



International Communes Network (ICN)
and the
International Communal Studies Association (ICSA)
1979-1988

A. Allen Butcher, 1989, Twin Oaks Community, Louisa, Virginia, U.S.A., revised 6-28-2026

1st INTERNATIONAL COMMUNES FESTIVAL 1979, Laurieston Hall, Scotland

As communities around the world gradually became more aware of each other's existence, interest in learning about their different experiences grew. In the 1970s, local, regional, and sometimes national networks of communities began to form. In Israel, one of the large kibbutz movements, Kibbutz Artzi, was beginning to communicate with people in community in other parts of the world. Mordechai Bentov, a founder of Kibbutz Mishmar Haemek, began circulating a newsletter in 1976.

Laurieston Hall, a community in Scotland of twenty or more people, some living communally in a sixty-room Scottish manor on a twelve acre estate, had been active through the 1970s in the Communes Network, an organization involving communities in the British Isles. As one of Laurieston Hall's industries is hosting conferences, it was a logical step to plan a world conference or festival of international communities.

Naturally, the first step was to create a newsletter. The first issues of the International Communes Network (ICN) newsletter were sent out in 1978 inviting communitarians from all around the world to Laurieston Hall for the first International Communes Festival (ICF) to take place in 1979. The ICN newsletter continued from 1978 through about 1983, usually produced a couple times between annual festivals, and usually sent from Laurieston. Most issues presented the following basic ideal and purposes of the International Communes Network:

ICN is a loosely knit global network of communes working on a radical alternative to present day social structures. It carries information and ideological support and gives strength and encouragement through the exchange of communal ideas and experiences.

Eighty to ninety people from fifteen countries joined the conference organizers, four of whom at Laurieston Hall were Linda Mallett, Sara Eno, Patrick Upton and Dave Treanor.

The post-conference newsletter presented the first of many views of the vast diversity of values and practices among communities, appreciations of the commonalities in the new network, and affirmations of the network's goals of encouraging an openness and understanding among communities. Linda Mallett wrote her perceptions on the main ideological commonalities among many of the participating communities:

Anarchy—often structured to provide for decision-making, work organization, decentralization.

Ecology—recycling, energy use/conservation, organic agriculture, whole foods.

Personal Politics—avoidance of hierarchies and ways of dealing with personal and sexual relationships in community.

Feminism—more discussion than real attempt at confronting feminist issues.

Local Organizing—political action publications and actions.

Education—adult skill-sharing, publications, childcare and schooling.

Some of the communities represented at this first ICF, however, presented exceptions to certain of Linda's points. Ralph White of Findhorn and Stein Jarving of Holmen Gard in Norway presented commentaries on the dynamics of this first networking gathering:

The fundamental dichotomy is, between approaches that favor changing society by starting within the individual, and those that encourage change by radical political action. Ralph White, Findhorn ... the representative of the Israeli Kibbutz movement stood out apart, in tie and briefcase, reflecting the social realities of another culture, oddly ill at ease among his newfound sisters and brothers.

Stein Jarving, Holmen Gard

... this is the real challenge of networking: to go beyond the groups who use similar vocabulary and concepts, and to reach out to those with a different perspective and discover the common ground between us. ... It seems very healthy to experience different forms of community life so we don't become too entrenched in the correctness of our own views.

Ralph White, Findhorn, *ICN Newsletter*, 1979



LAURIESTON HALL, KIRKCUDBRIGHTSHIRE, DUMFRIES, ENGLAND

2nd INTERNATIONAL COMMUNES FESTIVAL 1981, Mejlgard Castle, Denmark

Fifty people from eleven countries met at a campsite near Mejlgard Castle. In addition to the workshops on financing, decision-making and relationships there was an emphasis upon Third World outreach. Ongoing exchanges between the Danish collectives and Tanzanian villages was discussed, with some question about who actually received more out of the interactions. Tanzanian music and dancing was especially appreciated at the conference. John of Christiania, Denmark suggested that, "Even if it is us (who benefit from Third World/First World contacts), in all modesty, such exchanges are good for both parts."

Alberto of Comunidad in Stockholm, Sweden, discussed their trip to Bitaco, a land-reform community of 150 peasant families in Columbia. Their experience in collective production and self-determination in the face of government repression included women discussing with men their "machismo" and how men wanted to dominate women. Comunidad continues to publish and exchange information with Latin-American collectives.

ICN newsletter comments also focused upon other issues at the Denmark conference:

Danish alternative projects struck me as much more efficient and business-like in their activities, with a greater impact in the fields they work. The publishing side of the castle collective is much better equipped than any similar venture in Britain,... it leaves me with a lot of questions, as to why it has happened more powerfully here than at home. The liberal/socialist attitudes in Danish culture? The higher standard of living in a much richer country?

Dave Treanor, Laurieston Hall, Scotland

A lot of the time here was spent comparing economic set ups, rather than the social side of it, with not much impressions given of how the communards experienced their day-to-day life. ... There is something unalternative about Danish communes—a response to their affluence. Danish communes seem to be well integrated into the parent culture, and very bound up with the money economy. I found this slightly disturbing.

