

The Shambhala Community Co-operative : Commentary

2019-01-20:

- What makes one a 'Shambhala Community Co-operative supporter'?

As a first pass at this, a supporter is someone who does at least one of the following:

- contributes \$15 per week to the community fund
- defrays \$15 per week in community expenses
- logs one hour per week in community practice
- contributes one hour per week in supporting a community application
- delivers one hour of work or artifacts valued at \$15 per hour or higher at market rate per week

Weekly contributions can be given ahead of time, in aggregate. However, a maximum of three weeks can pass between weekly contribution or equivalent before supporter status is released. Restoring supporter status requires week to take effect. Duration and breadth of contribution should be recognized and celebrated.

In addition, a supporter abides by the initial statements in the Declaration of Support.

- Is this co-operative in competition with the Shambhala Organization, the Kalapa Court, or the lineage of Sakyongs?

Short answer: no. The co-operative is supportive, complementary, and structurally-decoupled from the Shambhala Organization (ie. has different tax ID, different website, different information systems), the Kalapa court, and the lineage of Sakyongs.

- follow-up: doesn't giving time, effort, and money to the co-operative place it in resource competition with the above structures?

Although the co-operative has no control over what people individually think or the position of other groups, it is the position of the co-operative that our structure is supportive of the Shambhala contemplative tradition, yet the priority is on the immediate and pressing human needs of community on a local or regional scale, for which the Shambhala organization is unpurposed to meet or address.

As a supportive structure, the co-operative presents practical forms and practices presented by the Shambhala contemplative tradition as recorded in publicly-available books. The co-operative may also adapt forms and practices found outside of the Shambhala contemplative tradition as needed, e.g. non-profit governance structure or ranked-choice voting.

An example of the Shambhala Community Co-operative supporting with Shambhala contemplative tradition is the case where a Shambhala Community Co-operative raises funds in order to buy a community center which houses space that a Shambhala Meditation Center, presenting teachings from the Shambhala contemplative tradition, can rent.

Finally, worth contemplating: if a structure purposed with the fulfillment of the vision of enlightened society (such as the co-operative) is seen to be in competition with the delivery structure of the expression of enlightened society (such as the organization), it suggests that the vision of enlightened society cannot be both expressed and fulfilled by that society.

- Can a Shambhala Community Co-operative supporter attend Scorpion Seal Assembly, Year 1

As discussed, the primary focus of the co-operative is on those community inspired by the Shambhala vision of enlightened society self-organizing in order to meet community human needs. The co-operative should be encouraging of supporters who wish to attend any authorized program offering by the Shambhala contemplative tradition.

In addition, the co-operative should be encouraging of supporters who wish to attend any authorized program offered by other, complementary wisdom traditions, such as contemplative Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Buddhism, etc.

- As a practitioner of the Shambhala Sadhana, Sadhana of Mahamudra, or other practices, can I lead or offer these practices at the co-operative? Can supporters participate in these practices?

Authorized practitioners of a particular, non-publicly-available practice or form are requested and advised to conform with the rules, guidelines, and commitments of their traditions. For example, if Sadhana of Mahamudra requires a Shambhala or Vajradhatu tantrika leading the sadhana in order to publicly offer that practice, then those rules should be followed. Known cases of repeated, intentional infractions of these rules may be escalated to stakeholders within that practitioner's respective wisdom tradition, as needed.

Guest presenters to the community may be requested to state their teaching credentials and how the content of their presentation is authorized by their wisdom tradition, as needed.

- How does a Shambhala Center that shares space with a Shambhala Community Co-operative get staffing for its programs and funds for its operations?

A supporter's volunteering to support the operations and programming of a Shambhala Meditation Center can count for the supporter's commitment contribution as the supporter requests.

2019-01-21:

- Does the emergence of a Shambhala Community Co-operative signal a gesture or position of no-confidence in the local Shambhala leadership, the regional Shambhala leadership, the court, or the Sakyongs?

The position of a Shambhala Community Co-operative is that the purpose of the Shambhala organization is the dissemination of teachings, forms, and practices of the Shambhala contemplative tradition. In this purpose, a Shambhala Community Co-operative should support the Shambhala organization, as the organization is the primary source for forms and practices pertaining to sacred fulfillment of the vision of enlightened society.

While the Shambhala organization is peopled with many warm, caring, and concerned people, at the end of the day, their work and time is bound to the purpose of the organization. Programs need to go on, classes need to begin and end, and volunteers need to be roused for organizational work. As the purpose of a Shambhala Community Co-operative is focused on the needs of actual people in the community, supporters of a co-operative can have confidence in both the teachings-disseminating leadership and the community-concerns leadership.

