C.A.L.L.

Communities At Large Letter

INTENTIONAL COMMUNITIES DESK YAD TABENKIN

No. 45 - Summer 2019

Dear Readers,

Do you recognize that face on the right?! Familiar?

After a hiatus of the last four issues of C.A.L.L., I've returned as editor of this beloved publication. After two and a half years in the United States, I've returned to normality, if you can call it that - to my full-income sharing, 150 souls all-living-under-one-roof, urban kibbutz in Israel. And of course back to, amongst other things, the Intentional Communities Desk (ICD).

I'd like to take this opportunity to thank Gabe, whose capable hands and eye for detail ensured that C.A.L.L. continued to drop through your letter boxes with stories and articles on communal living from around the globe.

And another development here at the ICD is our new cover design, soon to be updated website and increased social media presence. It's all change here, and it reflects our belief that the communities scene can and must keep moving to retain its relevance in today's fast moving world.

Actually, I'll be soon heading back across the Atlantic to attend the International Communal Studies Association (ICSA) conference being hosted by the cluster of Camphill Communities north of New York. It's an opportunity to meet old friends, make new ones, network and learn from others who are either researching, or living (and sometimes both) a community life.

So what do we have in this issue:

To be honest, we have it all; Europe, New Zealand and Australia, North America, the Middle East, rural communities, urban communities, new communities and old ones. We've even got a piece on a women only commune in Syria!

All that is left to say now is that I hope you enjoy reading this issue as much as I have had putting it together. Please share it with your friends and fellow community seekers.

You can send us your suggestions, corrections, contributions and retributions regarding C.A.L.L., to the usual email address,

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We need all sorts of farms to preserve the culture of agriculture

By Brenda Schoepp
www.albertafarmexpress.ca - May 7, 2019

It is time to be in the fields; to sow what will soon be an abundant Canadian harvest. There is something spiritual about growing food and it is supported by the sights, sounds, and scents of our time in the fields, gardens, and greenhouses of our community.

Some young folks could only dream of owning all that responsibility — the feeding of a family, a community, or a nation and beyond. And born into most people is a desire to connect with the ground in some way, if even just to relax and recharge.

Farming is often geographically isolating and a very independent way to make a life and a living. For rural and urban young people who want to get in on the action, it can be a long successional runway or an abrupt dead end. And there is little space for the unification of all of the dreamers and schemers to find ready solutions.

Some regions have resolved this road in their own way. In British Columbia through the Young Agrarians' Land Matching Program, adults wanting to farm are matched with landowners not fully utilizing their property. They can farm the land without buying it and receive support services as they navigate in the agricultural community. This brings two or more families together with the same intent of using the land for food production.

Going a step further are food communities that grow food and live in proximity to it. These are communities where folks from all walks of life live and work together for the sowing, care, and harvest of food. They have a common goal or goals and work towards those as a unit. These are intentional communities.

An example of a highly functional and successful intentional community would be the Hutterite community, which has a specific purpose and vision that includes growing food and related industries while honouring their religious and social beliefs. Other intentional communities incorporate one vision, such as ecology, and are often referred to as ecovillages or they may be unified in agriculture or historical preservation.

A community west of me has chosen to live near and preserve a historical lighthouse. Another looks at land acquisition for the purpose of food security and housing within its town and yet another group chose to live in a space with the specific purpose of protecting an environmentally sensitive area. A farm in the U.K. houses families with the intent of healing (land and people) while some folks live in intentional educational hubs or bee production hubs.

It's a new take on the old tribe, where folks lived together for a common purpose.

Paris Kibbutz

By Léa Schwartz

How did it all start?

It all started sitting around the dinner table, a depressed Jewish mother regaling my years spent on a kibbutz; they were the happiest years of my life. I had waited all of my 18 years to go and live where it seemed happiness was possible. It was 1983. The life I discovered on kibbutz went beyond my wildest dreams. Naturally, not everything was perfect, but I could see that in this way of life, most difficulties could be overcome.

My personal life unpredictably brought me back to France. I left Israel, but not the idea of the kibbutz. To this day, I'm convinced that this way of life is exportable, that it is a solution for both developing and developed countries, everywhere that is facing enormous human and ecological difficulties.

The main kibbutz building is an old guest house where the famous painter Lautrec once stayed

I have been working tirelessly since 1995 trying to create a kibbutz-inspired way of life. I am a psychotherapist by profession, and I run projects in the psycho-socio-educational field – helping our members to avoid psycho-social and economic suffering. In 2017, I met Claude Berger who for 20 years, in his publications and at conferences, has been talking about the urban kibbutz in Israel, and how they are working towards a more just and fulfilling society for both its members and for the surrounding environment. With his help, and with some other friends, I founded the "Paris Kibbutz" in January 2018, a non-profit organization whose goal is to promote a lifestyle inspired by the classical kibbutz and the urban kibbutz: the "rurban kibbutz". The first "rurban kibbutz" was founded in March 2018.

What is a « rurban kibbutz » ?

The "rurban kibbutz", as its name suggests, is a geographically dispersed community: some of its members live in rural areas while others live in urban areas. Thus, the rurban kibbutz offers its members the advantages of both the rural kibbutz and the urban kibbutz:

1 / The advantages of the rural kibbutz : located in the countryside, the rurban kibbutz offers experiences close to nature, whether it's during daily life, weekends, or longer holidays. In the rurban kibbutz, we look after our houses, our gardens and our grounds. We build, repair, plant, harvest etc. In doing so, the rurban kibbutz pursues the Jewish ideals of working the land - for a life close to nature – and not just in the Land of Israel. This proximity contributes to the flourishing of Jewish identity as much as to the celebration of all that has been "divinely" created.

2 / The advantages of the urban kibbutz: urban kibbutzim in Israel range in size from 10 to 150 people. The limited number of members in each community is conducive to togetherness, attentiveness towards each other, conviviality, friendliness and promotes mutual help.

Each urban kibbutz chooses its own terms and modalities of what members manage together in terms of work, lifestyle and its humanitarian and/or socio-educational internal and external missions. Because of the limited number of members in each community, it is easier for everyone to connect to the collective mission. Thus, each kibbutznik lives a life of satisfaction and fulfillment, insomuch as that is possible.

The urban kibbutz is a network of shared resources and socio-educational and/or humanitarian missions. Thus, 10 people in Haifa, 15 in Tel Aviv and 3 in Beer-Shev'a can see themselves as belonging to the same urban kibbutz because they work together in the same place and/or via the internet, they put a portion of their salary or all their salary into a shared bank account, they spend time together daily, or on a more occasional basis, they belong to the same organization and have common tasks, they cooperate on social and educational and/or humanitarian action projects. This network can actually be expanded internationally.

Paris kibbutz is located in a small village of painters, 20 minutes from Paris.

