“Three Acres and a Cow”

Small-Scale Agriculture as Solution to Urban Impoverishment in Britain and Germany, 1880–1933

DAVID H. HANEY

Today, in the prosperous countries of the “global North,” the term “urban agriculture” signifies a reaction against large-scale agricultural production and food distribution, representing instead a move toward small-scale production and consumption focusing on quality rather than profit. In the not too distant past, however, many people in these same countries argued for the need for small-scale farms as a means of solving urban poverty and reviving agriculture in rural districts as well. Two of the most important countries in this regard were Britain and Germany, in the period from the early 1880s to the late 1930s. Britain was the first country in the world to fully industrialize—and consequently also the first to propose reforms to address the resultant negative conditions. Germany, by contrast, industrialized relatively late and extremely rapidly. By the close of the nineteenth century, both countries had witnessed massive population shifts from the country to the city and the explosive growth of poor urban areas. Further, the agricultural sector of both countries was deeply affected by the sudden mass importation of cheap American grain, which caused a crisis throughout the 1880s. Perhaps it seemed a very obvious solution to resettle the less well-off urban classes and even the truly destitute “back” on the land. While allotment gardens of less than an acre had long been provided as an amenity for laborers, the focus in these decades shifted to the smallholding idea, or parcels of one to fifty acres, where a family could earn its entire livelihood.

Although allotment gardens were a major feature of World War I Britain, the smallholding movement never regained its former importance as a political concept after the end of the war. By contrast, in Germany following the war, various versions of the smallholding idea continued to be discussed and eventually incorporated into
modernist planning. Thus, Britain is significant as the source of the smallholdings idea, and Germany as the country where it became rationalized as part of the modernist planning agenda. The following case studies—selected to give a range of responses in both countries, within both mainstream and alternative cultural contexts—culminate in an overview of the German landscape architect Leberecht Migge as the primary representative of small-scale agricultural concepts within German modernist architecture and planning.
In British Parliamentary politics, Liberals supported the widespread establishment of smallholdings, in opposition to the Tories, who represented the landholding class. As early as 1879, William Gladstone spoke of the need for “petite culture” in England, referring to the perceived success of the proprietary peasants in France. The chief figure behind this movement was Liberal Member of Parliament Jesse Collings, whose phrase “three acres and a cow” became a popular slogan. Beginning in 1887, Collings set in motion the passage of a series of Acts of Parliament designed to provide individuals with allotments and smallholdings, from which they could derive all or part of their income. This series of Acts culminated in those of 1908, 1909, and 1910, which directed local county councils to procure and administrate allotments and smallholdings for either lease or sale, according to local demands. This was a highly political issue, with some politicians categorically denouncing the notion of smallholdings as a viable economic solution. Published government reports from 1909-10 indicate significant popular interest, but a massive amount of smallholdings was never provided, largely due to apathy and interference from government officials and the landed classes (Figure 2.1).

In Darkest England:
The Salvation Army Farm Colony and Overseas Settlement

In addition to the smallholdings movement, agricultural training was also seen as a means of helping the urban destitute. In late nineteenth-century England, the workhouse was the main instrument to deal with those without shelter. In principle, anyone could pass the night in the workhouse, under the condition that they perform extremely menial tasks during the day. But workhouses were deliberately set up to discourage the “idle” from entering and were, by all accounts, abjectly miserable places. When the Salvation Army set up its first men’s shelter in 1888, it was effectively a more compassionate, hygienic version of the workhouse, with work training eventually offered. In 1890, the founder of the Salvation Army, William Booth, published his visionary treatise on how the urban poor should be treated: *In Darkest England and the Way Out* (Figure 2.2). The title was an obvious play on Henry Morton Stanley’s book *In Darkest Africa*, intended as a ploy to shame his countrymen into action. From the beginning, Booth and the Salvation Army did not work against the established order, but within it, taking terminology and tactics from the British colonial machine. It was, after all, an “army,” with Booth as the “General.” Booth extended his scheme to an imperial scale in *In Darkest England*. The shelters were relabeled the “City Colony,” where poor men would first be gathered, to be sent on to a “Farm Colony,” where they would be trained in farming and horticulture in preparation for their final destination, the “Over-sea Colony,” where they would permanently settle and form families.

Within the same year, Booth succeeded in raising £100,000 to purchase nine hundred acres of farmland and to set up operations next to the village of Hadleigh in Essex near the Thames Estuary, about fifty miles east of London. During the 1890s, more farmland was gradually acquired, bringing the total area to more than three thousand acres. While not entirely economically self-sufficient, the venture was by all means a significant attempt to address the needs of the urban poor through agricultural training and settlement.
accounts a success, as the primary goal was to retrain destitute, down-and-out men. (In 1895, there were 350 men in residence.) The majority of men trained at Hadleigh were sent to colonies overseas, as Booth had promised, with Canada a preferred destination. But the outbreak of World War I in 1914 marked the gradual decline of the British Empire, and of the farm as well. During this same period, the Salvation Army also administered an emigration scheme for entire families, offering reduced passage rates and reliable agents to help settlers on arrival. But this was strongly criticized
by those arguing for resettling the urban populations on home soil, including Jesse Collings, who thought that this would simply sap England of its best laborers, leaving behind only the unfit.  

Booth, in fact, had stated in *In Darkest England* that he was in favor of settling those trained on Farm Colonies on smallholdings and farms in rural England, and he even wanted to start a cooperative farm next to the colony itself.  

But it was not until 1906 that the Salvation Army was able to implement its first smallholdings scheme farther north in the county of Essex, near the village of Boxted, when funds from a philanthropist allowed the purchase of four hundred acres. Smallholdings ranged from four-and-a-half to seven acres, with new semidetached houses provided for families. The tenants were given seeds and plants at no cost, and for the first year only a nominal rent was charged. The intention was that smallholdings would begin to return a profit after two years, enabling tenants to buy the land. The novelist H. Rider Haggard, himself an advocate of smallholdings, visited the colony in 1910 in order to make a firsthand inspection. From an interview with one of the smallholdings farmers, he recalled: “I found a little rift within the rural lute, for on asking him how his wife liked the life he replied after a little hesitation, ‘Not very well, sir; you see, she has been accustomed to a town.’” For Haggard, the key problem was whether tenants would be able to adjust to the move from town to country. In fact, the majority of them were not very successful in the first two years, most of them finding themselves with less money than when they arrived. In 1911, a number of the tenants proved so unsatisfactory that the Salvation Army resolved to remove them. A formal protest ensued, with the Salvation Army cleared of any wrongdoing by a government inquiry. The smallholdings were finally sold off in 1916, with the Essex County Council buying many of them to house returning war veterans. By comparison to the Farm Colony, the Boxted Smallholdings Settlement was not a success, due to a lack of cooperative spirit and proper agricultural training. What the Salvation Army was able to do in establishing settlements in North America and elsewhere, it was not able to repeat at home.