- What is the Shambhala Community Co-operative's position on Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche and allegations (as of 2020) of sexual misconduct leveled against him. Or, what would be the Shambhala Community Co-operative's position on a future Sakyong's alleged or demonstrated malfeasance?

Depending upon the scale and level of malfeasance, the Co-operative may vote to issue a statement of either support or censure, if appropriate. The same would apply to malfeasance within the organization or malfeasance within the co-operative itself, if needed.

A Shambhala Community Co-operative may also vote to issue a statement of either support or statement of censure towards public accusers or those who have received harm or damage by Shambhala organizational leadership, up to and including the Sakyongs.

However, it is the conviction of the leadership and supporters of a Shambhala Community Co-operative that the adopted practices and forms available are still good and worthwhile to practice and work with, for the purpose of meeting the needs of the community.

- If a Shambhala Community Co-operative is supportive, complementary, and structurally-decoupled from the Shambhala Organization, who is its leader and what is its central organizing principle?

The leader, or director of the non-profit entity could be called the dekyong as a repurposing of that Shambhala language. A community co-operative could also be considered a deleg using Shambhala language. The founding dekyong may hold such a position until the deleg has time and energy to hold elections to this position. A dekyong term is a three-year commitment. (Note, during the ABQ Shambhala pilot, this term will go the length of the pilot.) A dekyong may appoint a deleg council in order to delegate administrative responsibilities as appropriate.

The Sakyongs and the Kalapa court are not central figures of a Shambhala Community Co-operative, while a dekyong is simply an administrative coordinator. The central organizing principle of the Shambhala Community Co-operative are the qualities of the Shambhala contemplative tradition, represented by the image of the Primordial Rigden. These virtues are revealed and communicated via the dralas. It is the responsibility of all supporters to embody and inspire in one another the view of sacredness within secular life.

- How does one implement a Shambhala Community Co-operative at a local Shambhala center where leadership and members are already engaged in Shambhala practices and forms?

It might go something like: a local Shambhalian adopts the current Declaration of Support and requests the local Shambhala center council to make time and space to present the Declaration to the local community during a community meeting held at the local center. The local Shambhalian requests interested supporters to organize with them as the founding dekyong. The founding dekyong sets up a method of tracking contribution and works with the supporters to determine the first three or so practices and applications that would meet the present community needs. Initiation processes are forthcoming at this point. However, a dekyong would then be responsible for tracking contributions, facilitating applications, and organizing practice, among other operational processes, including familiarization with current Co-operative policies and processes.

- What place does a Shambhala Community Co-operative have in a center that has a strong leadership, robust practice container, active members, where the center meets community needs, and the members and community support the organization, the court, and the Sakyongs?

A Shambhala Community Co-operative could be considered a practice deleg at a strong center. Co-operative supporters should be welcoming and mindful of boundaries, ie. not overly solicitous for joining the Co-operative as a supporter. The dekyong should make requests of the council for space and time to address the community with updates during community gatherings. In general, co-operative supporters should not unduly make themselves unwelcome at a Shambhala center.

- What place does a Shambhala Community Co-operative have in a center that is struggling with time, money, and resources?

Through the formalization of supporter commitment, a Shambhala center that is struggling with time, money, and resources, could benefit from some cross-over steady dues, volunteering, or practice presence. Alternatively, structural burdens may be present that a center simply cannot sustain, given its size, its schedule, or its financial commitments. In this case, the organizational leadership may have some hard decisions to make. And the Co-operative should be supportive of the organizational leadership in making these hard decisions.

- Can a member of a Shambhala Center be a supporter of a Shambhala Community Co-operative?

Yes. And your dues and volunteering to a Shambhala Center counts towards your weekly support commitment.

- Can a leader within the Shambhala organization be a supporter of a Shambhala Community Co-operative?

Yes. However the Shambhala organizational leader cannot hold a leadership position within the co-operative and the Shambhala organizational leader cannot vote in Co-operative elections or decision-making for the duration of their leadership role within the Shambhala organization.

2019-01-28, 29:

- What are the defining characteristics of a Shambhala Community Co-operative? Are there aspects of the governing structure that do not change, such as a “seed idea”? Which are these?

The “seed idea” of a Shambhala Community Co-operative is laid out in the ideas presented in the Declaration of Support, in the base forms and applications, and in this commentary as a starting point for discussion. However, the intention here is not to create another heavy, top-down structure of management, but to create a lightweight and effective structure that is responsive to community needs.

- How do I know if I am implementing a Shambhala Community Co-operative? And how do I know if what someone calls a Shambhala Community Co-operative is so?

A “base current version” set of declarative statements, practices, applications, policies, and so on can be identified and promoted. Yet, even, pulling from these and altering them or generalizing to another wisdom tradition or another branch of the Shambhala contemplative tradition is not prohibited.

