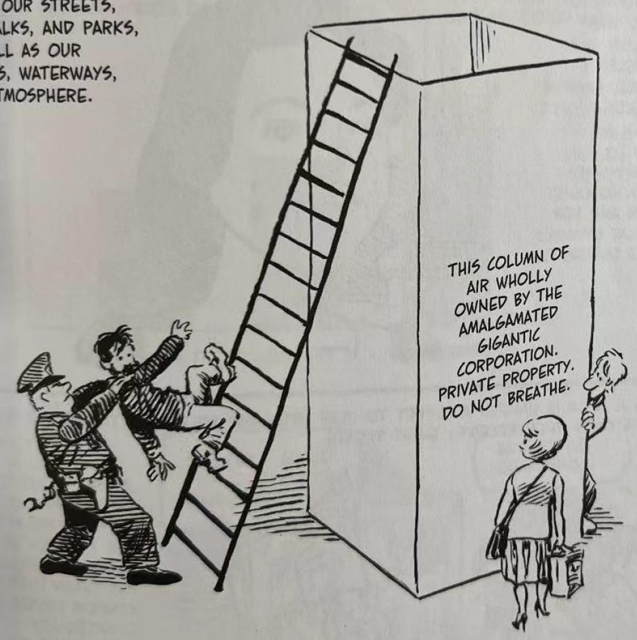
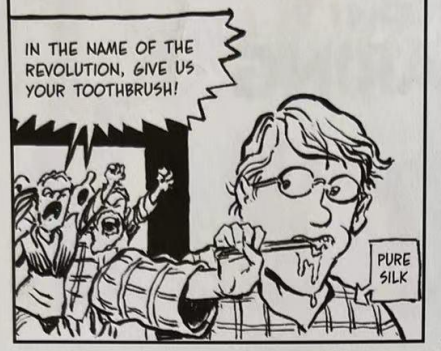
Chapter 9
SHARING

EVEN IN THIS HYPER-CAPITALISTIC WORLD, NOT EVERYTHING IS PRIVATELY OWNED. ALL COMMUNITIES DEPEND ON THINGS HELD AND USED IN COMMON. DESPITE PRIVATIZATION'S ENCROACHMENTS, WE SHARE OUR STREETS, SIDEWALKS, AND PARKS, AS WELL AS OUR OCEANS, WATERWAYS, AND ATMOSPHERE.



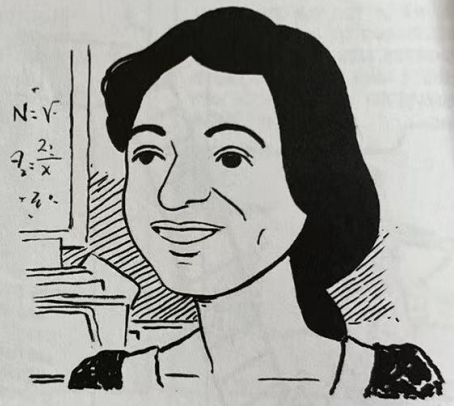
IN THIS CHAPTER, WE DISCUSS MANY WAYS IN WHICH PEOPLE ARE SHARING WITH EACH OTHER, RATHER THAN PRIVATELY OWNING ALL THEIR POSSESSIONS. THIS APPROACH TO OWNERSHIP AIMS TO IMPROVE THE ENVIRONMENT, SAVE MONEY, AND DISCOURAGE MINDLESS CONSUMERISM.

FIRST, WE ACKNOWLEDGE THAT THE THOUGHT OF SHARING CAN MAKE PEOPLE NERVOUS. IT SOUNDS LIKE STUFF BEING TAKEN AWAY.



BUT WE'RE NOT TALKING ABOUT CONFISCATION OR COERCION HERE. IN THIS CHAPTER, EVERYONE'S TOOTHBRUSH IS PRIVATE!

