



*Building Vibrant Local Living
Communities*

From Competition to Co-operation



Awakening Community Spirit

We all finish our journey through life at the same place. By helping each other, we make our journey meaningful and enjoyable for all of us.

We are at a unique moment in history when people are realizing that our current way of life is not environmentally, socially, economically or spiritually sustainable.

We need to, and we can create a better future.



Awakening Community Spirit

There is a growing awareness emerging among people in local communities around the globe that:

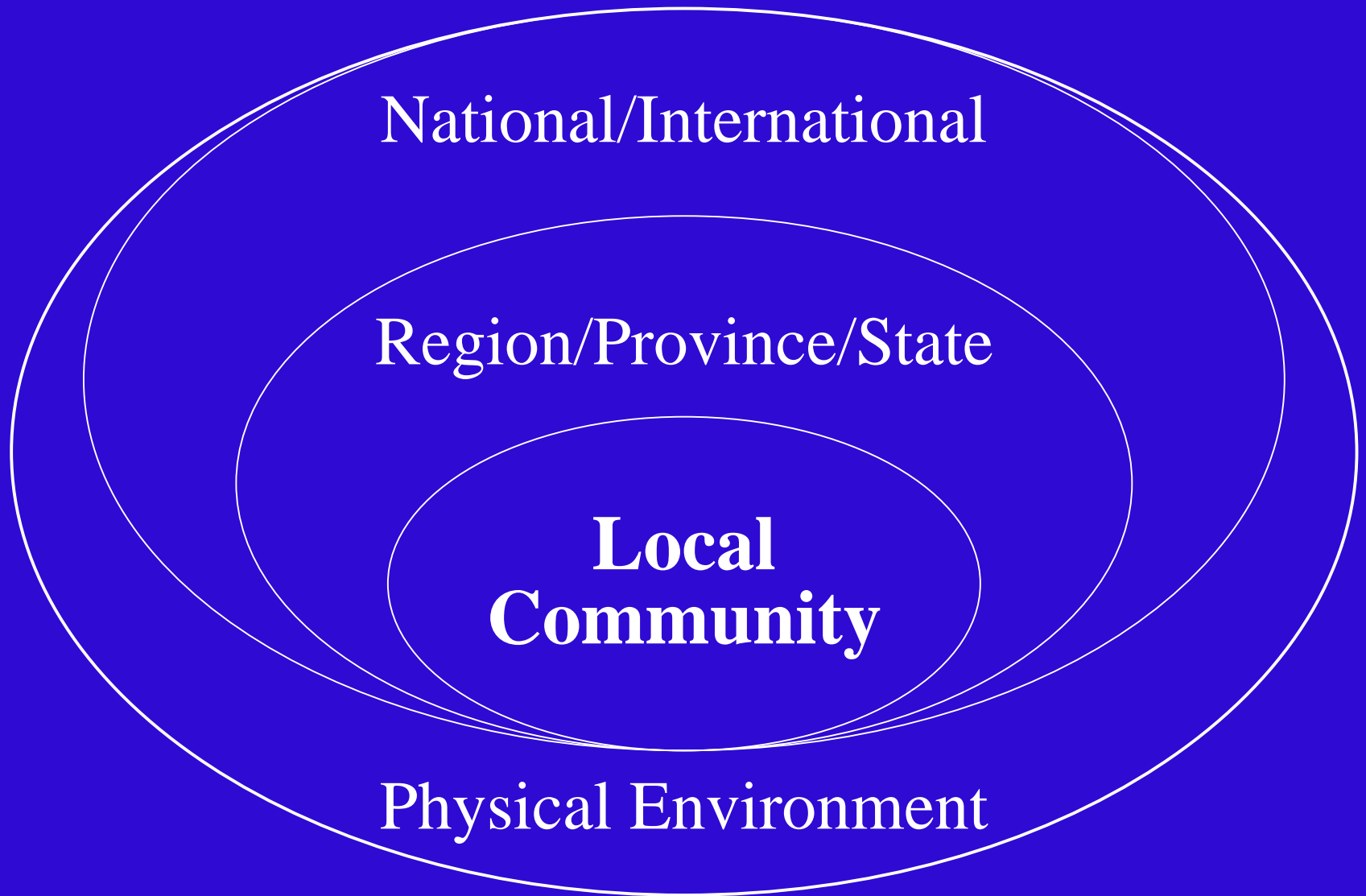
- We are all interdependent members of one human family sharing one common homeland, the planet earth.
- That the well-being and prosperity of each of us is best achieved through working together for the common good of all of us.
- One of the greatest opportunities we have to improve our quality of life both for ourselves and for future generations is through the holistic development of our local communities.

