

Therapeutic Farming and Homelessness: Reconnecting through the Natural Environment, Community and Work



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Therapeutic Farming and Homelessness: Reconnecting through the Natural Environment, Community and Work



Front cover: Tent in Vancouver park and author meeting horses used for therapeutic riding in Norway.

All photos are the authors own except where indicated

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About the Author

I grew up on a family farm in North Northumberland surrounded by beautiful scenery, connected to the natural environment and seasons. Fond memories remain of a close-knit, land-based community where people came together at crucial times of the year to work and socialise. Nature and the environment were a defining part of life, and close awareness of seasonal rhythms shaped the working year of the farm. A presumption existed that most people also shared these opportunities and connection to nature as it was an intrinsic part of life, Lambing, haymaking, sheep shearing defined and framed the year. In 2009 I left working on the farm to work for a voluntary organisation in a rural area of Malawi, followed by Liberia for further work in community development. In both countries, people retained a link to nature and agricultural systems with a close relationship to natural cycles and a reliance on ecological services for everyday livelihoods.

In 2016 I returned to the North East of England and undertook the task of establishing the first Emmaus community home in the North East of England. Focusing on three areas; Community, Work and Solidarity, this involved harnessing the power of lived experience

and conscientisation (Freire 1972) to support people facing homelessness.

Emmaus offers positive life choices and the opportunity for individuals to help themselves through assisting others. Members of an Emmaus community (referred in the Emmaus movement as companions) come from a range of backgrounds including those leaving the criminal justice system, rough sleepers and a myriad of other places that have left people disconnected, isolated and facing time on the streets. Over the past years, companions have continually demonstrated the value of community and connection through their hard work.



Social Farm-Lekvollhagan gård, Norway

A community has grown that continues to offer a place where those experiencing homelessness can find purpose and can contribute to society in a meaningful way. It has been a steep learning curve personally and emotionally challenging.

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Still, through it all, I have retained a belief in the restorative power of natural systems, coupled with the importance of connection, meaning and purpose to those facing isolation or hardship. Nature, connection, purpose and meaning have been intrinsically linked to many farming systems, and I have become increasingly interested in how these components can be harnessed for social good. When

researching ideas for Fellowship travels, I was attracted to countries who had a track record in harnessing agriculture and nature for its social and cultural value. I also deliberately intended to find and research organisations with a similar ethos to Emmaus, valuing work, community and solidarity as a framework to foster connection allowing people to live in the present and make positive choices.

Executive Summary

Homelessness is on the increase in the UK (Busby 2019) having a significant impact on the lives of those affected and creating a challenge to stakeholders and organisations who are attempting to support the people impacted. In response the UK government introduced the Homelessness Reduction Act in 2018, outlining several rights for those facing homelessness and placing statutory duties to refer, making joint working between public bodies and charitable organisations more streamlined and straightforward. Awareness of the issue is rising in the public consciousness with rough sleeping increasingly visible and a range of reasons cited.

Housing remains a central issue within the current homelessness discourse, highlighted by the widespread introduction of the Housing First Model (Homeless Link 2019) to address the problem. The causes are multifaceted though the contemporary focus of policy and debate regularly centres around systems and early interventions to secure accommodation as opposed to an individual and what they need to break the cycle of homelessness. This person-centred approach lies at the heart of Emmaus as the addiction, mental health issue, trauma, or offending history is just a single part of an individuals life

story and identity, not the whole. In working with people who have faced homelessness, housing and a safe, secure place to live are important. Often of more significance is the opportunity to make a choice, have a purpose, contribute; to live and be happy in the present time after what may have been many years of struggle.

The use of farming and the environment to improve health and well-being is not a new concept. Historically and in many belief systems, individuals go into nature to find something whether it is into a desert or up a mountain 'to go outside' into a different time, reality and space can bring new meaning, a change of perspective, reflexivity and promote self-discovery. Several countries have become leaders in an area that has different terminologies but has similar objectives:

- **Green Care**
- **Social Farming**
- **Care Farming**

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The concept has stimulated a growing interest in the UK as individuals and academic literature have identified the positive relationship between time spent outdoors interacting with plants/animals and increased levels of positive well-being.

In Nordic countries, spending time in nature is culturally significant and socially important; it is recognised as healing and restorative. Agricultural policy in the UK has historically focused on production resulting in specialisation, industrialisation and a dramatic reduction in smaller family farm units meaning the number of people directly employed or connected with agriculture has significantly reduced in the last forty years. Contemporary environmental and animal welfare concerns have focused the general public and media attention on the UK (farming) methods of production and food systems with an increasing interest in agroecological and organic farming principles as demonstrated by a growing market share.

The interest of the UK population in food and production systems creates a space to promote the social and cultural value of agriculture with its linkages to community, nature and meaningful work. Recent changes in the UK agricultural policy environment to a framework where farmers are incentivised to provide environmental and public benefits create a

space for change. This direction shift is an opportune moment to develop and promote the social contribution that UK agriculture can make, including utilising farming as a tool to address the needs of those facing homelessness. The multifaceted nature of homelessness and causes are more complex than a lack of affordable housing. Mental health, lack of employment opportunities, adverse life events, offending and addiction can all be factors that lead to unstable accommodation.

When working in homelessness provision, I have come across individuals who have rediscovered a sense of awe and reconnection with the enjoyment of creation. Before setting off on the Fellowship journey, I was working with a client who had undergone an alcohol relapse after a significant period of sobriety. An alcohol support worker (also in recovery) was trying to offer support by encouraging him to search, connect and explore what he had found when walking on the *"beaches, in the hills and looking at the sky"*. This seemingly insignificant interaction stimulated an interest to try and gain a deeper understanding of what this worker had found in nature, why it was significant and whether it could be replicated to help, and support others find meaning, purpose and connection.

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Key Findings:

- **Community and Connection**
- **Meaningful Work and Quality**
- **Building Awareness through Partnerships, Networks and Connections**
- **Linking Environmental and Social Justice**

Introduction

In the UK homelessness and its causes remains a significant and contested issue with a wide range of approaches utilised to address the needs of the people impacted leading to debates over whether the problem is primarily personal or structural. The current discourse includes discussion around housing availability, public health concerns and government economic policies. What is generally agreed is that the causes are multifaceted with no one size fits all solutions to the diverse array of reasons why individuals are living on the streets or in temporary and insecure accommodation. The relative poverty that people find themselves, although rarely absolute restricts freedom, reduces life choices and creates barriers to accessing the natural environment and meaningful work. Resulting in disconnection and isolation that can lead people into further cycles of dependency and limited opportunities for development and progression.

The term multiple and complex is associated with people who find themselves homeless and socially excluded. Could one of these basic needs be a discovery of the natural environment and a purpose through, e.g. working with the soil or caring for animals? We are moving into the Anthropocene; the impact

of human beings is currently being felt on all ecological systems. Still, we remain an intrinsic part of the natural order as a whole, dependent on the services delivered.