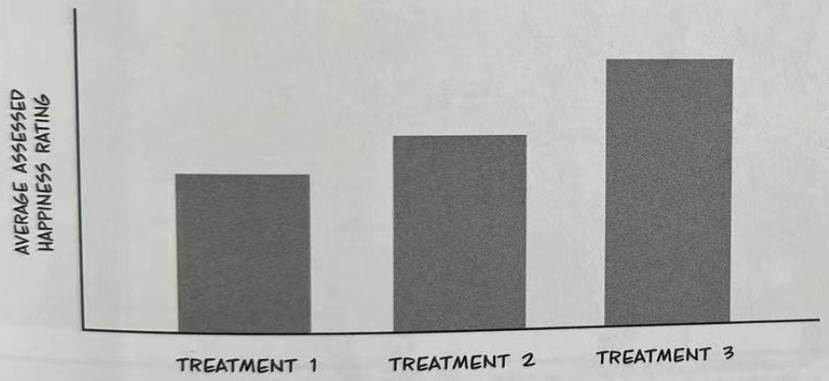
WE MUST ALSO NOTE THAT, DESPITE WHAT HYPERCAPITALISM MAY SAY ABOUT SELFISH HUMAN NATURE, SHARING ACTUALLY MAKES PEOPLE FEEL GOOD. MANY EXPERIMENTS BEAR THIS OUT, LIKE THIS ONE DONE BY PSYCHOLOGIST **LARA AKNIN** AND HER COLLEAGUES AT CANADA'S SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY.



IN THE LAB, A CHILD IS HANDED A PUPPET TO PLAY WITH AND TOLD THAT THE PUPPET "LIKES TREATS." THE CHILD THEN RECEIVES EIGHT TREATS.

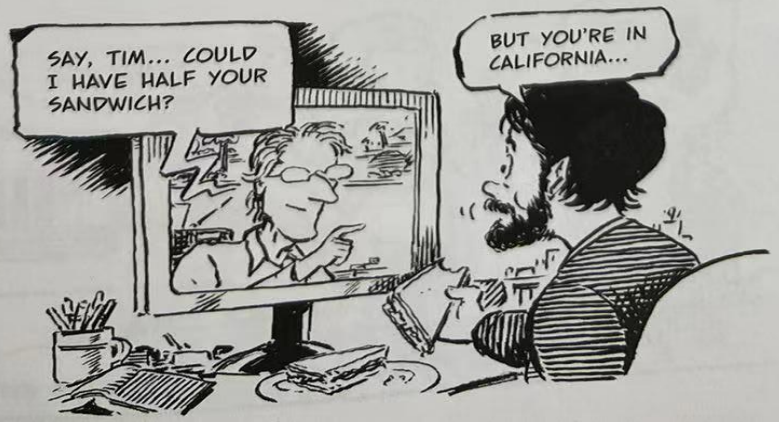
AT THIS POINT, THREE THINGS HAPPEN, ONE AFTER THE OTHER. THE EXPERIMENTER PERFORMS THEM IN RANDOM ORDER, TO COUNTER ANY EFFECT THAT THE ORDER MIGHT HAVE.

THEN ASSISTANTS WATCHED VIDEOS OF THE CHILDREN AND RATED HOW HAPPY EACH CHILD APPEARED TO BE. (ASSISTANTS DID NOT KNOW WHICH TREATMENT PRECEDED EACH VIDEO CLIP.)



RESULT: CHILDREN APPEARED HAPPIEST SHARING THEIR OWN TREATS.

IT REALLY DOES FEEL GOOD TO SHARE! SO LET'S MOVE ON TO SEE SOME WAYS FOR PEOPLE TO DO SYSTEMATIC SHARING.



AMONG THE MOST COMMON AND FAMILIAR FORMS OF SHARING ARE

LIBRARIES

SUPPORTED BY TAXES, THE **PUBLIC** LIBRARY OFFERS ACCESS TO THOUSANDS OF BOOKS, MOVIES, MAGAZINES, MUSICAL ITEMS, AND REFERENCE MATERIALS, BOTH PAPER AND ONLINE. LIBRARIES ARE ALL ABOUT SHARING: A LIBRARY BOOK MAY CIRCULATE THROUGH HUNDREDS OF HANDS, INSTEAD OF JUST THOSE OF A PRIVATE OWNER.

USE A LIBRARY, SAVE A TREE, THEN LIE UNDER IT TO READ A BOOK! (LIBRARIES ARE GREAT RESOURCES FOR KIDS, TOO.)

THE LENDING-LIBRARY MODEL ALSO EXTENDS BEYOND BOOKS.