Based on this understanding of the urban kibbutz, Paris Kibbutz plans to work towards "shituf" (sharing of means, missions, knowledge, know-how etc.) with existing kibbutzim in France (Pardailhan since 1950), a kibbutz in the process of being founded (Marseille), kibbutzim abroad such as the one near London or in Belgium, etc., and kibbutzim in Israel.

Paris Kibbutz is striving to develop these inter-kibbutz connections, to create psycho-socio-educational and humanitarian missions, to establish twinned missions with kibbutzim in Israel and the diaspora, partnerships with other associations and to build a financially profitable project. It organizes events (workshops, brunch / dinner, celebrations, kibbutz fashion holidays, trips, workshops and open days) to become better known, to share this way of life with others, through thoughts and actions. For more information visit our website at: www.lekibboutzdeparis.org

In September 2019, Paris kibbutz will begin to co-opt new members, people of all ages, French or Israeli, from Africa or elsewhere, who desire to participate in the economic and social development of the kibbutz. This can also be done through volunteering with us – send us an email if you are interested in getting involved.

The return of ICSA

Jan Martin Bang
26/05/19

It's the coffee bar in the mornings, and the bar in the evenings. That's where the real action is during ICSA conferences.

There is a certain magic that happens when you bring people together face to face. It's very hard to predict, and impossible to plan what kind of relationships may be formed when individuals get to know each other. So much is up to chance, who you happen to stand next to, a remark overheard, a word in a different language.

In 2004 I happened to sit next to a young researcher who was studying Camphill and the Catholic Worker movement. Being a member of Camphill myself, and a Catholic, I was of course interested in what he had to tell me. His research appeared as a book, and later we became friends and colleagues, and in a few weeks Dan McKanan will open the 13th ICSA conference in upstate New York. A chance meeting developed into a collegial friendship!

This conference will also be a game changer for me personally. In the 25 years that I have lived in intentional community, two thirds have been as a Kibbutz member in Israel, the rest as a Camphill member in Norway. When I first came into contact with Camphill I recognised that here was a very special kind of community. During my years in Kibbutz Gezer I wanted the kibbutz to learn more about Camphill, and during my time in Camphill I wanted Camphill to learn more about Kibbutz.

This year the ICSA is holding its conference in two Camphill communities, with a large number of speakers from the kibbutz movement, as well as many representatives from the Catholic Worker and L'Arche.

I am very excited about this conference, and hope to meet many readers of CALL.

See you there in the coffee bar!

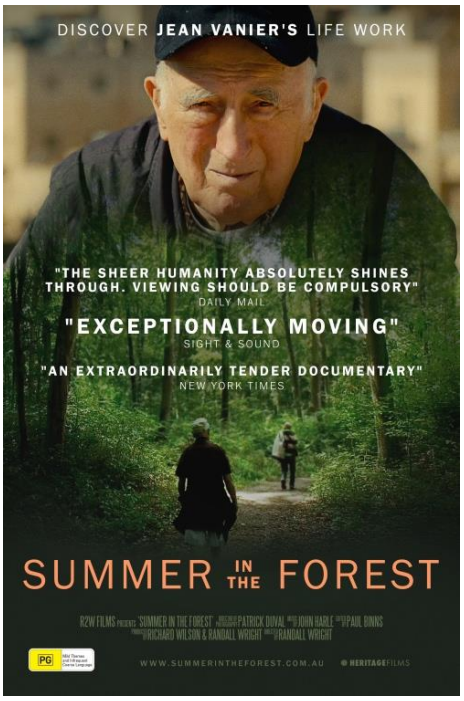
With the recent passing of Jean Vanier, the founder of the L'Arche network of communities, we publish a couple of articles on L'Arche – the idea, its history and its founder.

Disability: new documentary shows the blessing of communal living for those with - and without - an intellectual disability

29 March 2019
David Adams
https://www.sightmagazine.com.au

A global network of communities where people with intellectual disabilities live side-by-side with those without, L'Arche has, at its heart, a simple premise: that relationships between people is the key to living out the Gospel.

That concept of relationship lies at the heart of a new documentary film, *Summer in the Forest*, based on the organisation's founder Jean Vanier, and those who live with him in the first community he established in the village of Trosly-Breuil in France.



"It's purpose was to try and capture the relationship at the heart of L'Arche, which is the relationship between the person with and [the person] without a disability," explains Eileen Glass. Glass, a key member of the L'Arche community in Australia, was the first Australian to hold the post of the organisation's Vice-International Leader – a role which saw her serve as liaison between the film's director Randall Wallace and the organisation during the making of the documentary.

"I think it raises questions about…what is it to be human and live a faithful relationship in this world that's fragmenting, that's increasingly fearful of diversity which, in its mechanisms, is pushing people into positions of loneliness."

The origins of L'Arche (the name means "The Ark" in French) go back to 1964 when Vanier - the fourth child of Georges Vanier, a Canadian diplomat and Canada's Governor-General between 1959 and 1967 - found himself in France in search of a "different life" after leaving behind a eight year career in both the British and Canadian navies.

Encouraged by a friend, Catholic priest Father Thomas Philippe, he invited two men with intellectual disabilities – Raphael Simi and Philippe Seux – to leave the institution they were living in in southern Paris and move into his home in Trosly-Breuil.

While that original community now involves more than 100 people living in 10 different homes and work settings, the International Federation of L'Arche, which though founded in the Christian Gospel includes people of other faiths, now boasts 5,000 members with more than 150 communities located on all five continents.

These communities can vary in form and size and may comprise one or several households where people with and without disabilities (the latter are known as "assistants") share their lives.

"Our community life is beautiful and intense, a source of life for everyone," says Vanier - who has won a host of awards for his work including the French Legion of Honour, Companion of the Order of Canada and the 2015 Templeton Prize - in comments released with the film.

Jean Vanier, founder of L'Arche communities

"People with a disability experience a real transformation and discover confidence in themselves; they discover their capacity to make choices, and also find a certain liberty and, above all, their dignity as human beings."

Glass, who had been raised as a Catholic but became disillusioned with the institutional church as a young person, first visited the Trosly-Breuil community in 1974 while travelling the world and was deeply impacted by Vanier and what she found there. "I was a young person who'd been at university in the late 60s in the foment of the expressive revolution…and we were going to change the world. And at L'Arche I was confronted with another way of changing the world, really," she says.

"I was confronted with something that challenged the rhetoric of that political movement of the Sixties… because if you're really going to change the world and create a world where everyone belongs, then you have to be prepared to align yourself with people who don't belong, people who are put on the margins. And to live with them, to share life with them in communal households, is really to put yourself in the position where your vulnerability will be exposed, your powerlessness will become evident and you will be changed by the encounter. "

Eileen Glass

Glass describes it as a "radical way to live the Gospel".

