



Membership Directory: Thank you to all who have noticed things in the draft membership directory that needed correcting. It still has not gone to the printer if you want to review it again to make sure your suggested changes were made correctly. The latest version is posted on the ICL website under [More about ICL](#), in the [Member Area \(Password Protected\)](#). *New members were given the user name and password at orientation.* Please let [Dave MacMillan](#) know if any members spot any more corrections.

Suburban Alienation and the Promise of Garden Guilds - Written by Tom Ellis, ICL Member

Note: This article is published on [Medium.com](#), “a home for human stories and ideas. Here, anyone can share insightful perspectives, useful knowledge, and life wisdom with the world—without building a mailing list or a following first. The internet is noisy and chaotic; Medium is quiet yet full of insight. It’s simple, beautiful, collaborative, and helps you find the right audience for whatever you have to say.”

Like most Americans, especially those of us in the suburban middle class, I live in a neighborhood of modest, comfortable private homes with (usually multiple) cars, trucks, vans, and occasionally boat trailers in their driveways and out front, with tidy and often attractive trees, shrubs, and flowerbeds set out, like islands, on a sea of regularly mown and watered green grass monocultures — “curb appeal” as it is called in the Real Estate trade. But in our backyards, we are all surrounded by tall wooden privacy fences, like palisades, hiding our backyards from those of our neighbors on all sides. And by and large, nobody even knows who their neighbors are, other than, perhaps, those right next to them or across the street.

Even on beautiful spring and summer days, the streets in my neighborhood are largely empty of pedestrians, except for the occasional dog-walker, or young jogger fitted with earphones to block out the world by playing her favorite tunes. But children running and playing with one another — a common sight in the suburban neighborhood where I grew up, back in the Fifties — are almost entirely absent. Other than the occasional noxious sound of leaf blowers, lawn mowers, or power saws, the neighborhood is strangely quiet.

We see this kind of mutual alienation as perfectly normal — and many people have known nothing else — because our real lives are conducted remotely at a distance, whether by phone, internet, or getting in our cars to go somewhere else, whether to work, or to go shopping at a nearby shopping center. As a result, any attempt at making friends with a neighbor is initially viewed with suspicion, as a violation of their privacy. There are no “third places” such as public squares or plazas with sidewalk cafes and park benches — which are commonplace throughout Europe, for example — where people can stroll in the evening and hang out with their local friends and neighbors.

Such alienated lives may feel safe and reassuring — we only interact with those we want or need to interact with, and are otherwise left alone to do as we wish. But there are hidden costs to this suburban isolation. For one thing, we seldom interact these days with anyone who does not share our political leanings, religion, or business interests. Most of the news we get comes pre-selected, either by the TV channels we prefer (CNN, MSNBC, Fox, or PBS) or by algorithms on our internet newsfeeds and social media, which are designed to cater to our own interests, anxieties, and biases. So the opportunities have sharply dwindled for dialogue, or even a casual conversation, with people outside these chosen or prescribed circles of common interest or political bias.

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Dates to remember:

- **ICL Board Meeting: Monday, Aug 14, 2023 at 1:00 PM** on [Zoom](#) - all members are welcome.
- **Tuesday lunches: every Tuesday at 11:30 AM** at Taproot at the Mill at Willamette Heritage Center
- **Friday Virtual Happy Hours** on [Zoom](#) at 4:30 PM..



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