



LA CHOZA DEL MUNDO

Newsletter January 2009



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Happy New Year!

It's a new year with lots of exciting developments for the Choza. In addition to the various updates on our activities, we are going to start periodically including a more academic 'think piece' related to our activities in Costa Rica. Let us know if you have any feedback, or would even like to contribute something yourself.

If you haven't visited our website (<http://www.chozadelmundo.com>) in a while, you'll find there's been many content and a few design updates. And as always, you are welcome to contact us at founders@chozadelmundo.com.

Welcome Todd



We are extremely excited to announce that our good friend Todd Khozein has officially joined as a Choza 'founder'. Since we began the Choza project, the team has always been interested in having one or two more people participate as core drivers and visionaries for the project, helping to set direction and create community around these efforts.

Todd will not only bring these qualities, but he also rounds out the team with his extensive experience and natural skills as a communicator, connector and independent thinker. Welcome Todd!

Introducing Choza Membership

Over the past 6 months, we have been designing a membership model for the Choza. After initially considering funding the Choza through investments and donations, we decided that a membership-based operations model was a better fit for the type of activities, participation, community involvement, and continuity that we want to foster with and through our activities at the Choza. This is a big step for us, as it represents a milestone we

have looked forward to since we purchased the property in 2005.

Because the membership model is so important to how the Choza will operate and evolve over time, we are starting membership in 'private beta' mode, with a small group of interested individuals test driving the membership model throughout 2009. These individuals will be helping us to refine the membership model and other operational questions. We will be discussing communication and management structures, financial models, the membership model, building plans, and land management.

To support these members, the Choza will be open for operations for the first time this July and August!

In our next newsletter, we will announce more details about the initial members, their respective interests, and some of the questions and activities we will be taking on together in 2009. In the meantime, feel free to check out our website to see how we have integrated thoughts about membership into the site as a whole. You are also welcome to contribute to these conversations via our new blog. Please see the **Communications** section below for details.

New Gate!

For three years our advanced security system at the Choza was barbed wire tied around nicely chiseled posts which, if you were lucky, didn't nick your legs as you hopped out of Hank (the truck) to drag it out of the way while we entered and exited the Choza.



We liked having a gate that 'fit with the neighbourhood' and despite one or two



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robberies, were hesitant to install something more substantial for fear of alienating our neighbours or giving the Choza an unwelcoming feel.

However, after much advice (and some pleading!) from Joel, and some stellar design research from Juls, we decided to go ahead with the gate.

The balance of trying to fit in and owning up to being "different" is a fine line. We're experimenting every step of the way, learning as we go. The new gate was completed mid-January, and is slightly more imposing than the old contraption, but adds a warm welcome we didn't expect. Hopefully it will do so for years to come!

Think Piece: A Globally Distributed Think Tank

by Robbie Schingler

Think tanks have been in existence in their current form for the past 60 years. Originally tied to universities to perform research in areas of interest to the government and military, today think tanks specialize in a variety of areas as independent organizations.

However, much like think tanks during World War II, today's think tanks are strongly tied to their source of funding, mostly derived from private foundations, government and military programs. Researchers spend a significant amount of time writing grants and catering their research interests to topics that could be financed. Moreover, think tanks have gravitated to capital cities and produce their main output as policy papers. If one is to analyze the power relationship between think tanks and their financiers, it is difficult for think tanks to produce truly objective and independent work.

There exists the need for think tanks to thrive in a more raw form.



Human beings' ability to innovate has allowed many communities to survive within tight constraints. Innovation happens when a solution in one area is applied to a situation in another, and that innovation is all around us if one stops to investigate.

When taking into account the reason for systemic progress, sources of innovation, and ubiquitous communications and the Internet, there is an opportunity to architect a global think tank with many branch offices around the globe, each with their own 'Center of Excellence', or comparative advantage. Each think tank should be immersed within an area of study, and shift the mindset from seeing the "problem" as a burden to be solved in a heavy-handed way, into a sustainable opportunity for growth. The think tank should not stop at producing papers for an academic and political debate, but should take it a step further. Perhaps a more sustainable way for change to occur is action at a variety of different levels (state, local and international), and through complimentary approaches (through businesses, NGOs, and politics).

We call this a globally distributed think tank with implementation.

With this larger vision and greater ties to relevant communities, each think tank location can create alternate sources of revenues to the traditional think tank, such as micro-businesses at each location, or a business solution that was incubated at the think tank to provide a sustainable way forward. The think tank locations will be connected with each other across the globe, sharing ideas and solutions, but have its roots firmly planted in the local community.

La Choza del Mundo was created with this larger vision in mind, to be a node of a globally distributed think tank.

San Jose Earthquake

There was a magnitude 6.1 earthquake in Costa Rica in January. It was the largest quake there in 150 years! Luckily, everyone we know was fine. These events tend to highlight the



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fragility of the roads and structures in Costa Rica, but Joel reports that the roads are actually in great condition right now, and everything from his properties at the coast through to the Choza seem to have survived unscathed.

multi-purpose-- useful for everything from fitness and art activities, to brainstorming and philosophy sessions. In general, our building goals for 2009 are to create more discrete spaces around the property for people to spread out, both mentally and physically.

Building plans for 2009

As the Choza membership begins to grow, so much our ability to accommodate people on the land. In 2009, our minimum building plans involve the



Rancho that we announced in our last newsletter, and additional beds in the Choza for sleeping. We hope to build two floors in the Rancho, a ground floor to be used for social and work space, and a second floor catered towards sleeping, with 2-4 beds in it. This will be an open air sleeping environment, with mosquito nets and all the other jungle amenities!

Additional bed frames for the Choza will be custom made by local workers-- likely, the same men who built our gate for us. Wood is a good building material for these items in Costa Rica; it keeps relatively well over time, and can be bought locally-- sometimes even scavenged off our own land. However, one of the things we are constantly learning and thinking about is how to best choose materials which make sense where we are, and in the greater context of sustainability.

An additional possibility for this year is to build a viewing platform on the main 'finger' of the land from which we have enjoyed so many sunsets and conversations. Such a platform would also be



We are interested in using solar power at the Rancho to power the laptops, which will inevitably migrate out there. If you have any experience or interest in small scale solar power project, or know someone who does, please let us know!

Bounty Update

There were a few glitches with the website we chose to receive donations for building the Rancho. We're happy to announce that there is once again a functional way to donate towards the Rancho, via the PayPal button on our website. Thank you to those who tried to donate already. If we haven't scared you off, please visit



<http://www.chozadelmundo.com/contribute> to make your contribution. Building needs to begin by March, so if you are interested and willing to donate, please consider donating sooner rather than later. We need only \$3000 to start!

Communications

We now have a blog section on our website through which we will be sharing developments and thoughts related to the Choza in a more timely and interactive fashion. If you would like to comment on any of the content in this newsletter, consider submitting a comment on the blog! (And adding our RSS feed to your feed reader). (... And if you don't know what an RSS feed is, we'll be happy to tell you all about it).

Thanks!