UTOPIAN BENCHES
BANCS D'UTOPIE
WE SIT TOGETHER

FRANCIS CAPE

Utopian Benches, American communities, Arcadia University Art Gallery, Pennsylvania, 2011.

Utopian Benches, European communities, Fonds régional d'art contemporain de Franche-Comté, Besançon (France), 2015.

The *exhibition-in-the-making* 'Setting the Table' is a component of a research project, entitled 'Stretched', conducted at the Valand Academy at the University of Gothenburg and funded by the Swedish Research Council. The aim of this research is to interrogate how artistic practices are extended through forms of *artist-organisation*. It seeks to understand more of the administrative, managerial, programmatic, social, contextualising and theorising *activities* of artists; and to consider the implications of these granular actions to – and through – the field of curating. The research, therefore, focuses on artists' projects and art works that engage and emphasize curatorial methods in their conception, production and reception. The principal investigator of the research is Jason E. Bowman. Co-researchers are Julie Crawshaw and Mick Wilson. Kjell Caminha co-ordinates.

'Setting the Table' is organized by Jason E. Bowman, supported by BALTIC Contemporary Art and primarily funded by the Swedish Research Council. The originating 'Bancs d'Utopie' iteration was organized by the Syndicat mixte du Familistère Godin with support from the Département de l'Aisne and the town of Guise.

'Setting the Table' takes place at BALTIC 39 Project Space, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, UK from 12-15 April, 2018.

This booklet accompanies the inclusion of twelve benches selected from artist Francis Cape's ongoing project, 'Utopian Benches / We sit together' presented at 'Setting the Table'. It provides an overview of Cape's project to date and also loosely operates as an index for the selected benches exhibited in 'Setting the Table' originally produced from the project's extension, 'Bancs d'Utopie'. The focus of 'Bancs d'Utopie' is on intentional and utopian communities in Europe, whereas the project's origins lie in research and production conducted in the USA.

Using existing examples and drawings, between 2011 and 2014, Cape began to research and recreate benches, mostly those from nineteenth century utopian communities with traditions of craft in the USA. For the artist, the bench indicates communalism; its population gathered together whilst sat at the same height. Seeking to explore the significance of collective ownership, the artist has stated that his intent includes the aspiration to: "...address the legacy of resistance to capitalist-driven individualism that formed the founding ideals of American groups once referred to as 'communisms' and 'socialisms'."[1]

Cape's project also operates via various extensions that occur during processes that are activated towards their exhibiting and during their actual exhibiting. Since their first iteration, at Arcadia University Art Gallery in 2011, the artist has initiated a series of additive mechanisms that may be understood to also affect the operative registers of the project.

With the partners and co-producers involved in each iteration, with Cape, continue to conduct research processes by taking account of intentional or utopian communities that are - or were - proximate to each exhibition site. In general, this research informs either the production of new benches, incorporating also local timber and the legacies of particular crafting skills; or as text that is included in booklets that are produced for each occasion when benches are gathered; or both, new benches with new texts.

The making *public of art*, or art as a means to consider the making of *publics*, via research, production and exhibition alike, is also an important formation of comportment in Cape's project. When gathered at exhibition the benches also operate as spoors for discursivity; allowing for meetings, conversations and dialogues between those who are in co-attendance.

1. *http://franciscape.com/utopian-benches-2011/*. Accessed 4 April 2018.

The issues put into focus during these discussions most often relate to community and social idealism; utopia; the local; and the consequences of things.

The artist's suggestion is that whilst there may be *conversation leaders* and *proponents* these are to be sat among the other bodies that are congregated. Eschewing lecterns and lectures, the benches are, whenever possible, to be physically arranged longitudinally to emphasize the capacity to be in dialogue whilst sat face-to-face.

However, this is not to suggest that working with Cape is simply a matter of replicating these mechanisms as restrictive rubrics. Whilst initiated by an individual artist, Cape's project is one that becomes increasingly collaborative. Its furtherance occurs via dialogues regarding the particularities of the research possibilities of each iteration; how mediation may occur responsively to specific contexts; what skills of making are to be implemented and how materials and timber are sourced; and the ways in which the benches are to be inhabited and employed within the framework and contours of the discursive exhibitions through which benches are gathered, and at which they simultaneously operate as gatherers.

Cape's work is a compelling catalyst for considering how artists may lay out curatorial tracks whilst conceptualizing, initiating and sustaining forms of project-based art that incur collaboration. These courses may be understood as constitutional and antecedental to how future curators and co-producers attune to and navigate their mediation of the project and its potentials. This is not to suggest, though, that a curator simply acknowledges and follows a predetermined pathway.

In this sense, 'Utopian Benches / We sit together' is also a project of extendibility: an example of when an artist actively designates and determines an art work to also be potent with curatorial inflections. Amidst the strata of an ethos (as outlined by his originating intentions), Cape's project may be approached as axial. Its potentia are alerted via accumulative propositional interpretations and mediation of tracks laid out at the project's inception by the artist. Distinct nodes of emphasis may become warranted through identifying, nuancing and activating interstices offered through extendibility. Cumulatively, new iterations and

interpretations become accommodated and constitutional to the project's legacies and futures.

Between 2014 and 2015 the project extended to take account of benches produced and used by intentional and utopian communities in Europe. The École nationale supérieure des Beaux-Arts de Lyon, the Fonds régional d'art contemporain de Franche-Comté in Besançon, the Familistère at Guise and Francis Cape co-produced twelve benches, with a further one being made in 2017. Olivier Vadrot organized a workshop where Masters students in exhibition design at the École nationale supérieure des Beaux-Arts de Lyon worked with Cape on the documentation for benches, then made by the workshops of La Fabrique at Francheville with the collaboration of the students. 'Bancs d'Utopie' has also had numerous subsequent iterations.

'Setting the Table' assembles twelve of these benches; the omission being 'New Lanark', the proportions of which, unfortunately, were greater than that of the elevator at the BALTIC 39 venue. A new bench has not been produced for 'Setting the Table'; neither does this booklet include a survey of utopian or intentional communities in the region where BALTIC 39 is located. Rather, we encounter an activation of Cape's project through a new mediation of its extendibility. One that places the benches into a framework of an *exhibition-in-the-making*: a processual circumstance in which they also become operative in relation to works by other artists, tokens and things; co-present with a temporary population invited to gather over four intensive days in mid-April 2018.

