

# **TINY HOUSE VILLAGE PROJECT**

Creating a community development project

Jukka Toivainen

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Thesis, Autumn 2015  
Diaconia University of Applied Sciences  
Degree Programme in Social Services  
Option in Diaconal Social Work  
Bachelor in Social Services (UAS) +  
Qualification for the office of diaconia  
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## ABSTRACT

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Diaconia University of Applied Sciences. Degree Programme in Social Services, Option in Diaconal Social Work. Degree: Bachelor of Social Services (UAS) + Qualification for the office of diaconia worker in the Church of Finland.

This thesis is telling about creating a project idea and a project proposal of producing wooden wall elements in Finland, shipping them to Israel and building small houses to make a village for people who need temporary or cheap housing. I am writing about the process of developing the idea and what I took into consideration when making the project proposal.

I was collecting material for the project idea from Finland and from Israel. In Finland there is a general willingness among many Christian organizations to support Israel. Providing simple housing is one area where help is appreciated. Building these wooden wall elements in Finland by social enterprises gives also work for people who are recovering from substance abuse.

My goal is to propose a practical project to connect Finnish and Israeli organizations to develop co-operation through this project and to give a vision for this kind of possibility for giving and receiving help. One aim of the study is to understand more of the multicultural working environment through planning this project proposal.

In this thesis I describe the process of how this project proposal came first as an idea and how it has developed to a real and possible development project. As I was the person who got this idea and have been informing others about the project, I might consider myself as a coordinator for the possible project.

Main ideas for this project are to offer easy working possibilities for marginalized people in Finland, who would profit of having work and structure in life. Second idea is to make a community for easy housing, which supports people who do not have much money and who would benefit natural encountering with others. Third level is to increase co-operation between cultures, to build long lasting friendships and to support multicultural understanding.

My studies have included diaconal perspective and this is also included in my thesis. The project proposal and the whole idea have been developed through my understanding of life and my personal Christian worldview.

I found this process very interesting and encouraging and I hope the project will be started because I believe it will bring good results for everyone involved.

Keywords: Community development, tiny houses, Israel, Finland, wellbeing, multicultural co-operation, diaconal work

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## INTRODUCTION

I have been studying community development and diaconia in a Diaconia University of Applied Studies in Helsinki, Finland and my international placement took place in Jerusalem in a humanitarian organization. Earlier years and during my studies I have been working with homeless people. Through these experiences and my own interests I came up with this idea of a development project.

This thesis is an explanation about creating a development project idea. For the possible project I have made a project proposal, which is a written product. This project proposal is telling about bringing wooden wall elements from Finland to Israel and building small houses out of them and establishing a community village. I will point to the planning process and practical matters. I will describe my process of planning, tell about co-operation with people involved in Finland and in Israel and finally present the project proposal.

My idea is to make a practical project to provide small houses for anyone who is in need for a simple place to live in Israel. In this study I use the term “tiny houses”, because these are recently commonly used words among many people. It is also a new trend to find solutions against high costs of everyday living. In this thesis I introduce a project idea that can be done in practice later. The project is about to manufacture simple wooden wall elements and rafters for roofs in Finland and to ship them to Israel in containers. This work in Finland is planned to do by people who need integration in the society for social reasons.

These materials are then used to build tiny houses in Israel. After there has been found a suitable place for the houses, these can be placed near to each other, to make a compound of houses. This compound is intended to be serving as a village for people who need cheap and simple place to live. There will also be one separate main house, where it is possible to include common things like laundry facilities, café, meeting place and room for the worker of the center.

This thesis is explaining the process of making the project proposal. The proposal is made so that it is possible to start the project practically. Later if the project itself is decided to start, the writer of this thesis is interested to be the project coordinator for it.

In this thesis it is described how the idea was developed, where it has been done before and how the project proposal was made practically. I will think of my own development as a professional worker through this process of planning the project and gathering information for it. In the end I will make conclusions on how the process developed and how do I see the future of the project.

This thesis is about a product and my question is: "How is it possible to make this kind of project proposal, in order that it would be interesting and practical enough to get it started in real life?" Writing the project proposal was a combination and a result of my own ideas and discussions with others who are professionals in their own fields. I have been discussing with humanitarian organization leaders in both countries, representatives of Israel government, construction workers, an architectural office worker, building engineers, pastors in Israel and in Finland, Internet page adviser, and many others who I have met.

This project proposal is a result of all these discussions and advices that have been gathered together as a final product. Planning this project has been a great journey in itself and has been very interesting and has taught me a lot personally and professionally. Now we can wait and see if it will be changing into a real project. That will be worth another story.

## 1 THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE

In this project I have the idea of getting people in contact with each other's firstly by working and secondly by living in a community together. There have been projects, which have experienced these things in practice, and the results have been good. One of them has been in Utrecht and in 's-Hertogenbosh, Holland.

Schlatmann and van Waarde (2014, 98-99) are writing about how the community and organization should look like, in order for the participants to have a chance to grow stronger. There is a group of active residents in River District in Utrecht who have developed together all sorts of activities within ten years now. Originally it was started by a local pastor who came to the area to talk with the residents to find out, if there was something people would like to do. They have been organizing sport events and bingo for young people, dinners for large group of residents and after a while they got their own place for rent from the city of Utrecht. Schlatmann and van Waarde write observations about the empowering community:

The participants notice that their qualities are important for each other and that these are accepted. This generates a great affirming and acknowledging strength. It makes people grow in their sense of self-esteem. Recognition gives pride and strength. Strength to become more a subject, a valuable actor, among other people. It is not just the realization of someone's idea. It is always about a shift in what people think they are capable of, when they discover what they really want, and they ask themselves: just why would it not be possible? Their self-image is opened up, perhaps repositioned (Schlatmann & van Waarde 2014, 101).

