

47. Live together

The past year has made us reconsider the meaning of home and how much we value connection and community. We recommend reverting back to a housing model devised by Jews at the turn of the 20th century.

By Nolan Giles
Illustration R Fresson

In a world of choice, why, when it comes to the place we call home, do we so often compromise? From boxing ourselves up in tiny urban flats to signing our financial independence away for a suburban block in a place that we *hope* will one day be interesting, most of us live at the mercy of rigid housing systems. So what if we were to suggest an alternative? A model that broke from the mould and could bring you more happiness at a lower cost? Well, you'd probably question our sanity, particularly when we tell you said model is more than 100 years old. Yet the ideas that define the kibbutz, a collective way of living established by Jews heading to Israel from Eastern Europe at the turn of the 20th century, feel as relevant today as they did then.

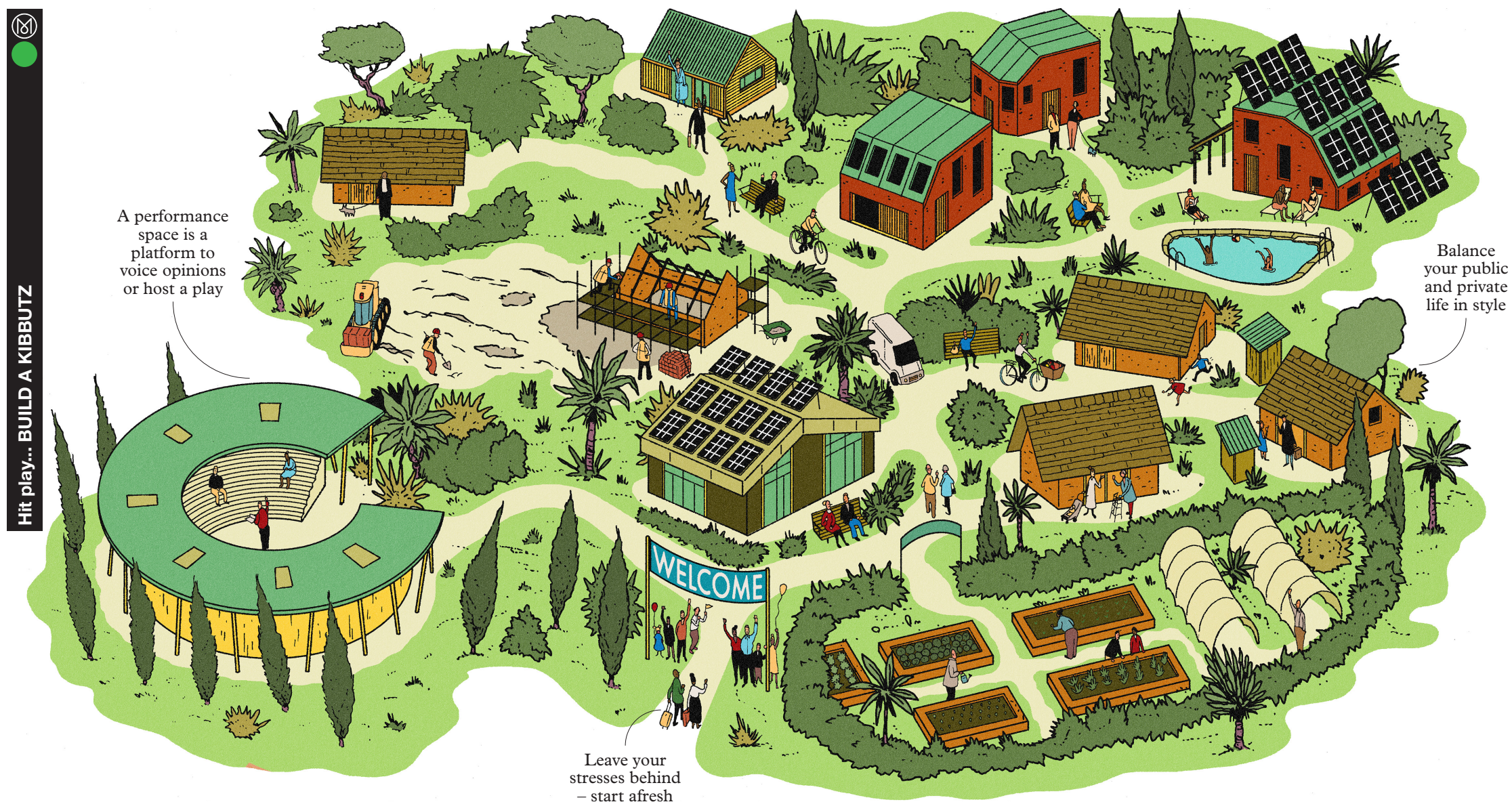
Kibbutzim brought together pioneering groups of people from different families and generations, and saw them forge self-sufficient communities. The thriving agricultural economy of Israel grew off the back of these settlements. Decisions tended to be managed democratically and everyone pitched in to not only farm land productively but make the kibbutz truly liveable. Benefits included community childcare, produce-rich dining halls, quality (and free) education and a decent social life to boot.