TOOL

LIBRARIES LEND... WELL, TOOLS. THE U.S. HAS SEVERAL DOZEN TOOL LIBRARIES, WHERE MEMBERS CAN BORROW SHOVELS, LADDERS, POWER DRILLS, AND OTHER EQUIPMENT THAT WOULD OTHERWISE MOSTLY SIT UNUSED IN SOMEONE'S GARAGE.

TOY

LIBRARIES OFFER PARENTS THE LOAN OF TOYS, PUZZLES, AND GAMES. TOY LIBRARIES MAKE A LOT OF SENSE, GIVEN HOW QUICKLY KIDS CAN OUTGROW GAMES (ALTHOUGH SOMETIMES THEY DO GROW ATTACHED).

SEED

LIBRARIES GIVE MEMBERS SEEDS FOR GARDEN OR VEGETABLE PLOTS. "BORROWERS" LET SOME OF THEIR PLANTS GO TO SEED AND THEN RETURN THESE SEEDS TO THE LIBRARY. RESULT: FOOD THAT COSTS NEARLY NOTHING AND DOESN'T COME FROM A SEED-MONOPOLIZING CORPORATION.

IT'S ALSO POSSIBLE TO SHARE **SERVICES** AS WELL AS MATERIAL GOODS, BY MEANS OF A

TIME BANK.*

A TIME BANK CONSISTS OF A GROUP OF PEOPLE WITH A MIX OF SKILLS: MUSICIANS, CARPENTERS, ACCOUNTANTS, COOKS, YOGA TEACHERS, YOU NAME IT. EACH MEMBER HAS A "TIME BALANCE" THAT TALLIES THE HOURS THE MEMBER HAS GIVEN AND TAKEN.

HERE, FOR INSTANCE, **SHARON PLENTY** (AT +7) HAS CONTRIBUTED SEVEN MORE HOURS THAN SHE'S TAKEN OUT, WHILE **MINNIE MINITZ** (AT −4) HAS TAKEN FOUR MORE HOURS OUT THAN SHE HAS PUT IN.

TYPICALLY, ACCOUNTS ARE KEPT ONLINE. MEMBERS LOOK AT THE TIME BANK'S WEB SITE TO CHECK THEIR BALANCES AND SEE WHAT SERVICES ARE AVAILABLE.

WHEN MINNIE GIVES SHARON SEVEN 1-HOUR MANDOLIN LESSONS, MINNIE'S BALANCE JUMPS BY 7 HOURS, WHILE SHARON'S FALLS BY THE SAME AMOUNT.

−4+7=3 7−7=0

LATER, SHARON REPLENISHES HER ACCOUNT BY HELPING ERNIE WAGES MAKE A PIE, AND MINNIE PAYS TWO OF HER HOURS TO WAYLESS SIKOVITZ, WHO FIXES HER BICYCLE.

ETC.!

MODERN TIME BANKING BEGAN AROUND 1980, WHEN **EDGAR CAHN** ORGANIZED THE FIRST "SERVICE CREDIT" ORGANIZATION IN ST. LOUIS. CAHN LISTS FIVE CORE VALUES OF TIME BANKING.

1. INCLUSION: EVERYONE HAS ASSETS TO SHARE.
2. REDEFINING WORK; PEOPLE SHOULD GET CREDIT FOR SOME WORK THAT USUALLY DOESN'T PAY.
3. RECIPROCITY
4. SOCIAL NETWORKS
5. RESPECT FOR OTHERS

TIME CREDITS, LIKE THE COMPLEMENTARY CURRENCIES DISCUSSED ON P. 150, ARE AN ALTERNATIVE WAY TO EXCHANGE SERVICES. AND, LIKE KENYA'S BANGLA-PESA, TIME BANKS SEEM ESPECIALLY EFFECTIVE AT DRAWING MARGINALIZED PEOPLE INTO THE COMMUNITY.