Clive of Rapid Transformations

*(Editor's note: The type of communities that Clive is referring to here may be the ones called Bofaellesskaber in Danish, that by the end of the 1980s would inspire what is called the **cohousing** movement in the U.S.A.)*

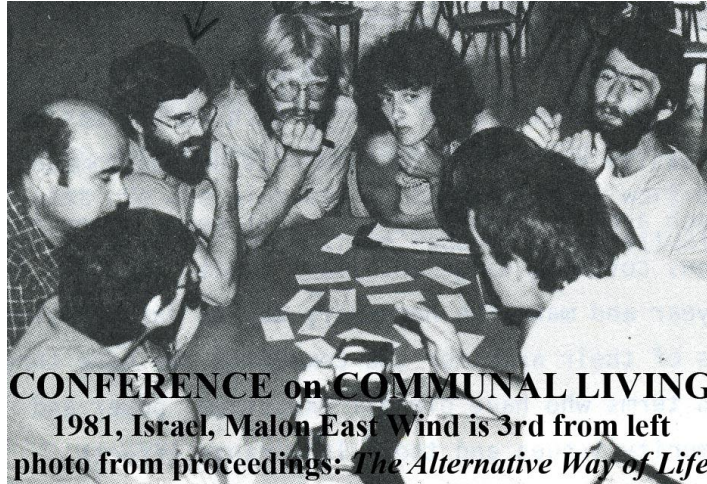
I didn't like this bloody Danish shifting weather, as inconstant as the alternative scene. Eric Van den Abbee, Tuiltergaerde, Belgium, *ICN Newsletter*, 1981

FIRST INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON COMMUNAL LIVING 1981, Kibbutz Ein-Hashofet, Israel

As early as 1976 Mordechai Bentov at the Kibbutz Artzi federation office in Tel Aviv had been circulating a newsletter among intentional communities around the world encouraging communication and information sharing. The expressed motive was simply to support the socialist ideal where ever it took root, as the kibbutz movement, Mordechai explained, was not just a Zionist movement but also a communitarian socialist movement interested in world solidarity. The newsletter was called simply "International Communes Desk" (ICD) and it existed at least between 1976 and 1985. A 1985 issue presented one of the few comments made which might be considered a statement of purpose, or an editorial policy:

Networking is effective in maintaining contacts across distances and between communities, a kind of friendship pattern. It does not direct or order, merely suggests, argues and debates.
ICD is in contact with many communities and commune organizations throughout the world. Please write to us,... and we shall publish *ICD Newsletter*, Sept. 1985

This statement, written six years after the 1st ICF gathering at Laurieston Hall, hints at the Kibbutz sensitivity to the criticism which its representatives were to hear from some non-Israeli communitarians in letters and at meetings through the 1980s. However, in the ICD newsletters of 1980-81 it is not clear that Mordechai Bentov or others were aware of the level of controversy that was beginning.



The First International Conference on Communal Living was held in 1981 at Kibbutz Bin-Hashofet, Israel. The conference was organized by the two largest kibbutz federations, Kibbutz Artzi and Kibbutz Meuhad, and co-sponsored by Tabenkin Institute and Haifa University, with the proceedings printed in a 139 page book titled, *The Alternative Way of Life*. 100 people attended from 16 countries, with half of the people being from Israeli universities or kibbutzim.

We, members of alternative communities the world over, ... recommend the exchange of experience and perspectives concerning our lifestyles and our attempts to change society We urge that efforts be made to develop contacts and forms of cooperation and mutual assistance between the various collectives in each country. We recommend establishment of committees or federations within each region to facilitate inter-community contact and communication

From the Conference Resolutions, *The Alternative Way of Life*

It is our identification as a movement that gives our everyday chores their meaning and gives us momentum into the future.

Jane, Dandelion, Ontario, Canada, *ICD Newsletter*, August 1982

The conference was sponsored, organized, and subsidized by members of two different Kibbutz Federations. Though it was not intended that the kibbutz be the focus of the conference, for a variety of reasons, we spent much of our time talking about kibbutz history, organization, ideology and direction, and criticizing or supporting the kibbutz while relating and comparing it to our own groups. ...the kibbutz has by no means formed an ideal society. There are continual unsolved problems, and from this perspective, it was hoped that the kibbutzniks present would also find something of value from the experiences and ideas of the delegates from around the world.

The issues that seemed to recur the most were those on which the kibbutz took the most criticism: sex roles in the division of labor, and children and the family. These are issues that are current and problematical in many of our own organizations as well as in the kibbutz, however, my impression was that many people expected the kibbutzim to have done better, and were demanding an accounting of why they had not done better, and what they intended to do about it.