'Setting the Table' seeks to also be discursive and to allow for discussion of the complexity of utopian thought; community and creative actions; the conditions affecting societies with legacies of welfare; and the implications of these for art, curating and the *exhibitionary*, on institutional and non-institutional terms. It also takes account of curatorial methods as initiated, employed and delineated by artists when conceptualizing of their projects in ways that enmesh: collaboration with others; plot complex clustering of temporal structures of past, present and implied futures for their production and reception; and graph pathways for meeting points and overlaps that inflect the processual development of these projects in the field of exhibition-making. In agreeing to loan for 'Setting the Table', Francis Cape generously responded to my requests for some navigational latitude

from the bounds of previous iterations.

Namely, he firstly agreed to the benches being re-sited daily around a series of tables produced by cabinetmaker Emma Leslie where attendees further their conversation over workers' lunches and dinners. Leslie's easily-assembled trestle tables are based on those used in soup kitchens during the UK miners' strike of 1984-85, but also incorporating joints and dimensions from the building of social and council housing. These have been produced in solidarity with social housing protest groups, including women on the Carpenter Estate in East London, a housing complex originally supported by the Carpenters' Company, of which Leslie is one of the very few female *freemen*. Following 'Setting the Table' these trestles are to be either distributed to social housing protest groups or to become catalysts for further collaborations between them and Leslie. Cape also agreed to a second deviation: the benches could also be moved to allow for constituents to attend and be accommodated at a script-in-hand reading of an adaptation of Aristophanes' *Peace*. Dressed in costumes, derived from Russian Constructivist Vera Mukhina's pattern for an *everyday* school uniform as designed by Nadezhda Lamanova, those gathered are to perform this satire on the cessation of war and corrupt profiteering. The return of Peace, made possible only through worker and community solidarity.

I am grateful to Cape himself and Janice Guy of Murray Guy, New York for their allowance in making these interventions possible in the spirit of Cape's intentions.

Jason E. Bowman, 2018

The Masters students in exhibition design at the École nationale supérieure des beaux-arts de Lyon, Olivier Vadrot and Frédéric Panni are the authors of the following texts that describe the European communities. Peter B. Thomas, Anne-Sophie Dautigny and Marie-Claire Page have translated these texts into English. The texts that describe the American communities were authored by Francis Cape.

The curating of 'Setting the Table' has been undertaken by Jason E. Bowman; and project-managed by Katie Hickman at BALTIC Contemporary Art and Kjell Caminha at the Valand Academy of the University of Gothenburg.

This booklet was edited by Jason E. Bowman with the support of Kjell Caminha. It builds upon a previous version by Frédéric Panni, who generously shared access to his editorial and to the design files.

UTOPIAN BENCHES

FRANCIS CAPE

'Utopian Benches/We sit together' opposes individualism with communalism. It celebrates values other than the individualist materialism of the mainstream. A bench is a seat that we share; it is also non-hierarchical, we sit at the same level. Overall, the benches presented are recreations of those used by American and European communities. During exhibitions, the benches are to be used to hold meetings and public conversations on topics related to the work.

'Utopian Benches' was first shown in the United States, where it focused on the nineteenth century American intentional communities, particularly those with a craft tradition. I made twenty benches for the first exhibition in 2011, then a few more in the following years. The benches are made from measured drawings taken from the original benches. Each bench is thus a remake of a bench that was used, or is currently used, by a communal society.

For the European 'Bancs d'Utopie', created in 2015, I collaborated with architect Olivier Vadrot and students of the Master in exhibition design at the École nationale supérieure des beaux-arts de Lyon.

They conducted research on European utopian communities, went to meet them, took measurements of their benches and participated in the remaking of the benches at a professional carpentry workshop near Lyon. Since almost all nineteenth century collectives in Europe emigrated to the United States founding the legacy I had explored there, those represented in the 'Bancs d'Utopie' iteration are, on the whole, twentieth century or contemporary, with the notable exceptions of the Fourierist Familistère de Guise, Robert Owen's New Lanark and Boimondau. 'Bancs d'Utopie' celebrates, not historical, but active contemporary explorations of alternative values and ways of living.

In tune with this living tradition, the benches are used to propose a site of meeting, discussion and social idealism embodied by the form itself.

This will include the programming of meetings. Each of these gatherings will be focused around a different topic pertinent to the project and moderated by a proponent or proponents in the given field. Conversation leaders will sit on the benches in among the other participants. The benches themselves will be arranged longitudinally in the room (facing each other as opposed to hierarchically facing a dais or altar at one end).

EUROPE

LE FAMILISTÈRE DE GUISE

MONTE VERITÀ

HAZORE'A

BOIMONDAU

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NEW LANARK

EUROPEAN COMMUNAL SOCIETIES REPRESENTED BY BENCHES

LE FAMILISTÈRE DE GUISE

FRANCE, AISNE: 1859-1968

HISTORY

Jean-Baptiste André Godin was born in 1817 into a working-class family in Esquéhéries (Aisne). While travelling France to perfect his skill as a locksmith, he went in search of a practical ideal of social justice. An inventive worker, he created a small cast-iron stove workshop in 1840. Twenty years later, Godin became an outstanding captain of industry, with major foundries and factories making stoves for heating and cooking in Guise and Brussels.

Already fueled by the ideas of Saint-Simon, Étienne Cabet and Robert Owen, Godin discovered in 1842 the doctrine of Charles Fourier: the socialist phalansterian. Godin joined the School founded by the disciples of Fourier and in 1853 financed the experiment of a Fourierist colony in Texas. Between 1859 to 1884 Godin built the Familistère or 'Social Palace', a town of 2,000 inhabitants, near his factory in Guise, which reinterpreted the idea of phalanstery conceived by Fourier. In 1880, Godin legally founded the Cooperative Association of Capital and Labour: workers acquired the rank of associates and elected the managing director. The 'palace' and factories became collective property.

Godin died in 1888. The Familistère at Guise operated under the Cooperative Association of Capital and Labour until 1968. Economic hardship forced associates to sell their equity to a capitalist group. The factory in Guise was transformed into a limited company, SA Godin. The apartments were sold to private owners. The factory manufacturing stoves and cookers is still in business. It is now part of the group Cheminées Philippe. Classified as historical monuments in 1991, the 'palace' is still inhabited; it has been gradually restored since 2000 and converted to be both a place of daily life, a museum and a cultural and tourist attraction.

COMMUNAL LIFE

The Familistère at Guise covers six hectares, between town and country. The river Oise, which flows through the site, separates the housing and living areas from the industrial area.

The living space consists of a collective housing complex organized around a central square. It included almost 500 apartments in five residential buildings, shops, a restaurant, a pharmacy, a nursery school, a theatre, a library, a laundry, a swimming pool and gardens.