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- What are some of the advantages of a Shambhala Community Co-operative decoupling from the Shambhala organization?

A main advantage to this decouplement is for Shambhala community to continue practicing vitality-raising forms and community care-taking while remaining arms-length from organizational concerns. In this way, the emphasis is on supporters focusing on care practice rather than on educational administrative practicalities.

Another advantage is, if employing a different tax ID, keeping local Shambhala community moneys within the local community as the priority, without the expectation that priority for moneys should go to a central body of the educational delivery organization, such as Shambhala Global Services. In other words, moneys raised could stay within the community without being pulled up the vertical structure.

Another advantage is that Co-operative supporters need not fully or partly buy in to a monarchy governance structure in order to participate in fulfilling the vision of enlightened society, as discussed below.

Another advantage is continuity of practice were the Sakyongship to change hands. The Shambhala contemplative tradition speaks of a lineage of Sakyongs. While one may feel loyalty and commitment to a particular Sakyong, that may not necessarily transfer to the next Sakyong. A Community Co-op could provide an avenue for community to continue practicing and being effective without necessarily having to contemplate this passing of leadership.

- What are some of the disadvantages of a Shambhala Community Co-operative decoupling from the Shambhala organization?

A main disadvantage could be social blowback from suspicion or mistrust as to the intentions of a community co-op. If a community co-op is implemented in an acrimonious community environment or during a difficult time, it could appear that the co-op supporters might hope to undermine the

Shambhala organizational structure. Co-op supporters are encouraged to kindly hold to living the stated values of the co-op in order to demonstrate their support for the Shambhala contemplative tradition and the educational-delivery organization.

Another disadvantage is that the Shambhala organization has time-tested and iteratively-refined policies, procedures, and guidance for their governance structures. A community co-op does not currently have such supports in place. However, this disadvantage may be balanced in time by iterative, distributed refinement of community co-op source tree / foundational documents.

Another disadvantage could be that the Shambhala organization has already put in the work to secure a tax id as a non-profit church. The Shambhala organization also has a guiding board of directors. The Shambhala organization has global services. In a community co-op, while no such high-level support is assured, perhaps less is needed, given the close focus of the mission.

- One communication of the SCC format included the expression, “The idea [of a Shambhala Community Co-operative] is to create an avenue of collaboration for folks interested in fulfilling the vision of Shambhala by engaging in forms, practices, and meeting community needs, but maybe not so interested in the contemplative burdens presented by processing the practice support of monarchy.” What are these “contemplative burdens?”

This contemplative burden would be the burden of having to contemplate monarchy-related power dynamics as these ex-Shambhala teachers have struggled to do:

- Pema Chodron: <https://shambhalatimes.org/2020/01/16/letter-from-ani-pema-chodron/#more-163186>
- David Schneider: <https://shambhalatimes.org/2020/01/14/david-schneider-steps-back-from-the-role-of-acharya/>

There are a number of other, unflattering articles online pertaining to recorded dysfunctions of the Shambhala Sakyongs and their courts, as contextualized by a generally-western perspective. While a co-op supporter should be aware of these criticisms, the focus of the co-op is on community care and practicing forms among present supporters in order to fulfill the vision of enlightened society, rather than trying to evaluate one’s own, oftentimes abstract relationship to locally-absent or deceased Shambhala lineage figures.

In addition, “contemplative burden” is not merely speculative or theoretical at a local level. Indeed, one of the inspirations for initiating a Shambhala Community Co-operative came from my discussion with a newer, local community member imploring me after she read Pema’s resignation letter as to whether there was a way to practice Shambhala without the need for a Sakyong. During our hour-long conversation, which my wife said I handled with good equanimity, I listened to this member’s concerns while reminding her that monarchy is part of the DNA of the Shambhala contemplative tradition. She appreciated my time and we parted on good terms, but then I thought afterwards, why should contemplating the governance structure of monarchy need to impose itself upon this woman’s practice and contribution to the local community and the wider world?

Also within the first week of of the inspiration for initiating a Shambhala Community Co-operative, I was forwarded an email that a member in another local center sent to their community, seeking dialogue on “what discussion there has been at the local level of severing ties with shambhala and continuing on as a local unaffiliated buddhist center” also writing, “i miss my sangha. i miss my practice, i miss my naivete, when i thought that shambhala was somehow different from the rest of the world. better. above things like drunken sexual assault...” and asking, “why aren’t we seriously discussing separation from shambhala and the sakyong until they prove they’re worthy of our trust?” I believe the burden this member is expressing has less to do with upset at human fallibility and more to do with upset at a fallibility he may consider beneath himself demonstrated by a central figure held above him by those practicing teachings he considers inspiring. So again, why should contemplating

the governance structure of monarchy need to impose itself upon this man's practice and contribution to the local community and the wider world?

