally travelling to cities for important meetings or conferences. Ultimately, just like the urbanisation movement, this new wave will be driven by a combination of push and pull factors:

19th & 20th century rural migration to cities

Push Factors

Jobs: due to population growth there were not enough jobs in rural areas. Rural work was seasonal so people became unemployed out of season.

Low wages: farming jobs were poorly paid. Despite working hard and long hours farmers still only received just enough money to survive.

Control: some landowners and squires treated their tenants badly.

Housing: housing was of poor quality with thin walls, windows with no glass and leaking roofs.


Pull Factors

Jobs: there were thought to be lots of jobs in towns, which would pay all year. Men, women and children could all work in factories, while women could also get jobs as domestic servants.

Education: children could get an education at Sunday school, which was less likely in the countryside.

Housing: houses were thought to be of better quality in the cities. People usually knew that they would not be able to rent a whole house but believed that a few rooms would be better than what they currently had.

Culture & Shopping: cities provided a rich access to a growing wealth of entertainment, culture and information



21st century entrepreneurial/creative-class migration to the countryside

Push Factors

Work/livelihood: business is global, one is more likely to be working on a daily basis with someone on the other side of the world than a next-door neighbour

Housing: city housing costs are growing rapidly & disproportionately from incomes.

Control: A 20-30 year mortgage demands a life of steady monthly income not compatible with the an entrepreneurial life

Time: With long commutes and travel to see friends, cities waste our time

Health: The biggest threat to our wellbeing today is an unhealthy lifestyle: stress, lack of exercise, poor diet – all promoted by modern city life

Children: Raising children in the city puts great pressure on parents there is little opportunity for children to roam outside leaving them constantly dependent on parents or TV/games for stimulation.

Pull Factors

Work/livelihood: The internet enables participation in global business irrespective of location.

Entrepreneurship hubs: newly emergent entrepreneurial hubs provide ready-to-join community of like-minded peers

Cost of living: Cheap housing, low food costs make cost of living much lower in the countryside.

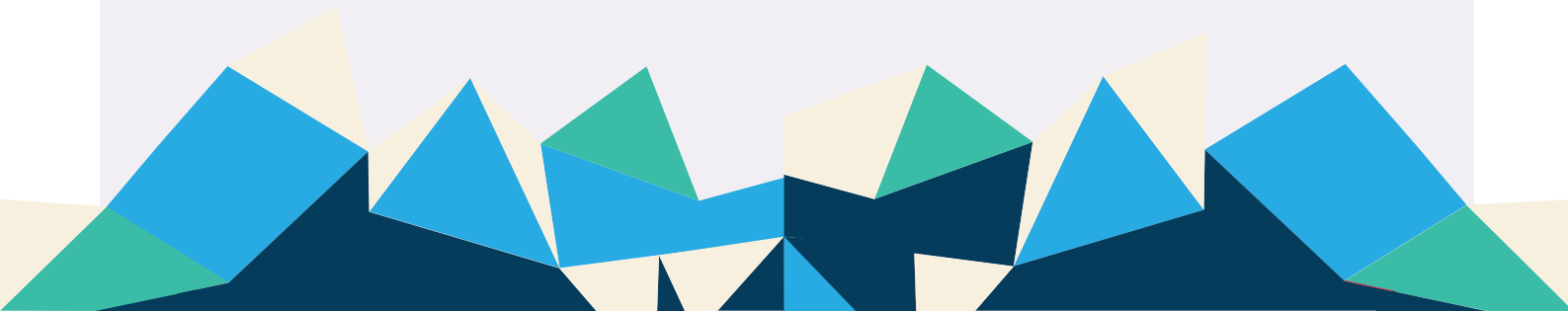
Nature: Life in cities greatly limits the time we can spend nature, but latest research clearly shows how beneficial time spent nature is for health & happiness

Education: Internet enables access to great amount of knowledge and world-wide peer connection. Free-to-learn movement enables families or communities to support children and youth in self-learning without the need for institutional schools.

Housing: greatly depressed prices in rural areas mean it is possible to buy a modest house for what a down payment on small apartment would be in the city. Interest is rising in natural building which enables anyone to build their own house investing months of work instead of decades of bank payments.