Brian Otto, Dandelion, Canada *ICD Newsletter*, August 1982

One of the things I regret about the conference was the lack of opportunities to get to know other participants better and to find out more about their communities. Most sessions took the form of a formal lecture delivered by a kibbutz speaker over a microphone, the "audience" sitting in a semi-circle on hard chairs. Questions were queued, so the discussion usually became a series of mini-speeches rather than a direct exchange of ideas. ...we should have played more games together, had smaller group discussions, given everyone a chance to speak.

June Stratham, Greentown, England, *ICD Newsletter*, August 1982

One of the stories that came back to North American communities from the conference related how, during one of the hot desert bus trips between kibbutzim, the conference participants requested a stop for swimming. Although their kibbutz guides desired to keep to the schedule, the communitarians persisted and eventually won the day and enjoyed the cool blue water and the Middle Eastern sun!

This incident may be indicative of a general values clash, or of generational differences between the kibbutz and the communitarian conferees, yet it serves to illustrate a point. One of the expressed needs of the non-kibbutz communitarians was for more social and recreational activities, and for the kind of bonds which grow through shared pleasures. Intellectual sharing is only one of many activities which builds networks.

It was in the ICD and ICN newsletters following this conference that the serious conflicts were finally voiced. There were concerns that the First Kibbutz conference in Israel had drawn energy away from the 2nd Communes Festival in Denmark that had happened four months earlier. Also, there was concern that the kibbutz people had ignored the networking that had been going on in Europe. Two "festivals" had already been held prior to the first "conference" and, semantics aside, the communes network felt slighted. The most serious concern involved the role of the kibbutz in the Zionist movement. Many of the European communities have strong political concerns and ideologies, and a few individuals voiced disapproval of such close involvement with a country that maintains a native population as second class citizens. Particularly objectionable was the concept of Zionist principles being equated with "alternative living."

The International Communes Desk newsletter continued to provide information about community projects around the world. However, considering Mordechai Bentov's and other kibbutz persons' interest in fostering an international communities movement, it is understandable that they would have great expectations. Unfortunately, for various reasons the European based International Communes Network could not develop beyond annual meetings, and the Australian, New Zealand and Japanese communities could do little better. In North America the movement was forming a number of different networks, some regional, others based upon lifestyle or ideological issues.

3rd INTERNATIONAL COMMUNES FESTIVAL 1982, Hasselt, Belgium

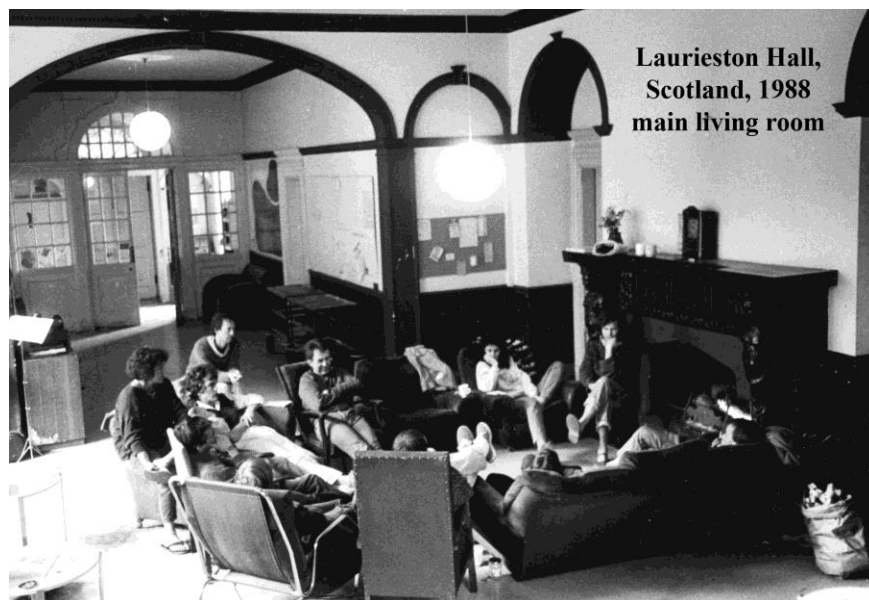
The Belgium ICF was intended to be primarily a European communities gathering, drawing people from 8 countries. It was hosted by IOC-MAB (Internationaal Ontmoetingscentrum Basisgroepen - Mouvement

D'Animation De Base) a networking center for social and political movements, cooperatives and communities.

We managed to get two workshops going for three days, one on communes and the changing of society, and one on financial, legal and organizational problems. Each evening we had presentations of different experiences in different countries.

And the last night of the meeting was one of the most strange things that happened here. One crazy Danish guy, having drunk loads of our good Belgian beer, was constantly trying to persuade the somewhat lazy bunch of leftover participants to come with him to a good pub nearby. Finally almost everybody got into the cars, and drove off. ... We got in, and found that this pub was really what we needed. Nice people. Good music, drinking, smoking, dancing. Everybody was exploding in a wild scene of crazy good vibrations. Getting high on feelings. Letting it flow. Not organized, not schemed. The whole night through tender huggin' slappings on the back, rolling on the ground, floating in down-to-earth skies of amazingly lovely wordless intercourse. That night we really got into each other. It just happened. The immense joy of meeting people from all over Europe. Experiencing the meaning of meetings like this in the thrilling of your own body. Breathlessly happy tumbling down in the soft morning bed. Breakfast at ten. Almost driven out of the conference centre, after shopping for bread and cheese and grapes and other fruit we settled again in a circle in the grass outside. Lunch picnic on the sun-warmed green. Last meeting. We stayed there until five in the afternoon, nicely chatting, playing the guitar, tenderly close.