Local Community Definition

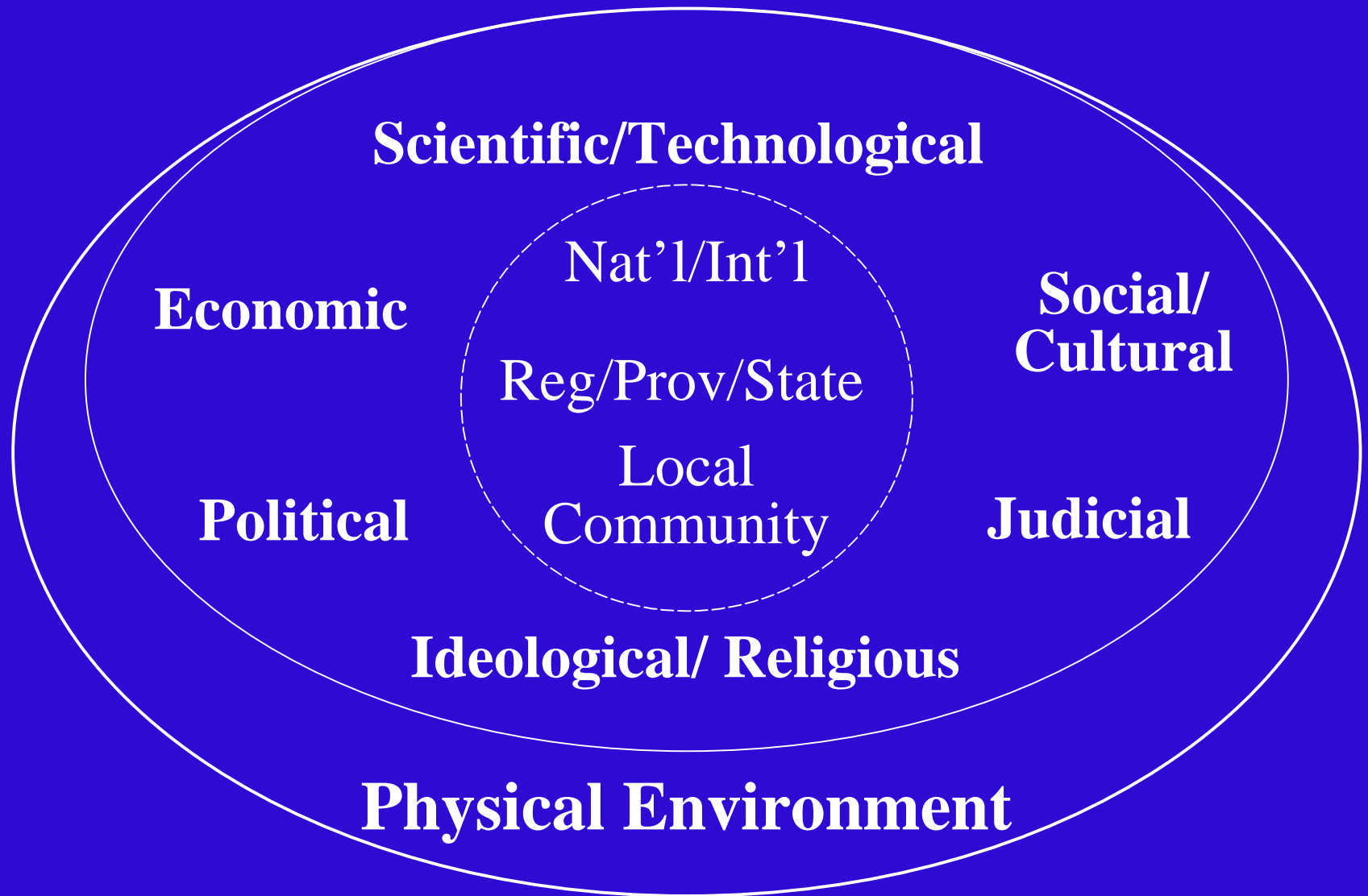
A community is a unique microcosm of the world consisting of diverse people of differing cultures, capacities, economic levels and belief systems served by various government, social, cultural and business institutions encompassed within and interacting with their particular physical environment.