One last point to consider: taking on the contemplative burden of a Sakyong's actions that conflict with social norms and mores may make us less available to contemplate and respond to the burdens of those around us.

- If a Shambhala Community Co-operative is supportive of the Shambhala organization, doesn't that mean that they support the Sakyongs and their court as well?

The co-operative is supportive of the organization as a conduit of teaching on creating or realizing enlightened society. In that the organization performs its function well, the co-operative is supportive of it. If, for example, the organization stopped providing high-quality forms and practices with accompanying teachings from the Shambhala contemplative tradition, the co-operative could be content practicing what they have, or the co-operative could be content exploring and adapting forms from other traditions.

While the central image of the co-op is the qualities of the Shambhala contemplative tradition as reflected by the Primordial Rigden, the co-op should acknowledge that the people who sit in the seat of the Sakyong are trying to embody these qualities as well, and to give guidance based upon the 'better dralas' of their natures. With this, co-op supporters should give benefit of the doubt towards the teachings, attempt to try them out to see how they work, and develop the ones that work best for them individually and as a community within a co-operative.

- Can I make a Trungpa Rinpoche Teachings-Only Vajradhatu Community Co-operative?

Sure thing, just adapt the SCC formative documents to fit your needs. You could also do the same for whatever other tradition is the conduit for your co-operative. If you are relating to a Shambhala Center any more at that point, please be respectful of the mission of that center in delivering teachings from the Shambhala contemplative tradition.

- How essential to a Shambhala Community Co-operative is the use of the Shambhala contemplative tradition terminology of Dekyong and Deleg?

The use of Dekyong and Deleg may help frame the activity of the community co-op in Shambhala language. If the center leadership or the organization feels strongly that these terms are protected or prohibited from use or repurpose by a co-op, the community co-op can use more natural terms like coordinator, coordination council, supporter, and support council to reflect roles within the co-op.

- What are the function and application of the councils within a Shambhala Community Co-operative?

The coordinator may need to appoint helpers to fulfill their responsibilities to the co-operative. These appointments would make up the Coordination Council / Dekyong Council. The coordination council could be likened to a general manager with a team of general program and project managers.

The supporters may need to elect a council to fulfill wider community needs such as the determination of use of funds. These elected positions would make up the Support Council / Deleg Council. The support council could be likened to a collaborative team of program managers.

The arising of these councils is optional, determined by the size and work of the co-op.

- What might the lifecycle of councils look like?

TBD, but something like the coordinator requesting someone to be on the coordination council for new work, such as onboarding a new application. When the work is operationalized, supporters

voting for someone on the support council (already present on the council or to be added) to be delegated to continuing the work.

- What is the proper sizing of councils?

TBD, but based upon size of supporter community and number of applications.

- I'm curious about cross-over dues. Is the idea that some of the Co-op's dues would transfer to the associated Center - **if** (and only if) the associated Center lacks financial stability?

The idea here is more that the co-op supporter could pay dues of \$15/wk to their local center and count it as their co-op support requirement for that week.

- Would the Co-op have a say as to how [cross-over] dues are spent by the Center?

The co-op supporter can initiate discussion about donation restriction (ie. restriction of donation to certain purposes) with the center. The co-op leadership should have no guidance on how the center spends the funds the member gives, although the Shambhala center community should be involved in the overall discussion of how the center spends its funds.

However, if a co-op has its own community fund, the co-op leadership may make either restricted or unrestricted donations to the center or the co-op may make investments in assets used by the center as directed by the supporters through a vote.

- I'm unclear about financial support from Co-op members. Would they be paying a total of \$60 per month?

\$15/wk or \$780/yr in cash support to the co-op, or

\$15/wk or \$780/yr in defrayed community expenses, or

1 hour/wk or 52 hr/yr in community practice, or

1 hour/wk or 52 hr/yr supporting a community application, or

1 hour/wk or 52 hr/yr of vocational work-equivalent in support of community, or

\$15/wk or \$780/yr of vocational products delivered in support of community, or
any combination of the above such that all weeks in a year are covered.

Note that the above activities could be logged, tracked and recognized at community celebrations.

2019-01-31 :

- "I am currently a member of a Shambhala meditation center, but on my way out of the community. I was invested in this path at one point, but I feel hurt by plausible allegations of abuse I have heard against the Sakyongs and/or the organization in general for permitting or accommodating a culture resulting in what has been called 'institutional betrayal' against members and ex-members. How will participating in a Shambhala Community Co-operative address these concerns?"