Culture & Shopping: an internet connection gives access to world's culture and unlimited shopping opportunities

Low cost travel: Rise of low-cost travel makes it reasonable for knowledge workers to travel to spend a few days of every month in a big city for work or entertainment.



To Conclude...

We all know that our world is far from perfect. We don't need to hear yet another story about our increasingly complex and interconnected social, economic and environmental challenges. Yet another intellectual crusade against corporate greed, political extremism and climate change is not going to make much of an impact. **If we want to catalyse the emergence of a more collaborative, conscious and compassionate world we need to develop and share openly models for how to live and work together in a new way.** Across Europe we are seeing the dramatic rise in house prices within major cities. Urban life is hard for young families, freelancers and entrepreneurs. At the same time each year the number of abandoned rural villages grows, especially in Spain, Greece and Portugal. Scores of ruined villages in inspiring nature filled settings await a new dream and a new entrepreneurial energy to rebuild and repopulate them.

Today, we all have an opportunity to contribute to a growing movement to build the places, networks and blueprints needed to drive forward an economic and cultural revolution. We can build a better future one community, one smart village at a time.

Please connect with us at info@earthskylab.vision and anton@exponentials.co.uk:

- If you own or have access to rural land and would like to open it up to a community of creatives and entrepreneurs
- If you are willing to fund or have access to funder who would like to provide loans to build a smart village
- If you have specialist design, planning, construction, technical, legal and/or community building skills and would like to share your expertise to support our vision
- If you are inspired by this article and would like to get involved in an smart village development
- If you are building a smart village and would like to join with others in sharing learnings and experience
- If you are inspired by this article and would like to build your own smart village community from the ground up.

Once you **complete this typeform**, we will invite you to our Facebook Group to continue the conversation and spark real action.





Appendix: Case Studies & Inspirations

The first step in launching any new startup development or community is to map what already exists and establish a global network of. Below we have mapped some of the leading concepts which will be driving the movement towards building smart villages across Europe and the world;

Euboea IO

Euboea is the name of the second largest island region in Greece. Our vision is to transform this region into one of the Europe's most culturally diverse and entrepreneurial destinations, and in doing so contribute to rebuilding the Greek economy. Imagine a network of smart villages across Euboea which will be able to host a wide range of retreats, learning programmes and micro-festivals as well as provide live/work studios for some of Europe's leading entrepreneurs and startup teams. These spaces alongside our digital tools and networks will become a platform for our global members and local residents to run experimental events, build physical prototypes and launch startup ventures that address a diverse range of social and environmental challenges.

Underpinning this vision is the IO, which is a model for building decentralised, collaborative, self-managing organisations. Our plan is to start by running a series of retreats on the Candili estate to establish our reputation and launch the **IO Collective**. We will then raise impact loans to either lease or buy nearby land and start building out the basic infrastructure and connectivity for our first permanent Euboea IO space. Through this development we can provide a space for impact driven entrepreneurs to prototype new solutions to food, water, energy, education, health, transport, tourism, housing, smart cities and more. Our mission is to provide entrepreneurs and creative professionals with a genuine alternative to urban life by inviting them to work with us to transform abandoned rural locations into smart villages where we fundamentally redesign how we live & work together. Today, we have an opportunity to not only imagine the future we want, but to actually built it, one smart village and dream space at a time.

See www.euboea.io


Earth Sky Lab

Earth Sky Lab is a new kind of village; a home for independent creative professionals, entrepreneurs, artists, craftsmen, designers, software developers.

EarthSkyLab re-imagines how we live and work together, combining the best of modern life with the peace & joy of living in a house you own, surrounded by nature, friends and a thriving, creative, community.

Earth Sky Lab brings together the following;

Modern Life in community & nature. Life in nature, surrounded by trees, mountains, springs & wildlife. Enriching life in a thriving, creative, collaborative, supportive village.



A balanced life, with time for friends, nature, community and creativity. Your own home without the burden of long-term debt. A deep connection with a culturally flourishing local community. Nature & space for our children to roam freely, a supportive community for them to grow up in.