Additionally Schlatmann and van Waarde (2014, 102-103) tell in their book about Pastoral Employment Agency (PEA) also in 's-Hertogenbosh, which offers daily activities and meeting places for homeless with addictions or who are mentally harmed, and who are far away from a paid job. According PEA's experience there are some steps that community and organization can offer to participants to grow as individuals and as a community:

*Phases in participants' needs and corresponding services (Schlatmann & van Waarde 2014, 103)*

PHAZE	COMMUNITY	ORGANIZATION
1	Physical: roof, heat, clothes, food and drink	Being helpful by referring, breakfast and lunch, food coupons
2	Offering safety	Rules of conduct to respect one another
3	Security: daily and weekly rhythm	Fixed days have diverse daily activities projects
4	Interests: accommodation, helping one another, belonging, mutual agreements	Participants help one another, support from social work, referral to social services
5	Contacts: acceptance and recognition and understanding	The daily activities are a means to make contact, with many breaks and chances to meet one another
6	Work together, take and get responsibility, learn from one another	Be an overseer, assume tasks, learn technical and social skills

## 1.1 Healing by working together

In Finland, people who are recovering from alcoholism or drug abuse have many times difficulties to find work from open markets. Often they don't have much working history or their earlier jobs have been so temporary that employers seem to be suspicious and not trusting their capability to stay in the work for long. After many years of misusing alcohol or drugs, a person can be affected of this in his physical appearance. It may be one reason why these persons having a past with addictions have more difficulties than others to receive a normal working place.

It is important to develop places where people who have this kind of history could have normal work to do. In modern society it has been noticed that some people just cannot find a normal working place, so that is why these kinds of easy-access working places have been started. It means that the municipality or the government is supporting the organization for hiring people who have some disabilities for normal work. A person gets normal salary according to the work that he is doing, but the organization or social enterprise gets financial benefits for its general costs.

The following information comes from a web page of the Ministry of Employment and the Economy at [www.te-services.fi](http://www.te-services.fi):

As an employer you may be eligible for a pay subsidy when you hire an unemployed jobseeker who finds it difficult to get a job. Finding employment may be hindered by reasons such as a prolonged period of unemployment, lack of professional skills, a disability or an illness.

These kinds of working possibilities are important for the person himself, but as much for the whole society, because of many good side effects they are leading to. First of all it is good for the worker himself. It gives schedule for his day, meaningful way to spend his time and freedom to handle his own financial matters without help. Most of all it is needed to maintain his balance of his mental

health. Then it is also worthy for the society to keep its members in good balance in order to get benefits from a common healthy and safe atmosphere.

Working together is a natural process to keep up an individual's capacity for healthy relations and personal mental balance. Working place offers a meaningful arena in meeting others as well as it gives good purpose for spending time together and in interaction with others. Achieving goals together in a working group gives mutual feelings of belonging, if the members of the group are working in the same direction. This is why a person who is recovering from different kinds of substance abuse should get into this kind of working group that is doing something meaningful together.

## 1.2 Benefits of community life

Modern urbanization and society getting more and more individualistic have side effects, such as a growing number of people feeling lonely and mentally depressed. It has been noticed that when people are in interaction with each other, it helps everyone to feel better mentally. Interaction gives feeling of belonging and it reflects one's own personality in a healthy way.

In a community, this happens in a natural way without a special need to search for other people to have communication. If the community is built to give an individual enough private space and possibility for his own quiet time, it also can be planned to give possibilities for encountering others naturally. Community life gives also many good practical advantages like sharing spaces, machines and costs of heating and repairing as well as sharing the decision making in important matters.

Living in a community is also a way to live as a single person but still to feel a family kind of belonging and care. In a community, people get to know each other quite well and in this way it is much easier to share feelings of joy and sadness together. As human beings we seem to need this kind of arenas in



which we are considered as friends or as someone who is known by others. As Homan writes about it:

“Healthy communities provide ways for members not only to survive but to grow; not only to receive but to contribute” (Homan 2011, 38)

Practical matters are much easier to handle in a community. Only one good laundry machine can handle many people’s laundry, newspapers can be ordered together, lending machines and recycling used things are all easier and natural in a community style of living.

In a community housing area there can be common spaces in which one can meet with others, keep meetings, and run a café or other activities. These activities help members to feel belonging to the community and to feel responsible of ones own actions. In these common areas one can normally meet with others, but when quiet time is needed one can go to his private space. Normally there is also possibility to get into contact with the persons from the organization’s side and handle practical matters or in some case to be heard in mental issues. If there is a service offered by the organization’s side, it can be developed according to the needs of the community members.

### 1.3 Multicultural co-operation

One part of my study is to consider how easy or difficult it is to make a project between multicultural organizations and people. As far as I have already noticed there are quite big differences between cultures, how things are said and done. Sometimes it is hard to tell which behavior comes from the personality and which one comes from the culture. I think that personal behavior has so much variety inside one culture that sometimes it is difficult to understand the main culture in the beginning but it becomes easier when the stay lasts longer inside the new culture. On the other hand if the stay is long enough, it is also possible to start to adapt oneself and therefore to loose the ability to notice all the differences there are. I agree with Mäkilouko (2003,13) as he says in his book that a

leader of a multicultural team should know about the different cultures inside his team, in order to improve his leadership.

