



# LA CHOZA DEL MUNDO

Newsletter October 2008



(Jessy Cowan Sharp, Julia Tizard, Robbie Schingler, Stephanie Gliege)

## Welcome

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Welcome to the first Choza newsletter!

In an effort to be more communicative with the wider world on Choza activities and inspire ourselves to keep momentum on the project up we thought we would introduce this newsletter.

For those of you who are new to La Choza del Mundo (or 'Choza' as we call it) we would encourage you to go to the new website and read what we are all about (in our current state of evolution!). We have included a small summary below as a prologue to the actual news updates.

<http://www.chozadelmundo.com>

We would love to hear any feedback on our thoughts and plans in general so please don't hesitate to email us back or start a discussion online.

[founders@chozadelmundo.com](mailto:founders@chozadelmundo.com)

Enjoy!

## Choza Overview

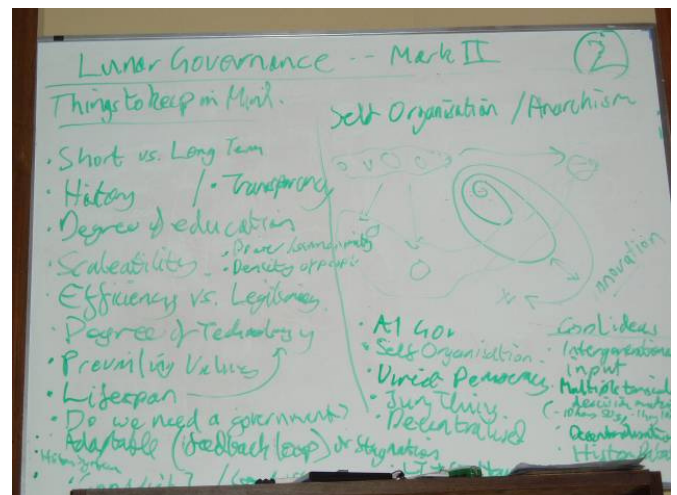
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The idea behind the Choza was inspired by the energy and excitement generated when young internationalists gather. Several of us have been fortunate to be part of various communities as we have been paving the way to our careers. These communities have varied between long established organisations like Pugwash, attendance at annual conferences, student groups like the Space Generation network and self-perpetuating ad hoc events such as New Years gatherings. Some people have overlapped considerably through these groups and a community naturally formed responding to the drive and effectiveness generated through the group. This community was brought together by a collective interest in space activities, but over time became focused intrinsically on the topic of the long-term future of humanity. Through these gatherings the idea of a Space Village (also called Space kibbutz, Ninja farm, or The Embassy) developed whereby this community could become a permanent rather than transient entity in our working lives.

The Space village was envisioned to be a physical resource for an individuals life's work and for a community to learn, work,

and experiment; a dynamic, organic environment, with a diverse range of activities, businesses and people, coming together to focus on issues of significance for the future of humanity

La Choza del Mundo is intended to be the first trial and is hoped to lead ultimately to a globally distributed entity for the positive evolution of humanity; a worldwide footprint with many different social, cultural and environmental hubs experimenting with anything from economics and politics through sustainability and personal living or life's work.



In selecting a place for the first hub it was important for us to take into account many social, political and environmental factors. Shortly after Robbie and Jessy met in 2003, they brainstormed indicators for countries with Andrew Hoppin in New York City. The result: Costa Rica. Costa Rica has a prospering economy due in part to the abolition of its military back in the 50's. Cost Rica chose instead to apply its resources to the education of its children resulting in one of the highest literacy rates in the world.

Costa Rica also has great environmental credentials. It is blessed with a location in the tropics which encourages plants and trees to flourish. In fact although Costa Rica only represents 0.1% of the world's landmass it contains 5% of the world's biodiversity. Costa Rica does a great deal to protect this asset with over 25% of its land being protected as national parks. Costa Rica ranks 5<sup>th</sup> in the world under the 2008 environmental performance index.