See www.skylab.earth

Summit Powder Mountain

Summit is building a mountain town around the spirit of innovation in the heart of Utah's Wasatch Mountains. Summit Powder Mountain aims to rethink the great American mountain town around a community focused on innovation, entrepreneurship, arts, and altruism. Tucked on the southern side of Powder Mountain, in the town of Eden, Utah, it's a new kind of neighbourhood, where friends, family, and the change makers of today and tomorrow gather in an environment created to catalyze personal and collective growth.

See: summitpowdermountain.com

Kalu Yala

Kalu Yala is a new village being built in a Panamanian river valley to bring together entrepreneurs, artists, scientists and modern day romantics. The Kalu Yala community is reimagining what's possible from life and designing an optimized model of living to share with the world.

Their formula is;

Educate

Students from around the world come to Kalu Yala to work in a real world environment as part of our town's research and development team.

Connect

Events and Hospitality connect us to people and their resources while sending Kalu Yala's lifestyle and best practices back home with them.

Build

The art of building is alive and well at Kalu Yala, as we construct the homes and spaces needed for people and businesses to thrive in our valley.

Launch

We've brought Silicon Valley funds to our custom designed entrepreneur launchpad so ideas can turn into financial returns and jobs at Kalu Yala.

See : www.kaluyala.com

Other inspirations...

Urban

The Collective - <https://www.thecollective.co.uk/> (growing in the UK)
Smart Growth - <http://smartgrowth.co/> (Oakland, US)
Open Door - <http://opendoor.io/> (Oakland, US)
The Embassy Network - <https://embassynetwork.com/>

Impact Hub - <http://www.impacthub.net/> (Global)
<https://startupretreats.com/> - list of retreat places for startups
<https://workfrom.co/> - places to work from for nomads

Rural

Euboea IO (Greece) - <http://www.euboea.io/>
Earth Sky Lab (Portugal) - <http://earthskylab.vision/>
Landstory IO (UK) - <http://landstory.io/>
KaluYala (Panama) - <https://kaluyala.com/>
Finding Aldea (Spain) - <http://findingaldea.org/>
Alternavida (Puerto Rico) - <http://www.alternavida.org/>
Tree Hotel (Sweedden) - <http://www.treehotel.se/en/>
Earthships (Global) - <http://earthship.com/>
Hooke Park (UK) - <http://hookepark.aaschool.ac.uk/>
Living Architecture (UK) - <http://www.living-architecture.com/>
Hubud (Bali) - <http://www.hubud.org/>
Outsite (US) - <http://outsite.co/>
Summit Mountain (US) - <http://www.summit.co/>
Roam (Gobal) - <https://www.roam.co/> (global co-living)
Co-living At - <http://coliving.at/>
West Lexham (UK) - <http://www.westlexham.org/>
The Do Farm (UK) - <http://www.thedo.farm/>
PermaLab - <http://www.permalab.eu/>
Liberland (Czech Republic) - <https://liberland.org/en/main/>
Otokobonjan (Croatian Island) - <http://www.otokobonjan.com/>
The Venus Project (US) - <https://www.thevenusproject.com/>
POC21 (Europe) - <http://www.poc21.cc/>
Sui Generis (Canada) - <http://suigeneris.li/>

Some selected articles, many more online:

<http://blog.cloudpeeps.com/top-10-companies-winning-at-remote-work-culture/>
<http://workingremote.ly/leaders/distributed-companies/>
<https://www.flexjobs.com/blog/post/76-virtual-companies-and-distributed-teams/>
<http://www.zdnet.com/article/25-companies-that-hire-virtual-workers/>
<http://www.entrepreneur.com/article/247907>



And a rising number of sites and services to support this growing ecosystem:

Outsite: Stay, work and play in beautiful locations

Remotive: A weekly newsletter on remote tips and jobs

Remote Co: A resource for companies that see remote work as the future

Nomad List: The best cities to live and work remotely

Pajamas: A collection of interviews with remote workers

Remote Year: Travel and work remotely for a year

Startup Retreats: The best remote work communities and co-living spaces for retreats

Retreat Guru: Retreat booking and search platform

Join the Village 3.0 Facebook Group

Please connect with us at info@earthskylab.vision and anton@exponentials.co.uk. Once **you complete this typeform** - <https://exponentials.typeform.com/to/wolygX>, we will then invite you to our Facebook Group to continue the conversation and spark real action.