The boundaries of a community vary by social, political, economic, ideological, judicial, technological and environmental systems.

Holistic Community Development



Holistic Community Development



Holistic Community Development

Social/Cultural: individual/community life

Political: sets the rules

Judicial: administers the rules

Economic: provides the material means

Scientific: provides the knowledge

Ideological: meaning, spirit, principles

Environmental: resources and living place

The Purpose of Community Development

The primary purpose, the basic objective, in laying down powerful laws and setting up great principles and institutions dealing with every aspect of civilization, is human happiness; and human happiness consists only in drawing closer to the Threshold of Almighty God, and in securing the peace and well-being of every individual member, high and low alike, of the human race; and the supreme agencies for accomplishing these two objectives are the excellent qualities with which humanity has been endowed. ('Abdu'l-Bahá, Secret of Divine Civilization, p. 60 - *TBA*, p.18).

The Foundation of Community Development

... the Divine religions, the holy precepts, the heavenly teachings, are the unassailable basis of human happiness, and that the peoples of the world can hope for no real relief or deliverance without this one great remedy. ('Abdu'l-Bahá, SDC p. 99-*TBA* p. 19).

Nothing can be effected in the world, not even conceivably, without unity and agreement, and the perfect means for engendering fellowship and union is true religion. ('Abdu'l-Bahá, SDC, p. 73 - *TBA*, p. 19).

Holistic Community Development is an organic process that involves:

- A fundamental change of consciousness from balancing competing self-interests to working together co-operatively for the common good of the whole community.
- Understanding the relationships among the social and environmental systems and developing a vibrant, meaningful, sustainable quality of life for all community members along all these dimensions.

Holistic Community Development is an organic process that involves:

- Creating self-reliant, self-sustaining, locally controlled communities for our current and future generations.
- Contributing to the betterment of the global society in which all communities share.

Holistic Community Development

Social/Cultural: From: self-preservation, disconnected

To: Human happiness: meaning, peace and well-being of every community member

Political: From: adversarial, partisan politics

To: consultative, pluralist participation

Judicial: From: adversarial, process driven

To: restorative justice, just code of law

Economic: From: capitalist, survival of the fittest

To: co-operative, prosperity for all

Holistic Community Development

Scientific: From: fragmented, economically driven

To: integrated, search for truth

Ideological: From: materialism

To: spiritual and social consciousness

Environmental: From: use and abuse

To: balance and renew

Clusters

There are many countries where increased institutional capacity, particularly at the level of the region, now makes it possible to focus attention on smaller geographic areas. Most of these will consist of a cluster of villages and towns, but, sometimes, a large city and its suburbs may constitute an area of this kind. **Among the factors that determine the boundaries of a cluster are culture, language, patterns of transport, infrastructure, and the social and economic life of the inhabitants.**