Erik Van den Abbeele, Tuiltergaerde, Belgium *ICN Newsletter*, February 1983



Laurieston Hall,
Scotland, 1988
main living room

4th INTERNATIONAL COMMUNES FESTIVAL 1983, Laurieston Hall, Scotland

Laurieston Hall invited the network to return to where it began four years before, and about 100 people attended. The pre-festival ICN newsletter and later ICD newsletter included the following letters:

...I have got only a short-and favorable report of the gathering in Belgium.... I think that the periodic international gatherings are a very good thing, and contribute much to the maturing of the Movement-so I favor very much the next gathering in Laurieston Hall. I will try to have somebody from Israel (a kibbutznik) there. ... I observe that there is growing spirit of mutual belonging in the

Communes, a will to act together, and also a feeling of some relationship to the society around us and the care for its future. ..."

Mordechai Bentov, Kibbutz-Artzi, Israel, *ICN Newsletter*, February 1983

.... On the one hand I feel an urge to move on to higher levels of cooperation and wider scopes of activities. At least we can't go on discussing the same problems forever, without some kind of summing up and discussing future aims and strategies. But basically we are faced with the problem of formulating a statement of aims and values sufficiently broad to encompass most communes, and yet exact enough to elicit active response and support from those same communes....

Bernt Djurs, Jaettestuen, Denmark, *ICN Newsletter*, February 1983

... there was plenty of time (at the 4th ICF at Laurieston Hall) to ... enjoy the commune's sauna and the Turkish bath tent... and get a tan during the few hours of sun. But have you ever tried to conduct a serious discussion on questions of universal importance, on the lawn, with a girl whose only cover is a pair of sunglasses?

At my own and some other communards' initiative we held a thorough discussion with most of the leading individuals on the future of the international network of communes. Two trends stood out. One claimed that after five years of links, these should be tightened—and an international center established, at least for the purpose of information and the collation of experiences for the general good.

Others argued that the present situation was good enough: "We don't have to create more official frameworks so as not to be caught up with problems of decision-making, finances, whom to help, and the like." In the background I sensed apprehension that since the kibbutz movement was older, longer established, and more tightly organized, it might gradually dominate the organization.

In spite of the many differences between them and us, I think that there is a great deal in common, especially in the motivation for the incessant search for a better form of life.

Uzi El-Natan, Kibbutz Geshar *ICD Newsletter*, May 1984

In the many debates we held, we came to the conclusion that nowhere in Europe did the communes create a country-wide movement, that would take on the task of joint plans and publications, cooperative buying, etc. Most commune people are active within their community and don't reach out for a broader framework.

In most countries there are attempts to form a collective network, but only in Britain, Denmark and Belgium exist permanent centers of contact and communication. If we want our contacts to rise above the passing value of purely personal character, we have to urgently build an international network. My impression was that the emphasis is still on personal ties.

Bernt Djurs, Jaettestuen, Denmark *ICD Newsletter*, May 1984

5th INTERNATIONAL COMMUNES FESTIVAL 1984, deRefter, Holland

De Refter is a castle-like complex near Nijmegen, the Dutch "Communes Capital." The community of 70 people occupy a former nunnery and church. The 60 festival participants, 4 from kibbutz, 2 from Canada, and the remainder European, shared the site with restoration construction workers. The conference participants reported:

It is not at all hard to discern the common mood of growing alienation from society, from your country, even from the traditional family (of the European communes movement) ... real, personal, deeply-felt fear of the on-coming atomic war that would spell total annihilation; the horror of the advancing, partly irreversible poisoning of all natural resources-air, soil and water. Against this background, the conference participants-in spite of the huge differences in their various forms of communal life-easily found a common language, a mutual understanding that based itself on identical principles and tendencies: TO BREAK AWAY FROM THE LONESOME, INDIVIDUALIST LIFE OF "EACH FOR HIMSELF" AND TRY TO BUILD ALTERNATIVE STYLES OF LIFE-TOGETHER, CLOSE TO ONE ANOTHER, NON-COMPETITIVE, SHARING, PRACTICING MUTUAL RESPECT AND SUPPORT...

Yoel Darom, Kibbutz Kfar Menachem, *ICD Newsletter*, April 1985

When you have a (communes) festival like this one officially opened by a Lord Mayor, then you know the times are changing.... The Major spoke proudly of the de Refter church and how the town of Ubbergen gave money to the project...