From my experience, some hurts benefit from processing in a space held by others, which a co-operative can provide, while some hurts may require limitless internal space to process. I think the internal space to process hurt for ourselves is discovered in the mind of meditation, which supporters of a co-operative rediscover continually by engaging in that practice together.

While I have met a number of soothing people during my time connected with the Shambhala contemplative tradition, I believe what could characterize them best is a palpable sense of their having worked with their own mind, becoming comfortable in their own skin with who they are, displaying a combination of having little-to-nothing to prove and yet, being genuinely inquisitive about my

perspective and my concerns: my own Current Situation. And certainly not attempting to play my personal concerns down under some bigger, community-wide Current Situation drama or other.

I believe that a contemplative tradition gives us tools to deeply self-soothe, even in difficult times. I believe that the tools of the Shambhala contemplative tradition work. And I believe that the resulting contentment from this self-soothing naturally overflows to others. I also believe that when we are not fully diligent in this work, not steady in our resting, we can lose contact with our heart and act callously towards others, which can, in a contemplative space or relationship, amplify our thoughtlessness or self-centeredness into a deep hurting of others.

Please note that when I use ‘we’ and ‘our’ here, these are my own perceptions of how people generally work. These are not prescriptions.

Plausible allegations of abuse have been made against the Sakyong, the Shambhala organization, or lineage figures of the Shambhala contemplative tradition. Future plausible allegations may come to light. While each supporter may have differing personal views, the co-op can craft a statement on these allegations. This can happen once, or as often as needed, as new information becomes available. The spirit of this statement should be a recommitment to sanity and kindness, understanding that basic goodness is the ground of our shared perspective.

However, the point of a Shambhala Community Co-operative is not to assuage concerns, to normalize dysfunction, to counterbalance, to remediate, to legitimize, or to otherwise validate malfeasance or unethical behavior or alleged behavior coming from people or figures within the Shambhala organization, including the court and Sakyongs.

A co-operative may make statements, the supporters may make personal decisions regarding their personal involvement with the Shambhala organization, but I feel the Shambhala organization itself needs to address issues arising from within the organization skillfully or ask for outside help to do so.

Again, the point of a Shambhala Community Co-operative is to engage in practice, forms, and gathering to meet the needs of the local community as a means of fulfilling the vision of enlightened society.

- How does a Shambhala Community Co-operative propose to free itself from a legacy of ‘institutional betrayal’ that some feel the Shambhala organization is mired in?

The possibility ever exists that a Co-operative could descend into an inherited form or even its own form of ‘institutional betrayal’. Personally, I believe that ‘institutional betrayal’ is a phantom-yet-active social-energetic residual that comes from aggregated moments of interpersonal betrayal—vertical or horizontal—over time: transgressions that were not properly resolved. Improper resolution could be shaped by obstacles such as cultural threads of spiritual bypassing or perfectionism, policies encouraging silencing or learned helplessness, or by key figures in power resorting to coarse-minded victim-blaming or victim-shaming as a matter of expedience or personal cowardice.

So, one approach to preventing causes of ‘institutional betrayal’ from developing momentum or calcifying could include:

- Developing policies and procedures for handling interpersonal betrayal that may happen at varying levels between people from time to time.
- Developing communication and awareness around personal and institutional betrayal.
- Ensuring elections to positions of leadership that allow different supporters access to working with ‘power-literacy.’
- Sharing the co-operative’s story with various outside groups in order to gauge variances from other group norms.
- Participating in a diversity of wider, general cultural offerings in order to gauge group and individual variances from societal norms.

The point here is not to conform to or blend in with wider society, but to be conscious of variances between the co-operative and other groups, and to work proactively with potentially-detrimental ones.

- "The Shambhala Community Co-operative is declared as a supportive structure to the Shambhala organization and Shambhala contemplative tradition. Can this support be on a conditional basis and/or can this support be severed by a co-operative?"

As stated above, a Shambhala Community Co-operative model can be repurposed to support other wisdom traditions, as appropriate. I suppose that a structure could also be created which supports no living lineage-holder of any particular tradition. If the central image of that "severed" co-operative is not to be the qualities of the Shambhala contemplative tradition, that co-op should probably be called something other than a "Shambhala" Community Co-operative.

- "Is one of the goals for the Shambhala Community Co-operative model to be accepted by the Shambhala Hierarchy and implemented broadly?"

This is not a stated goal of Shambhala Community Co-operatives.

A "base case" for a Shambhala Community Co-operative could be even a single person practicing on their own, in support of others in their daily life, not even necessarily within a Shambhala community, e.g. living in a town or city that has no center or group. However, the "general case" of a Co-operative is for folks connecting with the Shambhala contemplative tradition to practice in this way, together.

Recall also that the co-operative leadership should not be taking directives from the Shambhala organization, up to and including the courts and the Sakyongs.