"[I]t felt so authentic to me," she says of her experience at Trosly-Breuil.

Glass went on to spend two years living in another L'Arche community – this one in Winnipeg in Canada before she returned to Australia where she was involved in establishing the country's first L'Arche community in the Canberra area in 1978.

There are now five established L'Arche communities in Australia – in Brisbane, Sydney, Canberra, Melbourne and Hobart - and four communities in development as well as a "seed group" in Alice Springs.

Jean Vanier and the gift of L'Arche

by Melissa Florer-Bixler
May 7, 2019
christiancentury.org

Vanier learned about the possibilities of intentional community while visiting Harlem in the 1940s. It was here he met the people of Friendship House—experiments in cross-racial living, founded by Catholics, that were cropping up around the US and Canada. He saw similar work happening among the people who lived in the Catholic Worker homes in New York.

L'Arche founder Jean Vanier

Vanier returned to France after teaching philosophy in Toronto and serving in the Royal Navy during World War II. A local priest took him to an institution in Trosly called Val Fleury. Here he saw people with profound disabilities treated as refuse. Here are the poor, the priest told him.

In 1964 Vanier took three men out of this institution. Two of those men, Raphael Semi and Philippe Seux, continued to live with Vanier in a house in Trosly, the first L'Arche community.

It did not take long for the community to grow. "On the edge of the forest of Compiègne, L'Arche has opened its first home for the mentally and physically handicapped," Vanier wrote in his earliest diary entries about L'Arche. "These family-like homes, each welcoming from four to nine boys, at least twenty years old, are lifelong homes. They are the first of a group of homes which will be linked together with workshops, a cultural centre, a chapel and the necessary medical help."

People continued to come, to see in L'Arche a spark of hope not only for people with intellectual disabilities but for a new way of being in relationship, a new way of ordering life. The community of Trosly grew. Then others began to gather together in homes to undergo the transformative rhythms of daily life. L'Arche communities arose around the world—in Uganda and the West Bank, in France and Washington DC, in Japan and Egypt.

Vanier offered the gift of L'Arche to the world through his writings, opening a window to the communities of L'Arche International. Some of his reflections appear in his book *The Gospel of John: The Gospel of Relationship.* In 2008 Vanier reflected on L'Arche and nonviolence with theologian Stanley Hauerwas in their book *Living Gently in a Violent World.* But the best known book, often called the "L'Arche Bible," is *Community and Growth,* a series of reflections that continues to form intentional communities throughout the world—communities that hope to live the charism of friendship discovered in L'Arche.

Hakhel Brings 11 Countries to Israel for Innovation Conference

By Erin Ben-Moche | **MAY 17, 2019** |
JEWISHJOURNAL.COM

Hakhel, the Jewish intentional communities incubator, brought together 35 Jewish leaders from 21 Jewish intentional communities in 11 countries to see the latest innovative models for community building.

Community leaders from Australia, Canada, France, Germany, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Netherlands, Spain, Ukraine, the United Kingdom and the United States participated.

The week-long trip that ended May 16 included training and development opportunities as well as meetings with leaders of Israel's most successful intentional communities. They had the opportunity to meet with leaders from Friends By Nature, a community network of Ethiopian intentional communities, where they discussed the work they are doing to create dynamic programming and communal empowerment for this underprivileged sector of Israeli society.

"The key to building and sustaining a successful intentional community is mentorship," Hakhel General Director Aharon Ariel Lavi said in a statement. "Our goal was to bring the leaders of the top Jewish intentional communities in the Diaspora to meet with these successful communities here in Israel to learn best practices from them and for them to advise each other."

During the trip they met with The Reshet, a community of young adults in their 20s and 30s who chose to stay in Be'er Sheva after their university studies to create a vibrant and inviting scene for young adults; met with the leaders of Druze intentional communities, as well as with a joint farm of Jews and Arabs in Gush Etzion and visited communities on the Gaza border, and spent Shabbat there, learning what it meant to strengthen Israel's periphery on a daily basis.

Founded in 2014, Hakhel's mission is to spark and support new expressions of Jewish life in the Diaspora by nurturing the growth of intentional communities with advisors, seed funding and network building. They operate in partnership with Israel's Ministry of Diaspora Affairs, which works to strengthen Jewish life in the Diaspora and connection to Israel.

Four reasons to consider co-housing and housing cooperatives for alternative living

By Kirsten Stevens-Wood
theconversation.com

Intentional communities come in many different shapes and sizes. They are, simply put, groups of people who choose to share their lives and live communally with others. This is more than just, say, people who share a block of flats, but on the other hand they have moved on from being stereotypical hippy communes. Intentional communities can be as broad as a group of people squatting together as a protest community, or a group coming together to self-build. They are places where people "live together or share common facilities and … regularly associate with each other on the basis of explicit common values".

There are countless benefits to living in an intentional community – here are just four more reasons why it may be for you:

1. Collective ownership can give you more

Living in a grand house with its own boating lake is out of reach for many – but not for members of the Dol-Llys community, who live near Lllanidloes in mid-Wales. Dol-Llys was originally a regency house owned by the county council, but was bought by six families in 1992. The families all share the 14 acres of land which includes a man-made boating lake.

Thundercliffe Grange just outside Rotherham, meanwhile, boasts its own woodland, a walled garden and a stable block.

The collective nature of intentional communities often means that when a group pools its resources, the members can significantly increase their buying power. The community of Cannon Frome share a Georgian manor in Herefordshire with its own banqueting hall, while those at Laurieston Hall, in Scotland, reside in an impressive Victorian mansion with 135 acres of woods, pastures and marshland.

Although not all intentional communities are this grand, collective ownership enables groups to share other resources, too, such as meeting spaces, and communal tool sheds.

2. It can be good for the environment

Many housing cooperatives and co-housing projects share not just space, but also resources. In fact, researchers have found that communal cooking and eating saves on both energy use and food waste. In addition, intentional communities are more likely to participate in pro-environmental activities such

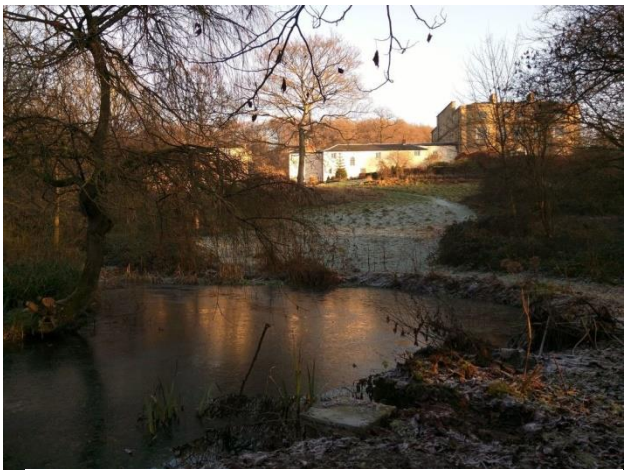
as car pooling, collective laundry facilities and, in some cases, are self sufficient.