Farming in the UK has gone through significant changes in the past decades moving from the diverse, mixed family farms of the post-war years to the more uniform, industrialised farming landscape driven by the EU Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) and its production focus. Subsidies that reward and stimulate growth/efficiency have resulted in larger, less diverse units and systems associated with negative environmental impacts and degrading welfare standards. UK farming has always had broader importance than its economic contribution and fosters several public goods. In more recent year's changes in agricultural policy have resulted in a move away from direct payments that stimulate production to the promotion of Agri-environmental schemes. Rewarding the improvement of the environment and promoting social benefits such as improved public access utilising an area-based payment structure.

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A UK Agriculture Minister Michael Gove recently announced:

"Our new environmental land management system will be underpinned by natural capital principles so that the benefits the natural environment provides for people that improve our mental and physical well-being wildlife are properly valued".

DEFRA (2018)

This current period of change in agriculture and the ongoing issue of homelessness with its associated challenges creates an opportunity to bring the two together. It could potentially benefit the long-term viability of UK farms through harnessing the non-production services provided by creating projects on farms that specifically address homelessness and its associated issues.

Purpose of Report

The report investigates the therapeutic value of agriculture in the context of homelessness and the linkages associated with the condition including disconnection, addiction, identity and meaningfulness. The recently announced UK Agriculture Bill (2020) that will shape UK agricultural policy post-Brexit will shift from an area-based payment system to one that supports farmers to provide public goods. Opportunities exist to

recognise (and appropriately value) the social contribution of farmers; the agricultural unit no longer purely a producer of food but a social and cultural resource with multiple other underutilised (often intangible) benefits.

Increasingly the natural environment is being acknowledged in the UK as a valuable public health resource, with a recognition that medicalisation and pharmaceutical responses can have short term impact but limited long term efficacy. Social prescribing and further integration of the UK farming sector into public health frameworks creates an opportunity not just for farmers but for those who are searching for connection and meaning. The word '*entrenched*' is a term frequently adopted to describe those impacted by homelessness with time spent in this state commonly measured in years or decades and can, unfortunately, extend to a lifetime. Interventions, whether concerning housing, addiction or mental health that do not recognise this longevity, will have a limited impact on those individuals hardest to reach. Farming also takes the long-term view as the establishment of a farm takes many years of hard work and investment; no quick fixes exist. It is a lifetime's work and like those who face homelessness involves many ups and downs.

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Commitment and transformative change, whether in farming or people take time to yield fruits, requiring the right conditions and environment. It is what makes these conditions and how they are propagated to bear fruit that I wanted to investigate further on Fellowship travels.

I retain a belief that Farming in the UK remains undervalued, with an untapped potential to be utilised in addressing several contemporary societal and cultural issues linked to homelessness, it has more to offer than sensitive land management and food production services.

Aims

- To Investigate Policies and Practices in the Fellowship countries and whether these are transferrable to the UK. What networks, partnerships or structures are in place to enable information sharing and engage in agricultural or social policy debates?
- To Determine the Importance and Significance of the Type of Work do the models work differently in diverse farming systems and what roles can animals play. What works best when incorporating a social component into a farming system?
- To Develop an Understanding of Community and whether

therapeutic farming works well in a residential setting with people who have lived experience of homelessness. What factors lead to the development of a positive therapeutic community, how is this environment fostered?

- To Find Innovative Approaches to therapeutic farming and share this information across networks in the UK to promote the concept and build relationships between practitioners and those who want to develop projects.
- To learn more about Operating Models and the financial structure to gain a greater understanding of how they sustain themselves and ensure viability without eroding quality service provision.
- To Develop a Plan for undertaking a therapeutic farming project in the UK to benefit people experiencing homelessness utilising the experience and learning gained from Fellowship travels.

Approach

After visiting several farms in the UK that incorporated a social or cultural value component and following a review of the academic literature several countries have been identified with an established social farming network (Norway, Italy, Belgium and Holland).

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These countries created an opportunity to trace the historical evolution of social farming and discover what worked well and how the sector had evolved over a period of time. Homelessness was rarely associated with the approach, although addiction/recovery and public health interventions frequently cited the benefits of engagement with the natural environment. North America (Canada) was chosen as a country with a relatively new approach to social farming, with projects more frequently being established in urban environments. Allowing individuals to engage in agriculture within the urban environment, reducing barriers to participation and offering an alternative model to the on-farm activities associated with countries that had longer-established social farming models

Countries Visited on Fellowship Travels

Norway

Green Care-Intrinsic Restorative Power of the Outdoors and Healing Power of Animals

Nordic countries culturally retain a close link with nature as time in the outdoors is widely promoted as healing and restorative.

The environment is something to be protected and enhanced as a public good for the value of the whole country. It was evident on driving around Norway on Fellowship travels as little, or no litter was

present, and recycling was a part of everyday life. The Fellowship journey began in Lillehammer, to learn about Green Care from Dr Ragnfrid Kogstad and her anthropologist colleague Børge Baklien at the Inland University of Applied Sciences. Preliminary findings of a report on the value of Green Care to health and five areas that have been identified of significance when analysing a social farming model:

- 1. Contact with animals**
- 2. Supportive natural environments**
- 3. The service leader as a significant important other,**
- 4. Social acceptance and Fellowship with other participants**
- 5. Meaningful and individually adapted activities in which mastery can be experienced**

Steigen et al. (2016)

Following these discussions, I visited a newly established project on a farm (Lekvollhagan gård) to discuss quality assurance and the operational model.

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Horses played a significant part in all the projects I visited and are valued for their therapeutic abilities and connection to human beings that have survived modernity. Professor Tobba Therkildsen Sudmann arranged a visit to a farm (Solbakken gård) near Bergen over two days to allow an experience of horses being used in therapy for a range of service users. Giving new insight into the power of equines, the role they can play in developing meaning and connection. The industrialisation process has taken away a central part from this evolutionary companion, but they retain the ability to connect, engage and heal.

Italy

Social Farming, Addiction and Therapeutic Community

A well-developed social farming sector with several social cooperatives and a central organisation responsible for promoting social Farming in Italy and to a broader European audience (Nazionale Agricoltura Sociale) exists with over 500 members. The projects visited included San Patrignano therapeutic recovery community based near Rimini where up to 1500 people live, work and recover over a minimum stay of three years with a record number of people (72%) remaining drug-free after a period of leaving the community (San Patrignano 2019). The creation and importance of community and

the value of work within this dynamic were investigated and the concept of a 'community of excellence' explored to understand more around purpose, person-centeredness and changing an individual's internal narrative.