In general, it is so nice to be loved and accepted by those whom you respect and wish good things for. So, we aim to fulfill this need within our community of supporters, so that the resulting joy may increase.

- You speak of the activity of a Shambhala Community Co-operative as "meeting needs" of the community. Can you speak more to what needs a co-op aims to meet? How can community needs be met by people who are not professional therapists / trauma informed / deeply realized, etc.

Maslow's hierarchy of needs could be a helpful model to discuss needs. As a Shambhala Community Co-operative is, in spirit, a 'bottom-up' or initially 'grass-roots' structure, the emphasis on meeting needs would begin at the bottom of the hierarchy--food, health, and shelter—and move up to safety, belonging, and so on.

A priority would be on supporters developing literacy with expressing their needs in a way that others can hear these needs and in a way that these needs can be met, which involves some environment of trust for such communication can happen. Communication skills such as Nonviolent Communication, Mindful Communication, or Relationship Enhancement can be used to build trust and express both needs and healthy boundaries in relation to meeting these needs.

It is correct, however, that there is no expectation or assurance that Shambhala Community Co-operative supporters are professionally trained. If one does need professional help, then this is something a co-operative should consider supporting--financially, socially, or whatever is appropriate.

If a supporter feels they have needs that are not being met by the co-operative but that are not necessarily addressed through professional help, such as with systemic social issues, the supporter whose needs are not being met should feel encouraged to create a 'lean-in' event or field trip, in order to give other supporters in the co-operative an opportunity to empathize and better understand how to meet these needs.

While sexual or other intimate needs may appear latent or subdued in a friendly environment, one should be mindful that these needs are present to varying degrees within full-spectrum human

beings. The key for making requests and meeting needs of this nature within community is consistent communication of consent between parties while moving toward intimacy. Consider setting reasonable limits on requests of your fellow community for meeting your intimate needs.

- What does a co-op do when there are difficult interpersonal or ideological conflicts within the co-operative itself? For example, if half of the supporters fundamentally want the co-op to be one thing, e.g. focusing on general Buddhist practices and language, and half of the supporters fundamentally want the co-op to be another thing, e.g. focusing on Shambhala practices and language.

It may be worth splitting into two co-operatives at that point. These co-ops could actually still support each other through resource-sharing. A single supporter can also be in two or more co-operatives, though their contributions should not transfer between co-operatives. For example, one could give \$15 to their Shambhala co-operative and practice together for one hour with their Buddhist co-operative in order to maintain supporter status in both co-ops for that week.

2019-02-02 :

- Is a Shambhala Community Co-operative a faction or a splinter group of Shambhala?

In relation to the Shambhala organization, a Shambhala Community Co-operative could be thought of more as an ordinary buttress to a building. If the walls of a building are fractured and splintering, the buttress may not be able to keep the building from collapsing, but the buttress should be able to stand in its own.

2019-02-06 :

- Is the point of a Shambhala Community Co-operative to keep and possibly increase the number of dues-paying members for the Shambhala organization who would otherwise wish to depart or not join the Shambhala community due to negative, abusive, or disillusioning experiences with the Shambhala organization?

A Shambhala Community Co-operative is a structure for people who are inspired to fulfill the vision of creating enlightened society by working together to meet shared needs while holding a view of sacredness. Supporting a co-operative does not necessarily consist of giving money, as discussed before. Supporters are free to engage or disengage as they feel inspired to or as they feel is necessary.

There is no promise or guarantee made by a Shambhala Community Co-operative of keeping or possibly increasing the number of dues-paying members for the Shambhala organization. Indeed, a Shambhala Community Co-operative's business plan should have scaling scenarios including a very small implementation: for example, one or two people operating together within a Shambhala household.

In principle, negative, abusive, or disillusioning experiences with the Shambhala organization should be addressed by the Shambhala organization. However, if such address is not forthcoming, a co-op can implement a listening support-group as an 'application' (similar perhaps to a Heart of Recovery group) for those still affected by or having survived such negative, abusive, or disillusioning experiences.

Keep in mind that supporters may be coming in to the co-op set upon by group or institutional trauma acquired from outside of the context of the Shambhala organization and that these people may need supportive listening as well. Also please remember to prioritize self-soothing and cohort-group work over relying heavily upon new folks or folks without a shared context in order to reconcile or integrate negative, abusive, or disillusioning experiences.

- I think the co-operative model does not go far enough for people who have experienced (or who deeply empathize with) the kind of trauma that has been going on in the Shambhala community. What

commitment does a Shambhala Community Co-operative have to supporting and / or healing this trauma?