How to understand the differences of the culture that one is not from oneself? This is a difficult question. According to Sarah Lanier, and to a three days course she was giving in Jerusalem about multicultural communication and how to solve multicultural conflicts, I learnt some basic behaviors. First of all we have to realize that naturally people understand many things wrongly, before they can start to see things in a new way. Normally a person thinks that if he sees something is being done differently than at home, it is not as well done as in his own culture. This is a normal way to think at first, but it does not help you to learn a new culture. If you come to a new country it is better to just observe what others are doing during the first six months. It is also good during this time not to take any initiative. That is because one might make big mistakes. It is wiser to follow others and to try to understand their ways and customs. Working long time together in a project with persons who come from other culture is a good way of learning their cultural manners that are different from ones own (Mäkilouko 2003, 33).

I have learned through my own experiences and in this Lanier's course that many times the difficulty arises because of where the level of politeness lies: in being relational or in being straight and direct to the point. For example in Scandinavian culture we emphasize factual and concrete matters in communication. We do not care so much how things are said as long as the facts are precisely correct. In more relational cultures the behavioral way you present the subject is the most important matter. Somewhere this kind of concentration on the facts and details instead of good relationships and feelings is considered very rude. Lanier (2005, 28) explains that cultures are either hot-climate or cold-climate, which means either relational or task-oriented cultures:

In the "hot-climate" world, words are often used as a means of establishing a pleasant atmosphere. The literal meaning of the words, therefore, is not nearly as important as the contact established by their use.

Co-operating in a multicultural project is a good way of learning to understand one's own culture as well. For a person who is coming from Scandinavia it is sometimes strange to see how people behave in more relational cultures. For example if a Scandinavian person is suggesting something to be done in a different way and if he does not get any precise answer he might think that the others did not understand what he was saying, or that they do not think it is important. Reality could be different. In more relational cultures it is considered rude to say something against someone's idea, so they think it might be better just to be silent and let the other one understand it through silence.

Through my personal experiences and Lanier's course I have understood that Scandinavian culture is very individualistic and concentrated on the factual matters. That is why it is easy to tell one's opinion when having a discussion about new ideas or planning something together. In a relational culture it might be considered very rude if one is saying anything against someone else's idea. Polite way would be to say first how good the first idea is and then maybe give another possibility for consideration, if everyone would find that this also is a good idea.

Co-operation between different cultures is difficult in some ways, but on the other ways it is very much needed and for a person who is working in this kind of arenas, it is a good place to learn how to understand others and one self. Basically some personalities can work across different cultures easier than others, but it is good also for those whom it is more difficult to have this experience. As a matter of fact, an interaction between people has certain common aspects, which are not depending on the differences between the cultures, but more likely unites them and makes them feel similarities as humans.

The world has become smaller in a way by people knowing much faster what happens on the other side of the world. Internet gives you an access to know what your friends are doing in their private life right now at the moment. Nothing can still replace real face-to-face meetings and conversations around the same table. Interaction with people from different countries builds friendships and trust

between individuals and nations. These friendships and trust are needed in today's world to make it a safer place for all of us.

#### 1.4 Diaconia, a Christian social work

Since the beginning of the early church there has been work, which is to help someone in need, and its foundation is in Judeo-Christian faith and teachings. We can read from the Bible that the early members of the church already started to take care of those who did not manage by themselves. It is also noticeable, that the early church members were mostly Jews. There started to be complaints among believers that some of the Hellenist widows were being neglected in the daily distribution. The twelve apostles asked all the disciples to come together and said that they should choose seven men among them to do this practical work, so that they could concentrate into the preaching of the word. They found out, that the result was good; in the book of Acts it is described like this:

"And what they said pleased the whole gathering, and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolaus, a proselyte of Antioch. These they set before the apostles, and they prayed and laid their hands on them. And the word of God continued to increase, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests became obedient to the faith." (Acts 6: 1-7).

They separated men to take care of the practical serving of the needy while the apostles continued their preaching work. It has stayed like this up till the modern Christian church. In the early church this kind of serving work was called diaconia and the workers deacons. That is how the matter is still today. In some denominations the work of a deacon differs a little, but mainly it is different than preaching and mainly serving those who are in need. We can call this kind of work a Christian social work and in other words, diaconia (Olson 1992, 22).

Juntunen & Young are explaining the term of diaconia like this (cited in Jokela 2011, 23, translation by myself):

The foundation of diaconia work has been earlier described that it is meant to support the most vulnerable, to seek for those who suffer most, to face and help people holistically, mentally, spiritually and practically; to support the fulfilling of compassionate love, to forward mercy and hope, to listen the person's story, to defend the weaker, to give them a voice.

What is the difference between Christian diaconia and normal social work? In my opinion there is not much difference from the service users side, but the motivation behind the workers might be different. Social workers' main motives can be based on humanitarian respect, social equality and understanding the value of good deeds, "Do to others as you would like them to do to you". Christian diaconia is ready to support all of these ideologies as well and has at least one more aspect into it. In Christian diaconia you understand that above all, the worker is responsible towards his Creator, God and He gives the worker the spiritual, ethical and moral guidelines.