Agricola Biologica Nico near Pisa is a conventional farm managed on Biodynamic principles. The linkage between social and environmental justice was evident as this method of farming places the worker as an integral part of the 'farm organism', responsible for managing a state of dynamic equilibrium through his/her actions to create an edible ecosystem. Deep care and understanding of the land and natural systems allowed the incorporation of people into the farm organism. They were facilitating the creation of an environment where those with complex needs felt safe, supported and needed as they also became an integral part of the system as opposed to actors upon it.

Belgium

The Power of Putting Hands in the Soil and the Value of Partnerships

Networks and working closely with health providers were a recurring theme in Belgium, coupled with the importance of getting people in the same room together to discuss and share best practice.

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A range of farms was visited in the Brussels area on the Fellowship journey featuring both horticulture and animal husbandry based practice. In many cases, the primary purpose of the farm remained production with the social value component a diversification as opposed to a core function. Social prescribing was prevalent within the projects visited, attempting to build the relationship between health providers and farmers to ensure quality assurance and consistent service delivery. It required a growing knowledge base and marketing of the value of social farming to health providers (to create referral pathways) and those with specific conditions which came from sharing experiences and offering a range of farm-based activities to service users.

Netherlands

Incorporating the Natural environment into the Emmaus Model of Community, Work and Solidarity

A well-developed Social Farming infrastructure exists in the Netherlands; I wanted to explore the value of animals and the natural environment to the Emmaus model through visiting Emmaus Haarzuilens community near Utrecht. The location of the community in a rural setting and the presence of animals and small-scale horticulture although not on a commercial scale created a different

atmosphere and opportunities for connection than what I regularly experience in urban-based UK Emmaus communities. The companions (residents of Emmaus) gain a sense of responsibility through caring for animals, and interaction has a therapeutic effect.



The Emmaus model: Emmaus Haarzuilens, Utrecht, Netherlands

Creating alternative opportunities for work away from the traditional (Emmaus) model of furniture and clothing re-use creates a space for different skills to be learnt and experienced. In a conventional Emmaus, social enterprise work can be neglected, and tasks unfulfilled with only a negative economic impact, when animals and crops are put into this equation, the effect of not caring is visible. Allowing companions to find a real purpose as they are very much needed, and the work is inherently meaningful.

Canada

Innovative, Low Barrier Urban Approaches

Limited networks related to social farms exist in Canada and the ones that do tend to be focused in the urban centres.

Two projects I visited had grown out of a specific need in Vancouver to provide a service supporting people through low barriers to engagement, focused on distinct geographic areas where social deprivation existed due to drug addiction, mental health and poverty. Vancouver, due to its location and environment (warm and mild) was often described during Fellowship travels as the centre of Canada's homeless issue. Progressive drugs policy that prioritises harm reduction and decriminalises drug use meant the visibility of drug use (injection/smoking) was quite shocking to an individual familiar with a very different policy environment. The Downtown East Side (DTES) was an area that I had been told to visit because of its social issues and challenges faced.

Endemic drug use (predominantly the powerful opioid fentanyl) has left the city fighting with an overdose epidemic that has killed over 1500 (BC Coroners Service 2019) in the British Columbia area over the last few years. First Nation communities, the homeless and those with mental health problems have been particularly hard hit by addiction and homelessness.

The provision of a safe space, work, the healing power of nature and a community where all are valued was a recurring theme in all projects that aimed not to follow a structured plan or help people become drug-free. All service users were asked was to just 'be' in the present time and contribute regardless of their status or identity. The projects visited in Canada had not grown organically from traditional agricultural practice; they had been designed and implemented as therapeutic interventions. It highlighted a different approach to most other projects visited on Fellowship travels except for San Patrignano recovery community in Italy.

Findings

Theme 1: Community and Connection

In all the projects, there was a thrown togetherness as people from different backgrounds and experiences came together to undertake a specific land-based activity. The term *communitas* (Turner 2012) describes a group coming together and sharing a collective, equal experience with mutual benefits; this was evident on projects visited on the Fellowship journey.

The farm as an environment creates an opportunity for a unique space away from the everyday challenges, and temptations that those facing homelessness, addiction and isolation face. It offers the chance to go outside both physically and metaphorically experiencing a different reality for a period that potentially creates a space for reflection, creating an opportunity to make a different choice or a small incremental change. People experiencing homelessness are often socially isolated, and this can lead to depression and mental health issues. Putting people together, regardless of backgrounds, creates an opportunity for connection and the farm as a novel and alternative experience can allow people to put their issues to the side even if only for

a short period. In Norway, people talked about looking forward to visiting farms to care for and ride horses as the environment was different; engagement with the animals stopped people continually focusing on themselves and perceived past failings. Whatever was holding them back was left at the farm gate, and for that time they were living in the present enjoying the experience in the farmyard, focused on staying on a horse which offered the opportunity for perhaps a small incremental change in behaviour or outlook.



Healing horses-Equine therapy at Solbakken gård

Creation of a community is not necessarily about time but space and conditions.

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The projects visited range from a residential project in Italy where people live and work together twenty-four hours a day for a minimum of three years to day services in Norway, Belgium, Italy and Canada. Where people would come as and when they had the time or the opportunity. It can be challenging to get absolute clarity on the most fertile conditions to propagate community, but reflections are possible.

Belgium

'To put your hands in the soil' was a term often used in Belgium and it highlights how when people undertake something different to their everyday experiences it not only creates an opportunity for the growth of a plant but also the growth of a person. Shared experiences and rituals played a significant part in the creation of community dynamics. Looking after animals or growing crops it was notable that the time spent on the farm would create a legacy that a group could discuss everyday experiences once they had left the farm and returned to 'normal' lives.

Interaction and care of animals stimulated this feeling of togetherness and the fact that they need a higher level of care and attention allowed people to find a real purpose and reason for being even if it was just for the short period the animals were in the individual's care.

Norway

Horses in Norway generated community as they need to be groomed, fed and watered with them reacting to the level of care they receive through interaction and engagement. A common theme in Norway, Italy and Holland was where several individuals stated that they preferred animals to people as they are a better judge of character. Whether this is true is debatable, but particularly in urban areas where many of the people facing homelessness are based animal interaction is absent despite research (Elings & Hassink 2008) to show it has a positive impact on human well-being. If this is due to our shared evolutionary history or other factors can be debated but where animals are present people come together and connect with them. Most importantly, individuals look forward to coming back to be with them in a different reality and experience to every day, broadening horizons, challenging what is possible and giving options.

Case Study

San Patrignano, Rimini, Italy

The 200ha grounds of San Patrignano (SP) are immaculately kept with people busily conducting several activities in different sections when visited.

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Uniformity and equality are prevalent with people dressed similarly and the majority of 'guests' as people on the program in SP being relatively young.

Individuals arrive at SP from a variety of countries and backgrounds, but all are either marginalised, socially isolated or struggling with addiction. Nobody pays and all come to complete the program and leave the community after a minimum of three years addiction-free ready to reintegrate back into society with a different outlook, perspective and new opportunities.

