Human beings are ‘dissipative systems’. They need to intake (to ‘consume’) a certain amount of energy in order to survive. Over the past twenty years there has been a great deal of scholarly interest in the phenomenon of homeowner associations, as well as a related interest in co-housing, proprietary communities, residential cooperatives, commons, and other non-governmental planning phenomena. What tends to happen is that each of these phenomena is dealt with individually, that is, independently of one another; furthermore, in many cases they are treated as if they instantiate completely different – at times even conflicting – issues. The aim of this seminar is to move towards a general theory of self-organizing communities; that is, a theory that takes account of this assortment of discrete phenomena as inter-related issues that are by no means at odds with one another.

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