## 2 DEVELOPMENT PROCESS OF THIS PROJECT IDEA

### 2.1 Idea for this project

As a part of my social work and diaconal studies, I had my international placement in Jerusalem for 3 months in autumn 2012 in an Israeli humanitarian NGO called “Machaseh”, which means refuge in English. This association is helping the poorest of the poor in this multicultural city of many different groups of people and religions. During my placement I got to know many Israelis and many foreigners who live and work in Israel with different kinds of backgrounds. One difficulty I noticed was to find an easy place to live for people who wanted to come for a certain time as volunteers or helpers in many organizations.

Social welfare is not organized in the same way in Israel as it is in Scandinavian countries and this can be one of the reasons why there are certain social problems in some areas in Israel. I have heard that families suffer low income and some have to go to several jobs to maintain reasonable standard of living. I have understood that officially there is no homelessness in Israel, but as the rents are getting higher and the social benefits are not on the level that is needed, therefore there is a lack of cheap homes to live. One reason for this project idea was the understanding of this problem as I have been receiving more knowledge of the every day life in Israel.

Among the other friends and volunteers from Finland came the idea that it would be nice to have a team house for the people who are often coming to Jerusalem. We made some plans already and asked if other people were interested in joining our plan. Soon we found out that it was not possible to have enough people to join our idea. In these discussions we even mentioned tents and cottages as possible ideas and these kept staying in my mind.

I have been interested in tiny houses because of other reasons as well: firstly my work in centers for homeless people, and secondly my practical student life.

So to begin with, I have been working for ten years under the Salvation Army of Finland in Lahti and in Helsinki with homeless men and women. In Finland, the Salvation Army has experience in working with homelessness for over 100 years (Salminen 2008). Often homeless people have many problems, which have caused them to lose their capacity to keep a steady home. Many times the problem is substance abuse, sometimes divorce, depression or mental illness. In this work I have noticed that even a small space to experience ones own privacy is enough to make one feel at home and relaxed. In my experience, having many homeless people living together in a same building with common kitchens and laundry rooms makes people to interact with each other and this seems to improve their mental state.

As I became a student in an adult age, I was interested to find out solutions for cutting the cost of housing for myself. As I have been studying and sometimes having less money than my friends who were working, gave me the idea of finding out different ways to cut the costs of living. I have understood that housing is the most expensive part of our monthly expenses for living. I have noticed a new phenomenon of building small and simple houses to cut the housing expenses.

## 2.2 Phenomenon of easy housing

In recent years I have got the feeling that there has been a growing interest of lowering the money spent in living and to try to find new and cheaper ways of housing. Many single people and couples, before or after having children, now want to try living in a simpler way. Traditionally a lot of effort is used to build a big house for the family and at the same time it means a life long commitment having a big loan from the bank. For most of the families it is a good and safe choice, but not for all.

I feel that it has become a phenomenon to search for simpler way of living. There is a movement and magazines for this kind of simple houses and lately

they have been called “tiny houses”. Many of them are built on a trailer so they are easily taken to other location, when needed. Some municipalities have given land for this kind of living and people are very excited about them. This movement is very popular especially in United States, but it is getting more and more popular also in Europe.

People are questioning the values of the society, which they feel is keeping them only in a status of a consumer who is one small piece of the factory of making profit and concentrating only on financial growth. Many want to be free from this bondage of growth and are ready to downgrade their status as a land and big house owner. They have found that it gives more freedom for their individualistic choices and decisions. Money that was needed to keep up a big house and gardens can now be spent in a different way. This kind of new thinking is getting more popular as the awareness of it is spreading.

In bigger cities it has been a new invention and a concept for solving the problems for housing students. Students don't need so much space while they study out of their own homes and only for a certain amount of years. It has also been an interest for many architectural students to make their studies on how to find a nice compact house for student use. Sometimes they are really well planned and beautiful to see. Some cities have built small housing complexes out of ship containers, changing them to small flats and piling them on top of each other. In this way much space is saved and the cost of living is kept low. For example I read about making small flats for students out of ship containers in Le Havre, France by the architectural firm Olgga Architects. This information comes from Das, on the web page of Tech Journal at [www.thetechjournal.com](http://www.thetechjournal.com).

This kind of concept for making small houses has also been used to give quick help for homeless people. There have been programs in United States to raise money to build up a village like this in several places. One example is “Second wind cottages for homeless” in Ithaca, New York. The information about this project comes from Crawford on the web pages of Indiegogo at [www.indiegogo.com](http://www.indiegogo.com):



In Ithaca, NY which is a small modern city, there is still an area in downtown called “Ithaca Jungle”. It used to be an area for homeless men and women for decades until Christmas 2012. One auto-body-shop owner called Carmen Guidi started to help these homeless and gave them a place to live with dignity. He bought them heated camping trailers and gave them place in his own land. Later he got himself a call to build a village of tiny cottages and he donated 7 acres of land behind his business for that purpose. An organization called Second Wind Cottages was established and their dream was to build up 18 tiny and separate cottages to give these homeless a new life in a community. Volunteers and professionals have been building the cottages with the help of the donations from local people, businesses and churches. Now the Ithaca Jungle is almost empty because these men that used to be homeless are no longer without a home. This concept is going to continue as long as needed they think and hope.

### 2.3 Gathering knowledge through co-operation

How to find good practices to write a project like this? In the beginning it was already clear that I could not develop this kind of project alone. I decided to tell about this idea to everybody who was interested. I made a short leaflet with pictures about the idea, which I could leave behind, if someone showed interest. There were many things that I heard that had to be taken under consideration: what are the regulations from the government’s side in both countries? How are we going to solve the financial matters? How does the project raise awareness? Who will make the architectural construction drawings for the houses? How is the organization for the tiny house village to be established? These kinds of questions came up and quite soon those who made them also started to help me to find the answers.