At Old Hall in rural Suffolk, the community of over 40 adults manages more than 70 acres of land, and has its own cows, chickens, sheep, pigs, bees and vegetable gardens. All meals are eaten communally and a large proportion of their food is grown or produced on site.

3. It's good for well-being

There is evidence that communal living, and in particular eating regularly with others, can enhance well-being and may reduce feelings of loneliness, too.

Some communities – such as the Older Womens Co-Housing project in north London – have been set up specifically as an alternative to living alone. Maria Brenton, a longstanding spokesperson for the London project, and advocate for senior co-housing, has carried out extensive research into the well-being aspects of community living and suggests that co-housing has the potential to "keep older people active, healthy and engaged, and reduces demand for health and social care services" .



Thundercliffe Grange

Custom built co-housing projects like the one in north London often favour community interaction, and have this factor built into the very design of the site. For example, the homes at Lancaster Cohousing all face a shared pedestrian path, increasing social interactions and the feeling of community.

4. Communities aspire to be inclusive

Although they are well populated with graduates and even university lecturers, many intentional communities consider inclusivity to be a key principle, and work hard to be affordable to a diverse range of members. The ownership model behind LILAC, a community of eco-built houses in Leeds was designed to enable those on lower incomes to afford to join. Chapel Town Cohousing, also in Leeds, meanwhile. has a membership policy which allocates spaces to disabled people, people from minority ethnic groups or individuals who identify as LGBTQ.

If you are considering an alternative way of living, you are not alone. In fact, you will be in very good company.

Why millennials are going nuts for 'communal living'

Nov 29, 2018
Marketwatch.com
By Catey Hill

Luxury co-living spaces are one of the hottest trends in real estate, particularly in cities like New York, L.A. and San Francisco

Call it a co-living space, call it a commune, or just call it home.

Whatever you call it, one thing is clear: High-end co-living - in which big groups of people live together and share well-designed communal spaces and luxe amenities - is all the rage among millennials. Typically, these co-living developments - which have popped up in cities like New York, Los Angeles, Chicago and San Francisco - offer small, fully-furnished studios or bedrooms for residents, with the big draw being large shared living spaces and perks like organized group events and weekly housekeeping that includes clean linens and refreshed toiletries and kitchen supplies.

"It's like living in a dorm again, but more mature. It's great," said video game designer and developer Chris McGlade, 24, who lives in an Ollie co-living space in New York City after graduating from college in Boston.

And like in a dorm, community is a big part of the appeal: **Ollie** - which has opened co-living spaces in cities like New York and Pittsburgh - advertises that you get "friends included" when you move into its spaces, and offers a dedicated community manager who helps organize everything from social mixers to weekend brunches. **Common** - with 20 co-living spaces in cities such as New York, Seattle and San Francisco - pitches its residences as "friendly homes" and notes that living at Common means "you're always invited." And WeLive (an offshoot of WeWork), which has co-living spots in NYC and D.C., says that it is "a new way of living built upon community" and that its spaces help "foster meaningful relationships."

Node - which has properties in places like London, Brooklyn and Dublin - is literally named because of its sense of community: "We're called Node because it means a connection between people," Node's CEO Anil Khera told Moneyish. "Actually knowing your neighbors and doing things together - we have lost a bit of that in society," he added about why people love co-living so much.

Welcome to Jinwar, a women-only village in Syria that wants to smash the patriarchy

By Richard Hall
2 December 2018
The Independent

The entrance to Jinwar, a women-only village in northern Syria

At the end of a long dusty road in the plains of northern Syria, a young woman with a rifle over her shoulder guards the entrance to the isolated village of Jinwar.

Thirty brick houses lie beyond the gate, decorated with splashes of purple and blue. They surround a large plot of agricultural land where rows of vegetables are growing.

A war zone perhaps isn't the most obvious setting for a feminist utopia. But here, in a far corner of a country that has been devastated by ongoing conflict, a group of women have created an escape from the chaos around them. Built over the past two years, this small hamlet is a self-sustaining, ecological idyll where women rule and men cannot stay.

"There's no need for men here, our lives are good," says Zainab Gavary, a 28-year-old resident. "This place is just for women who want to stand on their feet."

Jinwar is a women-only commune a few miles from Qamishli, a city in the mainly Kurdish region of northeast Syria. It was set up by local women's groups and international volunteers to create a space for women to live "free of the constraints of the oppressive power structures of patriarchy and capitalism".

The homes here were built by the women who are now living in them. Murals and statues of women at work are scattered around the site, in the centre of which is a garden of meadow flowers. It's a jarring contrast to the villages that surround it.

That it was built in northern Syria is no coincidence. Just a few years ago, the entire area lived under the shadow of the Isis caliphate. The jihadist group captured large swathes of territory when it made lightning advances to the south and to the east of the Kurdish region, and across the border into Iraq.

It made its capital in Raqqa, just a few hours away by car, and carried out one of its most heinous atrocities in the town of Sinjar less than a hundred miles east. Thousands of Yazidis were massacred, and still thousands more women were kidnapped

by the group to be used as sex slaves.

In response to this wave of brutality, many Kurdish women took up arms to fight the extremist group. The story of these women facing off against a murderous cult that aimed to enslave them captured the attention of the world.

The founders of Jinwar see their project as a continuation of the "women's revolution" that led those women to leave

Amira Muhammad lives with her five children in Jinwar

their families and go to war. But while the world may know the Kurds through images of women fighting on the frontline, Kurdish society is still deeply conservative. Jinwar was built as a place for women to escape the family-orientated roles that a patriarchal society has assigned to them. Gavary is one of them. She married when she was young, but her husband died not long after.

"Without women there is no freedom," she says, repeating a mantra that is written on the walls in Jinwar. "Until women educate and empower themselves, there won't be freedom."

The message here is deeply political. In addition to arguing for a greater role for women in society, Jinwar also promotes ecological and communal living as an alternative to modern life.

But Jinwar is also something much simpler: it is a refuge for women in need of support –particularly those who have lost loved ones in war.

Amira Muhammad, 33, is one of a number of widows who have made Jinwar home. Her husband was killed fighting Isis more than a year ago. She was forced to move back in with her parents and became entirely dependent on them.

"I came here because I have five kids and I didn't have an income or a house to live in," she says. "Here they provide a lot of benefits like education for the kids, their living expenses. It is a nice village, most importantly, my kids like it."

"We do our own farming, we plant trees. Every woman farms her own lot for her kids. We sell the harvest, and use the revenue to support our expenses," she adds.

