

THE CHALLENGE OF INTENTIONAL COMMUNITIES FROM RALPH WALDO EMERSON TO TODAY

10 FEBRUARY 2020

14.00-17.00

AUDITORIUM VU AMSTERDAM



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AMSTERDAM

Faculty of Religion
and Theology

THE CHALLENGE OF INTENTIONAL COMMUNITIES FROM RALPH WALDO EMERSON TO TODAY

PROGRAM OF THE SYMPOSIUM

14.00 OPENING AND KEYNOTE ADDRESS BY DAN MCKANAN
REFLECTIONS BY ACADEMICS (THEOLOGY, WESTERN
ESOTERICISM) AND PRACTITIONERS (CAMPHILL, DUTCH
ECOVILLAGE, CO-HOUSING)

16.00 – 17.00 PANEL DISCUSSION & DISCUSSION

Intentional communities have been important centers of social and spiritual experimentation for centuries. Nineteenth-century Americans built communities according to the utopian blueprints of Robert Owen and Charles Fourier; today, the quest for social and ecological harmony has inspired hundreds of ecovillages and cohousing developments. Among them is the Camphill network of communities, where people with and without intellectual disabilities share life, work, and celebration.

Ralph Waldo Emerson, the American Transcendentalist, inspired many of his friends to create intentional communities. But he personally was skeptical, they “skipped no fact but one, namely life. . .” Though Emerson was largely right with regard to the communities of his own day, contemporary communities are more enduring because they have found ways to take the fact of life into account. Rather than withdrawing from the rest of society, they seek to evolve in creative relationship with their neighbors and are able to foster ongoing social renewal.

Dan McKanan is the Emerson Senior Lecturer at Harvard Divinity School, where he teaches and conducts research on spirituality and social transformation, with emphasis on the Unitarian Universalist and anthroposophical movements. He has published several books, among them *Prophetic Encounters: Religion and the American Radical Tradition* (2011), *Eco-Alchemy: Anthroposophy and the History and Future of Environmentalism* (2017), and the forthcoming *Camphill and the Future: Spirituality and Disability in an Evolving Communal Movement* (to be released in fall 2020).

Entrance is free, but please register before 1 February 2020 by sending an e-mail to p.w.blomaard@vu.nl