A better and more stable (communes) network is essential, everyone agreed, but how do you create one? A permanent office with a full-time secretary was suggested by Bernt for every country ... but we are still left asking who wants to put this together? Little has changed over 12 months. The national networks are still undeveloped and need strengthening in order to promote the cause and make the international (network) situation possible.

Why isn't someone trying to unify the British Communes and Co-op Movement, for example, or even communes and peace groups? Why don't communes reach out to a wider spectrum—the unemployed, firstly? Why are communes so often branded as elitist? Communes of today can learn from history and decide whether they stand for isolation or influence. Which way is your Utopia facing? Can communes become more realistic and not just symbolic gestures?

Helen Prescott *ICD Newsletter*, April 1985

I have worked hard towards some sort of federation in Britain between communes (Fair Ground—involving a mutual community mortgage banking scheme, private deposit security, and loans to communities. *ICN Newsletter*, spring 1981), but became convinced that it would not work. I took six years reaching that conclusion, and other people are still actively trying to do it. So I am even less likely to have faith in an international federation that involved any significant "pooling of resources." And I doubt if the movement is best served by a central office at this stage. I prefer one that rotates around different groups, even though it is more likely to go wrong and is less efficient. Because it is more likely to discover the things that hold the groups together, and draw more communes into the net. I can see the attractions of a central office—gathering all the information together, providing a useful enquiry service, greater reliability, and so on. But I think it could rapidly alienate itself from most communes, who would not see its relevance to them. ...

Dave Treanor, Laurieston Hall, Scotland, *ICD Newsletter*, May 1984

Some communards have expressed to us their reluctance, even outright opposition, to the idea of strengthening and to some degree organizing contact and cooperation between communities the world over. We can well understand their apprehensions, but remain firm in our belief in the mutual benefits which regional or world-wide networks can offer to all of us.

Yoel Darom, Kibbutz Kfar Menachem, *ICD Newsletter*, April 1985

I have well understood through our meetings that the concept of a network—exchange of information without a central organization—is a basic concept. If we want efficient national and international co-operation, we have to look at our limited means, imposed by our own values and by geographical distance.

Arie Jaffe, Paris, France, *ICN Newsletter*, Sept. 1985

At the ICN festival in Nijmegen, Holland I came to the conclusion that with ICN as it is after 5 years, you cannot go any further than organizing yearly meetings, each year in a different country,... There is no such thing as a "responsible body" in ICN.... To me it seems impossible to organize an international communes movement at this moment... not within the ICN and not through a newspaper financed by different communes. The contact persons for the ICN are not all present at each conference, so it is difficult to decide anything but the next annual meeting.

What I think is needed are different approaches, using the opportunities that already exist, instead of seemingly Utopian Big Movement perspectives (edited):

- 1) Organize national networks.
- 2) Utilization of existing networks, publications, computer nets, conferences.
- 3) Provide information for visiting and traveling between different communities around the world.
- 4) Take advantage of opportunities to discuss strategies for social change in straight and alternative media, conferences, etc.

Eric Van den Abbeele, Hasselt, Belgium *ICD Newsletter*, April 1985

INTERNATIONAL COMMUNAL STUDIES ASSOCIATION (ICSA) 1985, Founding Convention, Israel

The first ICSA meeting was held at the Kibbutz Seminar Center, and organized by the Tabenkin Institute and Tel Aviv University. Proceedings and papers were printed in the 758-page hard-cover book, *Communal Life*, edited by Yosef Gorni, Yaacov Oved and Idit Paz. Shimon Mahler of Yad Tabenkin Institute wrote in the April 1985 ICD newsletter: "It is our hope that a major international event of this sort will introduce communal knowledge and consciousness into the academic world at large." The ICSA began triennial conferences, the second one to take place in 1988.

The new organization wrote its constitution with the following statement of purposes:

The ICSA has been formed to provide a common framework for a scholarly exchange and information on communes, intentional communities, collective settlements and kibbutz throughout the world. The organization will be multidisciplinary and shall strive for international representation among its members.

In order to carry out the purpose stated above, the organization shall engage in such activities as:

- 1) Providing a clearing house for research projects and encouraging comparative studies.
- 2) Maintaining and distributing a list of communal organizations as well as a list of individuals active in communal and kibbutz research, plus their addresses.
- 3) International Conferences.
- 4) Publications such as a journal/newsletter/bibliographies/proceedings of conferences.
- 5) Interaction with other professional/scholarly organizations, providing information for visiting scholars.

This will be, hopefully, a substantial step toward the development of an international channel for

transmitting information about on-going research and publications and other scholarly activities regarding the subject of communes and communal life. ... The purpose of this bulletin is to supply scholars with useful material of an interdisciplinary character and therefore we have diversified the sections so that both researchers and their work could be included as well as the activities of communal federations.

Bulletin of the ICSA, Spring 1987

The September 1985 ICD newsletter printed two accounts of the ICSA founding meeting. These two writings illustrate the conflicting values of the two movement strategies: the academics versus the activists.

