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## Introduction

The Enright Ridge Urban Ecovillage is a nonprofit organization based out of the Price Hill neighborhood of Cincinnati, OH. The organization was founded in the early 2000's to create solidarity in the Enright Ridge community. The founders organized ERUEV to create more sustainable way of life for themselves and their community with emphasis on green living and community based urban revitalization. ERUEV advertises itself as an intentional community leading urban revitalization and sustainability in Cincinnati. More importantly, the organization prides itself as being a one of the only ecovillage communities which operates in the urban context in the United States. An ecovillage is "a human-scaled full featured settlements in which human activities are harmless integrated into the natural world in a way that is supportive of healthy human development, and which can be successfully continued into the indefinite future" (Veteto & Lockyer, 2008). ERUEV is positioned in an urban context because the community places emphasis on accessibility and inclusivity. ERUEV openly disassociates from corporate models of gentrification which are structurally violent towards many citizens who occupy urban spaces. One of their primary goals is to educate the local community on the field of urban ecology. Many members are self proclaimed counter culturalists who openly oppose the twenty century emergence of neoliberalism. The village is composed of roughly sixty members neighborhood members and a number of community partners who actively maintain a community-sustained agriculture program, Common Roots Pub, and the Ice House Property Park.



## Methods

### Participant Observation

Participant observation is a participatory research practice which is vital to gathering qualitative data inquires for socio cultural anthropological research. In fall of 2018, my primary position was volunteering as a community engagement intern. Responsibilities of this position included being a tour guide for farm tours and canvassing for community events.



### Applied Methods

Leveraging my unique background in design, my colleagues and I developed an applied anthropological approach called Community Based Design. This technique generated a set of codable visual design data with community members while facilitating unstructured interviews about their perceptions of the local community. This participatory action research sought to understand the organization by trying to change it or further its mission in collaboration with the organization itself. In spring of 2019, I participated as a design intern and member of a grant writing team which was focused on the development of the Ice House Property Park.



## Conclusions

This participatory research has informed my understanding about the organizational makeup of an grassroots nonprofit while developing a nuanced understanding of the cultural dynamics of a neotribal community which identifies as an intentional community and distinguishes itself as operating in the urban context. I have concluded that the organization emphasizes accessibility and inclusivity while it aims to further their missions in three genres of justice: housing justice, social justice, climate justice. Actuating this goal over the duration of the organizations lifetime has been a difficult task due to tensions between three factions of the community, the spiritualist visionaries, the board, and the farm, which leverage their agency in the organization to accomplish separate, resource intensive, goals that each faction sees as being vital to both the identity and sustainability of the organization. However, their processes of actualization cause internal tensions which challenge the longevity of the organization. Structural aspects the organization make for dilapidated communication structures and revenue channels, high rates of bartender and farmer turnover, and multiple instances of individual burnout. Grassroots approaches to green urban renewal practices, that they call urban ecology, are challenging to actualize on an organizational level, but the community has seen over a decade of success actualizing urban ecological projects in their individual households. The individual narratives of success, public interaction with other community nonprofits, as well as disproportionate, often individual, contributions towards the completion of administrative tasks associated with running a nonprofit have been essential to constructing the communities identity as an intentional community and sustaining the organization as a nonprofit. According to the board, the primary way to sustain the organization is "keeping it in the black," so a truly sustainable community must also be able to financially sustain itself. However, this perspective is not consistent across the other factions which place more emphasis on annual crop yields and the vision of their naturalist spirituality. Even with internal tensions the ERUEV community has a steady member base, significant material equity, and serves their community. Being a villager is about living a lifestyle that is not mainstream and the symbolic capital associated with this counter cultural lifestyle is enough to establish a cohesive community and a shared sense of belonging.

## Acknowledgements

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**Figure 1: East Price Hill**

The map highlights the East Price Hill neighborhood of Cincinnati, OH. The Enright Ridge Urban Ecovillage is located in a one mile radius of Enright Ridge Ave & 8th St.



**Figure 2: Paradise Lounge**

In the early 2000s, Paradise Lounge was notorious for nightlife and drug related violence. The ERUEV community viewed this establishment as blight in their community.



**Figure 3: Ice House Property Park**

The Ice House Property has been vacant for over forty years and is seen as blight. The ERUEV community is currently organizing to develop this property into a community park.



**Figure 4: Urban Earth Farms**

Urban Earth Farms operates out of a florist's greenhouse which was acquired in 2009. The community manages a community-sustained agriculture project out of the facility.