Many of the individuals I spoke with talked about the community as their 'last chance' and have a range of histories, including homelessness and heavy drug use. Faith and deprivation of freedom are evident as individuals defer power to the community and 'programme' in the hope that they will undergo a rediscovery of the self.

Medicalisation and structured therapy are avoided unless necessary as daily work and interactions with peers who have shared lived experiences (on a similar journey) are the primary intervention. A common analogy from several guests was that they had to be stripped 'naked' (metaphorically) of old thought patterns and processes to rebuild on more solid foundations.

A significant difference between interventions in the UK and other areas of Italy is the holistic emphasis on the person

and a deliberate shift away from drug substitutes, e.g. methadone and Subutex. The medical director of San Patrignano (Dr Antonio Boschini) talked about moving the focus from pharmaceuticals and medicalisation of the issue to recovery or change of the whole person. San Patrignano has links with other therapeutic communities around the world in Sweden and the USA who operate a similar structure. Funding for the community is approximately 75% through social enterprises and the remainder through public donations (the project is well known in Italy) with minimal funds coming from the state. In terms of success, the community claims to be one of the most impactful residential drug rehabilitation communities in the world with 72% of people who complete the program able to remain drug-free (San Patrignano 2019) after five years of completion.



A community of Excellence; Award-winning Winemaking Facility, San Patrignano

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A community of peers and the power of this relationship is key to the success of SP as people at the start of the program are shadowed or followed for the first part of their SP journey, and in time, they will become followers. At all stages, it is possible for the guests to relate in solidarity to individuals at different stages of the journey and despite the hardships see what is possible in other people who have very similar backgrounds. Most staff at SP have completed the program (becoming solid positive role models) and have faith in its ability to facilitate authentic and lasting change that results in a drug-free life.

Enterprises are diverse, and the workforce is highly disciplined, community members are given little opportunity to use their agency. A deliberate strategy exists in placing individuals within enterprises where they have little to no knowledge or experience. The creation of a community or group is given high priority with people living and working in assigned residential groups for the duration of a stay and all work and leisure time tightly controlled. Everything has a reason and a place at SP with all new guests (as people in SP are referred) starting their first few weeks at Botichella and then transitioning into the central 1500 strong community.

A vineyard, Dairy Unit, Dog Breeding and horse breeding section was visited on the agricultural side along with other

enterprises including a bakery, printing workshop and catering departments. Our resident guide (Paulo) referred to San Patrignano as a community of excellence and work was highly valued with people encouraged to make everything to the highest standards.

Community

Among the problems that affect the drug addict, drug use is the least relevant. The core of the problem is not drugs, nor the abstinence crisis: it is the human being with his fears and the black holes that threaten to suck him in. That is why I do not like to say nor hear that ours is a community for drug addicts. Ours is a community for living, where you can restart in life after years spent as a social outcast. Ours, if we really need a definition, is a community against social marginalization.

Vincenzo Muccioli, Founder of the San Patrignano Community (San Patrignano 2019)

On the agricultural side, this included the manufacture of award-winning wines and the breeding of horses (showjumping) to world championship standards.

The project had the most control and structure of any other that I visited on the Fellowship journey as people voluntarily gave up a great deal of their liberty and agency.

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Putting all faith to recover in the program and their peers that despite a relatively harsh and austere environment, they could change. Community is central to everything at San Patrignano, and it is created and reinforced utilising specific factors in what could be described as a psychologically informed environment.

Building blocks for Therapeutic Community

Equality	All receive the same reward with democratic decision-making principles
Shared Experiences	Work not only as economics but as a tool to find purpose and meaning
Rituals and Rules	All eat together and the structure of the day is tightly controlled
Peer Support	Tough regime but all in it together on a shared journey to drug freedom
Solidarity	You help yourself through helping others

All the enterprises are conducted at a large scale, but contact with the outside world is minimal, and the people I met told

of how tough it can be but the struggle was worth the final outcome-Living free of addiction.

Case Study

Sole Food Farms and Hives for Humanity, Vancouver, Canada

First impressions of Vancouver were of a very affluent North American conurbation with the centre dominated by high-value real estate and well managed public spaces. The evidence of homelessness was limited to a few people begging in a small number of areas. The Downtown East Side (DTES) was an area that I had been told to visit as part of Fellowship travels because of its social deprivation and challenges predominantly linked to drug use with the powerful opioid fentanyl the most prevalent. The city has been faced with an overdose epidemic that in British Columbia has killed over 1500 in recent years. The health emergency has hard hit first Nation communities, the homeless and those with mental health problems.

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In Vancouver, the municipal authority has implemented a four-pillar drugs strategy:

- **Harm Reduction**
- **Prevention**
- **Treatment**
- **Enforcement**

(City of Vancouver 2019)

On visiting the DTES, I was struck by the concentration and scale of drug use with no attempt for addiction to be hidden despite the presence of law enforcement officers. Canadian drugs policy is very progressive and has pioneered the availability of safe drug injection sites even to the extent where pure heroin is prescribed (City of Vancouver 2019) to those are not on a journey of becoming drug-free. The harm reduction pillar was prevalent. A salient point was made on the visit when I enquired to a project worker whether the area was dangerous. The response was, *"the people in DTES are too busy harming themselves to do any harm to anyone else."*

SF Farms takes disused municipal land and creates urban horticultural spaces where all are welcome and intends to have as few barriers as possible to engage in the growing of crops for sale on market stalls and to high-end restaurants. The land is a precious resource in Vancouver, and Sole Food Farms has good relations with the municipal

authorities. The creation of community and the job opportunities are central to those who participate on the farm, and it works in partnership with other providers to offer accommodation and support services on request.

The founder Micheal Ableman draws a lot of analogies between farming and recovery highlighting the relationship between agriculture and a reason to live, if you do not take care of the farm, it will die, and personal responsibility becomes an essential factor in the process. People are employed on the project to grow food and become what SF refers to as a *'Farmily'* with the cross-cutting benefit of reconnecting the broader City of Vancouver with food production (Ableman 2016).

Building meaningful community through employment and shared purpose for those who would not usually get a job opportunity, in a safe and supportive space where people feel needed and had options.



Farming on the urban fringe: Sole Food Farms, Vancouver

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The SF Model was innovative due to its transient nature and the scale of agriculture in the middle of an urban area.

The parallel can be drawn between the way SF takes degraded wasteland and converts it back into a community asset with the journey that people who work on the farm make as they are brought back into employment and productive life.