The Familistère was designed entirely by Godin, right down to the details. He also designed the furniture in the nursery and schools. The 'palace' offered "equivalent of wealth" to its inhabitants, that is to say he made freely available to the community the benefits usually reserved for wealthy individuals: hygiene, health, comfort, education, leisure. The collective housing functioned as a "social condenser", creating proximity between people and providing many opportunities for interaction. The habitat is laid out around large glazed courtyards of the residential pavilions where Familistère celebrations were held. When Familistériens were not taking their meals together, they were constantly meeting at work or leisure, and they met regularly for the purposes of the administration of the Cooperative Association of Capital and Labour, in the various councils that managed the economic, social and domestic life of the 'palace'.

The courtyard of the central pavilion of the Familistère at Guise.

MONTE VERITÀ

SWITZERLAND, TICINO: 1900–1920

HISTORY

Close to the German 'Lebensreform' movement, Alfredo Pioda, a Swiss theosophist, tried to create a "secular convent" in 1889. His group took the name 'Fraternitas' and settled near Ascona in the Swiss canton of Ticino, where Pioda was a national councilor. He chose an idyllic site; La Monescia hill, overlooking Lake Maggiore, which they renamed Monte Verità (Mount Truth). Pioda was joined by members of the Theosophical Society. The small vegetarian community was looking for an alternative lifestyle, one in close contact with nature. But this first attempt at building a colony failed.

Then in 1900, Henri Oedenkoven and his wife Ida Hofmann bought three and a half hectares of the property from Pioda to build, on the ruins of Fraternitas, a real vegetarian "life reform" community. The colony took the name 'Monte Verità'. On this Alpine acropolis, they thought, imagination could be stimulated by the "energy" of the place to build a more peaceful future – a new golden age. They planned to create a cooperative vegan sanatorium dedicated to naturopathy and clean air.

COMMUNAL LIFE

Seven pioneers – men and women – veterans of a Munich anarchist circle, cleared land, cultivated their vegetables and built huts. They rejected all manufactured products, lived naked or dressed in simple pieces of fabric. In 1905, Henri Oedenkoven formalized the founding of the colony by publishing the "Provisional Regulations of the Vegetarian Society of the Monte Verità", two main principles of which, veganism and naturism, would lead to happiness. Henry Oedenkoven's efforts were first aimed at making the cooperative economically viable. This was quickly achieved: spa guests flocked in. They paid for their stay in cash or labor. Among the group, services were exchanged under a barter system.

The buildings constructed on the site reflected the search for harmony with the laws of nature. The wooden community building, built in 1905 in the

center of the colony by the architect Walter Hoffmann, brought together on four levels, solariums, dining, meeting, music rooms, and a library. Its Art Nouveau architecture, organic and symbolic, aimed at the quest for harmony with nature. The Taoist Yin Yang sign was everywhere; on ceilings, railings and facades. These *Naturmenschen* had a particular mysticism which included sun worship.

Sanatorium Monte Verità soon found a wider audience beyond the circle of his supporters. The community was the cradle of contemporary dance. The Ticino colony played host to Émile Jacques-Dalcroze, the inventor of Rhythmic Gymnastics, Rudolf von Laban, choreographer and theorist, and the dancers and choreographers Isadora Duncan and Mary Wigman. Numerous libertarian thinkers also frequented Monte Verità, such as the writer Hermann Hesse, the philosopher Martin Buber, the pioneer of the sexual revolution Otto Gross, the founder of anthroposophy Rudolf Steiner and the philosopher Jiddu Krishnamurti, promoter of alternative education.

The First World War put an initial stop to this international community, which finally disappeared in 1920 when the founders, in debt, abandoned the place. A wealthy German baron, Eduard von der Heydt, bought the property, created an institute of Asian art and in 1927 built a modernist style hotel. Von der Heydt died in 1964, bequeathing the property to the canton of Ticino to form a cultural foundation, active since 1989.

Monte Verità.

HAZORE'A

ISRAEL, NORTHERN DISTRICT: 1934 TO PRESENT

HISTORY

The first kibbutz ("together" in Hebrew), Degania, was founded in Palestine in 1909 by twelve young Jewish socialists from Russia. Today there are nearly 270 Israeli kibbutzim: towns of full equality of goods and labor, home to some 120,000 people. Hazore'a is the only kibbutz in Israel to be founded by members of Werkleute, a movement animated by an intellectual elite of young Jewish German socialists. With the arrival of the Nazis to power in the winter of 1933, the movement embraced the Zionist ideology of "return" of the Jews to Palestine and began preparations to found a kibbutz under the influence of the socialist youth movement Hashomer Hatzair ("The Young Guard"). A first group emigrated in early 1934. These young people, who followed academic or technical studies in Germany, began by learning about pioneer life. They met, during the year, south of Haifa at the foot of Mount Carmel, where they decide to build their kibbutz on land allotted by the Jewish settlement agency.

COMMUNAL LIFE

The young Germans lived in very difficult conditions for many years, in tents and barracks. Only after Israel's War of Independence in 1948 did the young graduates actually have ownership of their lands and could make their first tries at farming.

Because of the poor soil of the valley, the kibbutz began by breeding goats and sheep. At the same time, they drained and reclaimed the land of the Jezreel Valley. They developed orchards and vineyards, and produced fruit and vegetable crops, notably melons, before favoring the cultivation of cotton. Hazore'a took advantage of drainage facilities to develop fishponds and, like so many other kibbutzim, created a chicken farm and a dairy. In the 1950s, the kibbutz found it necessary to diversify its resources and imagine developing industry. A furniture factory, a food packaging factory and testing center for industrial products have been created.

The urbanization of Hazore'a follows a characteristic plan, which derives from the model created by architect Richard Kauffman for the kibbutzim: an open form to allow for the expansion of the community, separating the residential and work spaces with the dining hall and cultural center at its heart. The refectory was built by modernist architects Al Mansfeld and Munio Weinraub, who were also the creators of the rich Museum of Asian Art established on the kibbutz by Wilfrid Israel in 1951.

As in all kibbutzim, education is a key concern. Hazore'a applied the principle of children being separated from their biological parents and raised by the entire community. During and after the Second World War, the kibbutz welcomed and trained young people from Bulgaria, Syria, Lebanon and the various groups of Holocaust survivors. A Hebrew learning center for immigrants, an *ulpan*, was established in 1956, and was in operation for 50 years in Hazore'a, significantly contributing to the renewal of its members.

Hazore'a kibbutz is economically very dynamic. It remains a living community. The kibbutz, which now has about 900 members, still offers its members the same conditions. The refectory, emblem of community life, is still in operation. The democratic organization continues with its secretariat, its community council and its assembly of members. Changes have been occurring in recent decades: since 1991, children sleep with their biological parents, some services such as meals in the dining hall or the supply of electricity are charged for, and not just members of the kibbutz are allowed to live in Hazore'a. This gradual 'privatization' is a subject of ongoing debate today among members of Hazore'a.