"The Industrial Village of the Future":
Anarchist Peter Kropotkin’s Vision of Small-Scale Agriculture and Industry

Despite the relative conservatism of reformers like Booth, the 1880s and 1890s in Britain witnessed general tolerance toward alternative political views, with the country becoming a center for the rise of Socialism and anarchism. During the 1880s, the prominent designer William Morris publically embraced Socialism, a sign of the degree to which such ideas were being taken seriously, even by established figures. At the same time, numerous anarchists and other political refugees from the Continent found a haven in cosmopolitan London. Among them was the Russian prince turned anarchist Peter Kropotkin, who shortly after his arrival in 1886 befriended Morris and other important political activists. Of all those writing on the desirability of small-scale agriculture as a means of social reform, Kropotkin was the most sophisticated, and his writings continue to maintain their relevance today. Kropotkin became a public intellectual in
England, where he wrote for a number of journals, spoke around the country, and published several internationally recognized books.23

As a young man, Kropotkin was deeply moved by the plight of Russian serfs, beginning with those working under his family at home. Although he had a promising career as a geographer, he was thrown in jail for his political views. After he escaped prison in Russia, he became a leading anarchist on the Continent but was eventually incarcerated again in France. After this second period of imprisonment, he resettled in London, where he remained for nearly three decades. In Britain, Kropotkin made a careful first-hand study of the national economy, visiting not only cities but also the countryside. He, like others, was concerned about the depopulation of the countryside and the general malaise in agriculture. In his 1899 book, *Fields, Factories, and Workshops*, he claimed to be observing existing trends toward small-scale agricultural and industrial production, which he believed offered individuals, families, and small communities relative freedom from the large-scale farms and factories that he considered dehumanizing. Kropotkin’s version of anarchism at this point was not so much directed at the overthrow of the centralized government as toward a philosophy of alternative living in relative freedom from mainstream capitalism.24 In an article titled “The Industrial Village of the Future,” published in the prominent journal *The Nineteenth Century* in 1888, he laid out the basis of his vision of small groups of people in relatively independent villages, producing for their own needs. He explained how the process of industrialization had disrupted both traditional settlement and labor patterns: “And we, in our admiration of the prodigies achieved under the new factory system, overlooked the advantages of the old system under which the tiller of the soil was an industrial worker at the same time. We doomed to disappear all those branches of industry which formerly used to prosper in the villages; we condemned in industry all that was not a big factory.”24

A return to a smaller scale was critical, as was the reestablishment of communities where both agricultural and industrial activities could be pursued, even at the level of the individual laborer. He believed that the integration of labor needed to be reclaimed following the industrial emphasis on specialization, not just for economic purposes but for the quality of human life. Kropotkin believed that technology should be used to serve social aims in a new cooperative society, much as it had provided the foundation for capitalist industrialization.

Kropotkin’s discussion of small-scale agriculture was highly influenced by technological developments in agriculture, and even more so by the expanding field of horticulture. In comparing his comments in his 1888 article with the 1899 and 1912 editions of *Fields, Factories, and Workshops*, the intensification of his observations reflects continuing developments in horticultural practice (Figure 2.3).25 In 1888, he noted merely that clay fields near London could be greatly improved through unskilled tasks such as manuring, laying drains, and pulverizing phosphate, in line with more conventional agricultural practices. Writing in the 1899 edition, Kropotkin expanded his discussion greatly, reporting on large-scale operations growing under glass on the Isle of Jersey. Even more significantly, he described in great detail the intensive techniques of Paris market gardeners, who used glass in the form of bells (cloches), frames, and greenhouses,
along with copious applications of dung for warmth and fertilizer to maximize yields and to extend the growing season. In the 1912 edition, he expanded the section on market gardening further, exuding even more enthusiasm over intensive gardening techniques, as exemplified by the Parisians: “Let me add that all this wonderful culture has entirely developed in the second half of the nineteenth century. Before that, it was quite primitive. But now the Paris gardener not only defies the soil—he would grow the same crop on an asphalt pavement—he defies climate. . . . He has given to Paris the ‘two degrees of latitude’ after which a French scientific writer was longing . . .”6

For Kropotkin, intensive horticulture, so called because of the amount of labor required and the extremely efficient use of land, was a form of technology that could transcend local conditions and provide the maximum use of resources. As always, this was not to be in service of individual profit, but of the entire community. Unlike the Paris market gardeners who tended to work as individual families, here the ideal organization would involve a small community.

"Three Acres and a Cow"
Contrary to the arguments of Robert Malthus, who believed that the earth would only support a maximum population beyond which would come hunger or starvation, Kropotkin optimistically claimed that the new technologies of food production would ensure abundance for all:

It has been proved that by following the methods of intensive market-gardening—partly under glass—vegetables and fruit can be grown in such quantities that men could be provided with a rich vegetable food, and a profusion of fruit, if they simply devoted to the task of growing them the hours which everyone willingly devotes to work in the open air, after having spent most of his day in the factory, the mine, or the study. Provided, of course, that the production of foodstuffs should not be the work of the isolated individual, but the planned-out and combined action of human groups.  

In contrast to those arguing for smallholdings as the exclusive means of income for individual families, Kropotkin considered work on the smallholding or allotment as a secondary occupation, in combination with other forms of labor, although ideally within the same small cooperative community. Writing in the context of late nineteenth-century England, he appears to be making concessions to predominant conditions of the normal workday, although he proposed more independent forms of community as well.

A Commune among the Collieries: The Clousden Hill Colony near Newcastle upon Tyne

The one major daily newspaper in Europe that regularly printed Kropotkin’s articles was The Newcastle Chronicle, located in the northeast of England, an area that was at the time one of the largest shipbuilding and coal-producing centers in the world. The Chronicle’s editor, Joseph Cowan, was a well-known radical member of Parliament who invited Kropotkin to speak in Newcastle. As a center of anarchism, Newcastle also attracted the Jewish tailor Frank Kapper (Franz Kapir), who had immigrated to England from central Europe in 1893 to escape political persecution. Kapper soon became active on the Newcastle anarchist scene and—along with his relatively well-to-do colleague William Key—decided to found a cooperative settlement following Kropotkin’s suggestions. Through an advertisement in the Chronicle, Kapper found a willing landlord with twenty acres to let in Clousden Hill, a suburb of Newcastle, with William Key providing the initial financial backing. The original colonists in July 1895 were limited in number, not more than a dozen or so people, but they were intent on founding a cooperative community with a given set of rules to operate by. Kropotkin cautioned them at first, warning of the difficulties posed by the lack of capital and the hard work that would be involved, but nevertheless he supported their intentions in principle.

The colonists erected some greenhouses and proceeded to engage in market gardening to the best of their abilities. They appear to have been successful, selling flowers, geese, and other produce that could be raised on their relatively small plot of land.
Figure 2.4
Artist’s rendition of life at Clousden Hill Colony, near Newcastle upon Tyne, at Christmastime.
Reproduced from *The Illustrated London News*, January 8, 1898.
Word of the colony spread, and it began to attract more visitors, so that at one point the community reached a population of twenty-eight, which was more than it feasibly could support. One of the more noteworthy visitors, in addition to Kropotkin, was the German activist Bernhard Kampffmeyer, who later went on to help found the German Garden City Association in 1902. In England, the colony became so well known that *The Illustrated London News* carried a flattering story, with a full-page illustration showing it around Christmastime 1897 (Figure 2.4). Unfortunately, because of internal conflicts and a series of misfortunes (such as a bad hailstorm that destroyed the green-houses), the colony went into bankruptcy in 1902, with William Key still holding the lease. The Clousden Hill Colony was relatively well known in its day as the one place where Kropotkin’s ideas were put into practice, at least on the agricultural side.

The Workhouse, the Farm Labor Colony, and the Single Tax: George Lansbury and Joseph Fels’s Struggle to Address Urban Poverty

Among those who wanted to reform the poor law system and the workhouse was George Lansbury. In 1893, he became a “poor law guardian,” one of the elected trustees in charge of overseeing the workhouses, in this case in the East End district of Poplar, dominated by dockyards and chronic unemployment. Lansbury believed that poor laws should be reformed to address unemployment constructively, one solution being the “labour colony,” along the lines of William Booth’s Farm Colony in nearby Essex. In 1903, Lansbury met the extraordinary Jewish philanthropist and soap manufacturer Joseph Fels of Philadelphia, who had come to London on business in 1901, and quickly became involved in English politics. In 1904, Fels agreed with Lansbury to purchase a tract of 101 acres at Laindon in Essex, which he would lease to the Poplar Board of Guardians for a peppercorn rent. Lansbury envisioned a training center for unemployed men, where they would learn agricultural and horticultural skills, again not unlike Booth’s Farm Colony. Lansbury even conceived of a surrounding ring of fixed smallholdings where the men could permanently settle. A second labor colony soon followed in 1905, with Fels again leasing another large tract of land to the Poplar Board of Guardians, this time at Hollesley Bay in Suffolk. At both locations, Fels provided financing for farming and gardening facilities, and many significant people visited both places. This was a major departure from the old workhouse policies of providing people with menial, degrading tasks, such as picking oakum out of old rope. But unlike the Salvation Army’s Farm Colony, this was a public enterprise, even if it was being funded by Fels. Unfortunately, some government officials heartily disapproved of this liberal interpretation of the poor laws and effectively ended these projects.