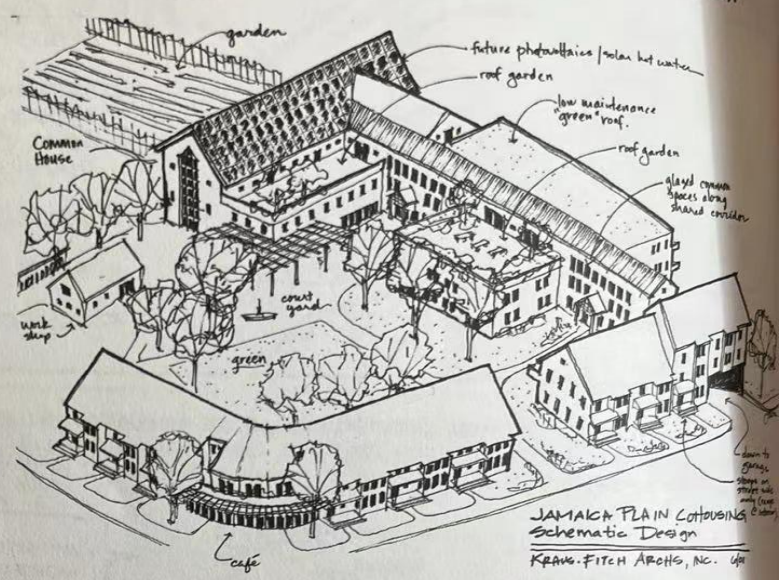
TIME BANKS ARE ESSENTIALLY EGALITARIAN. NO HYPERCAPITALIST 350:1 PAY RATIO HERE! AND BECAUSE OF THE 1:1 PAY RATIO, THE INTERNAL REVENUE SERVICE REGARDS TIME BANKS AS "FAVOR EXCHANGES," SO ALL SERVICES ARE RECEIVED **TAX-FREE.**

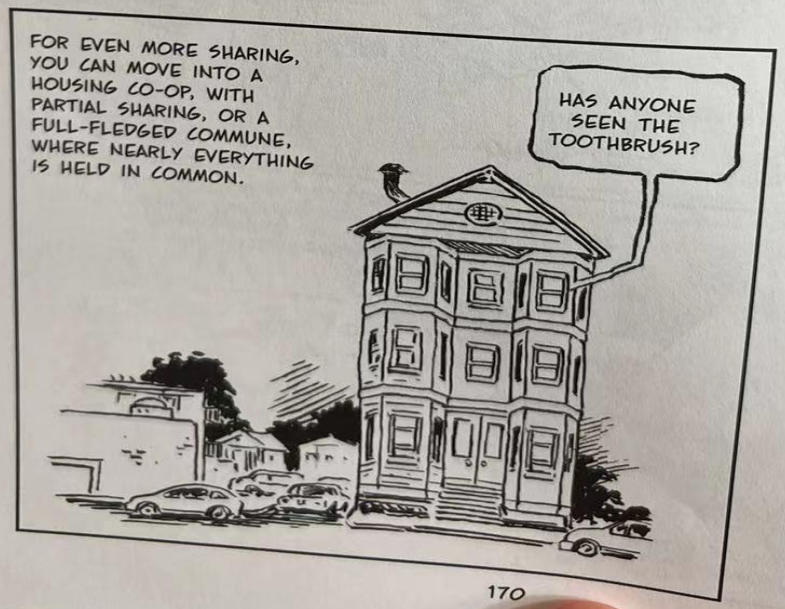
THERE ARE NOW DOZENS OF ACTIVE TIME BANKS IN THE UNITED STATES. YOU'LL FIND A DIRECTORY AT HTTP://COMMUNITY.TIMEBANKS.ORG/

WHEN PEOPLE GET TOGETHER TO SHARE **HOUSING,** THE RESULT IS OFTEN CALLED AN INTENTIONAL COMMUNITY.

CO-HOUSING IS AN INTENTIONAL COMMUNITY MODEL DEVELOPED IN SCANDINAVIA. TYPICALLY, CO-HOUSING RESIDENTS SHARE OWNERSHIP OF SOME OPEN SPACE, USUALLY WITH A GARDEN AND PLAYGROUND, AS WELL AS A COMMON BUILDING WITH A LARGE KITCHEN, LIVING ROOM, AND GUEST BEDROOMS. RESIDENTS' LIVING AREAS ARE PRIVATELY OWNED.

FOR MORE DETAILS, SEE COHOUSING.ORG.