Kibbutz Hazore'a.

BOIMONDAU

FRANCE, AUVERGNE-RHÔNE-ALPES: 1941 TO 1971

HISTORY

Boimondau (Boitier de Montre du Dauphiné – Watch Case of Dauphiné) is one of the longest-running and most advanced work commune experiments in the French industrial environment. During the first six years (1941-1947) of its existence, it bore the name of its founder, Marcel Barbu, who had left Besançon during the occupation to get to the Zone Libre, the French unoccupied zone in Valence.

COMMUNAL LIFE

In 1942 the community refused to comply with the requirements of the German STO (Compulsory Work Force), went clandestine and then joined the Resistance in the Maquis du Vercors. During this period, "companions" settled in the Ferme du Mourras where they farmed the land and logged the forest. The community was at its peak, having designed and laid down procedures for: social service, cultural activities, neighborhood groups, sports, counter-efforts, etc. After Marcel Barbu was arrested and deported, Marcel Mermoz succeeded him and gradually shifted the commune's vision to a less Christian and more Marxist one.

Boimondau went on to use some organisational principles from prior socialist utopias, with the intent of implementing a concrete and realistic operation within a tough capitalistic environment. Running the commune was at the core of its concerns, but still, decision-making and profits were to be shared, and members had the ability to practice cultural or sports-related activities during their weekly working hours.

In the early 1950s, the commune operated under strictly-defined social and economic rules. Hundreds of companions from very diverse backgrounds, were part of the community. But, as the legal form changed to become a SCOP (Société Coopérative Ouvrière de Production), the communal spirit began to fade. Business operations increasingly prevailed over social activities, and in 1957 tougher competition finally

Boimondau.

forced the commune to abandon social benefits, which had become too costly. The commune, then divided between original companions and newcomers, became more and more difficult to run. It was liquidated in 1971.

FINDHORN

UNITED KINGDOM, SCOTLAND: 1962 TO PRESENT

HISTORY

The Findhorn community was founded in 1962 in the northeast of Scotland in Findhorn Bay by Eileen Caddy, Peter Caddy and Dorothy Maclean. Arriving in the region in 1957, they were first hired in the town of Forres as managers of a luxury hotel, the Hotel Cluny Hill. They had to leave in 1961 and settled nearby in a caravan with their children. They began to experiment with organic gardening to survive. Discovering, according to them, that the spirit of the plants was guiding them in their efforts, they established a link between spirituality and the cultivation of vegetables. Their garden was proliferating and the group was soon famous, and grew with the arrival of new members. The community developed innovative spiritual and environmental research, which it broadcast through publishing and educational projects. In 1972, Findhorn was recognized as a foundation: the Findhorn Foundation. It soon had some three hundred members. The community, which had long lived in caravans, bought the Cluny Hill Hotel and built many buildings not only houses, but also a concert hall, a café, a recording studio and offices. In the late 1980s, the colony developed into an ecovillage. The community became very attractive, and eventually extended beyond its boundaries; members now live as far as 50 kilometers from the original site, and also on the islands of Iona and Erraid on the west coast of Scotland.

COMMUNAL LIFE

Today, the community occupies two main sites around the town of Forres: The Park and Cluny Hill are home to about 400 people (160 of whom are members). The Park is the most important part. There are gardens, crops, workshops, administrative offices and shared houses. Cluny Hill, served by a shuttle service, is frequented by both members and visitors. Guests can stay in the hotel and discover the community by participating in various seminars offered by the foundation, including *Experiences Weeks*. Young people and students can also enroll in courses of several months duration whilst contributing to community activities and land cultivation among

other activities. These programs allow Findhorn to become more known and earn money.

Spirituality is central to the life of the community. Initially mainly linked to plant cultivation, over time it has become the glue that binds the community and the support for all its activities. Spirituality permeates the organization and the seminars offered to visitors. Findhorn however, claims no affiliation to any particular religion: “We impose no formal doctrine or belief”, says the Findhorn website. “We believe that mankind is engaged in a process of evolutionary expansion of consciousness, generating new behaviour in societies and a global culture imbued with spiritual values.” This is not a place of retreat and meditation but of participatory work and communal life. However, the community has a secluded location on the island of Iona where themed ‘reflection’ weeks are available for small groups.

As Findhorn includes several hundred members or residents, organization is important and the tasks are distributed according to a precise schedule. The various tasks are carried out in a group, in a friendly atmosphere: gardening and culture, transport, food, cooking, cleaning, laundry etc. A council meets regularly to make decisions about community life.

Findhorn greenhouse and meeting space.

ARDELAINE

FRANCE, ARDÈCHE: 1972 TO PRESENT

HISTORY

In 1972, Gérard and Béatrice Barras decided to revive an old woolen mill located in Saint-Pierreville, Ardèche. The workshops had closed in 1960 due to the devaluation of wool in favor of synthetics. With them, an entire local economy was gone. Ardèche farmers threw out the wool from their sheep because they could not sell it. The region emptied. Gérard and Béatrice, already engaged in rebuilding a hamlet in southern Ardèche, wanted to save this piece of abandoned heritage, revive the region's wool industry and create a cooperative.

They bought the ruins of the Saint-Pierreville mill in 1975. It took several years for them to gather a motivated and supportive team, rehabilitate buildings and learn the wool trade. They didn't want to take on debt and chose to raise the funds needed for the project only by the fruit of their labor. They each performed several and diverse jobs, they made savings and pooled their resources to cope with common expenses (housing, food, clothing, transport etc) and to finance the work. The team was supported by many volunteers. The statutes of workers' production cooperative (SCOP) Ardelaine were adopted by sixteen people in 1982.

COMMUNAL LIFE

To be consistent with its objectives of solidarity, local development and respect for the environment, the cooperative took a comprehensive approach to the whole chain; from sheep-shearing to marketing the finished product. The team formed a network of rearers from areas committed to the quality of their wool. They managed the technical and ecological aspects of the whole production chain, and turned to direct sales to individuals on site, at shows or by mail. In 1982, the cooperative made bedding – mattresses, duvets and pillows. In 1986 Ardelaine launched a range of clothing made in a workshop that the cooperative established in Valence (Drôme). Ardelaine then sought to diversify its activities by promoting local development: today the cooperative includes

a wool museum, a shop, a café and bookshop, a restaurant leased to another cooperative and a cannery also leasing to different users. Fifty people work on the cooperative's site. Ardelaine is also active in the local economy and helps to revitalize the area by maintaining traditional skills. Its founders say Ardelaine is an "area cooperative".