Lansbury moved on with his political career, but Fels remained committed to the improvement of the less well-off by resettling them on the land. Fels quickly engaged with social reform circles in London, befriending Peter Kropotkin and others. Fels’s real hero, however, was the American land reformer Henry George. Although little known today, George’s influence during this period should not be underestimated. In 1879, George first published his political tract, *Progress and Poverty,* in which he argued that because all
wealth was ultimately based on the land, the land should belong to all. But he did not favor violently seizing the land; he was not arguing for revolution. Instead, his more practical solution was the “single tax,” meaning that the only government tax would be on the land, excluding improvements such as buildings. While this may not immediately seem sensible, in the case of smallholdings, for example, it was believed that a high land tax would make large landowners want to lease or sell their land to others who would increase its productivity in order to pay the tax. Unused land would be a financial burden on the owner, meaning that land should be taxed in order to assure that it was productive and not held for speculation or left idle. Another of George’s proposals was the collective ownership of land on a smaller scale, by groups formed for this purpose. George was very well known in London, having engaged in public debates with Socialists like Henry Hyndman in the 1880s. Fels, along with many others, was obsessed with the single tax idea (and, as an American manufacturer, was conveniently opposed to import tariffs). Fels coupled the idea of collective ownership of the land with the creation of rural smallholdings.

Following on the fiasco at Hollesley, in 1906 Fels founded a smallholdings settlement at Mayland on a six-hundred-acre farm purchased earlier. Fels had been attracted to Mayland by the horticultural activities of Thomas Smith, originally a printer in Manchester. Inspired by a published account of a family living comfortably from the produce of a three-acre plot in Essex, Smith subsequently purchased eleven acres and built a house named the “Homestead,” where he lived with his wife and two children. Smith also attracted other urban families; an announcement in The Labour Annual “Community Directory” of 1897 reads like an invitation to new colonists: “Individualist ownership, tempered by voluntary cooperation. Some more land can be had here, and Socialist settlers would find skilled advice and like-minded comrades.”

The Socialist colony was short-lived, but Smith remained and gradually trained himself to be a skilled horticulturist. Fels hired Smith to oversee operations at Nipsell’s Farm, where twenty-one smallholdings of five acres each were initially set up. Through a mutual interest in the American poet Walt Whitman, Fels met the young and already recognized architect Charles Holden, whom he commissioned to design economical, semidetached houses for the smallholders (Figure 2.5). These houses were reviewed positively in The Builders’ Journal in 1906 as exemplary housing for rural laborers. Fels also paid for the erection of a school and associated baths, a community hall with a lending library, and the construction of a large building for packing; altogether he spent about £25,000. Smallholders were selected by application, meaning that they were by no means destitute, and although urbanites, they had some experience with allotments. The new smallholders were not required to pay the first year of rent, but were expected to pay twenty-six to thirty pounds per year afterward.

Fels even went so far as to bring in a gardener (with his wife and two sons) from France to teach the smallholders “French gardening,” as the kind of intensive horticulture that Kropotkin had described was then popularly called. The complicated techniques of French gardening were beyond the capacities of most of the smallholders, who were still adjusting to rural life. A number of lean years followed, with Fels continually forgiving or reducing the rents substantially. Finally, in 1910, the situation had reached
the point that Fels offered the tenants the option of staying if they could pay subsequent rents in full, or they were given the option of leaving, with half of their original capital investment given back to them as a gift. Half of the original smallholders remained. In any case, during its operation as a colony, Mayland attracted a number of noteworthy visitors, including Peter Kropotkin and the planner Patrick Geddes, whose son Alasdair worked at the farm for a time. Fels died prematurely in 1914, at which point his wife Mary left England permanently, devoting herself instead to the settlement of Jewish Palestine, following the principles of Henry George.

**Intensive Horticulture and Fantasies of Abundance:**
The “French Gardening” Fad in England

Perhaps the main success story of the Fels farm at Mayland was Thomas Smith himself. He was already a noted horticulturalist in his own right when Fels paid a French gardener to come over to consult on setting up a “French garden” there (Figure 2.6). In 1909, with funding from Fels, Smith published a detailed technical manual, *The French Garden*, with an enthusiastic introduction by their friend Kropotkin. Smith opened by noting the substantial number of visitors who had recently come to visit the Mayland French garden, many of whom had been spurred on by the publication of “sensational” articles in the press. In his introduction to the book, Kropotkin claimed that he had received over the past fifteen years many inquiries for books on the *culture maraîchère* of Paris, but that this was the first authoritative work in English. Kropotkin emphasized that intensive gardening should not only be put in the service of profit but also be
utilized toward the betterment of humanity, even if only in a small way. In 1911, Smith published an even larger manual, *The Profitable Culture of Vegetables*, which was revised and reprinted three times, in 1937, 1946, and 1954. Smith was also made a fellow of the Royal Horticultural Society. He had initially begun in response to a Socialist journal article, and then had tried to establish a cooperative smallholdings colony. In the end, he succeeded in transforming himself into a leading figure in horticulture, and in his final book he emphasized the importance of profit-making to the success of the smallholder (Figure 2.7). Both he and Kropotkin emphasized the importance of technical knowledge and sufficient capital, while at the same time arguing for the potential social benefits.

“French gardening,” in fact, had been popularized following the visit of a group of gardeners from Evesham to Paris led by C. D. McKay in 1905, as noted by Kropotkin and others (Figure 2.8). Apparently this new mode of gardening was widely publicized and soon became a kind of fad, at least until 1914. McKay’s work on the subject was published as a series of articles in the *Daily Mail* newspaper in 1908, and a low-priced book was issued in 1909. The introduction to McKay’s book claimed that even Edward VII had enthusiastically received a copy. Another important book on French methods was John Weathers’s *French Market-Gardening*, also of 1909. Weathers positively discussed the French garden at Mayland as being an important center of experimentation and study, while also observing that the substantial expenditure lavished on the project by Fels was well beyond the means of the average market gardener. A smaller brochure by E. Kennedy Anton, *French Gardening without Capital*, published in 1908, was specifically concerned with keeping costs down without sacrificing the benefits of intensive gardening techniques. One of the cost-saving practices Anton advocated was the use
of “night soil” (human feces) as a cheap, readily available, and extremely effective form of fertilizer. The brief popularity of the topic of French gardening suggests that tales of intensive horticultural production evoked fantasies of abundance and financial independence in readers’ minds, and that the fad probably faded so quickly because readers soon realized the amount of time and energy required (Figure 2.9). On the other hand, among professional gardeners French methods revolutionized horticultural practice in entire districts in Britain, such as the Vale of Evesham.53

Utopian Diagrams and Practical Business Plans:
The Agricultural Belt as Realized at Letchworth Garden City
The originator of the garden city idea, Ebenezer Howard, was a product of the same intellectual reform milieu of this period in London. Howard would have known of the writings of Peter Kropotkin and Henry George, and would have been aware of discussions regarding smallholdings and movements to resettle urbanites on the land. Thus,
Howard’s garden city proposal was not wholly unique. The most effective elements of his propaganda were the clear, persuasive diagrams: the “three magnets” and the ideal garden city plans. Further, Howard’s vision provided for industry and agriculture together, as well as for comfortable residential districts. Although land was to be held in common ownership following George’s principles, the garden city was to be a town of around thirty thousand, not a small commune. Howard stressed the importance of small-scale agriculture, showing outer zones of both allotments and smallholdings in his diagrams.

