

Three Car-Free Ways of Existence to Choose from

Contributed by Jan Lundberg
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- RE-UPDATED - Art contest for depicting lifestyles DONE

We have the winners for our Lifestyles #1, #2 and #3 depicted for our Three Car-Free Ways of Existence. Joining Greg Jalbert's successful entries for #1 and #2 is Woody Barlettani for Lifestyle #3, the ecovillage hunter-gatherer. The winners received Jan Lundberg's new book Songs of Petroleum.

#1: A bus rider in a big U.S. city trundles along on a polyester-petroleum covered metal or plastic seat, letting the big machine's diesel fuel serve him on his way to his stop. He takes a drink out of a plastic water bottle and puts it back in his disposable plastic shopping bag. With each bag, bottle and bus ride he unintentionally drives species extinct, and is a little closer to the end of his life of little apparent meaning. We can't know what's going on in his mind, but it's probably something to do with money or the essentials it buys to get by in the city. Far off oil wars and pervasive cultural genocide at the hands of civilization are rarely if ever given a moment's thought. His health has seen better days before the luster of youth was overtaken by the accumulation of fast food. The meds don't quite work, but their side effects must mean he's getting something out of his prescriptions. He doesn't really miss being able to have a sex life, after that damn divorce anyway.

#2: A bicycle rider, not the sportif athlete or weekend warrior, takes a breath of car exhaust from just ahead. She curses the oblivious driver, but remembers that when she used to drive she never thought about what she was putting behind her for the plants, animals and humans to ingest. But her mind is actively spinning some stimulating ideas, such as putting together her own bike cart. She imagines taking it to the farmers markets that she frequents, and she hopes for their expansion that would block off more of the streets. She pictures being able to barter convivially every day. For now the rent she pays barely gives her a roof over her head, with the combined effort from housemates' incomes. The nice guy living in the living room pays the least. Each day she reminds herself, "I have some skills and I'm adding to them, and might be sort of ready for petrocollapse. But will anyone be ready for climate extinction?" She says once again, "I want a lover but we can't bring a baby into this world."

#3: The hunter-gatherer draws back his slingshot to obtain the basis of tonight's squirrel stew. As he patiently waits for the rodent to actually pause, he thinks of cheating the squirrels out of many of the acorns next year that the tribe could save and eat. Zap! goes the slingshot, and the poor head of the squirrel is knocked out forever. Back at the ecovillage, our hunter-gatherer's mate and their children are getting ready to cook wapato from the bottom of the ponds, flavored with dandelion, plantain, rose hips -- and squirrel meat. Later there will be a story around the fire and some dancing. Then they can forget that all the big trees are gone, and old style dugout canoes can't be made again for a few centuries. But the old fiberglass sailboats still float, and they bring supplemental foods that are traded for by the tribe's meager surpluses. One day, he dreams crazily, we'll taste again the delights of coffee and chocolate brought from the tropics on the wind and waves.

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