Dig deeper into ideas defining better housing models the world over and you'll see striking similarities to the kibbutz. Singapore's social-housing system blesses big apartment blocks with government-supported food courts. In Switzerland, self-governing collective housing developments are becoming increasingly desirable.

While we won't get into how the rise of the free market and individualism rendered the kibbutz out of date, what we will say is that this model could impact housing developments going forward. In 2020 we all craved better connection and reconsidered what "home" meant to us. Many discerned that housing facilitating a sense of community was more valuable than an extra parking space or higher ceilings. This is pertinent information to developers and architects, with the more progressive among them already re-thinking the housing agenda into something more social. With this in mind, we've established a manifesto that defines MONOCLE's Modern Kibbutz. — (M)



Hit play... BUILD A KIBBUTZ



A performance space is a platform to voice opinions or host a play

Balance your public and private life in style

Leave your stresses behind — start afresh

Tips for creating your model:

- 1. Forge a diverse crew**
The founders of your kibbutz should come from diverse backgrounds and age groups. In practical terms it means that the elderly feel included (and can act as babysitters for working parents), while all residents benefit from each other's expertise and experiences.
- 2. Share with care**
A sharing system of mobility options, from bikes to cars, is most appropriate in this climate-conscious age. It also means that, with the kibbutz's combined spending power, a handsome fleet of shared vehicles can be acquired.

- 3. Build a variety of housing**
While older residents need ground-floor dwellings with easy-access features, younger tenants might be happier to occupy more private, higher reaches. "Barrier-free design is fundamental," says Ben Nott of Switzerland's Blanco Architecture and Design, a specialist on community buildings, who adds that it's worth spending more on wider doors for wheelchair access.
- 4. Come together around fresh produce**
While we're not saying that your community should be funded by agriculture, there is a sense of joy that comes from growing your own food (and maybe

making a few bucks on the side). While certain aspects of self-building take time, creating a flourishing vegetable patch in a matter of months can provide inspiration and confidence in the kibbutz's grander goals.

- 5. Provide a warm welcome**
Hospitable design is often left by the wayside when it comes to communal areas in private developments. "Try to make them as inclusive as possible," says British architect Sarah Wigglesworth, whose firm focuses on designing "people-centred places", including community developments. "Children and young people need to feel welcome alongside the dog-walking fraternity and people with strollers."

- 6. Regenerate a village**
Going rural is a great option for a new community development, particularly if there's some decent existing housing stock to fix up. In doing so, broader rural regions can be revived. "The Swiss have the concept of the second home, the *rustico*," says Nott. "*Rustico* life can now become a permanent one: the status quo has been revised because a lot of people doing the nine to five can do it from anywhere they want these days."

- 7. Work together**
Working alone from home can be convenient but also isolating, as many of us learned in 2020. Collective workspaces, like those that progressive Melbourne

housing and office developer Hip V Hype creates, are places where workers from different professions can collaborate with one another and draw upon diverse skillsets.

- 8. Employ energy-conscious building design**
Even in a rural setting, the grouping of housing closely together is a wise way to conserve energy. Nott points out that "massing" housing means heat generated from appliances and our bodies provides more warmth than we realise. But skimping on insulation is not an option. We all need the comfort of silence and privacy in our homes — no matter how friendly our neighbours, there are some things we don't need to share.

- 9. Take ownership**
No matter how well-intentioned the social ideas of architects of contemporary private apartment blocks are, a lot of their best thoughts get sidelined by profit-minded developers and property managers. With a kibbutz, the self-builders set the agenda for the way the property should be run. Just make sure you have some smart architects in your gang from the beginning.

- 10. Have fun**
All this vegetable growing, home building and community organising needn't be a chore. A kibbutz should be a place where ideas are explored and a collective mindset creates better ways to live. So have fun!