Letchworth Garden City, founded in 1903, was the first garden city to be realized and was run as a private company. Historians have observed that even from the early years it was necessary to involve businesspeople in order to put the project on sound financial footing. It was run as a “cooperative,” but not along the lines of Mayland or Clousand Hill; in the end, it was a business. The whole of the original site purchased for Letchworth was farmland, much of it formerly held by absentee owners and thus poorly maintained. The central area was to be developed as the town site, with a surrounding agricultural zone intended as much to maintain active farming as to isolate the town from outside development, and to avoid a “ragged edge.” The farmland was left much as it was found, with property divisions following the topography; for, as Howard noted, “Nature does not love hard and fast lines.” The company made efforts to increase agricultural activity and to improve the farmland, for example, by planting hedges and installing drainage. Some of the tracts were subdivided into smallholdings and allotments, befitting the original concepts (Figure 2.10). In 1907, Howard claimed that 270 acres had been divided into twenty-four smallholdings averaging eleven acres each. One of the original farms had been divided into “Norton Small Holdings Ltd.,” and another cooperative company, Garden City Small Holdings Ltd., had been set up.
to facilitate the sale of the smallholders’ produce (Figure 2.11). The first secretary of the Garden City Association (separate from Letchworth Garden City) was Thomas Adams, who championed the cause of the smallholder, but with limited success.  

The number of smallholdings peaked before World War I, with Letchworth maps showing no significant increase through the mid-1930s. One of the fundamental purposes of the garden city was to provide individual houses with ample garden space, so allotments were less sought after. Smallholdings and allotments were located on the fringe of the town and never really incorporated within the plan. Most of the farmland beyond continued to be leased to individual farmers on an annual basis, but these areas were larger than smallholdings and cultivated following more conventional agricultural practices. Writing in 1913, H. Burr took a decidedly businesslike stance toward the whole issue of smallholdings. He claimed that providing smallholdings had never been a priority of the “Company,” and that the capital had never been available to erect cottages or provide equipment or other goods. To some extent he was correct: the main purpose was to build a town with housing. But Burr downplayed the importance of different scales of agriculture to Howard’s original scheme.

In the same year, the chair of the company, Aneurin Williams, pointed out somewhat defensively that although some people claimed that the garden city land was managed no differently than traditional practices on landed estates, this was not the case. Williams countered that “the controller of the whole estate [Letchworth] is a trustee for the public, not an individual seeking to make his own income as large as possible.” But in practice the difference was not so great—probably one reason why establishment

“Three Acres and a Cow” 33
figures and businessmen were willing to accept the garden city idea. In contrast to Howard’s ideal scheme, the surrounding smallholdings and farms never provided the majority of foodstuffs for Letchworth. Rather, the main economic emphasis was placed on small-scale industry, although the same people did not work in both farms and factories as Kropotkin envisioned in his industrial village. The principles expressed in Howard’s town-country diagrams were considerably compromised by broader economic factors, with agriculture suffering the most.

Translated Solutions:

**German Importation of English Models of Cooperative Communities and Garden Cities**

Although Germany industrialized much later and more rapidly than did Britain, the country faced similar social and economic problems at the close of the nineteenth century. While it is well known that Kaiser Wilhelm II sent the architect Hermann Muthesius to England in the late 1890s to study domestic architecture, British experiments in social reform and utopian settlement were also discussed among German intellectuals. In Berlin, Franz Oppenheimer was one of the earliest German social critics to study British social thinkers such as Robert Owen. Oppenheimer turned from assisting the urban poor with their health to investigating the potential of cooperative settlement, as described in his extensive study *The Cooperative Settlement: An Attempt to Positively Overcome Communism through the Solution of Cooperative Problems and the Agriculture Question*. Oppenheimer believed that the land should be freely available to those who wanted to farm it, and under the influence of his English contemporaries argued that small cooperative agricultural settlements represented the way forward, out of the trap of unhealthy, overcrowded, industrial metropolises like Berlin. Also as in England, the American Henry George’s work was very influential among social reformers; his *Progress and Poverty* was translated into German in 1881, a year after initial publication. Oppenheimer and others were committed to land reform, which could mean the implementation of the single tax or the expropriation of all privately held land. Oppenheimer was among many activists in the settlement (*Siedlung*) movement, which included a broad range of political and social perspectives.

In the early years of the twentieth century, Kropotkin’s work was accessible through the translations of Gustav Landauer, who had discovered anarchism while a young man in Berlin in the 1890s. An admirer of Kropotkin’s work, Landauer lived in London (Bromley) in 1902, not far from the older anarchist. After returning to Berlin in 1903, Landauer translated both Kropotkin’s *Mutual Aid* and *Fields, Factories, and Workshops*, the latter reprinted in 1910. In his own writings, Landauer placed more emphasis on the individual within the small settlement, and he introduced a spiritual, mystic element as well. In any case, Kropotkin’s translated work would exert a background influence on German modernism. Another important development coming from Britain in the early twentieth century was the garden city movement. The fact that the settlement movement was already well underway in Germany in the 1890s meant immediate support for
Howard’s ideas among activists like Oppenheimer, Landauer, and Kampffmeyer. (The latter, it may be remembered, stayed temporarily at Clousden Hill.) A German Garden City Association was founded in 1902, and Howard’s book Tomorrow was translated in 1907, with introductory commentaries by both Oppenheimer and Kampffmeyer. The German Garden City Association was very active in the years before World War I, organizing major study tours to England in 1909 and 1910. The first significant German garden city was Hellerau near Dresden, founded in 1907, with the original architects including Hermann Muthesius, Richard Riemerschmid, and Heinrich Tessenow. Hellerau, however, was not an agricultural community, but rather was centered on a Werkbund-affiliated furniture factory. As in England, garden cities in Germany never really succeeded in implementing the agricultural side of Howard’s original plans. But Howard’s general idea of settling in cooperative communities on the land would also have a strong effect on modernist architects and planners in Germany.

A Better Life through Vegetarianism on the Land: The Eden Colony near Berlin

Among the earlier experimental settlements in Germany established before 1900, the most exemplary is arguably the Eden Fruit-Growing Colony near the town of Oranienburg, on the outer edge of metropolitan Berlin (Figure 2.12). Founded by a group of middle-class vegetarians in central Berlin in 1893, Eden survived two world wars and the communist government of East Germany, and still exists today. Following the principles of George, land was held in common ownership, thus preventing any kind of real estate speculation (Figure 2.13). The original area was ninety-one acres, with each of the eighteen initial cooperative members contributing 500 marks toward the overall purchase cost of 9,000 marks. Each subsequent member was required to lease five thousand square meters (approximately one and one-quarter acres) of land within the settlement. An architect was soon hired to plan the community on a basic grid, locating communal facilities in the center. The planning concept called for relatively small houses with large plots, making it in effect a smallholding colony. Thousands of fruit trees were planted in 1894 under the supervision of a professional gardener hired for the purpose. Most of the original members were well educated, including a medical doctor and judge, and although small-scale agriculture was to be carried out, most settlers continued to work outside of the settlement as well. The agreed-upon rules stated that a percentage of produce from individual homesteads was to be given to the cooperative for immediate resale, or to be processed into foodstuffs such as jams and juices, also to be sold. Because the settlement was founded by vegetarians, initially only a limited number of laying chickens and milk goats could be kept by each family, and no animals were to be slaughtered.