The cooperative does not form properly a community but is the center of a network of solidarity in the area. Its internal organization remains dynamic. The cooperative society is administered by a board of twelve members. In 2014, Ardelaine had 47 employees, including 37 cooperative members. Each has one main, and several related tasks. This versatility, useful for productivity, allows everyone to be fully involved in the affairs of the cooperative and offers a real variety of work. Ardelaine continues its policy of equal pay (at minimum wage), regardless of seniority or responsibility: "A person is a person", explained Béatrice Barras in 2014. "We all need to eat, sleep, be warm in the winter. We all have the same standard of living. With equal pay, we don't judge ourselves by money, and it removes a tremendous amount of tension between people." However, this issue was recently discussed at a general meeting.

The village of Saint-Pierreville with, bottom right, the Ardelaine cooperative.

LE BÉAL

FRANCE, DRÔME: 1972 TO PRESENT

HISTORY

In 1972, Richard Hediger, pioneer of biodynamic agriculture in France and his wife Margaret, moved to Le Béal, an old silk mill in Taulignan in Drôme, with young people in difficulty. In 1977, after completing socio-therapeutic training in communities in Scotland, Germany, Switzerland and particularly in Camphill movement communities (see page 55), the couple's successors decided to take the social project further by welcoming adults with learning disabilities as 'companions'. Special educators and many young volunteers joined the community to live in companionship with adults with disabilities according to the principles of the Camphill movement.

In 1979, the Camphill Association of Le Béal was created. It was recognized as a Social Assistance organization in the context of social innovations by the Département de la Drôme

COMMUNAL LIFE

The community functions like a family: divided into five homes, the association has 23 companions for as many accompaniers. Designed as a shared social and therapeutic project, each household is inhabited by five or six companions supervised by a group of educators and several young volunteers. Life revolves around daily tasks such as: cleaning, laundry, and preparing meals; numerous workshops ivolving working on the farm; gardening according to the principles of biodynamic agriculture, and turning crops into juice, jam, etc.; and weekly cultural activities including singing, painting and theatre-making. The companions are involved in the balancing of and ensuring the functioning of the center. They play an active role in the life of the community.

Le Béal.

UTOPIAGGIA

ITALY, UMBRIA: 1982 TO PRESENT

HISTORY

The community Utopiaggia project was born in 1975 in Bavaria, and became concrete in 1982 in the center of Italy, in the hamlet of Piaggia, 50 kilometers southeast of Perugia. The founders were young Germans and many of whom participated in social protest movements of the 1960s. Their goal in Utopiaggia, was, according to their website: "to live in the country with a lifestyle of reduced reliance on markets, wage labor and private property".

COMMUNAL LIFE

Located in a wild valley, Utopiaggia consists of a villa and two farms on a plot of 92 hectares. It is an agricultural and craft cooperative. The community cultivates an organic garden, raises a flock of sheep, presses olives from its grove, and has created a cheese factory, a pottery workshop and a dyeing workshop using natural dyes. It has also developed a horticultural activity. Twenty adults and five children now live in the community. Utopiaggia sells its production but most of its revenue comes from members' work outside the community. There is no hierarchy, all decisions are shared. The community stopped receiving visitors in 2016 "in the interest of community life." Members are required to participate in certain tasks such as the maintenance of extensive land and buildings. Energy is largely provided by the photo-voltaic panels and solar thermal collectors.

Utopiaggia.

TORRI SUPERIORE

ITALY, LIGURIA: 1989 TO PRESENT

HISTORY

The Torri Superiore Cultural Association was created in 1989 from the desire to restore and turn a medieval village into a community ecovillage and a cultural center open to the public. The village of Torri Superiore is located at the foot of the Ligurian Alps, about ten kilometers from Ventimiglia and near the Bevera river. This old medieval mountainside fort is made up of three building complexes separated by two main alleys and through which there is a labyrinthine network of vaulted passages, terraces and staircases that give it a unique character. In 2012 the restoration of the village was virtually complete.

COMMUNAL LIFE

Composed of thirty members who do not all live in the ecovillage, the Torri Superiore Association follows the principles of a cooperative inspired by the values of environmental responsibility and sustainable development. It claims no political or religious agenda. Its objectives are discussed at an assembly twice a year. The Executive Board consists of nine members, residents or non-residents; its sessions are held every three months. Residents meet weekly to share decisions which concern community life. Families gathered at Torri Superiore come from diverse backgrounds. Each has an individual dwelling with private kitchen, but communal living is important, especially at meals, that are often taken together in a room provided for this purpose. Everyone contributes to community life, and to the running of the ecovillage and cultural activities. Torri Superiore has also developed an ecotourism business, with a building dedicated to accommodation and catering for visitors. Guests can stay in the village with the opportunity to participate in community tasks. Torri Superiore Association has a policy of sustainable development and ecological living. The village has been restored with natural materials with low environmental impact; it is equipped with solar panels and composting toilets. The village has farmland cultivated as permaculture, that is to say with the greatest possible economy

Torri Superiore.

of energy, in a sustainable way and being sensitive to the reciprocal relationship between nature and man. The community produces oil, bread, eggs, pasta, jam etc. Torri Superiore is on a process of ecological transition to self-sufficiency through the application of production methods that respect the environment. The community offers courses and educational seminars about reducing the impact of human activity on the environment.

LA FERME DU COLLET

FRANCE, ALPES-MARITIMES: 2001 TO PRESENT

HISTORY

La ferme du Collet, located in the southern Alps near the village of La Penne at about 800 meters, is a 'eco-hamlet', a collective that was founded in 2001. Designed as a versatile and experimental ecological farm by its founders Katia and Bertrand Ollivier, Françoise and Diego Arias and Marie-Thérèse Desbuissons, particularly based on permaculture. The project aims for the greatest self-sufficiency possible, and relies on the practice of polyculture food; the use of simple tools from local resources and know-how; efficient energy produced on site and self-building.

COMMUNAL LIFE

Currently, five households of eleven adults and four children share the site jointly acquired by the founders who partnered in a real estate company. The farm is divided into several houses so each family has its own living space. Everyone on the farm lives according to their needs, expertise and convictions. The family of Françoise and Diego produces cereals and bread; they are also involved in the cultivation of rare plants in the nursery to make herbal teas in particular, and provide training in botany. The family of Katia and Bertrand grows spirulina; they are also donkey breeders and Katia is also a practicing architect. Marie-Thérèse, a retired farmer, is responsible for cultivating the food garden. As the impact on the environment must be as low as possible, electricity is supplied mainly by photovoltaic panels, crops are irrigated only by rainwater and using horse power. Families share the costs and taxes. Although their economic activities might be separate, the idea of a return to the land and a desire for food and energy self-sufficiency brings them together. The solidarity and complementarity of the inhabitants are two inherent elements of farm life. There is no hierarchy between members, who hold a weekly meeting in a space dedicated to community activities. At any time, anyone can call an additional meeting. All decisions are taken by mutual agreement according to the principles of 'sociocracy', a governance likely to give an organization a behavior comparable to that of a self-regulating living organism.