(UHI, Jan. 9, 2001)

Clusters

". . . National Spiritual Assemblies proceeded with relative ease to divide the territories under their jurisdiction into areas consisting of adjacent localities, called clusters, **using criteria that were purely geographic and social and did not relate to the strength of local Bahá'í communities.**"

(UJH, January 17, 2003)

Clusters

Among the initial goals for every community should be the establishment of study circles, children's classes, and devotional meetings, open to all the inhabitants of the locality.... **Once communities are able to sustain the basic activities of Bahá'í life, a natural way to further their consolidation is to introduce small projects of social and economic development**-for example, a literacy project, a project for the advancement of women or environmental preservation, or even a village school.... The purpose is to ensure that the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh reaches the masses of humanity and **enables them to achieve spiritual and material progress through the application of the Teachings.** (UHJ, Jan. 9, 2001)

Clusters

When the Universal House of Justice called on the Bahá'ís at the beginning of the Five Year Plan to open their study circles, children's classes, and devotional meetings "**to all the inhabitants of the locality**", that phrase signaled a **change in the culture of Bahá'í communities**, a change that is intimately linked with the efforts of the Faith to grow and to embrace humankind. (Building Momentum: A Coherent Approach to Growth)

Clusters

Making a concerted effort to open the portals of our community life to the outside world requires both courage and imagination. . . . Bahá'ís are striving to expand their social circles and ultimately their friendships. . . . Having an 'outward-looking orientation' also suggests that it is important for Bahá'ís to understand more deeply the forces operating on the world stage and the solutions offered by the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh. . . . Adopting an attitude of openness and inclusion will help diminish the sharp line that believers have sometimes tended to draw between themselves and the public at large. (Building Momentum: A Coherent Approach to Growth)

Clusters

"It is evident, then, that a systematic approach to training has created a way for Bahá'ís to reach out to the surrounding society, share Bahá'u'lláh's message with friends, family, neighbors and coworkers, and expose them to the richness of His teachings. **This outward-looking orientation is one of the finest fruits of the grassroots learning taking place.** (UHJ, January 17, 2003)

Conduct of Consultative Sessions

Principles of Consultation

Freedom of Expression: Express your thoughts freely, without belittling the thoughts of others.

Objectivity: Carefully consider the views of others; do not willfully hold to your own opinion

Contribution: Express your views as a contribution to the consensus of opinion; do not voice them as correct or right

Detachment: A view once expressed belongs to the group; do not be offended if a conflicting view is expressed.

Decision Support: Support fully all decisions; do not criticize previous decisions.

Meeting Each Other

- Name
- Where from
- Main “Hat” today (business owner, LSA member, employee, community volunteer, etc.)
- Heart’s desire for this workshop

International Organizations

- The New Rules Project: Designing rules as if community matters.
- BALLE: Business Alliance for Local Living Economies: Building economies for the common good. www.balle.com
- Alliance for the new humanity: one global family.
- World Business Academy: business responsibility for the whole.

Holistic Community Development Characteristics

Local Co-operative Economic System

- Promote human scale, locally owned co-operatives, employee-owned enterprises and private businesses that:
 - Are values-based, environmentally sustainable and economically viable.
 - Offer customers personal service and useful, safe, sustainable, quality products at a fair price.
 - Treat customers as individuals to be valued rather than consumers to be exploited.
 - Where possible, offer customers an experience unique to the local community.

Holistic Community Development Characteristics

Local Co-operative Economic System

- Promote human scale, locally owned co-operatives, employee-owned enterprises and private businesses that:
 - Produce and exchange locally as many products as possible.
 - Source products from other enterprises with similar values, with a preference for local procurement.
 - Provide employees with healthy workplaces and with meaningful, living-wage jobs.
 - Work with suppliers to establish a fair exchange and develop steady markets.