People have a willingness to help if they see that someone is genuinely trying to create something good for the others. In this kind of project planning it is easy to be willing to help, because every detail is understandable for normal person and

it has many common points for everybody. Many people have visited a summer cottage and some have even built one for themselves, so it is easy to visualize what this project plan is about in a concrete way. Not so much knowledge is available about how to organize and run a tiny house village like this and what would be the rules and the commitment level for those who live there. In these matters I find myself to be on my own, but on the other hand I am the one who has the education for this work.

Homan (2011,97) is giving five conditions one must fill to be able to make sustainable action for the community change:

1. You have to know that action is needed.
2. You have to know what action can be taken.
3. You have to feel competent to perform the action.
4. You have to feel relatively safe to do so.
5. You have to receive sufficient encouragement or fulfillment to continue to take needed actions.

## 2.4 Writing the project proposal

Process of writing the project proposal has been an interesting experience of thinking practically and theoretically at the same time, to combine the background idea for the project and the practical matters that have to be done in a certain order. During the project proposal writing one can see things that have not yet been taken under consideration yet and then one has to start solving them. Some things cannot be solved beforehand, but need to be taken care of, if the project is decided to start later. In the writing process one has to think the project chronologically and at the same time in layers of things that should happen at the same time in different areas.

As the version of the project proposal is in its first edition, there have been used a lot of different style of pictures and much general information to avoid it to narrow the further planning process. As this project is not yet decided to start in real life, there has to be still a possibility for changes when it comes to flexibility for the future needs. The method for writing the proposal is to give future visions and positive atmosphere for the decision makers to see deeper in the core values of the possible project. There have been photos added in the project proposal to give a vision for the reader of how the tiny house village might look like when it is ready. Those photos have been taken from the cottage garden villages in Helsinki area.

### 3 PROFESSIONAL AND PERSONAL GROWTH

#### 3.1 From an idea to a project plan

In the beginning this idea for making a tiny house village in Israel and bringing the material from Finland was only a dream-like thought. My wife and some friends thought that it really was a good idea and they encouraged me. At some point I was still ready to forget the project, because in the beginning there came no interest from the Israeli side. Afterwards I have been thinking that there was not enough information given from my side to show the possibilities of the project. After awhile I got a strong positive encouragement from our partner Machaseh, a NGO in Israel and that gave me a new strength to continue.

Earlier I had already tried some other projects and plans for doing my thesis, but this one was much more interesting. Actually this project contains many aspects that I find interesting professionally and personally. It combines my experience in working with homeless, my studies in community development and my personal interest of the phenomenon of small houses as well as supporting the nation of Israel. It was easy to continue after my idea got support from other sources. Since the beginning whenever I have been explaining this project, it has received a positive feedback and people are ready to help if they can.

#### 3.2 Professional development

Professionally it has been a journey of learning. In the beginning I did not understand how much it would need different kind of knowledge and professional help. It has been a learning process to figure out step-by-step how much more information and details are needed. In this kind of project planning it is impossible for a person who is doing it for the first time to read the right books or find out all the information that is necessary by himself. In this case, much co-operation is required. Meeting with one professional in his field leads to many

new questions that never would have come in mind in the first place and opens up more things that need to be taken into consideration.

This way of developing new things as they come for the first time into one's knowledge in a person who has been educated as a community developer, opens new ways of thinking and solving problems as these abilities now seem to be part of his identity (Hoggett, Mayo & Miller 2009, 77). There is also a danger that someone might start to think and make decisions according to the financial matters instead of the community development's point of view. Making a project, which is firstly practical and is dealing very much with concrete and financial questions might cover up the hoped well being, which indeed is the real goal of the project. This has been one learning experience in a professional way.

One thing that has been a good experience in my professional growth is that the amount of responsibility I let myself to take, strengthens up my ability to handle responsibility. Some things are good to delegate to those who are professionals in their own fields, but there is a certain amount of responsibility that the project leader always has to carry. He has to have a power to say when things start to move too much out of the target of the project's main ideas or if someone who is helping in the project starts to make decisions over the leadership.

People, who did not think of me as a leader or as a project coordinator before, now have to adjust to my new role and especially I need to do it myself. It has been a good learning experience to see this happening. If I keep my role as a leader and the one who is coordinating things, I can see the effects of the new role. It takes time to get used to this professional role, but at the same time it teaches me the things I need to be learning for my professional working life. I can learn when it is needed and I can learn by doing the right things in the right order. Sometimes I need to trust my professional thinking and to make decisions according to my trust.

### 3.3 Personal development

Personally this has been a wonderful experience and it has opened my eyes to see the possibilities we have when we start to do things together. During our studies we learned how much more we could achieve when we do things in groups. Group work was one of the tools we were supported to use during our studies and we all noticed how much difference it made in the learning process. On the other hand it makes the process more complex while doing it, but the outcome is much wider and deeper, because there are many persons who are participating.

Personally in this process I have learned three things: to trust myself, to trust others and to trust God. Everyone has got some level of trust for himself and for others. Personally for me it has been a matter of different times in my life. I have had times when I was very optimistic and trustful for others, and myself for humanity to conquer every obstacle on the way to develop humanity and mankind. At some point I noticed that this is not the case, it is more like the opposite. Human kind is always repeating its mistakes and individuals are hopeless of keeping their moral standards. Thanks be to God that I found another message and good news from the Bible. Personally it has been a life changing for me.