La ferme du Collet.

HOFKOLLEKTIV WIESERHOISL

AUSTRIA, STYRIA: 2008 TO PRESENT

HISTORY

The history of Hofkollektiv Wieserhoisl begins in 2008. The collective formed out of a small group of people who chose to live communally and to work the land. The goal was to develop a united and sustainable society. They settled in Deutschlandsberg in Austria, in a farmhouse situated on a plot of twelve hectares of forest and meadows.

COMMUNAL LIFE

The Hofkollektiv Wieserhoisl consists of eight adults and three children. The farm is commonly owned. Decisions are taken jointly, with no hierarchy between members and with full equality between men and women. The work is considered of equal importance: subsistence farming, housework, childcare or paid employment. Revenues generated by the community feed a common fund. Its members claim a simple and healthy lifestyle. The community aims for self-sufficiency. The wood it gets from its forest is sufficient for its heating and construction needs. It has a large vegetable garden where they grow fruit, vegetables and medicinal plants. Sheep, chickens, ducks and geese are raised on their meadows. When production exceeds what the community consumes, the surplus is sold locally. The Hofkollektiv Wieserhoisl is a member of the food cooperative lkdl (Lebensmittelkooperative Deutschlandsberg) that allows consumers to buy directly from local producers and offers a sustainable alternative to mass distribution in supermarkets. Required food that the community is not able to produce by itself is purchased locally or exchanged for products or services. The community has created a street theatre group combining circus arts and political reflection. The group organizes and participates in many cultural and political events. It also offers cookery workshops and various meetings. Members activities are part of a network of similar places and projects.

House at Hofkollektiv Wieserhoisl.

NEW LANARK*

UNITED KINGDOM, SCOTLAND: 1800-1825

HISTORY

New Lanark, 35 kilometers south-east of Glasgow, is an industrial town entirely created by David Dale, in 1785, to establish a large cotton mill, the largest in Great Britain in number of employees (1,500 in 1816). Beside the River Clyde, David Dale built, using local sandstone, industrial buildings and rows of housing for workers. In 1800, Dale sold the factory to his son-in-law, Robert Owen, together with other entrepreneurs. Born in 1771 in Wales, Robert Owen began a successful career in the textile industry in Manchester, where he experienced the confusion and irrationality of the great European industrial city. The situation in New Lanark, where he settled in 1800, was quite different. Scottish manufacturing was a rural model from the first industrial revolution, where community feeling had not disappeared. Robert Owen tried to make the village, on the banks of the River Clyde, which had 2,000 inhabitants on his arrival, the prototype of a community corresponding, at least partially, to a new vision of society, which he explained to the public in 1812.

COMMUNAL LIFE

The industrialist wanted to demonstrate in Scotland the beneficial effects on the behavior of men in improving their environment. Owen embarked on three areas of reform: he made New Lanark a model factory, gave the village a community organization and founded an ambitious education institution.

Owen pushed back the age of the employment of children in spinning to ten years old (where they used to work at five); he limited the working day to twelve hours, and after 1816 to ten and a half hours a day. Salaries were not very high, but benefits were extensive. The humanisation of working conditions was accompanied by research in productivity. Under the direction of Robert Owen, the factory of New Lanark became quite prosperous; its value doubled in fifteen years. Part of the proceeds were used to raise the living conditions of the population. The people

of New Lanark could shop, at cost, in a community store; they enjoyed comfortable housing at affordable rents; free health services; a very modest contribution was requested for the education of the children; a savings bank was open to them. Owen tried to develop self-regulation of behavior of the inhabitants, who were reputed to lead a dissolute lifestyle at the time of David Dale. Social control was ensured by a body of twelve inspectors elected by the people, responsible for enforcing the rules of health, cleanliness and good conduct.

The Institution for the Formation of Character was opened in 1816. It was kindergarten and school for children less than ten years old, a night school for children over ten, and an education center for adults. After prohibiting the employment of children under ten years, Owen endeavored to develop their education in an original way, using methods comparable to those of Froebel and Pestalozzi. Punishments, as well as artificial awards, were banned. Dancing, singing and parades were daily activities.

From the 1820s, Owen felt too limited within New Lanark. Not finding useful support in the UK for his project of cooperative committees, in 1825 he enlisted in a major new experiment, New Harmony, Indiana in the United States. He yielded New Lanark to new owners favorable to his reforms. The mills remained in operation until 1968. After closing, people began to leave the village and the buildings deteriorated. In 1975, the New Lanark Conservation Trust was founded to prevent the demolition of buildings. New Lanark is now a major tourist attraction; it was added to the list of World Heritage Sites in 2001.

*The New Lanark bench is not included in 'Setting the Table'.

New Lanark.

THE EUROPEAN BENCHES

The twelve benches gathered together for 'Setting the Table' represent the communal societies described in the first part of this booklet. They were made in 2015 in chestnut timber. One further bench was made in 2017. Eight benches were made from poplar timber, between 2011 and 2014, after the benches of the American communities, of which five are represented in this booklet.

The originating 'Bancs d'Utopie' exhibition was organized by the Syndicat mixte du Familistère Godin with support from the Département de l'Aisne and the town of Guise.

Le Familistère de Guise
h. 44 x l. 249 x w. 30 cm

Monte Verità
h. 57,5 x l. 270 x w. 34,5 cm

Hazore'a
h. 44,5 x l. 198 x w. 25,8 cm

Boimandau
h. 43 x l. 167 x w. 23 cm

Findhorn
h. 46 x l. 181 x w. 23 cm

Findhorn
h. 49,5 x l. 152 x w. 29 cm

Ardelaine
h. 46 x l. 181 x w. 23 cm

Le Béal
h. 45,5 x l. 120 x w. 30 cm

La ferme du Collet
h. 42,5 x l. 111,5 x w. 30 cm

Utopiaggia
h. 48 x l. 220 x w. 34 cm

Torri Superiore
h. 28,5 x l. 178 x w. 21,3 cm

Hofkollektiv Wieserhoisl
h. 45 x l. 150 x w. 31 cm.