Eden was not founded to solve the problem of urban poverty, but to provide a healthy environment for children and families. In addition to consuming only vegetarian food, life out of doors was also seen as a means of improving health, and gardening as an act was valued as a hygienic activity. The cooperative erected a school, a community center for meetings, and facilities for processing fruits and vegetables. There was also a
guesthouse for urbanites seeking a rest cure. Because most of the settlers were city people who were not used to farming, they had some difficulty getting started in the early years, but the cooperative was well funded enough to bring in professional gardeners. The fact that an agricultural and horticultural school was located nearby also helped on the technical side. A bank was founded within Eden in 1895 to fund the purchase of property and the erection of houses, with capital coming from within the community and interested parties elsewhere. By 1914, there were 90 single-family houses, and by 1935, the total population had reached 998 people in 260 houses. Additional land was acquired throughout the 1890s, with agricultural areas adjoining the central settlement farmed by both residents and outside labor.

In terms of the yearly harvests of individual families, the settlement was not self-sustaining. A typical garden in 1900 produced about 600–800 marks’ worth of fruits and vegetables, with a typical operating cost of about 900 marks. Therefore, gardening was generally a secondary occupation. But out of income from collectively shared produce and individual leases, the cooperative was able to function and provide for the needs of the community. Eden was a major center for followers of “life reform” movements, aimed at improving quality of life through greater independence from centralized capitalist production and consumption. But the Eden cooperative depended heavily on markets in Berlin, without which it would not have been financially viable. In comparison with numerous other settlements based on small-scale agriculture that failed after a few years, Eden probably survived because it had sufficient capital from the beginning; it was founded by educated and resourced families, it was well organized, and families were never intended to exist financially on gardening alone. The relatively small scale here probably also contributed to its longevity. Eden soon became a recognized
center for horticultural practice, and in 1903 was given a substantial interest-free loan from the Prussian government for further gardening experiments, in recognition of its achievements.\textsuperscript{73}

Initially, Eden was part of a movement to found a network of loosely connected vegetarian settlements, but this never materialized.\textsuperscript{74} Eden remained a relatively unique success story. Oppenheimer later wrote enthusiastically of Eden: “This small settlement blossomed like an oasis in the middle of the capitalist desert, with its ugliness, squalor, and physical degeneration . . .”\textsuperscript{75} Oppenheimer believed that Eden was of historic, international significance, regretting the fact that it remained relatively unknown.

\textit{Everyman Self-Sufficient!}

Leberecht Migge and Small-Scale Agriculture in Post–World War I Germany

In post–World War I Britain, the problem of servicemen returning home received widespread attention, resulting in the government’s “homes fit for heroes” campaign.\textsuperscript{76} The situation in Germany after the war was much more desperate, marked by mass hunger and privation. The need to provide not only cheap housing but also gardens for growing food led to increased experimentation in the standardization of housing types and rationalization of planning, including gardens. More so than in Britain, the goals of the prewar German settlement movement began to influence mainstream planning and architecture. Although small-scale agriculture and settlement were being discussed by many architects, such as Hermann Muthesius in his book \textit{Small House and Small Settlement},\textsuperscript{77} more than any other individual it was the landscape architect Leberecht Migge who championed the cause of the small family garden.\textsuperscript{78}
Migge began his career as a landscape architect in the early years of the century, designing private gardens for the well-to-do, as well as a number of important public parks. By 1913, he was already writing of the need for allotment gardens on a mass scale within large cities, but the changed social conditions following World War I led him to devote himself entirely to productive gardening. Migge also trained at the gardeners’ school in Oranienburg near the Eden Colony discussed previously, a not unimportant fact in his biography. He was not just a designer but also a skilled horticulturalist with extensive technical knowledge. At some point after 1913, Migge began to refer to himself professionally as an “architect for horticulture,” a title of his own invention. In 1918, he published a small brochure, *Everyman Self-Sufficient!,* in which he described in detail how a small cooperative agricultural settlement could be based on “the new horticulture.” Although Migge wrote this brochure for “everyman,” the initial publication was, not incidentally, funded by the Greater-Berlin Committee for the Settlement of the War-Wounded. *Everyman Self-Sufficient!* was Migge’s attempt to take the older concept of the smallholding colony, which he knew from Eden, and apply it the most rational planning techniques possible.

Migge derived his social concepts from Kropotkin’s book *Fields, Factories, and Workshops,* for as a technocrat he was able to understand the anarchist’s scientific perspective. While Kropotkin had described “industrial villages” where families would engage not only in small-scale agriculture but also in industry at the level of the workshop, Migge concentrated solely on gardening: “My intention is to show how a family with a modest garden can pay for the land with their own handwork, and generally support themselves as well.” Migge thoroughly absorbed Kropotkin’s enthusiasm for the “intensive” cultivation techniques of Paris market gardeners. The primary factor of interest to Kropotkin, and now Migge, was that intensive gardening techniques meant greater yields on smaller land areas. Kropotkin had discussed market garden areas of two to five acres managed by professional gardeners, but here Migge was concerned with much smaller plots attached to individual family dwellings. At the Eden Colony, members had been required to lease an area of at least five thousand square meters (approximately one and a quarter acres). In a somewhat radical move, Migge claimed that a family of five could support its needs, and possibly have some surplus, with a garden of four hundred square meters (approximately one-tenth of an acre). But garden plot sizes varied depending upon the number of children in the family, as he showed in graphic diagrams (Figure 2.14). His model community was not vegetarian, for small animal husbandry was encouraged, but the raising of livestock was not part of the scheme. The dwelling and the garden were the basic planning unit, with different sizes labeled as A–D on the site plan provided (Figure 2.15). The individual garden areas were “intensive,” meaning that crops requiring more labor and attention, like salad greens, were more appropriate next to the house. Beyond the individual dwellings were located the “extensive” crop areas for potatoes and similar vegetables, which would be farmed cooperatively by the whole community. He also included a nursery where crops for sale would be grown under glass, not unlike the so-called French gardens in England.

Like Eden, this new model settlement would be run on a cooperative basis, with the land owned by the community and collective sale of produce covering the initial
cost of land purchase and building. Following another of Kropotkin’s principles, the strong would help the weak though mutual aid and collaborative effort, but nevertheless what was required were “not evening diletantes, but work fanatics, not tired club members, but proud subscribers to success.”84 With the aftereffects of the recent war in mind, he further exclaimed: “It makes no difference, whether one possesses only one leg or a perforated lung, but he must have modern nerves [emphasis mine], an instinct for technology, and serve an unbroken idealism, he, who consciously creates his own happiness, with a generous heart, helps the lives of all.”85

These communities were not just self-help schemes for the impoverished; they were to be places for the creation of a modern, heroically cooperative society. If, as at Eden, settlers came together from similar backgrounds with a common purpose, then conceivably such communities might succeed. But if families were forced to live and work in such gardening settlements out of dire necessity, then the effects might be rather different. In any case, the most controversial aspect of Migge’s proposals were the extraordinarily high yields he claimed for small plots of land. It was as if he wanted to claim that the amount of

Figure 2.14
Leberecht Migge’s diagram showing how many chickens and so forth would be needed according to family size. The plan shows the ideal settlement with the different-sized private gardens and collective farming areas.

Reproduced from Leberecht Migge, Jedermann Selbst-Versorger! (Jena: Diederichs, 1919), foldout between pages 10–11.
vegetable produce associated with a smallholding could now be realized on an allotment. The editor of the Eden community newspaper, *Eden Announcements*, was enthusiastic about the overall proposal but unconvinced by the high ratio of yield to plot size. Migge found more enthusiastic support from architects, soon to be among the leading modernists, than he did among fellow garden designers. Because of this, he continued to be invited to provide green space planning for public housing projects throughout the 1920s.