The international conference on Kibbutz and Communes is now behind us. ... There were 45 lecturers from all over the world (USA, Canada, Australia, England, Holland, Denmark, Germany) and 55 lecturers from Israel. We had 27 meetings: 9 plenary sessions and 18 workshops. The audience often included hundreds of people.

A delegation of six members of the Hutterite and Bruderhof communes in America ... spent a whole month visiting kibbutzim, and this made possible a most interesting exchange of views between members of the two largest communal movements in the world—the Kibbutz and the Society of Brothers.

Most of the participants from overseas got first-hand knowledge by residing 3-4 days in a kibbutz, after a two-day trip that was organized for them. They "met" the Essenes at Kumran, got a fascinating picture about the different stages of the kibbutz movement, younger and older settlements, and the first (kibbutz) site of Degania. They even managed to get a sense of the cradle of the three monotheistic religions at Jerusalem and Bethlehem. And what about results? An international society on research about communes and kibbutz was founded, and will be an important factor in maintaining contacts between participants and other researchers.

We know of course about some of our shortcomings: there were no participants for the "Latin countries" (France, Belgium, Italy, Spain, Iberic America)...

Shimon Mahler, Yad Tabenkin Institute, *ICD Newsletter*, Sept. 1985

For the activist in both kibbutz and commune movements, conferences such as these are only of marginal significance. They are the paradise of the academic. There is no doubt that they stimulate research, and give researchers new inspiration and points of view. This was the conference's greatest triumph. ... This also has a long-term spin off for the activist, the down-to-earth builder of new communities, however cynical he or she may be about academia.

My suggestion is, that next time the kibbutz movement hosts such an international gathering, it should be for those people, for the activists. The founders and builders of community, the driving force within the various groupings, networks and movements around the world.

Jan Bang, Kibbutz Gezer, formerly of Communes Network, *ICD Newsletter*, Sept. 1985

6th INTERNATIONAL COMMUNES FESTIVAL 1985, LePuy, France

Meanwhile, back in Europe, preparations were being made for the next ICF to be hosted by Collectif Reseau Alternatif (CRA) the network of 20 communes in France specializing in helping young people and adults "in difficulty."

Sixty people from 12 countries attended the conference-festival at a youth hostel on top of a mountain in central France. Each meeting session was presented in both English and French, the time waiting while translation was presented proved helpful in providing each person time to think clearly about their next statements. The value of the informal gathering to people actively building community was once again expressed, along with all of the tensions and division of opinions.

The following is a report of two conference workshops, the first is on the topic, "Interpersonal Relationships in Community," the second is on the "Womyn's Workshop."

Do other communities know better how to deal with the conflicts that arise in community? Are there, maybe methods to ease conflicts that my community faces different or the same as other communities?

Our desires to be cooperative, loving, caring and tolerant seems to be forgotten over minor conflict in our living together. ... The people that one can trust to say anything to, to be irrational, seems to be needed in communities. The importance of trust toward each other makes a difference to how the community works. I felt it was growing slowly in the group.

The workshop group on "Interpersonal Relationships in Community" loosened up a little, because the last day we actually tried to work on how do we deal with our own feelings living in community. Turn over, the old/member/new member issue, the question of how to establish trust between members, the question of how to be a powerful person without over-powering other people, is not solved.... There is no recipe found yet and it does not look like that is what we need. What we need is to work on those things as well as tolerance toward others' opinions, structures and beliefs.

In the "Womyn's Workshop," one French womyn explained that one of the main changes she has seen is that womyn of the movement got to the place where they did not want to work with men at all anymore, and then found out that they did not like the isolation at all. "Now we work with them, if we are able, and ignore them if they bother us," she said. "We have given up trying to make them grow. They have to do it at their own speed and with their own energy."

The support that the British and Danish womyn get is to take time to find out what they want. This support does not seem to exist in the more southern countries. But even in the north, things have changed. "A few years ago I needed to prove that I can do things as well as a man, like using the chainsaw ... now I don't have to prove those things to myself. The underlying competition with a man seems to be gone. It is more important to me to find myself, my emotional balance, my needs, my own spirituality, than arguing with men."

This seems to be the new theme of the movement. Men who let womyn do as they need can share the experience, and those who want to stay where they are may stay there. Separatism is not an issue for most of the womyn anymore, mainly because they get enough support in their communities to have womynspace when they want it.

The fact that there is discrimination toward single womyn with children seems to be international, even though there are mostly single womyn with kids in community. ... We all are aware that raising kids is costly in labor and money with and without government help, but why do communities consider it inefficient to raise a new generation with hopefully new values?

Thea Page, Twin Oaks Community, U.S.A.

7th INTERNATIONAL COMMUNES FESTIVAL Canceled

The joys and energies that had sustained the International Communes Festivals through six meetings from 1979 to 1985 apparently could not survive the doubts and conflicts expressed by so many people over the years. By the time of the second ICSA conference in 1988, most European communitarians were ignoring the ICSA, boycotting, as it were, the academics. Perhaps the sentiment was one of reluctance to continue to debate the networking issue, as though the movement, through hearing years of talk about networking centers and the setting of organizational goals, was tired of competing with the kibbutz movement. An added factor is that after eight years of activism, many communitarian activists were moving on, some of them leaving community, frustrated with the slow rate of progress, others being ready for a lifestyle change. Given the mood in the European communities movement it is not surprising that so few bothered with the ICSA, even though its 1988 meeting was set for the same country as the birthplace of the ICN.