New Lanark
h. 43 x l. 349 x w. 18,5 cm

UNITED STATES

THE SHAKERS

HARMONY SOCIETY

SOCIETY OF TRUE INSPIRATION, AMANA

TWIN OAKS

CAMPHILL VILLAGE KIMBERTON HILLS

USA COMMUNAL SOCIETIES REPRESENTED BY BENCHES

THE SHAKERS

UNITED STATES: 1774 TO PRESENT

HISTORY

The community of the United Society of Believers in Christ's Second Appearing, or the Shakers, began in 1747, when a group broke from the Quakers. Members looked to women as leaders. Ann Lee soon assumed leadership and began to preach that marriage and sexual intercourse were sinful, and called on her followers to confess their sins, give up all their worldly goods, and embrace celibacy. The Shakers were not welcome in England because their services were so noisy and their beliefs were considered unusual. Ann Lee was imprisoned several times. Many Shakers believed, on her release from prison in 1770, that Christ had returned to earth in her form. By 1774 she and eight followers had emigrated to New York, eventually settling on land owned by one of the Shakers. Over the next century they built over twenty settlements and attracted more than 20,000 converts.

COMMUNAL LIFE

The Shakers are renowned for their simple lives and products, for their celibacy, and for their early practice of equality of the sexes. Mother Ann Lee taught: "Put your hands to work and your hearts to God."

A Shaker village was divided into groups or 'families', with each family occupying a large house. Each family was designed to be self-supporting with its own farm and businesses. The leading group in each village was the Church Family; the village was governed by a team of two men and two women, elders and eldresses respectively. Men and women lived together as brothers and sisters. Houses were divided by gender with separate staircases and doors. They sat on opposite sides of the room during worship, at meals, and during 'union meetings' work areas were similarly segregated.

Shakers lived in a form of religious communism. Written covenants were developed in 1790 – those who signed had to confess their sins,

consecrate their property and labor to the society, and maintain celibacy. If they were married before they joined, their marriages essentially ended upon joining. Since Shakers did not practice procreation, children joined through indenture, adoption, or conversion. When they turned 21, children were free to leave or stay with the community; many left, unwilling to remain celibate.

The Shaker religion valued men and women equally. It was a hierarchical church with men and women sharing authority on each level. They viewed God as both male and female. Worshiping in white unadorned meetinghouses, they marched, sang, danced, and sometimes turned, twitched, jerked, or shouted.

Their dedication to hard work and perfection has resulted in a unique style of architecture, furniture and handcraft styles. They believed that making something well was itself an act of prayer. "Do your work as though you had a thousand years to live and as if you were to die tomorrow." Their industry and search for efficiency resulted in many inventions, including, for woodworkers, the circular saw. They also wrote their own music: songs and dances that were used in worship.

By 1925 most Shaker villages were no longer in existence. One reason for the decline was that the Shakers' handmade goods could not compete economically with mass-produced products. Another was that people were attracted to the cities, away from the farms, and, of course, celibacy. Some sites are now museums. There is still one active community, Sabbathday Lake, Maine, which has three members (2016).

Meeting House, Mount Lebanon.

HARMONY SOCIETY

UNITED STATES: 1805-1905

HISTORY

When the group first moved to the United States from Wurttemberg, Germany, they purchased land in Western Pennsylvania and established the town of Harmony. The small community held houses, a church, a school, and workshops. Because the group had little money, their leader, Johann Georg Rapp, put it all into one common fund. On February 15, 1805 the Harmony Society was formally organized and all of their goods were placed in common. In 1814, seeking a better location, they sold the town in Harmony, Pennsylvania and moved to New Harmony, Indiana. The community moved once again in 1824, when they sold New Harmony, Indiana to Robert Owen and relocated to their final settlement of Economy, Pennsylvania.

COMMUNAL LIFE

The Harmonists developed a simple, pietistic lifestyle based on the early Christian Church. Upon joining, Harmonists turned over everything they owned to the Harmony Society. Everyone worked together for the good of the Society and received in turn what he or she needed to live simply and comfortably.

Homes were mostly two-story brick houses with neat gardens arranged on a grid of streets, along with a church, school, shops, mills and communal buildings. Four to six adults, generally family members, lived in each home. Since celibacy was advocated by most members and became the custom in the Society, it was suggested that married couples live together as brother and sister. Though sex was discouraged, although not banned outright, there were few births in later years and only a few marriages. Each member had a particular job in a specific craft or trade. Most men performed manual labor and women worked in textiles and agriculture. As technology developed and business expanded, outsiders were hired as additional workers.

Although initially modeled on agricultural self-sufficiency, the settlements became economically successful, producing many goods in their clothing factory, sawmill, tannery, vineyards and distillery. They also produced high quality silk for garments. Though plain clothing was typically worn, members donned fine silk garments on Sundays and special occasions.

As Millennialists, who believed that Jesus Christ would return to earth within their lifetimes and usher in a thousand-year kingdom of peace on earth, they embraced beauty and sought to establish harmony on this earth. They made a communal flower garden, deer park, and a maze; enjoyed music, and installed a museum with fine paintings, antiquities and curios. They drank wine and whiskey, but refrained from tobacco.

Frederick Rapp, Johann Georg Rapp's adopted son, helped his father lead the group, and managed its business and commerce. A board of elders was elected to enforce the society's rules and regulations.

After the death of Johann Georg Rapp many members left. Nevertheless, the Harmony Society prospered as a successful business community. However, declining membership resulting from both the practice of celibacy and an increasing reluctance to accept new members, along with the move from a religious to a business approach, caused the decline and finally the dissolution of the Society. The land and assets were sold by the remaining members in 1906. Today many of the buildings remain preserved by the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission.

Feast Hall and Museum, Old Economy.

SOCIETY OF TRUE INSPIRATION IN AMANA

UNITED STATES: 1855-1932

HISTORY

The Amana Colonies trace their origins to a religious movement called the Community of True Inspiration that began in Germany in 1714. The movement was started by Eberhard L. Gruber and Johann F. Rock, who believed that God communicated directly through inspired individuals. Suffering persecution in Germany, Christian Metz led a committee to America in September 1842, in search of land for relocation. Pooling their resources, the community purchased 5,000 acres near Buffalo, New York.

Working co-operatively and sharing their property, the community, now numbering some 1,200 people, managed to carve out a relatively comfortable living. They called their community the Ebenezer Society and adopted a constitution formalizing their communal way of life. In 1854, when increasing prices of land in the area and a growing interest among some members in materialism threatened the spiritual focus of the community, the leaders decided to move the community westward, to Iowa, where there was unsettled land.

COMMUNAL LIFE

The seven Amana villages lie along the fertile Iowa River Valley on 26,000 acres of Society land. Each village, with its two-storywood, brick and stone houses, looks perhaps like any German-American settlement, except that the wood houses are not painted. But the houses were communal: families occupied suites with bedrooms and sitting rooms, and ate together in communal kitchen houses. Property and resources were shared. On joining, members gave their property to the Society, and in return received home, food, all necessities, and an allowance at the village store. Bertha Shambaugh relates that a talented Brother appealed for a larger allowance on the basis of his abilities. He was asked if the simple shepherd did not perform the task allotted to him faithfully and to the utmost of his ability. On answering yes, he was told to go and do likewise.