SHARED HOUSING TENDS TO COST LESS THAN FULLY PRIVATE LIVING, AND IT PROMOTES BETTER LAND USE AND MORE SOCIAL INTERACTION BETWEEN NEIGHBORS.

TRANSPORTATION

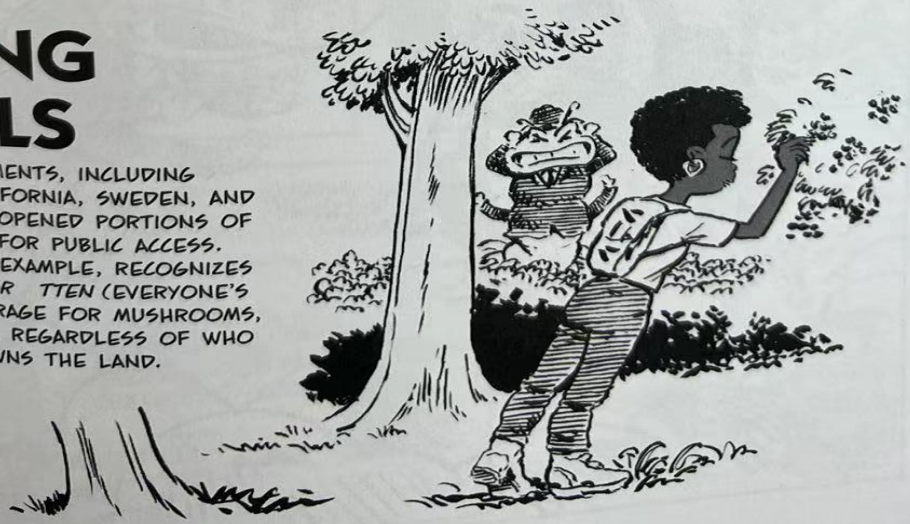
PUBLIC MASS TRANSIT IS A VERY EFFICIENT KIND OF RIDE-SHARING, BUT BUSES AND TRAINS DON'T ALWAYS GO WHERE YOU WANT. MANY CITIES NOW HAVE PROGRAMS TO SHARE BICICYLES AND CARS.

A BIKE SHARER PAYS A MONTHLY SUBSCRIPTION FEE, WHICH ALLOWS ACCESS TO BIKES AT MANY LOCATIONS AROUND TOWN. THE RIDER THEN PAYS A PER-HOUR CHARGE FOR USE OF THE RIDE. CAR SHARING WORKS THE SAME WAY.

RIDERS NEEDN'T OWN THEIR OWN RIDES; VEHICLES ARE USED MORE INTENSIVELY; AND MORE PARKING OPENS UP, TOO!

HIKING TRAILS

MANY GOVERNMENTS, INCLUDING THOSE OF CALIFORNIA, SWEDEN, AND BRITAIN, HAVE OPENED PORTIONS OF PRIVATE LAND FOR PUBLIC ACCESS. SWEDEN, FOR EXAMPLE, RECOGNIZES AN *ALLENMANSR TTEN* (EVERYONE'S RIGHT) TO FORAGE FOR MUSHROOMS, BERRIES, ETC., REGARDLESS OF WHO (OR WHAT) OWNS THE LAND.



YOU MAY HAVE NOTICED SOMETHING DIFFERENT ABOUT THIS CHAPTER: EVERYTHING IN IT DEPENDS ON **ORGANIZATION!**
VOLUNTARY SIMPLICITY (CHAPTER 8) IS ESSENTIALLY AN **INDIVIDUAL** DECISION. MINDFUL BUYING (CHAPTER 7) COMBINES PERSONAL CHOICES WITH SOME ORGANIZED SUPPORT, SUCH AS BOYCOTTS, FAIR TRADE NETWORKS, AND ALTERNATIVE CURRENCIES.
BY NOW IT SHOULD BE CLEAR THAT **ORGANIZATION** IS **ESSENTIAL.** A REVOLUTION OF VALUES WILL TAKE MORE THAN CHANGING INDIVIDUAL BELIEFS AND BEHAVIORS. SOCIAL **INSTITUTIONS** ALSO HAVE TO CHANGE.
IN THE NEXT CHAPTER, WE LOOK AT SOME THINGS THAT CAN BE DONE TO CHANGE **BUSINESS** INSTITUTIONS.
WHAT? **NO!!**