I can see the world as its creator Himself created it and analyze the happenings of the world according to His explanations in the book of the Bible. Understanding the world as given by God has given me more trust in me and in the others. Trusting that if I try my best according to how I see things would be right and believing that others are trying to do their best also, then it most probably goes towards that. Learning to trust goes through giving chances to trust. We never learn to trust, if we are suspicious and doubtful.

### 3.4 From a plan to a real work

At the same time as I have been writing and developing the project proposal, there have been discussions to really start the project. Already in Israel we had a meeting with one worker from a governmental office and another one who is working in the Knesset, which is the parliament of Israel. They were interviewing me about this project idea and how it was supposed to be done. They also gave some good advises for improvement so that it would be more suitable for Israel's needs. In the end of our meeting we all hoped that this project could be started and taken till the end.

If we think about the future and about this project, there are endless possibilities for it to continue and to grow. This kind of project is made to be as a concept and that is why it is also possible to reproduce it to another location as many times as needed. In many churches in Finland there is a strong willingness to bless and help Israel as much as possible. In Finland we also have many people who need practical and meaningful work to do, so we have a capacity to make more wall elements for wooden houses if needed.

Israel always wants to keep good relations with all the countries if possible. When I look at the news I feel that there is a growing tendency all over the world for anti-Semitism, which means that there are more and more Jews coming back to Israel to live for good. Therefore I think that there might be more need for short-term easy access housing before the new immigrants find a permanent home.

As the project proposal has now been written and it is ready to be started as a real project, we all hope that one day we can welcome you to Israel to see this tiny house village in action.

## 4 CONCLUSIONS

### 4.1 People want to help and work together

During many years as I have worked in the Salvation Army, I have noticed that people want to do things together. A person who is considered almost a hopeless case because of alcohol or drug abuse is still very much wanting to be helpful and in contact with other people if there is respectful arena for it. While doing this project plan I noticed also that every person who came to know about it wanted to give me some kind of help. People want to be part of something that is done together and to help someone else.

The Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) (2009a) has a statement about the importance of human interaction with others (cited in Cantle 2012, 103):

The human need to connect with others is as important to our well-being as it ever was.

Lack of human interaction is always harmful and can lead to psychological unbalanced state and depression if it is continuing for a long time. When depressed people have to interact with others, they seem to get better mentally although the interaction might happen against their natural will. If a person would like to be alone, but is encouraged to meet with others, that may still be good for his mental wellbeing.

If this project of tiny house village becomes a reality, it would be a good project and have good results in many levels. First of all it gives good working opportunities for those who are recovering from alcohol or drug abuse and who would work in making these wall elements in Finland. Secondly it makes a lot of people connected inside of Finland and inside of Israel for a good reason. Lastly it is connecting people between these two countries and it is giving friendships



and co-operation possibilities. We can see that these kinds of projects are important and good to improve interaction between people and nations.

#### 4.2 Project needs leaders

Every project and process needs a starting point and someone who is interested to lead it. If the leader or a group of people who are leading the process is excited about the idea, it is easy for others to join it and get interested. Planning this project has been interesting and rewarding also because of the help and encouragement from others. I have understood while being the leader of the idea that someone needs to update how the planning is going on and what other things are happening in this field somewhere else. For me it has been a good possibility for growing personally and professionally. Being the one who is responsible is not an easy position, but in the end it is very much rewarding and satisfying as a process.

There needs to be a leader for the project, but also practically there has to be a project board that is supervising the project leader. For the project board it is good to find many different professionals in their own field to cover as much knowledge as possible. As according to Homan (2011, 346), a group leadership of the project is better if you find suitable person to fill those parts of the leadership that they feel natural to do. Additionally there are basic needs for the leadership group to cover in the organization, which can be described as following:

- ★ Guiding strategic and tactical decisions
- ★ Inspiring and motivating others to encourage accomplishment of tasks, including modeling task performance by assuming your responsibility to get work done
- ★ Providing direction and coordinating of efforts
- ★ Representing the organization to the public

- ★ Negotiating the organization's interests with other individuals, groups and organizations

- ★ Addressing internal issues

#### 4.3 Learning by doing

Thinking theoretically of a good project is interesting, but to start to write a project proposal and to find out real practical matters makes it a learning process and at the same time it connects people. Learning things by doing makes difficult things look easier practically as much as it reveals new difficulties that were not thought about earlier. In this way the plans will change as they get nearer to become reality instead of only being theoretical dreams. Many good ideas are often talked about, but never accomplished in practice. Planning and writing about this project has given a lot of learning possibilities for the writer and for those who have been part of it already.

#### 4.4 Final analysis and continuation

Finally I want to make a SWOT analysis of the project proposal, which means to have an evaluation of the Strengths and the Weaknesses of the idea as well as the Opportunities and lastly the possible Threats of the project.

As for the strengths, I can see the strong willingness of people to make something good together and towards others. In this time of the global situation where many people are suffering of loneliness, mental illnesses, substance abuse problems and other kind of hard situations in life, there is also an inner need to help and to do something for the suffering neighbors. This project idea is supporting the willingness and giving practical ways to give and receive help in a simple way. It is easy to see for everyone that this would be benefitting many partakers and it is generally making good for the community.

If we think of the weaknesses of this idea we might see that this project is still quite limited in the number of participants and in this way it is not going to effect widely inside the community. On the other hand it may grow bigger in the future if the idea is working well, has good results and starts to get support from the society around it.