The Shambhala Community Co-operative model itself provides space and gathers supporter focus for interacting in the spirit of fulfilling the vision of enlightened society. Through working together, through practicing together, trust and rapport can be built among supporters. In focusing on basic tasks first, the intent is to provide some kind of “cool boredom” presence and healing.

To be clear, the co-operative model is not intended to heal deep wounds and trauma, but to engage in this boring, mundane work, infusing it with sacredness. That said, if the supporters of a particular co-operative wish to prioritize trauma work—organizational, racial, sexual, gender, etc., there is no reason why they could not create one or more ‘applications’ to fulfill these needs (again, perhaps like a Heart of Recovery group, or a regular listening circle for sharing experiences and insights)

The benefit of not going focusing on addressing trauma, is that the co-operative remains flexible so that community interaction does not organize itself around a single level of needs-to-be-met. Supporters should also work to ensure each other’s basic needs are met, as per the hierarchy of needs, discussed earlier.

- For many, hierarchy is seen as the perfect structure for the abuse of power. Many Shambhala centers are now experimenting with non-hierarchical, community-based governance, along the lines of Theory U – which the Shambhala Board proposed centers look into. Many Shambhalians took these classes and have brought techniques of community-based leadership back to their centers. What is a Shambhala Community Co-operative’s commitment to non-hierarchical, community-based governance? Is some standard proposed such as complying to the principles of Theory U? How do supporters of a Shambhala Community Co-operative work with hierarchy and power?

Yes, power is an interesting topic. Speaking to a Shambhala friend recently, I wondered if Shambhala has less of a power-imbalance problem, than a power-illiteracy problem. As I wrote to her, in the Buddhism, we have the three archetypal bodhisattvas in our mahayana tradition, which respectively represent wisdom, compassion, and power. In my nearly 18 years in Shambhala, I have heard much wide teaching and discussion on deepening wisdom and deepening in compassion, but not so much on deepening in power. And I can’t help but wonder who benefits from that.

So, I do believe it is important to work with power actively. This includes working with human organization, its politics, its benefits and its shortcomings, seeing what it is like to receive decisions and what it is like to make decisions. I believe working more fully with power and developing power-literacy in community will have an educational, illuminating effect similar to how sex-ed taught in school can help to empower young adults in intimacy literacy.

Two obstacles I think a non-hierarchical, community-based governance approach should look out for are: “no one in charge means everyone in charge”, and “trading explicit hierarchy for implicit hierarchy.”

“No one in charge means everyone in charge” means that, in a flattened hierarchy, since no one has the perspective to delegate, intercommunicate, and be accountable to fulfilling a coordinated process, the community must engage in perpetual, piecemeal effort-raising. This could be at odds with a member/supporter’s desire to come to a practice session knowing that others are doing their part to support the space, as the member/supporter could be called on at any time to fulfill an immediate task that could have otherwise been organized ahead of time. This could lead to overwork and burn-out for a few, since no one may be watching the overall picture. Or, since everyone would need to watch the overall picture, people may have to begin self-promoting in order to acquit themselves of ongoing leader-community analysis about whether other member/supporters are pulling their weight. Member/supporters might then begin to think twice about coming to the center to do the dishes that no

one else has done, or possibly coming to the center to be asked if they have considered doing the dishes lately.

“Trading explicit hierarchy for implicit hierarchy” means simply that people with soft skills and social skills are now at the top of the hierarchy but without any role-based responsibility. I think some folks may actually prefer this, but then, people who are wary of charismatic leadership may not enjoy an absence of explicit hierarchy to appeal to in case of feeling unduly leaned-upon.

Perhaps Theory U addresses these obstacles. If so, wonderful! Some of the spirit of the Shambhala Community Co-operative in placing the qualities of the Shambhala tradition as its central image and laying the responsibility to hold sacred view across all supporters is to allow for a non-hierarchical expression of spiritual community. Implicit hierarchy drawbacks could still apply here. However, since the recommended administration of a Shambhala Community Co-operative is hierarchical, there should be room for sanity and balance between the flat and vertical aspects.

Another full topic to discuss briefly here is that there is no inherent reason a Shambhala Community Co-operative structure could not itself scale up to higher levels of organization, such as for an urban area or climatic region. This would then require hierarchy for communication, coordination, and alignment. However, the direction of the energy should remain bottom-up, for needs and decision-making, with lightweight, rotating coordination at the top.

All that said, if a Shambhala Community Co-operative would like to pilot a non-hierarchical, community-based governance model, that co-op could simply do so, altering the SCC formative structure as needed in order to implement.

Finally, I think that Shambhala community should be able to start up a community co-operative without needing to heavily study organizational theory, theology, intersectional justice, or trauma therapy. The idea is to jump in and get started on the “cool boredom” of people helping people in a basic way without engaging in too much paralysis of analysis. The aim is for a lightweight structure where people can gather and help each other and learn as they go, making mistakes along the way. The aim is certainly not trying to get it perfect the first time, out of the gate.