Hives for Humanity combines social and environmental justice through working with Bees and their products by removing barriers and creating an opportunity for those who are socially isolated through addiction or socio-economic factors. The community bees produce, and significance of each insect to the hive is essential as an example to demonstrate all are equal but play a role in the success or failure of the hive/community. The location of the project near the DTES in Vancouver allows people to access the scheme,

undertaking an activity away from usual surroundings in a safe and supportive atmosphere. DTES had a vibrant and rich culture and community but has been blighted by addiction and social deprivation. It gave the sense that the project was not trying to change or gentrify the area but was a community asset where people could learn new skills and be part of a therapeutic learning community. No one had to be on any specific drugs reduction program or a pathway just to be present, authentic and contributing as a person was enough.

Therapeutic Farming and Homelessness: Reconnecting through the Natural Environment, Community and Work

Learning for the UK

Factor	Method	UK
Person-centred	Focus on the individual and not the illness or addiction. Requires real investment in time if the end goal is to be drug-free (SP). Short term fixes have limited impact	Develop projects that are for the long term and allow people to participate for a significant duration as change takes time. Long term investment and commitment required.
Psychologically Informed Environment	Ensure the environment fits with the needs of the beneficiaries to offer the support they need to progress	Ensure farm-based activities have the maximum impact and the environment recognises people have experienced trauma. Train farmers in this approach
Structure & Rituals	Many people who have had traumatic and chaotic lives and value clear boundaries and order to give them a foundation	Allow individuals to become immersed in the daily working life and structure of the farm. Ensure meaningful activities throughout the day.
Leadership & Vision	Capable and skilled leadership to establish the culture and develop the project	Develop networks for social farming leaders and support them in the development of projects
Low Barriers to Participation	Ensure that individuals can participate, and projects are inclusive. Identify what is required to allow the maximum impact with the least barriers to entry	People who are homeless, they struggle with addiction, mental health or trauma. Projects need to identify the obstacles and put in measures to allow participation, including accessing available funding. From DEFRA etc.

Theme 2: Meaningful Work and Quality

Work was a central component of all the projects visited as part of the Fellowship travels and ranged from basic tasks such as weeding a vegetable garden in Belgium and Canada to relatively complex and skilled jobs such as the manufacturing of award-winning wines and daily milking in Italy. A common theme was quality and a task that had a real purpose with a mission so individuals could take pride in a job and see the results of their labour, much depended on the capacity and resources of the organisation as to what form of agriculture could be undertaken. Resources and space were significant variable factors and ranged from activities on relatively large commercial farms in Belgium to small scale urban gardening in Vancouver.

In Italy, Belgium, Holland, Netherlands, Norway and Canada, the emphasis was not only placed on production, but the process undertaken with most units run on organic or biodynamic principles. Norway, Holland, Belgium and Italy have well-developed quality assurance schemes that service providers can become members of after completing an application and submitting to regular checks and audits to receive certification. In Norway, where Green Care farms receive referrals directly

from health providers. They operate in a competitive, market-driven environment. To demonstrate compliance with health and safety and as a recognition of quality, membership of the certifying assurance scheme *Inn på tunet* (IPT) is common. This assurance of quality is essential when offering services to those from a non-agricultural background-commissioners, health providers and non-profit organisations to ensure that the farm provider meets minimum basic standards. The cross over between agriculture and public health requires a universal language and terminology that both sectors can understand.

Leadership and innovation were also a key element with projects having dynamic and innovative leaders who could empower people and get them to engage in activities. In Italy leadership was often peer-facilitated while in Norway, Canada, Holland and Belgium charismatic leaders with absolute belief in the power of horticulture led by example through working in solidarity with individuals, acting as role models to actively encourage people to get involved. Leadership was evident clearly in Norway, where equine therapy required specific skills and enthusiasm.

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People may consider riding a risky activity, but it was facilitated by the building of mutual trust between the leader, beneficiary and horse. The process began by meeting the horses in the stable, grooming them and then gradually getting them ready for an activity. Time was also spent interacting with other animals on the farm and taking the time to conduct other cohesive, social events such as communal eating and coffee breaks.

Italy

Work was central to the SP model of a community of excellence, wine and food were produced to the highest standards to create a sense of pride. Whether producing an award-winning cheese or wine, it had to meet a certain standard. In Agricola Biologica the ethos was not driven by excellence but quality and Biodynamic production principles. This ensured food was treated with respect and created the least impact on the natural ecosystem as it was produced in harmony with it.

Canada

Production was important and whether honey through hives for humanity or urban produced vegetables at Sole Food Farms had to be fit for a market. The social value of the product was also heavily marketed to add value. Integrating customers into

the supply chain by packaging and communicating the social impact.

Case study

Atelier Groot Eiland, Brussels, Belgium

This project is in the poor neighbourhood of Molenbeek-Saint-Jean made infamous for being the home for a number of those involved in recent terrorist attacks in Paris. Due to its location, a high proportion of the people it works with are migrants who are supported to learn new skills in a range of social enterprises. An urban horticultural project is a central component, constructed on former wasteland at the centre of the project. This 1500 sq/m site is run on organic principles and is a significant contrast to the surrounding social housing tower blocks.



**A sanctuary within the Urban Environment:
Atelier Groot Eiland, Molenbeek St-Jean, Brussels**

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Creation of community and developing transferable skills that are valuable to the workplace were high priorities but also a focus on quality food and like San Patrignano, a focus on excellence. Everything was done for a reason and had to be suitable for commercial resale. The vegetables sold in the shop and to local catering establishments along with other high quality brought in food items with a strong emphasis on zero waste and ecological credentials. Respect and an

environment to promote mastering of abilities were vital elements.

Work was the critical component, along with inclusivity and respect. In this densely built-up area of Brussels, I was surprised to find such a large garden project, and it was an opportunity for green space that few would have had previously had. The garden used for production but also a space for relaxation and recreation.

Therapeutic Farming and Homelessness: Reconnecting through the Natural Environment, Community and Work

Learning for the UK

Factor	Method	UK
Therapeutic Value of Work	Work as a basic human need to provide meaning, purpose and identity	Integrate a social component into UK farming systems. Including horticulture and animal-based production.
Quality	Creates a sense of pride in playing a part in an agricultural process especially when a finished product is visible as output	Develop training for farmers and service users so they can get fully immersed in the farming process, including considerations of safety and health.
Assurance	Certification schemes to demonstrate quality for a service or product	Work with certification bodies in the UK to develop an awareness of programmes and pilot new ideas, e.g. Socially produced food certification
Learning & Skills	Develop skills that are transferrable and will benefit individuals when they leave a project	Develop structured training for those wishing to learn more about farming and low barrier apprenticeships
Physical Work	Get people involved and undertaking hard work in a safe environment	Conduct risk assessments on farms but then encourage people to get stuck in despite a challenging environment and rigorous physical work.

Theme 3: Building Awareness through Partnerships, Networks and Connections

In the majority of Fellowship countries, social farming was well developed except for Canada. The establishment of networks of projects and service users was prevalent in Norway, Belgium, The Netherlands and Italy with groups coordinated centrally to ensure sharing of best practice and quality of service.