We can see lots of opportunities if we use our imagination with a positive attitude. We have endless possibilities to get this idea multiplied in number and even to develop new innovative variations of the main idea. It is possible to apply this idea for different kind of needs, like to specialize to help homeless, students, women who are recovering from prostitution and many others. This project concept structure can also be used in another different kind of projects, which have the same kind of structure in community development working field. For example, making easy wooden structures, which could be used for different needs in another country, like chicken houses in India etc.

As for the threats we can easily think of the financial matters, which are depending mostly of the willingness of people to join into this kind of charity-based project. There are also things that may hinder the positive work, like different specific local laws that could be causing surprises, which cannot be all known beforehand. New ideas have to make a way for new thinking and this can be sometimes difficult. This project has a good idea, but one difficulty for it to develop further would be if it were considered more as an experiment than a real ongoing and growing concept.

I think of this project idea as a positive community development plan, which has a good future and an interesting and challenging way ahead. In the end there will be many people who have learned project work, many who have been healed through encountering with other people and a society, which has seen its work valuable and encouraging.

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## APPENDIX

### Appendix 1:

#### TINY HOUSE VILLAGE PROJECT PROPOSAL



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## **Tiny house village project proposal**

**23.11.2015**

### **Introduction**

This is a proposal for a project to ship wooden wall elements from Finland and to build them up as small houses and to establish a tiny house village in Israel and a local organization to run it. A plan is to build wall elements in Finland in a social enterprise by people who are recovering from substance abuse or have other difficulties to find work from the open markets. In Israel the idea is to offer cheap housing for those who need it and a community where one can feel belonging. This project can be planned like a concept and be multiplied later in different places if needed.

### **Background for this project**

#### **Target group and need for cheap housing**

In Israel there is a great need for easy and cheap housing for people who didn't yet find a permanent place to live, for example students, young couples, lone soldiers, people who don't have much money or who are recovering from substance abuse and volunteers.

## Israel and Finland

In Finland there are many people and organizations that would like to support Israel as a nation. This project is one possibility for people in Finland to give support and have co-operation straight with Israel. In Israel there is also a willingness to keep good relations with all the nations. This project is also meant to build friendships and connections between these two countries.

## Goals of the project

The idea of this whole project is to bring humanitarian co-operation and personal friendships between Finland and Israel around a good idea to support wellbeing of people who need easy and cheap housing. One of the goals is to offer low-entry working place in Finland for the people who are recovering from substance abuse. Another one is to establish a village of little houses in Israel to help the housing situation. This project also helps people in Finland to get more information about Israel as a nation and for people in Israel to see that it has many friends in Finland.



## Tiny house village

In recent years, these kind of small houses have been called “tiny houses” and they have become popular among people who have been trying to find new solutions because of more and more expensive housing costs. This idea has also been used around the world to give housing opportunity for those who have difficulties to find a place to live from open markets.

This project has an idea of building many small houses near each other that would be called “Tiny house village”. In this project we are thinking of 12 small houses and one central house for common use. Houses can be built little by little according to the needs and possibilities, or all at the same period of time. There could be one central building in which the village could have common facilities like café, meeting room, information desk, laundry rooms for general use and an office for the community worker.



### **Living and working place for social work students**

This village is also a good place for social work students to live and practice their studies in real world. Students of social work could get their rent for free or get some discount according to how much they are involved in working for the village.

### **Tiny house village ownership**

In this project the village is to be owned by an “Amuta” (NGO in Hebrew). This Israeli Amuta would own these houses and people who come and live in them would pay rent for their living. In this case the idea is to keep the rent quite low. From the Amuta’s side there could be one worker who is taking care of the rents, of the community development work and who would inform the Amuta of what is happening and needed.

### **Tiny house village as a community**

This tiny house village can operate in the “spirit of kibbutz” and even offer working possibility for some people. This community-like living gives good opportunities to meet with other people and it gives the feeling of belonging. The spirit of this kind of village supports that people would have a cozy feeling and could make individual decisions according to his/her own house building and its surrounding, while living in it.



## Working plan

This project idea is to build wooden wall elements in Finland, which would already be isolated to keep out cold and heat. Also there would be roofs and floors made at the same time together with the wall elements. These wall and floor elements and roof structures could be later easily built together as small houses in Israel. This work to make the wall elements would take place in a so-called social enterprise in Finland, which offers work for those who can't easily find work on the open market. Work quality and the level of craftsmanship would still be kept high, and at the same time the work is ethically respectful.