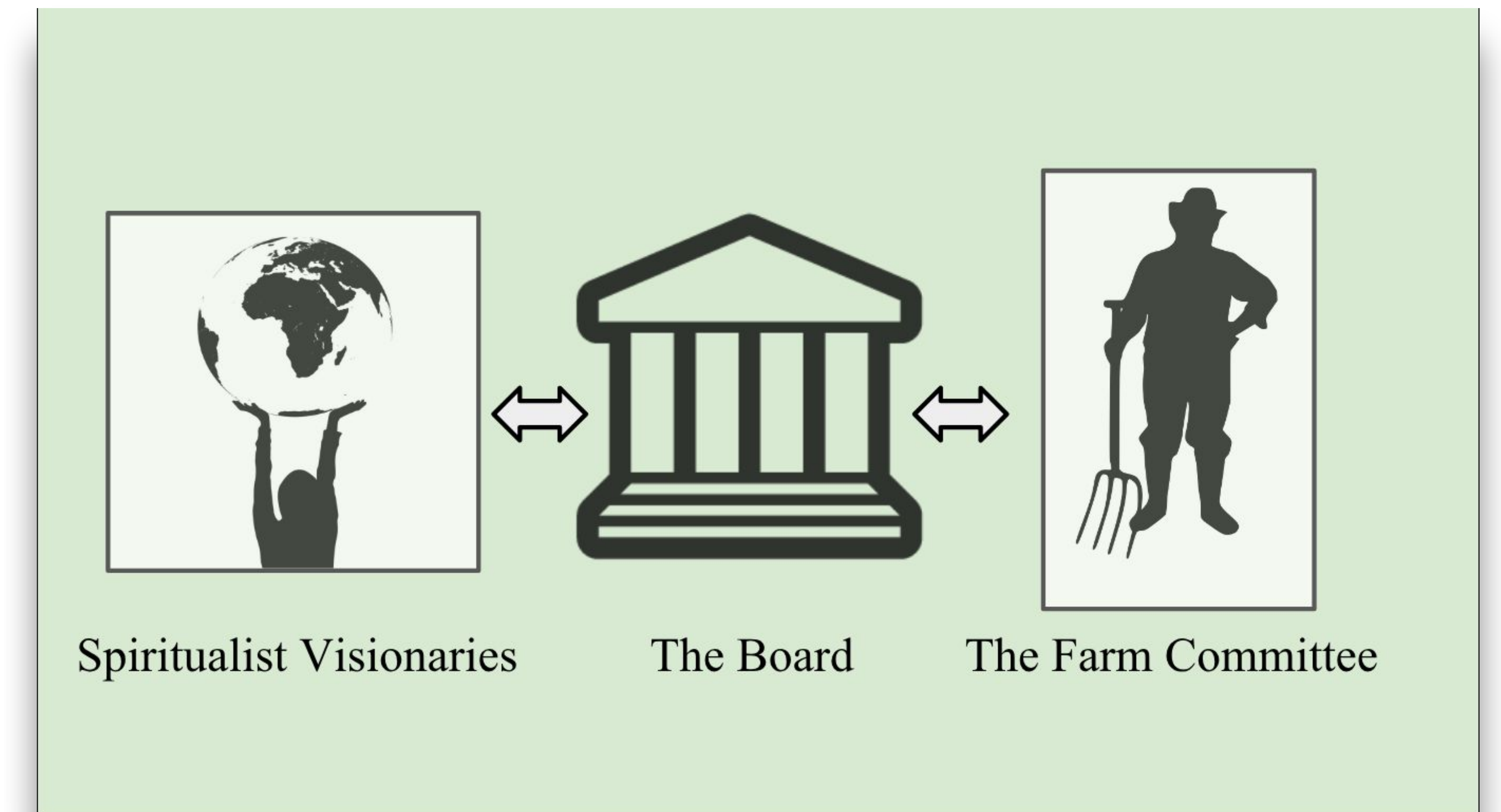
**Figure 5: Common Roots Pub**

Common Roots Pub, formerly Paradise Lounge, is a hub of social activity for the community hosting weekly potlucks, guest speakers, open mic nights, and various ERUEV events.



**Figure 6: Community Based Design**

Community Based Design is being used by a team of design interns to generate ideas for the Ice House Property Park.



**Figure 7: Organizational Structure**

The Enright Ridge Urban Ecovillage is a nonprofit based out of East Price Hill. Their primary revenue channels are government funding, private loans, and internal funding. The community operates on a consensus based structure which needs ¾ corum or ½ vote from the board. This structure has went through multiple phases of revision over the lifespan of the organization. The organizational structure is composed of three main institutions. The Board is composed of a nominated, or often voluntary, executive team who focused on the organizational revisions and administrative tasks. The Spiritualist Visionaries are composed of counter culturalist who embrace the naturalist spirituality and connection to Earth. The Farm committee is focused on crop yields and organizing the community sustained agriculture program. The farm committee is the most successful at facilitating urban ecology projects on an organizational level. Many community members have social mobility in each of these institutions. However, the divide becomes clear during political dialogues.