**Communal Gardening, Not Government Handouts: Migge’s Hof Hammer Settlement Plan in Kiel**

One of the first projects that Migge realized based on his self-sufficient gardening community was the “Hof Hammer” *Siedlung* (settlement) in Kiel, a northern German port city on the Baltic. He received the contract in 1921, three years after the publication of *Everyman Self-Sufficient!* The actual plan in this case was carefully adapted to the existing contours of the site, with a parklike landscape interspersed among the individual dwellings and gardens. House and garden units were organized among different types:
the “full-time” settler garden for those who would support themselves entirely through
their garden produce on areas of two to four thousand square meters, and the “part-time
settler” gardens for those who would only need to feed their families. Families at Eden each
had five thousand square meters of garden per household, so this was still a somewhat
limited land area. The double houses at Hof Hammer were to be built as economically
as possible, incorporating chicken coops and supply rooms. The whole settlement was
intended as a kind of social welfare scheme, with would-be settlers applying through the
city to rent dwelling and garden units at the lowest possible rate. Leases were awarded
with the understanding that tenants would raise their own food and surplus produce for
income, thus requiring no further public assistance.

Five years after the planning of Hof Hammer Siedlung, the annual meeting of the
German Garden City Association was held at Kiel in 1926, with Migge’s colleague in the
city government, Willi Hahn, reporting on the project. As the city planner responsi-
ble for the Siedlung, Hahn regretfully reported that the self-sufficiency concept had not
functioned as planned. (Most settlers continued to work at other occupations rather
than occupy themselves full-time as gardeners.) Hahn blamed the tenants, who he
claimed didn’t understand the difference between “have” and “do,” meaning that they
simply took what they were given without exerting sufficient effort. Neither Hahn nor
Migge accepted that the “failure” of the economic operation of this Siedlung was the
result of either the initial planning concepts or its subsequent administration. Their
judgments were probably somewhat unfair, as period photos show that the gardens were
well kept and not neglected (Figure 2.16). As a public housing project with ample pro-
vision for gardening, it was no doubt a success, but it did not meet the strict economic
guidelines that Migge had proposed initially.

Figure 2.16
A typical street in the Hof
Hammer Siedlung in Kiel, ca. 1922.
Photograph courtesy of the archive
of the City of Kiel/Reference: Hof
Hammer Siedlung, Spekenbeker Eck
Hammerbusch, Neg. Nr. 22.
Perhaps the most prolific and iconic modernist housing program in Germany was that of Ernst May’s “New Frankfurt,” in which a team of architects, planners, and designers realized a substantial number of projects between 1925 and 1930. During this period of relative prosperity, the majority of housing projects included dwelling gardens and integrated allotment areas, but these were all provided as amenities, not purely for economic self-sufficiency. Frankfurt was not a blank slate in respect to public green space policy. An organization of allotment gardeners had been active in Frankfurt since the 1880s, and in 1920, local allotment garden and land reform societies successfully petitioned the city to found a Siedlung office. Following the land tax principles of Henry George, a previous mayor, Franz Adickes, had acquired substantial land areas for the city, now available for public housing, allotment gardens, and parks to be designed by May and his team. Migge’s most important design contribution was the overall layout of the Nidda Valley in the northwest of the city, with new public housing projects on one side, a villa district on the other, and the river running through the center. Migge proposed a mixture of parkland and allotment gardens, and in the end nature protection areas were also included along the old branches of the Nidda. Migge’s published plan of the project shows how the housing was carefully fitted to the valley contours, and the whole space was organized into a series of zones beginning with private gardens, followed by allotments, and then parkland (Figure 2.17). In comparison with the agricultural belt and smallholdings at Letchworth, the small gardening areas here were much more integrated within the whole. May, in fact, had trained with Raymond Unwin, the architect who had planned Letchworth, and would have been very familiar with his concepts.

In 1928, Migge prepared a report detailing an overall garden development plan for Frankfurt, at May’s invitation. Garden types were again specified, with the small allotment gardens in Nidda being one type, followed by allotment colonies elsewhere in the city. Migge also recommended areas of smallholdings settlements on the outer edges of the city for commercial gardeners. These would provide produce for the new central market hall designed by Martin Elsaesser as part of the New Frankfurt program, meaning that the city itself was to be relatively self-sufficient. Migge pointed to the Oberrad district of Frankfurt as being a possible location for new gardeners’ settlements. Since Oberrad had long been an area of market gardening for the city, Migge was arguing for the augmentation of an established horticultural tradition rather than the formation of an entirely new area.

One gardeners’ settlement was built in accordance with Migge’s concepts, the Teller Siedlung in Oberrad (Figure 2.18). Although the architect was Franz Roeckle, the double houses and facilities for intensive gardening at Teller recalled the model gardeners’ dwellings that Migge had designed with the architect Theodor Fischer for an exhibition in 1925. Constructed between 1926 and 1930, the twenty dwellings of the Teller Siedlung were provided with an efficient “Frankfurt kitchen” and central hot-water heating. The garden areas were fitted with a total of three hundred square meters of greenhouse
Figure 2.17
View of the Romerstadt Siedlung in Frankfurt, with the Nidda Valley in the background, ca. 1930.
Photograph courtesy of the Institut für Stadtgeschichte, Frankfurt am Main/Reference: Bestand ehem. Grünflächenamt.

Figure 2.18
Gardens at the Teller Siedlung in Frankfurt, with double houses to the right of the image, ca. 1928.
Photograph courtesy of the Institut für Stadtgeschichte, Frankfurt am Main/Reference: S7X/169.

“Three Acres and a Cow” 43
area and 150 hotbed frames. The original settlers needed a substantial amount of capital to buy into the scheme (5,000 marks), thus most of them were not amateurs entering into business for the first time. In 2002, residents celebrated the seventy-fifth anniversary of the settlement. At that time, six residents were still engaged in commercial horticulture, with five of them producing vegetables and one raising flowers. Although the Teller Siedlung was only one such example in Migge’s overall planning concept, May’s New Frankfurt represents one of the most comprehensive examples of urban productive landscapes ever realized.

A Cultural Landscape of Smallholdings:
Migge’s “Growing Settlement” as Depression-Era Vision for the Future
Migge’s last important publication, *The Growing Settlement*, appeared in 1932 following the first two years of the Great Depression in Germany. Here, Migge presented a vision of entire landscapes of smallholdings as a solution to mass unemployment, possibly the largest-scale smallholdings paradigm ever proposed. Migge based his “growing settlement” on a recent Berlin exhibition of “growing” houses organized by his friend, the architect Martin Wagner. Migge and others at this time were investigating biological theories of growth as a metaphorical basis for settlement. On a practical level, families could first start with very small houses and gardens, which could be gradually increased in size as the families became larger and more prosperous (Figure 2.19). While he did not openly advocate the gradual replacement of large-scale conventional agriculture with intensive smallholdings, his concepts would have led to this end. Migge extended previous discussions of smallholdings settlements to a regional scale, but still within the influence of urban areas. The question of the scale of communities was left rather vague, apparently to emphasize possibilities of extensive growth. At this time, Migge was very critical of the large-scale urban housing schemes of the 1920s, such as those in Frankfurt, for the opposite reasons: “Every category of Siedlung . . . arose as an impeccably clean structure, painstakingly closed off and separated from the neighboring one, in spite of the planned unity of construction and concept. Organic growth, the precondition of all healthy life, was not possible for the single type, and even less so for the standardized group.”

As an alternative model, healthy gardening communities were to be distributed across entire landscapes, such as valleys and riversides (Figure 2.20). But these were not to be confused with traditional farming areas: “Farming or agricultural cultivation of the extensive type results in a strongly characteristic landscape but never results in the character of the productive landscape: to this belongs the intensive, technical type of soil utilization resulting in increased yield.” His perception of the economic imperatives of the Depression era meant that increasing productivity was an unquestionable necessity, for him meaning intensive horticulture on a mass scale.

