

Villages to Cities to Villages?

Humans used to mostly live in villages. Clusters of families where the adults did work and the kids roamed and observed and played and learned work by being around it.

With specialization, mass scale production, and technological advances the arrangement changed. People lived in neighborhoods or cities that were often much larger, adults commuted to cities during the day vastly larger still, and kids were shipped off to huge age-segregated clusters, before smaller immediate families came back together for dinner in the evening.

The benefits of technological progress are astounding and I wouldn't trade them. The benefits greatly outweighed the costs, which is why just about everyone who had the chance chose it. But shifting living arrangements were (often) one item on the cost side of the ledger. It was sometimes necessary, not necessarily optimal.

With increasing automation, software, robotics, and information access, the equation is changing again. Humans don't need to cluster together *en masse* for economic production. That means one of the costs we had to pay to get the benefits of economic progress has been removed. Now there is choice. You can do the commute to cities and office buildings while kids commute to age segregated schools thing if you want. But you don't have to.

This is a pretty new choice. And so far, only a handful of early adopters see and seize it. People can now live where they want with who they want with kids and adults alike doing their work and play near the home. Most people still do not realize this is an option. They are wedded to the *status quo* by inertia, not necessity.

Recent voluntary and forced quarantines are waking some people up to this possibility. More people than realized can work from anywhere. People also realize how they might want to change their living arrangements if they were to continue this more flexible, work and learn from home arrangement. For example, you might want to choose your neighbors more deliberately if you're spending more time in a village-like setting. If you and your kids social life and work life and learning will be more local, spontaneous, and collaborative, you might change the kind of natural environment you're in. Climate, house type, access to outdoors, etc.

I wouldn't be surprised to see a slow steady uptick in deliberate village-like communities. Clusters of families with some shared interest, ideology, religion, or profession who have adults who can work from anywhere on flexible hours and kids roaming around learning through mixed-age play and imitation.

It's possible the reason few people do this now is that few prefer it. It's also possible the

reason few do it now is because they've been conditioned for several generations into the assumption that it's not on the table. More short-term experiments in this type of arrangement could inspire more to do it.