- When it comes to sexual abuse or misconduct, our whole society is great at paying lip-service to justice and care for victims, but I think we collectively are very willing to allow such crimes and their victims to be placed on the ‘back-burner’ while we focus on seemingly more important matters in our lives, such as “getting back to normal” which may only serve to maintain the status quo. What is a Shambhala Community Co-operative’s commitment to placing these issues on the ‘front burner’? How does a Shambhala Community Co-operative aim to meet its supporters’ needs for being in a safe environment with community?

I think this is another interesting topic that finds me at the edge of my understanding. I think there is an aspect of self-soothing and emotional moderation that comes from meditating over time that does allow the mind to “get back to normal” after an injury or abuse. I believe our experience becomes informed by some continuity of ordinariness accompanying the space discovered in mindfulness/awareness practice. Is this kind of practice something people are still interested in?

Personally speaking, I am still dealing with an injury. Eight years ago, and ten years into my involvement with contemplative meditation through the Shambhala Buddhist path, the humerus bone in my arm was fractured by a man I did not know, during some unremarkable weeknight jiu-jitsu practice class. The hospital stay cost me time off work, hundreds, if not thousands of dollars out-of-pocket, and countless hours of rehabilitation.

Eight years later, I still do not have the full range of motion in this arm. So, it is indisputable that I was injured. However, I also did not experience pain (and this, without pain medication) while I was in the hospital. I bear no resentment to the man who injured me. And I have learned to use my arm in a manner that is limited for over a sixth of my life, all without needing to self-identify as a victim. I believe that these results and my ability to “get back to normal” were due to two things: deciding there

is no “normal” to go back to, and having tamed and developed my mind through contemplative meditation in the Shambhala Buddhist tradition. Is this kind of outcome something people are interested in?

I think that a Shambhala Community Co-operative’s commitment to placing crimes and victims on the ‘front burner’ is up to the supporters of that co-operative. However, I believe that fulfilling the vision of enlightened society through meeting supporter needs from the bottom-up is the organizing purpose of gathering together. If a trauma survivor has needs-to-be-met around their trauma, I think that having an environment where the survivor feels safe to request those needs be met, and having other supporters listen to, respond to, and work to meet the needs they can meet, reflects a successful co-operative. However, unless there is long-term, caring rapport among the community, I would warn against supporters trying to guess at each other’s needs-to-be-met or against a supporter holding some expectation that their needs-to-be-met should be guessed-at and/or fulfilled without discussion or them asking.

If known abusive or criminal behavior takes place within a co-operative or is made known in a co-operative, I think the good guidance is to give the reporter the benefit of the doubt that what they say happened did happen to them, and to support them in reporting to the proper authorities.

If there is grey area about whether abusive or criminal behavior is taking place, a supporter should check in with fellow supporters, with the coordinator, or with someone they trust outside the co-operative to refine their understanding of what happened and to take action based upon their understanding in a way that sits well with their heart. Speaking from experience of the plenty-of-times I have misperceived others’ intentions, words, and actions, I have found that being responsive and communicating my perception with positive intent goes a long way in clearing up most situations where I could have otherwise developed resentment, mistrust, or further perception of wrongdoing.

In order to meet supporter’s needs for a safe environment, the format of the co-operative should be fairly lightweight, without expectation that heavy political, religious, or personal obligations are to be laid upon one another. At the same time, co-operative supporters should work through mindfulness practice to develop a steady, clear, and resilient mind that can be accommodating, concerned, and supportive of each other in times of stress and crisis that naturally and periodically arise.

- I am a Shambhala Buddhist Vajrayana practitioner, as are you. Don’t you think this co-operative idea goes against your commitments and / or devotion to the Sakyong as your Dharma-king guru?

The simple answer is no. From one perspective, having a guru is simply a post-conventional practice support for progressing expeditiously along the Buddhist path. Thus, Sakyong Mipham is seen to be a human being who has graciously “agreed” to sit in this seat while I, as a wild-minded meditation practitioner, get to project all kinds of hopes, fears, and dramas upon him without even getting to know him personally at all. While I feel this guru-arrangement advantages me greatly and while I wish Sakyong Mipham well in making amends with his many students for their alleged and plausible reports of negativity, abuse, and disillusionment, I feel that a Shambhala Community Co-operative is not some kind of exit for me from this arrangement, but simply a form and framework I feel could be helpful for folks who are interested in fulfilling the vision of enlightened society as revealed by the Shambhala contemplative tradition, but who have no interest in engaging in, or continuing to engage in some kind of Dharma-king guru arrangement.