But these landscapes of growing settlements were not merely aimed at solving the problem of unemployment or increasing yield, for as he explained his project was based on deeper meanings: “Thus the cultural landscape develops out of the productive
Figure 2.19
Migge’s diagram explaining how settlement gardens would “grow,” or expand, as families grew or had more resources, 1932.
Reproduced from Leberecht Migge, Die wachsende Siedlung (Stuttgart: Frankhische Verlagshandlung, 1932), 23.
landscape as the outward symbol of the culture of a people, as the expression of their being on the earth.” Migge, in fact, envisioned a kind of new culture arising from these productive landscapes. He showed aerial photographs from different productive landscapes around the world, ranging from hillside rice terraces in China to fruit orchards in California, to the intensive horticultural areas of contemporary Holland. These examples all depended upon some kind of intensive horticultural practice, even if not at the scale of the smallholding. Migge’s ideal was “a garden-landscape defined by gardeners and gardening culture.” Like Howard, however, he believed that urban amenities should be available to these gardening families, for “Our settler is no cow-farmer [Kuhbauer], but a fully cultured citizen.” Migge didn’t explain how exactly cultural amenities were to be provided, but presumably these productive landscapes were to be located near cities, where produce could be marketed.

Although Migge was now critical of the large-scale housing projects of the 1920s, the diagrams that he presented were highly geometric, with a specific spatial organization based on long, narrow plots extended behind the dwelling units. As with some of his smaller schemes, these plots were divided by walls that provided wind protection and surfaces for growing, as primitive solar collectors. The logic of the growing house was fairly easy to understand. As the family grew and had more capital, rooms could be added as needed. The mechanics by which the garden could grow in size were
somewhat problematic. The garden was to grow outward, but was restricted by the framework of the parallel protective walls. The historic prototype that he had in mind was probably the Vierlande district near Hamburg, illustrated in his book. Clearly, for such a scheme to function, land would have to be held in collective ownership, with a governing body assigning the land as needed, but no specifics were given on these points. Migge’s general commentary on prototypical productive landscapes is more convincing, as are his claims for the benefits of intensive horticulture. But the diagrams and descriptions of the actual organization of his new version of productive landscape are much less so. One contemporary critic was unconvinced that city people would want to live in such environments, which he thought would deprive them of urban cultural amenities and living standards; by contrast, another commentator thought that Migge’s plan represented a viable means of creating employment.

During the early 1930s, Migge was certainly not the only one writing about small-scale agricultural settlement as a means of solving mass unemployment. In 1931, the Weimar government under Reichskanzler Heinrich Brüning approved a significant act providing financial support for the construction of self-sufficient Siedlungen and allotment gardens. In January 1933, on the eve of the takeover of political power by the National Socialists, Migge was still corresponding with leading figures such as Wilhelm Ludovici Jr. on the topic of small agricultural settlements. But soon afterward, Migge quickly became an isolated figure, despite his desire to obtain government contracts. Perhaps the American housing expert Catherine Bauer summarized Migge’s position best when she wrote of The Growing Settlement in 1935: “A small scientific book on intensive gardening, by one of the best German landscape architects. Closer to Kropotkin than to Nazi colonization methods.” In fact, the National Socialists campaigned for the support of the traditional farmer and large-scale agriculture, not for small-scale intensive agriculture as Migge had done. The 1930s saw the end phase of the idea of the smallholding as a solution to poverty and unemployment, with Migge’s book marking the final high point of fantasizing about a new world of smallholders on cooperatively owned land.

Not Just Utopian Dreaming: Practical Developments in Horticulture and the Smallholding Today

It would be easy to dismiss the majority of the case studies above as “failures”—because they did not last indefinitely for various reasons, or because they were not economically viable as planned. There is also a tendency to label these types of smallholding communities as “utopian,” which often means unrealistic, impractical, and therefore only of interest to prove that deviation from the mainstream is not sensible or even possible. But all of the above protagonists, including Kropotkin and Migge, would have thought of themselves as proposing very real, practical solutions to current social and economic problems. Further, the historical recurrence of communities based on alternative practices, such as small-scale agriculture, should be taken as a sign of their importance as a critical historical tendency. Therefore, they are worthy of analysis on their own terms.
Even among the limited number of communities discussed above, there are important differences, particularly the distinction between “intentional” and “unintentional” communities. The former are those where people choose to come together among themselves out of shared interests, such as Clousden Hill and Eden, and the latter are places where people apply for tenancies to a central administrative body, such as Hof Hammer in Kiel or Fels’s Farm in Mayland. (The fact that one was public and the other private makes little difference in this sense.) Although a generalization, the dynamics within these two types of communities are very different. The intentional community may disintegrate because of interpersonal conflicts, especially on the small scale of Clousden Hill. On the other hand, in the case of Eden, where the settlement was well funded and organized from the beginning, the common vision of a healthy, vegetarian life on the land held the small society together. The unintentional community presents different problems, in the case of places like Hof Hammer and Fels’s Farm, where members were expected to operate cooperatively and follow a predetermined set of procedures. But large housing estates such as those in Frankfurt would not be subject to exactly the same issues because the same level of cooperation was neither demanded nor needed. Howard’s garden city scheme as realized at Letchworth represents a particularly interesting example. His original diagrams could well be interpreted as propositions for a “utopian,” intentional community, which was how Kropotkin and Landauer thought of them. But the first garden city of Letchworth was founded as a private company from the beginning, and even though altruistic in nature, it nevertheless was not open to the level of social experimentation implied by communities of self-sufficient smallholdings.

The contemporary British agricultural historian Joan Thirsk argues that these experimental smallholding communities in Britain should be understood against the background of real advances in horticultural technology (and this could apply equally well to Germany). The new intensive growing techniques were not just a figure in Kropotkin’s mind; they were the result of a major change in agriculture in Europe in general, in response to the mass influx of cheap grain from North America. Thirsk compares the agricultural situation in Britain during the 1880s and 1890s to the period following the black death in the late Middle Ages. In both cases, patterns of food consumption were drastically altered, necessitating a turn to smaller-scale operations, which Thirsk terms “alternative agriculture”: “The dominant theme in our farming history is mainstream agriculture, which is primarily concerned with the production of cereals and meat. But when for some reason cereals are produced in excess of human needs, farmers have to find alternative uses for at least some of their land, choosing new enterprises which will yield a profit, and make up for the losses otherwise incurred through the slump in cereals.” Thirsk views this turn toward small-scale, or alternative, agriculture in the face of apparent disasters as ultimately a positive development. She notes that the advances in horticulture of the late nineteenth century created more employment, as well as expanded the variety and amount of fruits and vegetables suddenly available for the average table.

Perhaps one of the reasons that this horticultural development is not widely understood is that generally histories, especially in the context of architecture and planning,
have focused on “utopian” settlements, not on the lives and work of individual small-scale farmers or gardeners. For example, although Kropotkin and others noted the significance of the importation of French intensive horticultural techniques by gardeners in the Vale of Evesham, what was actually achieved there is not very well documented.

Thirsk concludes her historical survey of alternative agriculture over the centuries by identifying a fourth phase in this development, beginning in the 1970s. Writing in the 1990s, she observed an upsurge in smallholdings in Britain, and strongly advocated their importance to society: “The creation of satisfying and productive work on the land is one of the smallholders’ contributions to a society seeking solutions to the large problem of unemployment. Their achievement stands in contrast to that of star performers in business: the more jobs they slash, the more they are acclaimed.” Thirsk takes a long view of agricultural history and sees the advent of smallholding and intensive agriculture as a potentially popular movement standing in contrast to large-scale farming, which may be on the wane. Her discussions show the importance of continued technological developments in horticulture and how they do, in fact, allow individual gardeners more freedom and mobility, an observation Kropotkin would no doubt agree with.