The residents of Jinwar are kept busy by the work required to be self-sustainable. The group take turns cooking and eat all their meals together in a large communal kitchen. There are animals to tend to and a school for the children.

Communal living fans keen to break hippy connotations

By Lee Kenny, Aug 17 2018
stuff.co.nz

In a south Christchurch home, eight adults live together, sharing meals and chores. They're not students or even flatmates, but young professionals who took down the fence between two suburban properties to create a communal living space.

Curtis and Tash Higginson moved into an "intentional community" in Somerfield in March 2017 to live with six others in two houses.

Curtis and Tash Higginson moved into an "intentional community" in Somerfield in March 2017 to live with six others in two houses. There are eight adults in two houses, but "we try to act like one".

"We initially moved into the shared house then we bought the house across the road.

"We share meals together and only do one big shop. We share resources and chores. It works really well."

Curtis works in construction and Tash is a youth worker. He says although he has lived in shared houses in the past, the group's values set it apart from his other experiences.

"I've flatted in the past and you can be like passing ships, never seeing each other. We make sure we eat together every day and share our time and our resources."

"We have 'Deep Time' where we share our feelings, it's a space where people can be open and vulnerable. We also have what we call a 'Good Bubble' and a 'Bad Bubble' at mealtimes.

"A Good Bubble might be thanks to someone who did my chores because I had other things to do. A Bad Bubble might be a reminder for others not to leave the dishes in the sink. It works well and keeps everything in the open."

The group recently set-up a food bank in their front garden to help those in need. Anyone can leave or take produce.

"We had a lady leave half a dozen eggs the other day. We've already got a lot and it's not even harvest season.

"It's about giving what you can. If people have an excess of something they can donate it to the community. If people don't, they can take what they need."

At Compersia, sharing is more than caring — it's life

Streetsensemedia.org
January 25, 2019
By Samantha Caruso

As children, many of us were encouraged to learn how to take turns. For some, sharing toys, emotions and common spaces with those around us was an early lesson in societal values. But Compersia, an "intentional community" in the Northwest quadrant of Washington, D.C., has taken the concept of sharing to a new level.

The cooperative derives its name from "compersion", which means "the feeling of joy one has experiencing another's joy." Compersion is the opposite of schadenfreude.

The seven adults and four children who are members of Compersia share basic economic necessities, including their house and individual incomes.

Founded in March 2016, Compersia is the first commune in D.C. to be recognized by the Federation of Egalitarian Communities. Members log their labor — both income-generating work, like a paid salary, and non-income generating work, like childcare and household chores — to ensure that all contribute significantly to the commune.

Anthony Telos, a Compersia member, has been at the cooperative for about a year, but before coming to D.C., he spent time at housing cooperatives that "share some things, but definitely fewer things."

"I was in search of a community that shared my values more so," Telos said. "And that's what sent me into Compersia, a more resource-sharing community… You don't see a lifestyle like this validated from the outside very often."

Members share funds via a joint bank account, which differs significantly from the practice of most sharing communities. "Any out of the ordinary spending that's over $100, we ask each other about that," Telos said. In the spring, for example, he asked for the group's permission to take a community herbalism course, which they allowed.

Right now, Telos mainly contributes non-income generating labor: He volunteers on two local urban farms, one of which gives much of its produce to Bread for the City, and canvasses for petitions organized by groups he supports. On Saturdays, he runs a farmers market.

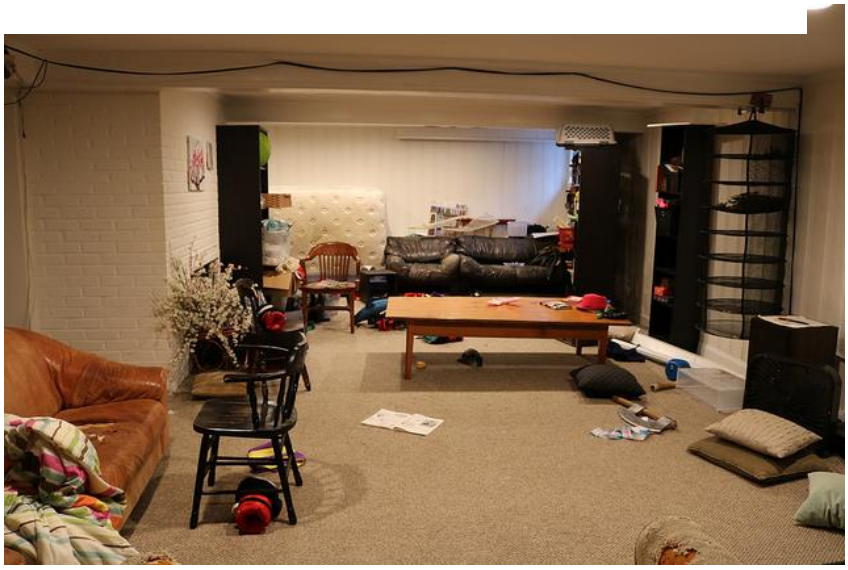
Another Compersia member, Kathryn Johnson, works at the American Friends Service

Committee as a policy advocacy coordinator and contributes mostly income-generating labor.

She joined Compersia in the early spring of 2017.

"Since I work full-time [outside] the home, it's been really nice to have other people take care of the domestic stuff," she said. "I do less domestic stuff, but still sometimes cook and clean at dinner. I'm not home that much."

Vital to the success of Compersia and happiness of its members is its Clearness Process, which members consider to be a cornerstone of the community. All members must, at different points throughout the year, have conversations with every other member to air grievances and brainstorm solutions to communal problems.



Compersia's shared living space.

"Instead of letting things kind of build up, we actually have a time to sit down and discuss with each other the experience of living together," Johnson said.

In addition to the Clearness Process, the entire community meets once a week to discuss smaller issues that affect everyone.

"[It] is kind of like a business meeting," Telos said. "We talk about projects we'd like to do and things we'd like to spend money on, those decisions that we make together as a community."

A frequent topic of discussion is their progress toward saving enough money to make a down payment on a house that could fit up to 15 community members, which is one of Compersia's "savings goals" right now.

Both Telos and Johnson said the practice of "deep sharing" does not come without controversy.

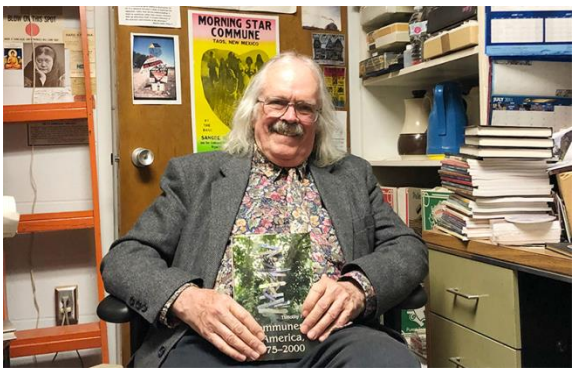
"We've all been raised a certain way with certain values, and when we tell people we share our money, they're like, 'Whoa, that's weird. I could never do that,'" Telos said. "Sharing this deeply is not a value that we see reflected in many places in our society. It's not like we all move in and we start sharing our paychecks hunky-dory. There's resentment. There's sometimes conflict between the people who make more money and the people who make less money."