Holistic Community Development Characteristics

Local Co-operative Economic System

- Promote human scale, locally owned co-operatives, employee-owned enterprises and private businesses that:
 - Cooperate with other enterprises in their industry to share ideas whenever such collaboration advances the common good.
 - Support an inclusive, healthy and socially interactive community.
 - Sustain and restore our natural environment.
 - Yield a living return to owners and investors and share profits with employees.
- Promote local investors to invest and reinvest locally

Holistic Community Development Characteristics

Local Social/Cultural System

- Educate community members on the value of
 - Supporting local values-based businesses that provide environmentally and socially responsible products and services at fair prices.
 - Purchasing locally produced and fairly traded goods and services.
 - Adopting environmentally sustainable living practices.
 - Contributing to the role of the community as a model centre for sustainability.

Holistic Community Development Characteristics

Local Social/Cultural System

- Promote local social/cultural events and the arts.
- Create community meeting and socializing space.
- Support community co-operatives offering social services.

Holistic Community Development Characteristics

Local Co-operative Political System

- Promote open/transparent local governance.
- Move from adversarial “Roberts Rules of Order” debate and conflict to applying principles of consultation.
- Set the common good above private interest.
- Proactively involve community in governance through focus groups, word-of-mouth volunteers, website, email communications, newsletters, town halls, etc.
- Change electoral process to plurality system.
- Work with other levels of government to promote vibrant local living communities.

Holistic Community Development Characteristics

Ideological System - Spiritual and Social Consciousness:

- Understand how the practice of human virtues or what some call moral values is the fundamental driving force of individual and community development.
- Recognize there are common virtues revealed in all Faith Traditions and moral systems.
- Be inclusive and unifying rather than exclusive and contending.
- Respect others' belief systems and their journey.
- Understand spiritual truths are consistent with science and reason.
- Educate on virtues without imposing any particular belief system.

Co-operative - Business with a Soul

Purpose: To allow people to co-operate in mutually beneficial enterprises, protecting the autonomy of each member, protecting the intellectual property of each, and yet allowing them to benefit from unity.

Co-operative - Business with a Soul

Definition: A co-operative is an autonomous association of persons united voluntarily to meet their common economic, social, and cultural needs and aspirations through a jointly-owned and democratically-controlled enterprise.

- First Co-operative formed in 1844
- 800 million people worldwide are members
- 4 out of 10 Americans depend on co-operatives
- Diverse sectors, finance, marketing, consumer, resource, - local community, region based

Co-operative - Business with a Soul

Values: Co-operatives are based on the values of self-help, self-responsibility, democracy, equality, equity and solidarity. In the tradition of their founders, co-operative members believe in the ethical values of honesty, openness, social responsibility and caring for others.

Co-operative - Business with a Soul

Principles:

1. Voluntary and open membership
2. Democratic member control
3. Member economic participation
4. Autonomy and Independence
5. Education, training and information
6. Co-operation among co-operatives
7. Concern for community

Practical Measures - Buy local

- Support local values-based enterprises that provide products and services at fair prices.
- Purchase locally produced & fairly traded goods & services.
- Eat in local restaurants, buy from local farmer's markets, local grocers.
- Adopt environmentally sustainable living practices.
- Contribute to the role of the community as a model centre for sustainability.
- Promote local social/cultural events and the arts.
- Support community social services co-operatives.

Practical Measures - Get Involved

- Create local/cluster Bahá'í-inspired enterprises, co-operatives, societies e.g.
 - sustainable enterprises in energy, environment, micro-manufacturing, distribution, service sectors.
 - VBN - Values-based Business Network - a network that develops and promotes a values-based, sustainable business culture in the Capital Region.
 - 'Win- Ing' Community Co-operative - a holistic rural community development co-operative in the District of Muskoka, Northern Ontario, Canada. A plurality electoral process phyllis.ingram@sympatico.ca

Practical Measures - Get Involved

Create local/cluster Bahá'í-inspired co-operatives to promote moral development workshops to demonstrate:

- How the practice of human virtues or what some call moral values is the fundamental driving force of individual and community development.
- The common virtues revealed in all Faith Traditions and moral systems.
- How to be inclusive and unifying rather than exclusive and contending.
- Respect of others' belief systems and their journey.
- Spiritual truths are consistent with science and reason.
- Virtues without imposing any particular belief system.