The linkage between health providers was vital in ensuring that referral pathways could be established and often required facilitation by a third party. In Norway Inn på tunet ensures compliance including health and safety and provides quality assurance to service providers that the offer meets a specific standard.

In Italy, coordination and marketing are conducted by Nazionale Agricoltura Sociale who are heavily involved in the promotion and marketing of the concept of social farming. Evidence exists of the healing power of nature-based therapies (Henderson & Vikander 2007). Still, it is often in competition with societies increasingly individualisation of care and faith in the ability of pharmaceuticals to provide quick solutions. The longer-term

and more time-intensive approach offered (through social farming) that promotes behaviour and personal change requires intensive sharing of evidence of the benefits. It also highlights potential cost savings through a lack of dependence on existing health and social service providers. In Norway, Italy, The Netherlands and Belgium, social farming is well known, but in Canada, further work needs to be done to promote the concept to farmers and service providers. In the UK social farming can be viewed as an alternative concept, seen as not particularly suited to conventional farming systems whereas experiences in the Fellowship countries visited would counteract this argument by demonstrating it is a viable diversification for multiple production systems.



Networks for Growth: Nos Oignons, Stakeholder Farm walk, Wallonia, Belgium

Case Study

Nos Oignons, Belgium

Nos Oignons operates in Wallonia and works with a variety of farms to facilitate social inclusion and integration. It works closely with a wide range of farms and conducts workshops to promote its activities. The concept of putting 'your hands in the soil' was mentioned often as something positive and a way to reconnect and heal. The project worked closely with a range of health providers building a network of service providers that connected with health facilities. The two farms visited were relatively small but created an opportunity for people to experience something different while participating in meaningful work in a healthy environment.



Shared Learning; Nos Oignons Farm Visit Italian delegation. Wallonia, Belgium

A dairy goat farm in Chaumont-Gistoux offered an opportunity to share and learn with a delegation from Italy (supported

through EU funds) to observe and discuss how people who are socially isolated could benefit of placement on a farm. Many of the people who are referred for placements are suffering 'burn out' and socially isolated. The individual I met on the farm enjoyed the work but also the interaction and being a part of the farming family

Fanes de Carotte was visited as part of the Nos Oignons network of social farming providers in Wallonia, including a farm walk and workshop for other members of the group. Most of the participants were relatively small-scale farms and several new entrants with only a limited number of larger-scale commercial farmer involvement. The farm dynamic and suitability for social farming may be due to economic or time constraints and the limiting factor of being able to offer jobs that are meaningful and safe. This type of project is possible on small scale mixed farms but not so easy on a larger scale and industrialised unit where higher levels of training and induction are required.

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Small but powerful: Fanes Des Carotte, Belgium

Case Study

Lekvollhagan Gard (Farm)

A small farm to the South of Lillehammer and established by a couple from a non-farming background Annett (health) and Elspen Dalsbø (military). The farm, although small, is set in a beautiful location, its primary function is not commercial agriculture but the provision of a range of social services 365 days per year financed from Government contracts. Young people are accommodated on the farm and support offered with many (25) staff. The farm offers a policy where no one is excluded and takes young people

from a range of backgrounds, often with severe behavioural challenges. Animal therapy and outdoor activities are an essential component of the service, and Elspen talked about how the animals have a good sense of when to engage with or avoid those with different needs.



Quality assurance: Inn på tunet logo, Lillehammer, Norway

Inn på tunet is the quality assurance standard of many Green Care farms in Norway and Lekvollhagan was a member. The term means in the yard, and all farms must meet several basic quality standards with inspections and audits regularly carried out on the farm

Therapeutic Farming and Homelessness: Reconnecting through the Natural Environment, Community and Work

Learning for the UK

Factor	Method	UK
Building Networks and Peer groups	Separate networks of farmers, service users and those who commission services created to share experience and learning. Health and social providers can clearly understand how to incorporate farming into practice.	Networks like Social Farms & Gardens need to bring stakeholders together to understand the gaps and opportunities in service provision.
Value	Calculate the social value of farming in a monetary context and how it can save money through social prescribing through utilising a social return on investment approach	Promote and market the cost-saving benefits and value of social farming to commissioners and social/health providers
Research	Commission research to provide evidence on the benefit of farming to social care.	Stimulate research in social farming from agriculture, social care and health perspective to develop learning specifically for the UK context
Quality Assurance	Assurance schemes that are well known and recognised to develop a respected brand	A voluntary scheme currently in operation in the UK. Develop an agreed certification standard and invest in promoting within agriculture, health and social care. Invest in the capacity of the certifying organisation and ensure it has the resources to implement a UK wide, certified brand.

Theme 4: Linking Environmental and Social Justice

In the projects visited the approach to how land and animals were cared for was a central theme; a correlation could be seen between care for these two elements and care for the person.

The individual becomes a part of the system, and no longer a passive observer but an active participant in natural cycles on the farm; an integral part of a vibrant social and natural ecosystem with its opportunity for restoration and transformation.

In the UK, the farming landscape is dramatically changing, which is likely to be accelerated with departure from the EU policy framework. Leaving the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) and an increasing focus of all nations on the environment allows restructuring in UK agricultural policy priorities. The 2020 Agriculture Bill will form the basis of the support offered to farmers when the country leaves the EU and creates a valuable opportunity for recognition of potential social goods and services that farming can provide to be part of the consultation process.

Norway has a culture of closeness and engagement with the outdoors and nature. Increasingly the value of nature to improve well-being and health has been recognised (Ellings & Hassink 2008).

Friluftsliv

Associated with being outdoors and a sense of freedom and connection it is a core part of the Scandinavian way of being and is not about exploiting nature and natural resources but preserving and enjoying them in a relaxed way in the present time.

The Scandinavians even have a word for this concept *friluftsliv* (pronounced *free-loofts-liv*) ingrained in the culture, the enjoyment without exploitation of nature and being in it.

Outdoor living was identified as a significant factor in Norway as many people have a connection with nature, historically people have undertaken hunting and fishing.

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At the same time, a large number of small family farms existed with people conducting jobs off the farm at specific times of the year. However, in recent times farms have got larger, and many farms have amalgamated with larger units. A trust exists in the healing power of nature as evidence shows it is linked to higher levels of well-being. How time is spent in nature and on farms was a key element with sustainable and agroecological farming systems highlighting the linkage with farm health and personal health in terms of the food produced but also the natural ecosystems.

