Earthship
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BIOTECTURE

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To whom this may concern,

Over the last 45 years, I have been designing and building autonomous houses, called “Earthships” that address 6 basic principles and human needs : building with natural and recycled materials, using thermal/solar heating and cooling, solar and wind electricity, water harvesting, contained sewage treatment and food production.

I founded Earthship Biotecture in 1969, a company based in Taos, USA and from a fringe experiment in the desert of northern New Mexico we became representatives of a worldwide movement that is committed to evolve the way humans live on this planet by transforming our way of living, home by home.

Today, not only do we continue building Earthships but we also teach people how to build their own at our Earthship Academy and intern program. We also organize sustainable development and poverty relief projects all over the world, where we help communities to build using sustainable construction. We are now a global movement that inspires people all over the world to build their homes more consciously based on Earthship principles and techniques.

I was recently introduced to another global movement: the FabLab network. Earthships and Fablabs seem to share a very similar drive, that of educating and empowering people to find and implement local solutions to global problems. I see a huge potential in joining forces to multiply the efforts of both movements in creating a more sustainable way of living. To bridge the two worlds, one of our students suggested the idea that we use our off-grid building expertise to build fully autonomous FabLabs to empower communities to become more sustainable and self-reliant. We have studied this proposal and it seems we have a unique opportunity here in Taos to build a prototype of the world’s first off-grid FabLab, that we named “Fabship”.

Our community in Taos counts 100 residents, and as part of our Earthship Academy and internship program we also welcome more than 400 students each year.

This makes an ideal platform to develop such a project.

Filters, pumps, inverters, charge controllers, windmills... I clearly see how such a FabLab can help us innovate, fabricate and maintain the tools and systems that are necessary to build sustainable communities. Furthermore, I see Fabships freeing us from costly dependencies on imported industrial components and materials that are often programmed to fail and carry heavy carbon footprints and costs.

In short, this Fabship can help us improve our work with communities around the world, which is one of our core values. We've always shared our philosophy, research, building methods and systems openly, several books and a mobile app are available which describe in detail the drawings and construction process of our homes. We also host our Earthship Academy program all over the world to transfer this knowledge. The Fabships could help fulfilling this same decentralizing and educational role in sharing open source knowledge and practices. If this experiment works we hope to replicate Fabships in communities where they are needed most.

Finally, more than a technical challenge, I see the building of an autonomous Fablab or Fabship as a social experiment. Getting it to work is one thing, but adapting and adopting digital fabrication technology into off-grid communities is where we will see its core value. Off grid fabrication involves testing our limits and being aware of how and why we use technology in an energy and environmentally conscious way. To this end, our community in Taos also makes a good case study.

It goes without saying that Fabships can bring huge benefits to autonomous off-grid communities like ours as much as they can help grow the FabLab network. Exploring how this can be done is our goal and we look forward to your feedback, ideas and suggestions and getting the first Fabship up and running in Taos. We are a small company managing a large and vibrant community and able to provide the land and human resources to build the Fabship. However, we would need to look for ways to help us finance such a project. We invite you to visit us in order to fully experience an Earthship life and hopefully have the opportunity to discuss this project further in person.

Sincerely,

Michael Reynolds.