Communes Carry On In Individualistic America

May 1st 2019

KU News Service.

Timothy Miller, professor of religious studies at the University of Kansas, has just published "Communes in America, 1975-2000." It follows his "The Quest for Utopia in Twentieth-Century America, Volume I, 1900-1960" and "The 60s Communes: Hippies and Beyond," all from Syracuse University Press.



Sitting in his Smith Hall office on the KU campus, Timothy Miller holds a copy of his latest book, "Communes in America: 1975-2000."

"Rumors of the demise of the commune are greatly exaggerated," he wrote in the latest book.

Miller lived in a commune outside Lawrence for a time during the 1970s, and he has always been fascinated by the subject.

"My specialty was new religious movements," Miller said. "I'm just intrigued with people that do things differently, people who go against the flow."

Miller tries throughout the new book to tamp down hysterical reactions, pointing out the many more peaceful, successful communal forms of living, in contrast with the few high-profile failures, which he also sketched.

Miller pointed out that not all communes have a religious purpose.

He wrote, "Most American communes see themselves as either arks or lighthouses. In the former case, communitarians band together to protect themselves from the outside world – from environmental collapse, millennial tribulation or other threats of disaster or catastrophic change. In the latter, persons equally despairing, perhaps, but nevertheless hopeful … build communities as shining examples of just how wonderful the world could be if we would live in better ways ..."

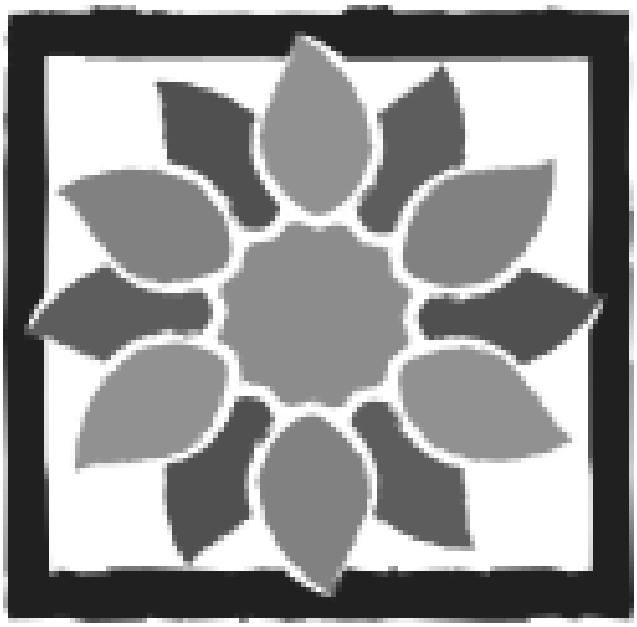
Miller wrote that whereas he once saw those two forms as mutually exclusive, some communes he calls "ecovillages" try to combine those two ethics.

The Federation of Egalitarian Communities and Community Networking

By Sumner Nichols

The Federation of Egalitarian Communities (FEC) was formed by a number of people, including founders of Twin Oaks and East Wind. Its intended mission is to create and grow a network of income-sharing communities. You can learn more about the FEC at thefec.org.

Here is the part of East Wind's bylaws that interests me the most: "We are striving to be self reliant, especially in cooperation with other groups…and we promote the formation and growth of similar communities." As an Occupy burnout (and subsequent college and workforce burnout) I wasn't looking for unrealistic and unattainable goals. East Wind having the stature of a four-decades-old establishment, institution even, held great appeal to me during my first visit. The energy and idealism of the founders got a boulder rolling that continues to this day at an even pace. The flavor and aesthetic of that energy and idealism have changed and morphed over the years as people come and go, but the community habitat that allows these creative forces to come together is still well intact (supported vigilantly by successful businesses). The opportunity to network with those who inhabit these special places and not only dream up, but execute on, plans for new communal living situations is one of the many reasons I give my time and energy to this movement.



Movement may seem to be an inappropriate word to some, in this context. How much larger is the FEC population since, say, 2000? How many people have come in and out of these communes and attempted to start their own? I have little data, but we are not dealing with large numbers here (at East Wind, the past 15 years have seen about 700 people come in as official visitors or members). Think of a slow, geologically slow, movement of income sharing and communal living from the late 1960s to today. Many FEC communities have sustained for decades and continue to inspire. The back-to-the-land spirit that motivated so many two generations ago is resurging as the increasingly absurd "mainstream" society fails to capture the interest of the new generation. The living social experiments of the large FEC communities provide the accumulation and transfer of experiential knowledge needed to accelerate new communitarians' transitions into varied communal living arrangements.

Let us imagine East Wind and Twin Oaks as two big anchors keeping the fleet safely in harbor. The fleet is made up of ships big and small and crews of endless variety. Of course, any of the various captains in the fleet can choose to break off in a dinghy to execute a specific plan. A great historical example of this is East Wind relying on Twin Oaks' hammocks business to support themselves through the beginning years. Business expansion is perhaps the most reliable way for growth. This top-down approach has to be carefully conceived and even more diligently managed. A seriously committed group of independent thinkers with a strong communal spirit is necessary. Of course, each ship's crews are learning to live with each other in the process of evolution. Individual mariners meet mariners from different crews and get to see a variety of living arrangements. Those that stick with the income-sharing fleet for a long enough time inevitably get ideas of their own of the best living agreements and a percentage of them feel drawn to attempt to be the founders of a new project. They venture off into unknown waters and experiment, blazing new routes. Most will burn out, but that is no reason to not try.
Small, minimalist projects don't require significant material support. Large top-down projects require taking on some amount of risk. Every concept is an option to be considered. East Wind and Twin Oaks can choose to be passive, put out small bets, or take a bigger risk to grow community (a goal explicitly stated in both communities' bylaws, and exemplified by Twin Oaks' spawning of nearby Acorn, also an FEC member community). Agreements for dividends, specific land use terms, etc. can be made to help get potential concepts off the ground. Getting the material support into the hands of those who have some chance of success is obviously the most difficult part of this process. And this is where networking comes in. Both communities have good reason to be wary of a lousy business plan or mal-intentioned schemers. I think this problem can be slightly alleviated by shared business experience (e.g., food manufacturing) and an effective joint venture. Keeping records, knowing histories, etc. can really help determine who is a thoughtful decision maker and who is in over their head. A big enough group with the right synergies and a willingness to be founders takes time and energy to form.

