

*Prior to reading, the term "functionally diverse" refers to individuals who do not possess the same abilities as those typically expected in society. A Spanish psychologist coined this term that we would know with words like differently abled or disabled but in a formal manner.*

I want to structure my journey to research the concept of intentional community because it can solve countries' socioeconomic issues regarding elderly displacement, retirement housing, sustainability, eco-friendly establishments, mental health institutions, and support programs. Intentional community is not just for the support of the individuals but for their family and friends. It relieves a certain stress of making rational decisions with an emotional attachment. This journey will also honor my grandmother, Nannie Rene Lattimore, the matriarch of our family and who was constantly building an intentional community by feeding neighbors, being a pillar of the church, and linking others together. While the intentional community encompasses many areas and subjects, my primary focus for this project will be the intergenerational and functional diversity aspects. Residing in the Netherlands, Denmark, Thailand, and Japan for three months each will allow me to explore intergenerational and functional diversity consciously. The variation can be displayed in different healthcare structures, governments, and innovative housing techniques that have not yet made their way to the US.

My journey begins with the Netherlands. The Netherlands is known for its progressive approach to intergenerational living and has various successful intentional communities that promote intergenerational and functional diversity. Exploring this country can provide valuable insights into innovative models and practices for creating such communities. While here, I will observe the "dementia village." This village, located in Hogeweyk, is a new generation of treatment facilities aiming to integrate older-generation dementia patients with the communities around them. This place will show me the proper etiquette and pitfalls to avoid when dealing with someone who is mentally and functionally diverse. Since countries like Germany are adapting their techniques with the dementia village as one of their models, I will be witnessing this innovative strategy firsthand. I will journal my observations and create a video summary of my learnings. I will also use this journal as a way to compare and contrast between here and the other countries. I have established a connection with an individual named Iris Van Sloten in the Netherlands, and they have shared some upcoming events that will take place through their organization and other nonprofits.

My next stop is Denmark. Denmark's approach to intentional community is similar to the Netherlands; however, what makes them unique is their implementation style. Denmark focuses more on sustainability and communal style. Sustainability helps provide future generations with the same or more resources than the previous ones. Exploring this country can provide valuable insights into innovative sustainability models and practices for creating such communities. While here, a major focus of my journey will be in the city of Roskilde because they are stated to have at least five different intentional communities located there: Kæphøj og Jernstøberiet, Trekroner-området er de bofællesskaberne, Munksøgård, Absalons Have, Trekroner Bo, and Glashusene. The similarities and differences between these communities would be interesting to observe because I will journal my observations and create a video summary of what I have learned. I have reached out to six organizations in Denmark and taken note of upcoming events that will take place through the villages and other nonprofits.

After concluding my observations in Europe, I will travel to Asia. The first visited country will be Thailand. Thailand's rich cultural traditions and strong family bonds make it an interesting case study for intergenerational dynamics. A part of the cultural tradition is participating in permaculture, a practice that builds housing around the environment to help the natural ecosystem flourish. I intend to explore the Chiang Mai province because many of the prospective intentional communities are located throughout the province. Another unique aspect of the Chiang Mai province is that there are groups of people called the Hill Tribes located throughout the region. The Hill Tribe people are stated to be the indigenous people of Thailand, Burma, and China forced to relocate due to government persecution. It stated that some of the tribes, like the Karen, are stated to have gone back over 2000 years. These communities are very rich in their heritage and self-sufficient despite the odds. I find it fascinating that there has been a community that was self-sufficient enough to sustain their community for thousands of years and worth looking into. I will note the difference between the tribes and the intentional communities in Chiang Mai province. The intentional communities I am working with are Gaaware Village, Gaia Ashram, and Lifyeuchan International Family Society. As for the tribes, I will have to trek to establish contact when I arrive in Thailand. I have connected with an intentional community photojournalist within the Chiang Mai province, Ryan Libre, who could potentially guide me within these communities and tribes.

After completing my observation in Thailand, I will travel to Japan. This country faces unique challenges, such as a declining birth rate and issues related to elderly homelessness. In response, they are developing innovative projects to establish sustainable housing solutions for the current and future generations. During my journey, I plan to observe three different areas: Tokyo, Mt. Fuji, and Fukuoka. I chose Tokyo because it is one of the first in the country to create projects to deter elderly homelessness. Two places that come to mind when exploring Tokyo are Cocofump and Tokyo Shikidai, places for elderly residents to work and live. Around that area is a restaurant called "Restaurant of Mistaken Orders." The staff are older adults with dementia. It is a unique way to look at having functionally diverse people in the workforce. In Mt. Fuji, there is an intentional community called the Konohana Family that is more rural and uses more holistic approaches. This means that the village uses more nature-based solutions before equipment treatment, a juxtaposition in lifestyle compared to Tokyo. In Fukuoka, I've established connections with a local named Yuko, who is well-versed in the retirement areas around Fukuoka. I was also invited to attend some of their events to network and make more connections pertaining to different housing projects for people in the city. The arrival airport will help me decide the direction of travel; all three areas and other cities follow the bullet train route for transportation. Since I have been to Japan previously, I know how to get to different cities.

While my cultural training and language classes prepare me for effective communication in Japan, I acknowledge that conservatism may present occasional challenges in some areas. There have been instances where foreigners faced restrictions in certain areas. If I encounter any of those unwelcoming situations, I would pivot my research to explore other more hospitable locations.

As for the other countries, due to each of them having different official languages, the biggest challenge I will face is the language barrier. Though my contacts in each of the countries stated the majority of the locals can speak English, it has been mentioned that their daily conversations

are spoken in their official language. To avoid difficulties, I plan to learn conversational language to get by day-to-day, and I will also purchase a translation machine for more formal or business conversations. The machine I would use is Vasco V4 due to free lifetime internet access for all the prospective countries, so I don't have to worry about hotspots for the device. It also can translate all of my languages offline as well, making it the superior option to its competitors. I have also set aside funding for in-person translation services for each country visit to minimize difficulties.

At the conclusion of this journey, I will return as a transformed individual. This experience will reassure me that my actions are leading me in the right direction, and I have more confidence to make plans and ideas and be a leader regarding intentional community projects. The outcome of this journey is to come back with the knowledge that will be used to create a better system of support and create the best community I can. Following my Watson journey, I will take my learnings and journal to work with a nonprofit organization, like the CARE Consortium, and apply these tactics to their upcoming intentional community projects. In the long term, I hope to become a philanthropic advisor for intentional community organizations. Though I cannot make those changes alone, I will lead by example. I am using this proposal as a map to follow. I see this proposal as an itinerary for my journey if things were to go flawlessly. However, that is not always the case. As life changes, so do the plans, and I am willing to change the trajectory if needed. I selected these countries because they will help me develop a unique perspective, but my journey could take me anywhere and everywhere because we all need community.