One major factor for the estrangement of the ICN from the ICSA must certainly be the different styles of conferences. Lectures prepared in advance by "experts" and followed by question and answer sessions is a very different group dynamic than the workshop which relies upon informal resource persons who contribute to the topic after it is determined by the group. The difference is between hierarchical versus an egalitarian atmosphere. Add to this the institutional setting with its own hierarchies of degrees and titles representing a culture and society to which many intentional communities consider themselves an alternative, and one is left with little justification for participation. It is also the case that the academic program sets its priorities according to its own imperatives of "publish or perish," grants hunting, tenure and other concerns far removed from the world of all but the largest intentional communities and community networks.

Given that the ICSA, like the National Historic Communal Societies Association (NHCSA) in the USA, have an institutional bias, the only satisfactory recourse for the interested communitarian, beyond merely being a spectator, is to write a paper, get on the schedule, and follow the program.



ICSA 1988 Communitarian Meeting, moderator Henry Near of Kibbutz Beit Ha'emek in foreground. Right-to-left: Andy Wood, Cobweb, England; William Metcalf, housing co-op, Australia; Peter de la Cour, Redfield, England; Mildred (wearing black, talking to group) and others, Ganas, Staten Island, USA; two members of Shindig, Edinburgh, Scotland; Daniel Wright talking with his wife (both with white hair just above Henry Near), Padanaram, Indiana, USA; man standing and others from Comunidad, Stockholm, Sweden; woman far left from Findhorn; many kibbutz members in background. Photo by Allen, Twin Oaks Community, USA.

2nd INTERNATIONAL COMMUNAL STUDIES ASSOCIATION 1988, Edinburgh/New Lanark, Scotland

210 people from 19 countries attended the 1988 ICSA conference. About 10% of these people were from kibbutz and another 10% from communities in at least six other countries (Australia, England, Scotland, Sweden, Holland, U.S.A.). 5% of the people were from Japan, primarily from universities and cooperatives.

About 40 people attended the one session scheduled for people living in community. The dozen or so kibbutz people stayed outside of the circle of community representatives, except for the workshop moderator, Henry Near of Kibbutz Beit Ha'emek. Recognizing the time limit, no presentation about kibbutz was presented at this meeting.

Two afternoon sessions and the final conference banquet were held at New Lanark, the historic site of Robert Owen's Nineteenth Century industrial community experiment, with most of the sessions held at Edinburgh University's Pollock Halls. About 100 lectures were presented in workshops and plenary sessions, with photo-copies of the 90 papers made available later through the New Lanark Conservation Trust, Lorna Davidson, NLCT, New Lanark Mills, Lanark, England, ML11 9DB.

After this conference the Utopian Studies Society - Europe (USS) was formed in England by Lorna Davidson, Dennis Hardy, and others, holding an annual international conference since 2000.

The fall 1988 issue number four of the *Bulletin of the ICSA* reported that over 600 individuals were receiving the newsletter, and that the Yad Tabenkin Institute (Research Center of the United Kibbutz Movement) was defraying all office and secretarial costs not covered by ICSA dues, now raised to \$15 per member per year.

This 1988 ICSA conference was cosponsored by the National Historic Communal Societies Association (NHCSA) based in Evansville, Indiana, USA, later to change its name to Communal Societies Association (CSA). The 1991 ICSA was planned for Elizabethtown, Pennsylvania, also to be co-sponsored by the NHCSA.

The organizers of the 2nd ICSA conference presented their report in the ICSA newsletter:

It is impossible to capture the rich and infinitely varied patterns of thought and discussion that evolved over several days, the conference gathering its own momentum and unique characteristics in the way of any communal experience.

...the conference was inevitably distinguished by the various priorities and values of the participants, shaped, in turn, by their own experience of (largely Western) societies in the 1980s. For example, gender, as a dimension of Utopian thought and action, has climbed the research agenda in recent years, and a number of papers were specifically directed to reassessing the role of women in this field. In contrast, other areas were relatively neglected; notably, it was pointed out that the study of Utopia and community remains unreasonably ethnocentric, with a marked under-representation of material from Third World countries—something that one might hope to see corrected at future events.

...one could not fail to be drawn into the web of debate that surrounds the modern kibbutz, an experiment that has never been far from difficulties and contention and, perhaps, never more than now. Fired by a powerful ideology and strengthened by a pioneering spirit, the question is one of how to sustain the institution when some of this original motivating force has diminished.