What is in the future of the communities movement? More Acorns and more little seedlings, one can hope. It is happening, slowly but surely at the moment. The flood of the late '60s and early '70s will undoubtedly be repeated; let us prepare for it!

Sumner is a 27-year-old attempting to live a moral life in an age of decline. He desires to be a participant in the creation of new cultures and new communities. When he is not managing the multi-million-dollar business that is East Wind Nut Butters he likes to garden, write, milk cows, and document the communities movement. You can read his blogs, which have plenty of pictures (and soon to be film), online at eastwind.org.

Marmalade Lane

Cambridge's first cohousing project is a triumph

By Adrian Curtis
02 May 2019
cambridgeindependent.co.uk

A resident on Cambridge's first cohousing development says the first community of its type in the city is founded on respect.

Jan Chadwick, a resident of Marmalade Lane, insists the development is all about community engagement and is a throwback to the days when the neighbourhood cared about each other's welfare.

Marmalade Lane residents celebrate the the launch of its successful cohousing project

The K1 Cohousing development is the culmination of eight years of work by the group, and comes at a moment when custom-build and community-led housing are being recognised by the government as viable and attractive models for future housing.

The development comprises of 42 homes, a mix of two-to-five bedroom terraced houses and one and two bedroom apartments.

In common with the other cohousing communities in the UK, Marmalade Lane's shared spaces and communal facilities are designed to foster community spirit and sustainable living and remain integral to the development.

These include extensive shared gardens as the focal space of the community, with areas for growing food, play, socialising and quiet contemplation, and a flexible 'common house', which boasts a play room, guest bedrooms, laundry facilities, meeting rooms, and a large hall and kitchen for shared meals and parties. A separate workshop is located elsewhere on site.

All residents are members of Cambridge Cohousing Ltd, have a stake in the common parts and contribute to the management of the community. Fulfilling the group's aspiration for mixed, intergenerational living, the group includes families with young children, retired couples, single person households of different ages and young professionals couples.

Ms Chadwick said: "We are delighted. We are the largest cohousing community in the country.

"We are a neighbourhood in the true sense in that we know our neighbours and we keep an eye out for them.

"If you go back several decades, to potentially when I was a child in the 50s, people knew their neighbours and kept an eye out for the local kids.

"You could play on the streets then because there was hardly any cars like today. Your mum knew where you were. It was a whole different way of life to how it has developed today with its pressures of modern life, car usage, and the lack of walking.

"Cohousing is about intentional communities and a build that fosters community engagement and opportunity. This is why we have a shared common house where we've got a number of shared facilities. We have a community kitchen that we can use to do shared meals and other events.

"Our overarching rule is respect. Respect for each other, our built environment, our natural environment and the environment in the greater sense.

"We are not green but we are all keen on recycling. We didn't want gas on site so everything is electric and we all use suppliers who use renewable energy.

Marmalade Lane in Cambridge

"Everything is designed to lighten our footprint on the environment. We also have a gym and workshop and the great hall where we have community meals, community rooms for pilates and meetings, craft groups, mother and baby meetings.

"It is all for us to use as a community. When we are full, there will be around 100 people plus kids. We all know each other. It is about getting back to a collective responsibility for the community and ourselves, each other and the environment as well as being connected. "Don't get me wrong, we communicate in the modern ways, but modern life today is totally disconnected."

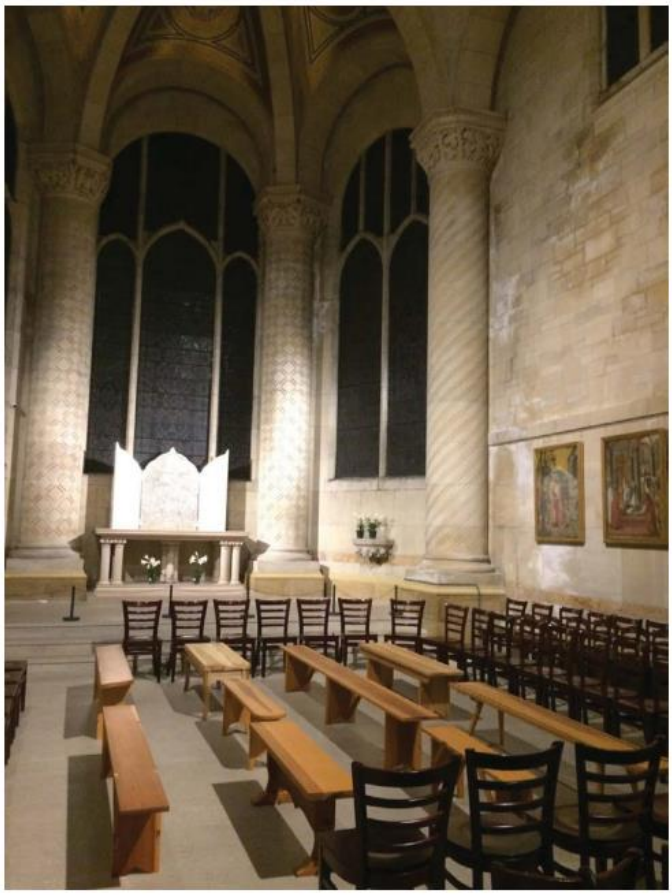
Marmalade Lane is also the first council-led cohousing scheme in the city, and was designed by Mole Architects for joint developers TOWN and Trivselhus. It involved extensive collaboration with the cohousing residents, with planning permission being submitted in December 2015 and granted the following October. Construction commenced in June 2017 and finished in January 2019.

There are currently 21 cohousing groups in the UK. The inaugural national community-led housing conference took place in November 2017. A £200 million community housing fund was announced at the conference by the Minister of State for Housing and Planning at that time, Alok Sharma MP.

Way back in Issue #38 of C.A.L.L., in the summer of 2014, we published a piece on this ongoing project by artist Francis Cape. Lo and behold, in the latest newsletter of Ganas (dated 24th May 2019), it seems that the community in Staten Island has agreed to participate too.

WE SIT ON THE SAME BENCH

Artist Francis Cape approached Ganas a few months ago about participating in his ongoing project entitled "Utopian Benches". It featured benches — as representations of dialogue and sharing experience — from historical and present-day communities that he faithfully reproduced or, in the case of the bench from Twin Oaks, was built by a community member. We happily accepted his invitation. I gave Francis a tour of all the benches of Ganas community, indoors and out, and told him everything I knew about them. He selected one indoor bench (an upholstered bench in 139 front hallway, no doubt picked up on pick-ups for the furniture store, as most of our furniture is), and took detailed measurements and made drawings of it. Back in his shop he built a replica in the same poplar finished with tung oil he used to build the other benches in the exhibit. In late April, Susan and I participated in a lively discussion with Francis and about 20 of his interested and engaged friends about Ganas community, while we all sat together on the benches arranged in a chapel of the Cathedral of St. John the Divine in Manhattan. "A Gathering of Utopian Benches" is included in this awe-inspiring setting in the larger exhibit "The Value of Sanctuary: Building a House Without Walls", at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine in Manhattan until June 30. If you're interested I have the program booklets "we sit on the same bench" and "Sanctuary" for the exhibits.