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The inter-American Court of Human Rights and the United Nations University of Peace are based in Costa Rica in recognition of Costa Rica's human rights policy and stable democracy. Costa Rica also has a modern democracy with laws conducive to business and investment and considers them a neutral country (some call it the "Switzerland of Central America"), and has a large international airport and adequate civic infrastructure of roads, electricity, and Internet.

As the first hub in a globally distributed community, the Choza is experimenting with its governance structure, the activities or businesses that will be generated there and how to generate a good resource to support individuals and group life's works, whilst also be responsible along the way. We are looking forward to creating something exciting...

## The Founders & 5-year goals

Following many discussions over New Years and other gatherings on the concept of a kibbutz, Robbie and Jessy discovered some land and a house the in the summer of 2004 while volunteering and travelling in Costa Rica. Over the next year, Robbie made three trips to Costa Rica, and finally decided they decided to fly to Costa Rica for the summer of 2005 with the intent to purchase the property.



That summer they reconnected with their friend, Stephanie, a lawyer had been living and working in Costa Rica. By coincidence, Stephanie lived in Ciudad Colon, which was conveniently close (albeit, 2 hours away) to the site they had identified for purchase. Stephanie, using her contacts and linguistic support, helped Robbie and Jessy complete the purchase of the Choza and incorporate of Proyecto

Concepcion, the Costa Rican Choza entity. That summer, Robbie and Jessy purchased the land, bought a 1978 Toyota Land Cruiser (called 'Hank'), and spent six weeks on the property renovating the existing three bedroom structure.

During the initial stages of the Choza's development, Stephanie's place in Costa Rica became the "landing place" for people on their way to and from the Choza, thus of course, when time permitted, Stephanie also visited on occasion. Stephanie quickly fell in love with the place in a country she called 'home' and became a partner to the Choza through this process.

Julia came on board in late 2005 to make up the four current founders of the current La Choza del Mundo. Julia had been involved on the original talks of a Kibbutz/Choza and after selling her house in Manchester was keen to be a part of the first assault on creating a real life's work community. Julia joined as a founder before visiting the Choza for the first time in April 2006.

Since then, the Choza has been developing in concept, in physical form and in our own personal and group integration to the local Costa Rican community. Definition of the purpose and presence of the Choza has come a long way, and stimulated production of this newsletter with which we hope to communicate development of, and enrol a larger community in, the project.

Below are a few of our personal goals for the Choza over the next 5 years, which aim to build up the Choza infrastructure and put into practice the main vision of the Choza.

Jessy:

- To have a functioning membership model
- or members and groups to be able to utilize the Choza continuously, and independently of the founders
- to do a computer administration training session for Zapaton/Mastatal and other neighbouring communities

Julia:

- (7 year goal!) To have a Choza Think Tank host The Elders annual meeting in 2015

Robbie:

- Develop a socially responsible, non-tourism microbusiness at the Choza for a self-sustaining financial model
- Plant lots of Pau de Arco trees!

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- Develop a custom for visitors of more than five days to teach (their passion) at the local school

Stephanie:

- To participate in annual, or biannual visits and eventually spend a month or longer at the Choza actively working on the project (as well as bring friends and family to visit)
- To improve the overall landscape architecture to reflect the thoughts and inspirations that keep bringing us back for visits

## Introducing Joel

Joel and Stephanie became close friends in 2003 when Stephanie first moved to Ciudad Colon. Joel was born and raised in Ciudad Colon, but has always harbored dreams of travel, which was what initially connected him with Stephanie. He is trained as a lawyer and currently runs several different businesses and manages a portfolio of his own properties. He is an incredible guy who takes his responsibilities seriously, and at the same time loves to surf and enjoy life. . He also has an adorable puppy called Luna.