The community supported itself through farming and the production of wool and calico. In addition, the colonists made their own books, bricks, clocks, fabrics, furniture, and wines. Good craftsmanship was valued. They grew and prepared all their own food, and communal kitchens provided three daily meals, as well as mid-morning and mid-afternoon snacks.

Spiritual and temporal authority lay with an elected Board of Trustees. All adult men, widows and single women over 30 voted in the annual meeting. The Board of Trustees appointed elders to the village councils, which ran the affairs of each village.

The village council assigned work according to seasonal and business needs. Men might work in any of a number of trades; women worked in traditional roles. Children aged 5 to 14 attended school six days a week year-round without vacation. Older boys spent some hours each day trying out a trade. A few boys were sent to college for training as teachers, doctors and dentists.

In 1932 the members of the community voted to abandon the communal system and became a profit-sharing corporation. Many had come to see the communal way of life as a barrier to achieving individual goals. Rather than leaving or watching their children go, they changed. Today the Amana Society has nearly 900 members.

Communal Kitchen, Middle Amana.

TWIN OAKS

UNITED STATES, VIRGINIA: 1967 TO PRESENT

HISTORY

Twin Oaks was founded following a conference in Michigan in 1966 that was held to promote the idea of starting a community based on B. F. Skinner's novel *Walden Two*. The novel describes a utopian community where members share work and income, have plenty of leisure time, and use behavioral modification training to lessen individual negative emotions and behavior. Twin Oaks began with eight members on a farm purchased by one member.

COMMUNAL LIFE

— I came up the dirt drive past a large field of – was it beans? – to the home-built hammock workshop, and next to it, the small original farmhouse. Labeled piles of recycled materials stood about. Other workshops, homes and the dining hall scattered along the field's edge and into the woods. The place was unkempt but purposive. A woman working in the office in the farmhouse took to me to find Purl who had volunteered to show me around. He worked as a forestry manager, harvesting from their woodland to supply frames for the hammock works. Later I met a woman making a hammock, who also fielded general e-mail enquiries, including mine. Up at the dining hall, Purl joined a group preparing a harvest of strawberries while I measured the bench.

Twin Oaks is made up of around 85 adult members and 15 children. Their website states: "We do not have a central leader; we govern ourselves by a form of democracy with responsibility shared among various managers, planners, and committees. We are self-supporting economically, and partly self-sufficient. We are income-sharing. Each member works 42 hours a week in the community's business and domestic areas. Each member receives housing, food, health care, and personal spending money from the community."

The community has a structured but flexible labor system with labor credits. Each member must work an equal amount of time, and all work

earns equal labor credits. Members opt for the work of their choice; most work a few different jobs each week. Members can earn vacation time by working extra hours. The community earns income by making and selling hammocks and hammock chairs, making tofu and other soy products and indexing books. They produce most of their own food and generally eat in the common dining hall, though some houses have separate kitchens. They live in group houses, which they build themselves.

The roughly 75 managers are each responsible for one area such as a business, residence, the vehicles, or gardens. Anyone can volunteer to be a manager, whereon they are approved by a council of managers of like areas. The three planners serve 18-month staggered terms, make long-term policy decisions, and control the community's resources. New candidates are chosen by other planners and must then be voted in by at least 80 percent of the community.

The founders of Twin Oaks had wanted the children of the community to be raised by the community as a whole, rather than by their parents as a single unit. However, parents wanted more contact with and responsibility for their children, and now children are either home-schooled or go to the local public school.

Twin Oaks does not isolate itself, but allows newspapers, radio, and the Internet as well as visits to nearby towns and recreational travel. The community hosts an annual Women's Gathering, open to all women and girls, and an annual Communities Gathering, open to the public. They also welcome visitors for tours on Saturdays.

Hammock Workshop, Twin Oaks.

CAMPHILL VILLAGE, KIMBERTON HILLS

UNITED STATES, PENNSYLVANIA: 1972 TO PRESENT

HISTORY

Karl Koenig, an Austrian physician who had left his home country after the Nazi invasion, formed the first Camphill community in Scotland in 1940. Before he fled to Scotland he had worked as a physician for a therapeutic institute in Switzerland and co-founded a school for people with disabilities. In Scotland he joined others in seeking to establish a spiritual community based on ideals of freedom and equality, who ultimately deciding to focus their time and energy on caring for children with special needs. As the children grew up, the communities expanded into communities accommodating adults with developmental disabilities.

The underlying principles of König's Camphill school were derived from concepts of education and social life outlined decades earlier by anthroposophist Rudolf Steiner. These are still the founding principles of all Camphill Village Communities. The first Camphill community in the United States was started in 1961 on 615 acres in Columbia County, New York.

COMMUNAL LIFE

— My brother worked as a shepherd on a Camphill Village in Scotland for a few years, and an ex-girlfriend is, as far as I know, living on one still. So, it was with fond anticipation that I came up the long drive that meanders through pastures generously bordered by woods in the gently rolling hills. Across a field I saw a stand of beehives under reaching branches. At the top of the hill stood the older stone house. Each house, hall or workshop is carefully sited and designed according to specific anthroposophical prin·ciples. Inside they are clean and orderly. I entered the stone house by the wrong door. A villager came from her loom and led me to the office.

Villagers, those with special needs, and co-workers, those with 'ordinary' needs, live together in group houses. Some co-workers are long term residents. Others are volunteers who come for a year. Co-workers are not paid for their services but receive room, board, health insurance, and a small monthly stipend, as they are considered members of the community.

The community website states: "Community members, with and without disabilities, live and work together as expanded families in comfortable homes throughout the village, forming a supportive community based on shared responsibility and caring. This lifestyle helps to foster mutual help and understanding, as people live and work side by side, day by day, each learning from the other."

Each house has a "house mother" and a "house father" and its own kitchen, dining and sitting rooms. All work together in one of the craft shops, gardens or on the farm. Camphill Kimberton takes its stewardship of the land seriously. Anthroposophy embraces a spiritual understanding of the human being, based on knowing rather than faith. Anthroposophy is the wellspring for Waldorf education, biodynamic agriculture, and curative work.

— There is a wonderful calm and peaceful feeling about Camphill Kimberton. It was not so easy to leave at the end of the day.

Rose Hall, Camphill Village, Kimberton Hills.

Conversation on Utopian benches, Murray Guy Gallery, New York, 2013.

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