Practical Measures

- Use business licensing to limit the number of competitors in particular sectors to avoid over-supplying the local community.
- Limit square-footage of retail space to eliminate large chain stores.
- Use by-laws to limit the number of chain stores and “formula” outlets

Practical Measures

- Use tax shifting to benefit holistic development
- Apply smart growth strategies to develop compact, pedestrian/bicycle friendly, bounded, mixed-use urban areas
- Develop community meeting space
- Beautify the community

Practical Measures

- Conduct values-based business training
- Promote community virtues training
- Promote restorative justice, non-adversarial conflict resolution
- Utilize principles of consultation and systematic decision making aimed at arriving at the truth.
- Implement alternative pluralistic electoral model

Implementing Changes

- Not through adversarial protests
- build holistically
- be the change we want others to be
- attract people to the new way
- let attrition change the old ways.

Conclusion

- We are at the beginning of a vast experiment in raising the social and spiritual consciousness of humanity.
- The challenges are great, the road long and arduous, but it is worth it.

Life's journey is not to arrive at the grave safely in a well preserved body, but rather to skid in sideways, totally worn out, shouting "...holy moly! ...what a ride!"

Conclusion

And yet, is not the object of every Revelation to effect a transformation in the whole character of mankind, a transformation that shall manifest itself both outwardly and inwardly, that shall affect both its inner life and external conditions? For if the character of mankind be not changed, the futility of God's universal Manifestations would be apparent. Bahá'u'lláh

Economics Quotes

Equal opportunities for economic advancement and progress, however, must be woven into the very fabric of the new order. Ultimately, the most important regulation on any economic system is the moral regulation that begins in the hearts and minds of people. *Turning Point for All Nations*

On the one hand, people of all nations proclaim not only their readiness but their longing for peace and harmony, for an end to the harrowing apprehensions tormenting their daily lives. On the other, uncritical assent is given to the proposition that human beings are incorrigibly selfish and aggressive and thus incapable of erecting a **social system at once progressive and peaceful, dynamic and harmonious, a system giving free play to individual creativity and initiative but based on co-operation and reciprocity.** *The Promise of World Peace*

Purpose of the Law

Let there be no misgivings as to the animating purpose of the world-wide Law of Bahá'u'lláh. Far from aiming at the subversion of the existing foundations of society, it seeks to broaden its basis, to remold its institutions in a manner consonant with the needs of an ever-changing world. It can conflict with no legitimate allegiances, nor can it undermine essential loyalties. Its purpose is neither to stifle the flame of a sane and intelligent patriotism in men's hearts, nor to abolish the system of national autonomy so essential if the evils of excessive centralization are to be avoided. It does not ignore, nor does it attempt to suppress, the diversity of ethnical origins, of climate, of history, of language and tradition, of thought and habit, that differentiate the peoples and nations of the world. It calls for a wider loyalty, for a larger aspiration than any that has animated the human race. It insists upon the subordination of national impulses and interests to the imperative claims of a unified world. It repudiates excessive centralization on one hand, and disclaims all attempts at uniformity on the other. Its watchword is unity in diversity

(Shoghi Effendi: World Order of Bahá'u'lláh, pages 41-42)

Local/Regional Organizations

- ‘Win- I ng’ Community Co-operative
- Values-based Business Network: values-based, sustainable business culture
- BC Sustainable Energy Association: Seeking sustainable solutions for all BC’s needs
- Centre for Integral Economics
- West Coast Environmental Law: Smart Growth By Laws