Generally, people in architecture and agriculture do not often engage, either on the historical or practical level. For this reason, the appropriately self-titled “architect for horticulture,” Leberecht Migge, stands out as a relatively unusual figure internationally. He was able to combine his spatial and organizational conceptual abilities with well-founded practical knowledge in agriculture. His understanding of social issues, however, was not as solid, particularly because he tended to confuse “intentional” and “unintentional” communities, which was the problem at Hof Hammer in Kiel. Residents there wanted houses and gardens, but were not as willing to follow his strict regimen of garden work. On one level, Migge was trying to adapt the principles of the Eden Colony to mass housing for the unemployed—typical of efforts among modernists to apply alternative practices within mainstream architecture and planning. But even if the social model could not be directly transferred, his emphasis on green spaces of all kinds, including productive gardens, resulted in some very high-quality living environments. Migge’s vision of whole landscapes of smallholdings may seem rather idealistic, but contemporary observations by Thirsk on the return of the smallholding in Britain suggest that this may be a possibility in the not too distant future. In keeping with the long view of agricultural history, many factors point to the imminent demise of the current practice of flying fresh produce around the world. The arguments of Migge and Thirsk, taken together, suggest that the study of the history of small-scale agriculture could well inform future developments in architecture and planning.
Notes

8 Parkhill and Cook, *Hadleigh Salvation Army Farm*, 8.
10 Parkhill and Cook, *Hadleigh Salvation Army Farm*.
11 H. Rider Haggard, *Regeneration: Being an Account of the Social Work of the Salvation Army in Great Britain* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1910), 81. Haggard reported that before 1910, the Salvation Army had resettled approximately sixty thousand people abroad, mostly in Canada. Haggard was the author of highly popular “exotic” novels, such as *She* and *King Solomon’s Mines*, as well as numerous studies on agriculture and smallholdings.
18 Carter, *Short History of Boxted*.
23 Caroline Cahm, *Kropotkin and the Rise of Revolutionary Anarchism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989). Cahm examines Kropotkin’s more revolutionary views, such as his attacks on English trade unions in pages 267–78. “When Kropotkin came out of prison in 1886 he was deeply disturbed by the inadequacies of the anarchist movement in the face of the immense task of combating the reformist influences of parliamentarism.”
25 Peter Kropotkin, *Fields, Factories, and Workshops* (London: Hutchinson, 1899); and Peter Kropotkin, *Fields, Factories, and Workshops* (New York and London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1912). Swann Sonnenchein and Co. in London also published editions in 1901, 1904, and 1909, but unlike these the 1912 edition was substantially updated.
27 Kropotkin, *Fields, Factories, and Workshops*, 189.
28 Morris, *Anarchist Geographer*.

John Shepherd, George Lansbury: At the Heart of Old Labour (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 60–63. George Lansbury is the grandfather of the noted actress Angela Lansbury.


Shepherd, George Lansbury, 29.

Dudden, Joseph Fels and the Single Tax Movement, 71.


The Labour Annual (1897): 154, cited in Hardy, Alternative Communities in Nineteenth-Century England, 115. The Labour Annual was edited by Joseph Edwards and published in Manchester from 1894 to 1899. On this same page in The Labour Annual are listed Clousden Hill Colony in Newcastle and Fairhope in Alabama. Fairhope was based on the cooperative land ownership principles of George and was heavily subsidized by Joseph Fels in its early years; my own mother lived in Fairhope as a child during World War II.


Dudden, Joseph Fels and the Single Tax Movement, 88.

Dudden, Joseph Fels and the Single Tax Movement, 85.


Smith, French Gardening, v.

Smith, French Gardening, ix–x.

Thomas Smith, The Profitable Culture of Vegetables (London: Longmans, Green, 1911).


Thirsk, Alternative Agriculture, 184–85.


Weathers, French Market-Gardening, 2.


Anton, French Gardening without Capital, 29. Thirsk claims that this practice was never widely accepted in England; see Thirsk, Alternative Agriculture, 184–85.


Purdom, Garden City, 218.


“Three Acres and a Cow” 51


68 Baumgartner, *Ernährungsreform*, 130.

69 Baumgartner, *Ernährungsreform*, 134. The architect’s surname was “Kick,” but nothing further is known about him; apparently he was not significant.


79 Leberecht Migge, *Jedermann Selbst-Versorger!* (Jena: Diederichs, 1918–19). Note that the literal translation would be something like “everyman self-provider,” but I have altered this to capture the slogan-like character of the original title.

80 The term “smallholding” arose out of English landholding conditions, but I use it here as a general concept, referred to in Germany by numerous terms including “klein Agrarwirtschaft” and “Kleinbauernhof.”


84 Migge, *Jedermann Selbst-Versorger!*, 27.

85 Migge, *Jedermann Selbst-Versorger!*, 27.


90 Hr. Förster, Verbandes der Kleingartenbauvereine, to Magistrat, Frankfurt am Main, 19 April 1920, and Bund Deutscher Bodenreformer, Ortsgruppe Frankfurt am Main, to Stadtverordentlichenversammlung der Stadt Frankfurt am Main, 16 September 1920, File 491, Institut für Stadtgeschichte, Frankfurt am Main.


92 See Haney, *When Modern Was Green*, chapter 3; and David H. Haney, “Birds and Fishes versus Potatoes and Cabbages: Max Bromme’s and Leberecht Migge’s Attitudes towards Green Space


Leberecht Migge, “Grünpolitik der Stadt Frankfurt am Main: Gutachten für die grüne kolonisatorische Entwicklung der neuen Großgemeinde,” July 10, 1928, May Papers, IB, 48 + 49, Germanisches Nationalmuseum, Nuremberg.

Although Migge’s report on Frankfurt was not prepared until 1928, his close relationship with May suggests that the architect was well aware of his proposals elsewhere, so Migge’s background influence at Teller is logical. In Migge’s unpublished report (“Gutachten”) for Ernst May, illustrated as Siedlung type 4, Erwerbsbesiedlung, with photo and rendering by Hans Leistikow; Ernst May, “Gedanken über künftige städtische Grünpolitik,” Die Gartenkunst 10 (1930): 159–61; and Das Neue Frankfurt 2–3 (1930): 108 (with the same rendering by Leistikow as noted above).


Christoph Mohr and Michael Müller, Funktionalität und Moderne: Das Neue Frankfurt und seine Bauten 1925–1933 (Cologne: Rüdolf Müller, 1984), 84, 252.


Flender, “Im Teller ist die Welt noch in Ordnung.”

Leberecht Migge, Die wachsende Siedlung (Stuttgart: Frankh’sche Verlagshandlung, 1932).

Martin Wagner, Das wachsende Haus (Berlin: Bong, 1932).

Migge, Die wachsende Siedlung, 9.

Migge, Die wachsende Siedlung, 10.

Migge, Die wachsende Siedlung, 17.

Migge, Die wachsende Siedlung, 11.

Migge, Die wachsende Siedlung, 34. The rejection of “Kuhbauer” (cow farmer) was possibly aimed at Friedrich Wiepking, who was arguing more for small-scale agriculture than intensive horticulture. See U. Kellner, “Heinrich Friedrich Wiepking (1891–1973) Leben, Lehre und Werk” (PhD diss., Technische Universität Hannover, 1998), 216. This relates back, indirectly, to the “three acres and a cow” idea in Britain in the 1880s.

Migge, Die wachsende Siedlung, 18–19.

For the negative view, see G. Schroeder, “Diskussion um die Stadtrandsiedlung, Die wachsende Siedlung,” Die Neue Stadt, June 1932, 68–69. For the positive view, see A. Boecking, Beiträge zur Produktiven Arbeitsversorgung (Braunschweig: Serger and Hempel, 1932).


Correspondence between Leberecht Migge and Wilhelm Ludovici, dated January 10, 1933, Rare Book Collection, Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection. Later in 1933, after the seizure of power by the National Socialists, Ludovici became a minister in charge of settlement under the new regime, although this does not appear to have helped Migge’s position. Note that this correspondence was filed in an envelope addressed to Gerhart von Schulze-Gävernitz, an economist and agricultural writer cited by Kropotkin in Fields, Factories, and Workshops.

For more discussion of Migge’s political leanings, see Haney, When Modern Was Green, chapter 4 and conclusion.


Thirsk, Alternative Agriculture, 3.

Thirsk, Alternative Agriculture, 7.

Thirsk, Alternative Agriculture, 249.

“Three Acres and a Cow” 53