...modern Utopian ideas and experiments are increasingly directed towards the **process** of achieving change rather than simply about setting unrealistic goals. Appropriately, it remains a question of looking for better ways to organize society, but if (as is invariably the case) a total reconstruction is impossible in the short term then the task becomes one of identifying practical and manageable steps along that road. As such, the conference was as much about **means** as about **ends**.

Lorna Davidson and Dennis Hardy, *Bulletin of the ICSA*, no. 4, fall, 1988 (emphasis in original)

NETWORKING COMMUNITIES

This ten year history of international meetings of communities expresses two very different networking needs. One is the intellectual, academic-oriented conference model with formal presentations. The second is the experiential, morale-building, celebratory festival with an interpersonal orientation in an informal setting. Through recognizing that both gathering formats possess networking value, the movement might best be served by affirming the need for, and supporting both.

It is certainly a significant advance for the intentional communities movement that opportunities now exist for regular academic inquiry into and discussion about the experience of community. It remains for the communitarians to work with this resource, to contribute to the academicians material in an appropriate form and manner, such as presumably this history, and for the academics to provide an unbiased representation of the communitarian movement to the dominant, Outside World culture. In this sense, the academic conferences may serve as an interested, informed audience through which the movement may practice expressing its goals and ideals.

Given that a number of communitarians attend ICSA, USS, NHCSA (now CSA) and similar conferences, the opportunity exists for community members planning their attendance to request that the conference organizers provide a space for community persons to meet a number of times during the conference. At the 1988 ICSA conference there was just one two-hour session for contemporary communitarians to meet. This was time enough for only a description of each group, and an answer from each group to the question of member selection. It was only because the communitarians were relying upon the conference organizers to direct them that no further meetings or gatherings of communitarians attending the conference were held.

With prior arrangement there is good reason to expect that the "Communal Society" conference organizers would be willing to include on their program a meeting time and place for "practicing communitarians" during each day of the conference. With time enough to work together it is possible that an interesting and informative presentation could be made by current community members to a conference session on the status and programs of the various individual communities and their movements, particularly regarding their willingness to support networking organizations.

Such an exercise would also support the ideal of involving communitarians in mutually beneficial projects. Joint outreach, even at academic conferences, requires the building of trust and understanding among people of different communities, and the provision of such an opportunity for community people to work together during their conferences is a real service which the academic people could provide to the community movement.

People in community benefit by knowing what is happening in other parts of the movement; who the people are and how they feel about what they are doing. As intentional communities are unique social structures, this kind of sharing and mutual support is of great significance whenever it can be affected. It serves as a form of cross-fertilization, enriching everyone's life, bringing broader perspectives, understandings and appreciations for others' as well as for one's home community design. Considering that the academic issues are now being

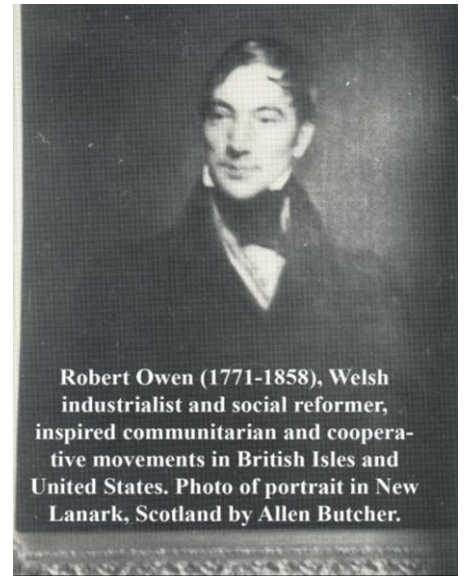
covered in admirable form, the separate communitarian gatherings can focus upon celebration and the forging of bonds among people in community. Programs of mutual aid and cooperative services may then develop in their own time and speed.

An effective strategy for a global intentional communities network would be to build upon both affinity networks of similar communities, and upon regional, national, or continental networks of communities. As the founding of the ICN was directly a result of the prior activities of the Communes Network among communities of the British Isles, discovering where the energy centers are today is an appropriate next step to make. (See: community directories printed in Europe and the U.S.) This is essentially the program suggested by Bernt Djurs in 1984 and Eric Van den Abbeele in 1985 in letters printed in the *International Communes Desk* newsletters. With such a foundation a world network may be built upon the prior existence of regional centers and affinity networks. (Note: the Global Ecovillage Network was formed at Findhorn, Scotland in 1995.)

There are great changes coming about in the world. Computer-aided communication tools are a great aid in networking, and these technological changes as well as social, economic, and political changes will result in opportunities as well as problems for many people in community. Yet with the appropriate use of information technology we can look forward to enjoying community gatherings and festivals of many forms among people in community through the future.



ICSA 1988, New Lanark, Scotland, final evening dinner entertainment of 19th century period music of (left-to-right) harpsichord, viola, & violin. Portrait of Welsh social reformer Robert Owen is on left of back wall.



Robert Owen (1771-1858), Welsh industrialist and social reformer, inspired communitarian and cooperative movements in British Isles and United States. Photo of portrait in New Lanark, Scotland by Allen Butcher.