He is particularly excited about being a part of the Choza development process and regularly keeps us updated on all aspects of his work with the Choza where he has been acting as the property manager since 2007, and more seriously since January of 2008 with the structural renovations



## La Choza Renovations

There are many plans for the Choza but it made sense to start with the main house to make it hospitable for visitors and use it as a platform for other work on the land. Choza renovations started in the summer of 2005 with Jessie, Robbie and Taryn (Robbie's sister). In 2007, under the watchful eye of Joel, we decided to put a new roof on the Choza, and in early 2008 increased its footprint, extended the 3<sup>rd</sup> bedroom, put in a new, larger bathroom, a septic tank, re-wired the electrical system and upgraded the plumbing to the house. See the before and now pictures below!

We (as in the literal we; Robbie, Jessie and I with significant help from friends – all listed below!) have also done a lot of sanding, filling, painting, plumbing, and other bits and pieces to add to the work. We haven't yet finished, as we'd like to do more to get the house in line with the philosophy of the Choza. We are looking into getting Internet to the Choza, in order to create a more effective working environment and enable us to stay there longer, but also as a resource for the local community. We'd eventually like to move the Choza off the grid by making use of the natural sunlight. We'd also like to find a long term, alternative solution for the new Choza septic tank that is more natural.



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(Pictures of the Choza from 2006)

In planning the Choza renovations we came across a few decisions like the installation of the septic tank and the use of concrete for the foundation of the building that we chose, in conflict with the ideal for the Choza, as short term solutions to enable us to keep moving and achieve the near term goals of getting the main house habitable and useful for the more serious work of building the Choza, the entity vs. Choza the main house. These decisions were taken partly from fiscal consideration, partly to keep up momentum and partly due to lack of an immediately available alternative. The main house is almost ready to serve it's purpose. We hope it will provide us and the Choza with a humble, historical and personal reminder, of where we started.



(Pictures of the Choza recently, July 2008)



## Planting Season

We recently bought 70 trees for the Choza to begin populating the Choza land with yet more species of trees and give the Choza more sustainable produce. The Choza already has a lot of trees (and other plants). Over the 25 acres we have so far found; Almond, Bamboo, Guanacaste (Costa Rica's national tree), Mango, Avocado, Banana, Naranja (sour oranges), Maranan (cashew trees) and Pau d'Arco trees (whose bark can be used to boost the immune system and acts as an antioxidant amongst a lot of other things). The Pau d'Arco tree could form a potential business for the Choza.

Last visit, one of the park rangers from La Cangreja National park helped us out with a broken Hank (the jeep), he had a plant specialist with him who was telling us how the local area around us and in the national park had the highest density of plant species in Costa Rica. He is working with the park



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rangers to record them all. It would be nice to have him out to our land at some point.

We planned to introduce some more tree species including fruit trees close to the house, where the banana, avocado and mango trees are. We are adding orange, lemon, water apple, and mandarina (mandarin) trees and the Carambola tree which produces star fruit.

Joel also managed to pick up 50 forest trees for us for free in San Jose, where the district is giving trees in exchange for a written promise to plant and care for them. We have Roble de Sabana and Cedros (Cedar) trees amongst some others. We aim to re-populate some of the land that had previously been cleared for grazing cattle with these trees. The Roble is a beautiful wood, used a lot for flooring and furniture making and because of this it is becoming increasingly rare outside of national parks.

We next aim to supplement these trees with some more medicinal types, like the Pau d'Arco. Examples include Madrono (Nicaragua's national tree). Its bark is used to stomach ulcers and its flowers are used to make a tea to treat diahrrea. Other future options include planting more Bamboo as a home grown construction resource, Cristobal, which is in danger of extinction as it is a beautiful wood for furniture and the Jobo tree, who's fruit is a favourite for monkeys.

**Thanks!**

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Next month we hope to bring you some news on incorporating the project as an NGO in the USA and perhaps share some of our thoughts on the Choza's membership model.