— Richard

'We are under challenge': The Healesville community built on survival

By Hannie Rayson
The Sydney Morning Herald
April 19, 2019

In 1974 Peter Cock drove up a mountain. He was responding to a small advertisement he'd seen in *The Age* offering 245 hectares of land for sale on Mt Toolebewong, 10km south of Healesville.

As he drove, the dirt road curled up through towering mountain ash and lush ferns, streaked by sunlight, then opened out at the summit. Standing there, awed by the majesty of the place, he was reminded of the words of John Batman: "This is the place for a village."

Forty-five years later, Peter and his wife Sandra are still living in that village. It's called Moora Moora, a co-operative community of 50 adults and 20 children.

Peter tears up at the memory of that first day and the long journey they undertook to secure the property. "I wanted to live in a place where nature was powerful; not subservient to human activity."

At 73, Peter Cock is fit and charismatic. "Maybe I chose a place that reinforced my strengths and allowed me to avoid dealing with my weaknesses. I am a big-picture person. I don't always attend to the details. I don't really look below my knees." He smiles, sheepishly. "I'm working on that."

Moora Moora members, from left, William Cody, Peter Cock, Chelsea McNab, Pepa McOliver, Bob Rich and Ari McOliver.

For Sandra, it is the exquisite air of the mountain that fills her heart. And the dark, bountiful soil. "You can dig down deep here," she says. "Living on community teaches you that."

In the beginning, when Peter was lecturing at Monash University, a pregnant Sandra was living up here alone on the mountain with their two-year-old. Peter joined her on weekends.

"You were here all by yourself?" I am awed. "Wasn't I lucky!" says Sandra airily.

They both had impeccable credentials as alternative-lifestyle pioneers. They lived at Kent State University in the 1960s. Peter was a conscientious objector during the Vietnam War. He is a sociologist, she is a psychologist. They experimented with a few ways of communal living before Moora Moora.

"I visited other communities up north and they weren't for me," Peter tells me. "I didn't want to be sitting on a veranda smoking dope in a benign climate."

Peter was never interested in dropping out. His focus was – and remains – to create a place of life-long learning. Living here keeps people active.

"We are under challenge," he says. "It's no easy place. People can't sit on their arses. Fire is ever-present in the summer."

The Darrius at Moora Moora started out as a wind turbine, but now functions as 'an installation'.

But now it is autumn. The fire season is over for another year. The community breathes out and gives thanks. A brisk wind blows up from the valley and bustles through the gum trees.
"The wind is a great source of energy," Peter says. "A great cleanser. Even my anger can be blown away."

Moora Moora has a written manifesto built on the principles of conservation, sustainability, community and education. The language can feel a bit 1960s, lamenting the superficiality of human relationships in the suburbs. And the need to get away from the foul air and pollution of the city.

Some of it reminded me of the essays we had to write at high school in the '60s: "Competitive, violent and materialistic values permeate our society. Discuss."

I meet Bob Rich, a psychologist and author who lived on Moora Moora for almost 40 years. Originally from Hungary, Bob married his fabulously capable Dutch wife Yolanda and together they built their mud-brick house among a cluster of other houses on the mountain.

Now 76, Bob has reluctantly come down to the town, acquiescing to Yolanda's plan for a new chapter in their lives.

Bob and Yolanda joined the Moora Moora community in January 1976. Bob wanted to change the world. Yolanda wanted to build her own home.

"This is why I came to Australia," says Yolanda in her matter-of-fact Dutch way. "Yolanda is a practical person," says Bob. "She's not interested in philosophy."

"I always thought, I am going to marry a guy who can do things. But I married Bob." Bob grins cheerfully. "I was born with three left hands."

Bob says that his philosophy is all about creating "a survivable world – one worth surviving". His fervent belief is that mainstream society only changes when creative minorities on the margins come up with new solutions to the challenges of survival.

When I ask what attracted him to life on this "intentional community" he quotes an Egyptian architect, Hassan Fathy: "One man cannot build one house but 20 men can build 20 houses."

A year after they joined the community, Bob and Yolanda set about building their house. Despite being dubbed "the most impractical man on earth" by his brother, Bob taught himself all the necessary skills.

"None of us had any money or contacts or expertise. We just applied ourselves to learning." A decade later he published a book about how to do it, which became a bestseller: *The Earth Garden Building Book*.

"Bob dug his house-site by hand, because he didn't want to use fossil fuels," one member of the co-op recounts, with a slightly bemused smile.

"I'm not the kind of leader who persuades people," Bob tells me. "I'm the kind of leader who says, 'I'm going this way. Copy me, if you want'."

The co-op requires every member to contribute 60 hours of physical work per year. They also attend monthly meetings about land management, maintenance and the myriad challenges facing a community committed to living co-operatively.

For Yolanda, the meetings were a chore. For others, they are the engine room of the community, even when there is conflict. "If you want a vibrant community, you've got to vibrate," says Bob.

Chelsea McNab, 42, is one of the new generation who are leading the community into the future. She is a fit, clear-eyed woman who radiates strength and goodwill. She came to Moora Moora as a child to play with school friends. She always knew she wanted to live on community. Despite travelling and living in many places around the world, she says that Moora Moora feels like home.

She has three children, Ari, 15, Pepa, 13, and Tiga, eight. They are free to roam the leafy bushland that surrounds the community.

The children have plenty of mates to hang out with after school. It's a fabulous place for kids to grow and learn. The first afternoon we meet, a gang of kids pour through the airy hexagonal house that Chelsea built with her partner, Ollie. She despatches two of the girls to feed the goats. They whinge, like any kids. But they do it.

Chelsea acknowledges that co-parenting poses its own challenges. Other parents in the community have different values: different views about discipline or what's acceptable for children to watch on TV. On one occasion, a parent asked Chelsea to make her own daughter's birthday party sugar-free. She laughs good-naturedly. "That wasn't going to happen."

Darkness embraces the mountain, and the community settles in for the night. I drive back down that winding road, through the ghostly and silent forest.

I leave behind me a robust, idealistic and practical group of people who are powered by optimism, curiosity and commitment to the planet.

And somehow, the world tonight seems like a slightly better place.

C.A.L.L.

Communities At Large Letter

Have you visited our website?

www.communa.org.il