Biodynamic Farming

Focuses on the holistic nature of the farm and the farmer as an integral part of the process as opposed to an external controller, adopting a triple bottom line approach (economic, social and environmental sustainability). The relationship of the farmer to the land is to try and achieve balance by being aware of natural rhythms and cycles, treating the farm as a living organism existing in a state of dynamic equilibrium through the interaction of animals, plants, human beings and nature. Deep connection and focus on nature were valued by people who visited farms as they became a part of something bigger

than themselves, playing a role in the cycle

Case Study

Solbakken Gård, Bergen, Norway

Tobba Therkildsen Sudmann is an equine physiotherapist who has a background in working with a variety of people from different backgrounds, including those who have been homeless and struggling with addiction. She has worked for several years with Solbakken gård (farm) where a range of day services are offered to people on the farm by the female farmer (Mari-Anne). The farm is no longer a commercial enterprise. Still, it has a range of animals and small-scale enterprises for people on day visits to become involved with, including assistance by volunteers with a number taking part after accessing the service. The farm has applied for membership of Inn på tunet, but work still needs to be conducted to prepare for entry into the scheme. While visiting the farm, it was possible to take part in a riding session as a participant (on horseback). Although the client group was not homeless, a sense of well-being and creation of a community in that specific time and place was tangible.

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We all took part in preparing the horses and supported each other as we went through a series of structured activities on horseback.

Mari-Anne talked about how the animals greet people when they come onto the farm; she advocated as far as possible the animals should roam free. I was witness to this when a man with limited mobility arrived on the farm to have an individual lesson. A pig and a dog came out, and it was evident in his demeanour he was put at ease through the encounter. In another observation, a disabled child new to the farm engaged with a cat, it was then used by the physiotherapists as an opportunity to provide therapy.

The range of activities and animals on the farm gave countless opportunities for interaction, and regardless of the client group, it creates an alternative space away from the institution, drug use or whatever the issue may be and a glimpse of opportunity or a critical juncture for change.

Case Study

Agricola Biologica Nico

This small farm on the outskirts of Pisa was managed on Biodynamic principles as based on the work of Rudolph Steiner. It was principally involved in the growing of crops but recognised the importance of

interdependent elements soil, animals, plants and the role of people. Utilising the biodynamic calendar and through increasing fertility, ensuring the farm was productive in a relatively small area. The farm only supported one vulnerable individual regularly, and it created opportunities for day visits for other groups. It was similar to projects visited in Belgium where a farmer would take on the responsibility of supporting either an individual or a couple of people at specific times in the week. No particular program was followed just the opportunity to be a companion of the farmer for this time undertaking whatever tasks required effort in line with the time of year and the season. Although the farmers would not consider themselves support workers the intensive engagement with an individual in this unstructured way created a space for sharing concerns and aspirations while also completing tasks. It had mutual reciprocity in that the farmer had helped to complete tasks and received financial support for hosting a placement. The service user had the opportunity to contribute to the success of the farm by undertaking tasks and received the therapeutic benefits of interacting with the natural environment in a safe and supportive environment.

Learning for the UK

Factor	Method	UK
The Farming Method	The process of how farming is practised is an essential consideration for a project. People need to feel a part of the system and not external to it for maximum impact. Time needs to be invested in teaching basic agroecological principles, so service users understand their place in the system	<p>Opportunities exist to build relationships with agroecological focused organisations, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Biodynamic Association • Land Workers Alliance • Organic groups <p>These organisations also want to capture and enhance the social and cultural value of agriculture</p>
Scale	Social Farming can have a positive impact at a variety of scales from individuals working on a small family holding to the much larger numbers on specifically designed projects in Canada and Italy.	A range of offers needs to be developed in the UK from the farmers who want to promote social value as a small-scale diversification of existing core business to solely social impact projects.
Linkages	How food is produced has clear linkages to well-being. The more holistic and environmentally aware the farmer is has a direct correlation to the potential social value.	Farmers who have an interest in developing projects that would benefit people experiencing homelessness identified and brought together. Offered appropriate levels of support to design and scale projects with a clear understanding of what is achievable

Conclusion

1. Community and Connection

The power of a group of people to facilitate change and have a positive therapeutic impact was a theme throughout Fellowship travels, but how community is practised, created and nurtured was very diverse. In Italy, the highly disciplined and structured therapeutic community of San Patrignano with the ultimate objective of a drug-free life stood in sharp contrast to the low barrier communities experienced in Canada. Still, both espoused the same values that all are valued and needed. Community creates connection and to be part of something greater than yourself even for a short period. Farming creates a space for a different context or environment to be experienced with peers and a sense of purpose developed where community can be built around shared narrative and experiences. Social isolation can lead to drug use and mental health challenges. Still, relationships with people, animals and the natural environment created a greater understanding of a person's place in the world. Leading to the realisation that they are an intrinsic and active

part of the natural ecosystem as opposed to a passive observer. Disconnection comes from a sense of not belonging, reconnecting with nature can reawaken the primaeval self that often becomes buried by technology and modernity.

2. Meaningful Work and Quality

A farm creates a myriad of different types of work and requires constant daily care to ensure that crops are growing well, and animals are in good health. This type of work is inherently meaningful because if tasks are not undertaken, animals will suffer, and crops will not provide a yield. The diversity and types of tasks on a farm mean people from a range of backgrounds can contribute and take pride in a job well done. In a community of excellence such as San Patrignano, the breeding of world champion show jumpers and growing award-winning wines was the primary goal. In other projects, relatively simple tasks like grooming horses, cleaning out goats, growing crops was enough.

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The production of an item like honey in Vancouver or cheese in Brussels allowed people a sense of achievement and the involvement in work processes permitted those who had been far from economic activity getting back into work routines and culture in a safe and supportive environment. A supportive environment was essential as the work; this could be attributed to the leadership of the project. Encouraging people and making them feel safe enough to try new things, empowered to undertake activities that may have been out of their everyday comfort zone, such as interaction with large animals.

3. Building Awareness through Partnerships, Networks and Connections

Encourage social farming to grow in a country requires, well-coordinated and funded groups to share best practice and experiences while also developing a sense of solidarity. In Italy, Holland, Norway and Belgium, these groups are well developed, and quality assurance schemes mean that commissioners and service users can identify the type of farms that will

benefit different categories of service users. Building awareness of social farming to the customer base was critical, particularly in the area of social prescribing to ensure both provider and customer had a clear understanding of what was achievable on a particular type of farm.

Leadership, motivation and personal relationships were important with farmers in Norway, Italy, Belgium and Canada often having close linkages to health and a strong desire for social justice. Creating equal relationships where all are valued was intrinsic to the San Patrignano model in Italy and prevalent on other Fellowship projects, requiring an environment of trust and mutual respect to be commonplace between the service provider and users. Several farms had the social component as the primary purpose of the farm with agricultural production secondary. Still, they retained a connection to growing and animal husbandry as tools for therapeutic interventions. In contrast, others framed the social component as an additional secondary output, and traditional agricultural production retained a primary role.

An example of this was a small-scale goat farm in Belgium which was focused on production but offered one referral placement to an individual struggling with mental health.