## Moving house elements to Israel by ship containers

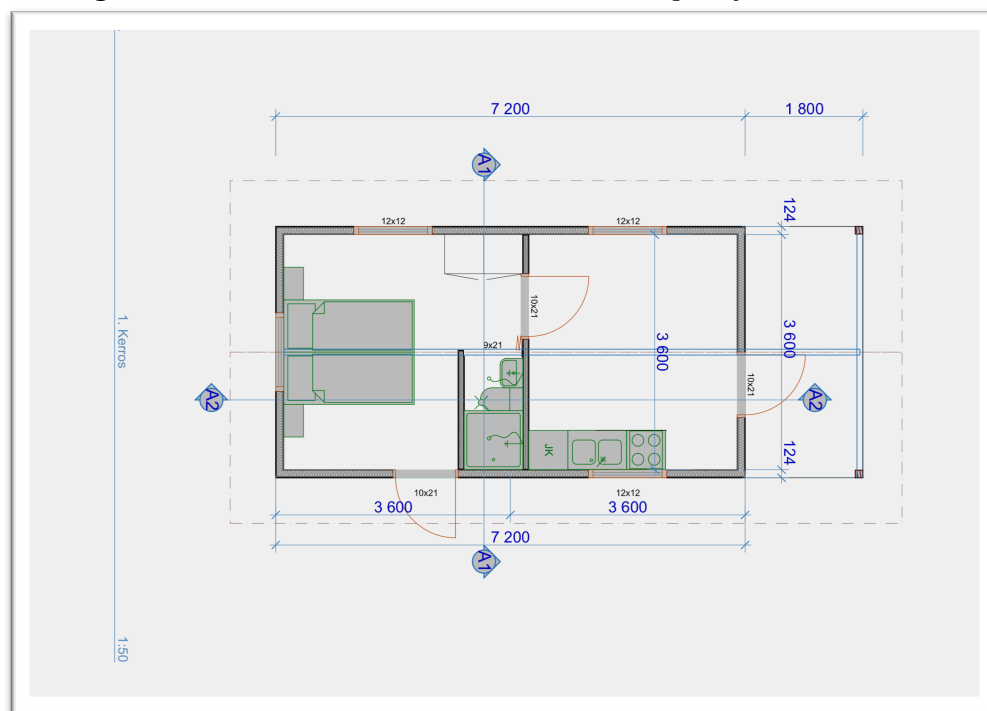
Ready-made elements are loaded to ship containers and shipped to Israel. These elements are very compact so they are easy to pack into the containers very tightly. One container can take inside many houses as packed in pieces.

## Building small houses from elements in Israel

In Israel the elements are taken first to the warehouse from where they are later transported to the chosen building place. There the elements are built together and finalized as ready-made small houses. This part could also be done partly with the help of voluntary people. There are many organizations that would like to take part of this building work. With the guidance and instruction of the local municipality and regulations, volunteers (who would be professionals in constructing work) could build houses under supervision of an Israeli building company.

## Finding a good place for the village

It is important that the place for this village is suitable for this kind of idea. This part needs to be well planned. In this matter the best knowledge would come from a governmental office or from a local municipality.



*Example of the blueprint of one house*

## Organizing the project

This project would have a coordinator who is keeping everyone aware of the current situation of the project. There has already been interest in Finland as well as in Israel. In Finland one non-governmental organization from Hanko and another one from Jerusalem in Israel have already been interested in this project. One building company from Israel has been giving its advice in planning and it is willing to be available when needed later. We are looking for organizations in Finland who would like to be involved in finding a funding for this project.

## Funding

The idea for funding this kind of project is to raise money during the building time in Finland through Finnish charity organizations. While building the tiny house village in Israel, the funding would mostly come from Israeli governmental and local municipality sources. The project funding needs media support and spreading awareness.

## Budget

At this point the budget can only be estimation and it is later decided according to the quality level that is wanted and requirements that are given by the local authorities. Here we can still have an estimation of the costs of the whole project up till the time that the village is ready to start.

In Finland before the building time: Estimated cost

	€ / House
Wall, roof and floor elements made in Finland	600, -
Windows and doors	400, -
Shipping from Finland to Israel	200, -
Transportation to warehouse in Israel	100, -
	<u>1300, -</u>
All houses	1300, - x 12 = 15 600, - €

In Israel during the building time:

Warehouse rent for the material before building	1 000, -
Organizational work to find a place and to start a NGO	2 000, -
To prepare the ground to be ready for building	10 000, -
To build or to renovate one central building	5 000, -
Basic electric work and water work for all the village	25 000, -
Kitchen, toilet and shower for each house	12 x 1 000, - = 12 000, -
Roof and wall cover materials	12 x 1 500, - = 18 000, -
	<u>73 000, -</u>
	<u>+ 15 600, -</u>
	88 600, - €
	366 800, - NIS

### Project board

Before the project will be decided to start there needs to be a project board, which has decision makers from all the stakeholders and one project coordinator. In the board we need participants from both countries, Finland and Israel. From Finland's side we can have a member from the organization, which is taking care of the practical building of the wooden elements of the houses, and one member from the fund raising organization. From Israel side there needs to be a participant from the Amuta (NGO) which is going to be the owner of the Tiny house village and from the organization or a company which is taking care of the building of the houses and the compound.



The project board is making the final decisions in the following matters:

- Timetable
- Budget
- Principles in using experts and volunteers
- Public relations
- Framework of values for the practical life in the Tiny House village

The project coordinator will prepare a detailed project plan before the board meetings after consulting with the board members beforehand.

*These are the different stages of the project, people involved and goals of each stage*

<b>Stage of the project</b>	<b>People involved</b>	<b>Goals of the stage</b>
Planning, finding partners	Project coordinator, possible partners	Preparations for the project, planning the board
Choosing a project board	At least one member from each stakeholder and the project coordinator	Finding the best decision makers who are interested about the project
Preparing a project plan	All the board members and the project coordinator	Deciding about the project plan: timetable, budget, workers, public relations, responsibility division
Starting the project	Project workers, the board members and the project coordinator	Following the project plan and looking for possible changes if needed during the project
Working with the project	Project workers, board members and the project coordinator	Following the project plan and making corrections if needed
Ending the project	Project workers, board members and the project coordinator	Following the project plan and checking that it was done correctly
Evaluation of the project	Board members and the project coordinator	Finding out how the project succeeded and seeing the things that can be improved for the next possible project
Thinking of a possibility for the next project	Board members and the project coordinator	Thinking the needs and possibilities to continue with this kind of project