4. Linking Environmental and Social Justice

Being in nature and away from the 'everyday' whether caring for animals or undertaking horticultural activities created a space for reflections and different interactions; the opportunity to create a change. To '*put your hands in the soil*' was frequently talked about in Belgium and Norway as healing. People with emotional trauma and who struggled to form relationships with fellow humans often found a connection with animals. Horses in Norway, dogs in Italy and goats in Belgium had a therapeutic capacity (Davis & Maurstad 2016). They could allow people to feel an emotional connection and purpose when the care of the animal was also incorporated into practice; resulting in a tangible way of a self-discovery that the service user was genuinely needed to ensure the animal's welfare. Animal interaction was cited as a reason for returning to projects, relationships or what was often perceived as a mutual friendship established for the future, a

companion for the journey and a potential pathway out of social isolation.

5. General

Limited linkages would appear to exist at first sight between homelessness and farming as they are rarely associated. Homelessness is regularly linked with disconnection and transience as individuals move from place to place at times, invisible or isolated to the surrounding community. Alternatively, farming is associated with a deep connection to land, animals and the natural environment in a specific time and place. Community and what it means and how it is created was a constant theme of the Fellowship coupled with the experience of working the land or caring for animals and how it could be restorative, providing a framework through which people could rediscover hope, meaning and purpose.

The range of projects in different countries allowed themes to be identified and how they can relate and be applied to the UK context. Agriculture is going through significant changes with an exit from the EU Common Agricultural Policy caused by BREXIT and all the technicalities that entail. Significantly the place of farming in society is changing as the world has become more globalised and interconnected.

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Farmers are no longer required just to feed the country as they were in early years but are expected to provide a range of services to earn financial compensation. The current discourse is primarily focused on environmental benefits and reducing negative impacts through increasing biodiversity, but the social potential of farming creates a valuable opportunity for UK agriculture.

On reflection, a parallel can be drawn between those facing homelessness and farmers in the UK at present. Both feel disconnected and are unsure of their place and purpose. By linking the two together, mutual and reciprocal benefits can occur by farmers demonstrating value for public support received and those experiencing homelessness discovering connection and purpose which may be the incremental change they require to get them back onto their feet.

Next Steps

- **Share the findings of the Fellowship report with networks and peers working within the area of homelessness and recovery within the North East to gauge interest and receive feedback.**
- **Start engagement with people who have lived experienced homelessness and share report findings. Do they agree and**

what options exist for capturing the lived experience they have to co-develop a project incorporating learning from the report into the project design.

- **Contact stakeholders with interest in the transformative and restorative power of farming including the Land workers Alliance, Biodynamic Farming Association and Social Farms and Gardens**
- **Develop pilot projects including on a recently acquired allotment and in conjunction with the Northumberland National Park that utilise the natural environment and farming practices to stimulate connection and meaning**
- **Engage with decision-makers to ensure that the social and cultural value of farming is recognised and appropriately valued in a changing policy environment that shifts from area-based payments to a 'public goods for public funding' approach.**
- **Identify opportunities to establish a project that incorporates the therapeutic value of farming into an Emmaus model of community, work and solidarity**

Recommendations

1. Work to Build Meaning

Integrate social care into conventional farming practice. A task that has a legitimate purpose and the opportunity to develop skills while in a supportive and safe space is critical in therapeutic farming projects. It is essential that tokenism does not take over, but work has a meaning and is needed. The goal needs to be building confidence in a psychologically informed and supportive environment while creating cohesion and a shared narrative within a group. An aversion to risk and a fear over health and safety constraints can stop people from getting involved. Service users need to be encouraged to get stuck in despite the work being stressful, animals unpredictable, and the weather is terrible.

2. Building Community through Shared Experiences

Ensure that projects incorporate methods of building community. Creation of community is organic and happens in all situations, whether creative or destructive, when people with a common purpose come together. The factors that can be controlled are around the feeling of belonging and the creation of a supportive, open environment where all feel valued. The ability of a diverse group of people to come together on a farm and create positive (outcomes) through *communitas*, reducing barriers, and shared experience is vital. Getting people out of their present environment for a period is essential to change the internal narrative, allow exploration of new possibilities to reflect, make a choice and experience change. No situation is permanent.

3. Scale and Development

The majority of projects visited in the UK are small with urban gardening becoming increasingly popular and more extensive scale social farms on commercial units being the exception to the rule. Develop projects that link commercial agriculture with social and cultural value so that they can generate income from farming activities as opposed to receiving government and grants support for taking land out of production; capture and exploit social value.

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Investigate models based on Emmaus principles where farming has a dual-use of generating revenue while also providing meaningful work and community.

A shift needs to take place with a recognition that UK agriculture is about more than the production of food and incorporates a range of other public goods and services that can be captured and utilised for social and commercial benefit.

4. Influence Policy

Agriculture in the UK is going through significant changes with the introduction of the 2020 Agriculture Bill and shifts in agriculture policy linked to BREXIT. Space is available during the consultation to promote and support principles that enhance the social value of agriculture (agroecology) and recognise the importance of farming as a cultural and social good in UK society. Link the current changes in Government policy where farmers are paid for public benefit to ensure that funding is available for farmers who wish to develop social benefits and not just environmental schemes. Develop funds similar to the European Union's Knowledge Transfer and Innovation Fund, specifically for farmers who want to diversify into social agriculture. Provide clear frameworks for UK farmers to receive support specifically for the provision of social goods and ensure that this is considered alongside debates concerning food production and environmental benefits.

5. Social Prescribing and Engagement with Public Health Discourse

The recent Coronavirus pandemic has resulted in many people in the UK spending more times in the outdoors with widespread recognition of the positive impact nature and time outdoors has on well-being. The positive benefits have been widely acknowledged in Nordic countries for many years, but in the UK lifestyles and work-life balances that prioritise work and other non-nature-based activities has resulted in a disconnection. There is an opportunity for service providers in the UK with several pilot projects at present to reconnect health with the services nature and time in the outdoors provides. Ensure that social farming has a place in the social prescribing discourse by building on the work of the organisation Social Farms and Gardens to build networks of practitioners and service users. Further evidence of the impact of environmental-based social prescribing needs to be captured so that commissioners and decision-makers understand the value of the approach.

6. Quality Assurance

In the UK Social Farms and Gardens offer a voluntary Code of Practice for farms in the UK to sign up to and self-assess as evidence to potential service users that specific minimum standards are met. Inn på tunet is a rigorous quality assurance scheme in Norway. Farmers in the UK are used to meeting the requirement of accreditation schemes (Freedom Foods, Organic, Biodynamic and Red tractor). A more widely known and recognised accreditation requires development with the input of the public sector, health and social service departments that demonstrates not only the health and safety compliance of service but also the value that can be expected for those who engage with it. In parallel with assurance can take place training, development and advocacy, Social Farms and Gardens currently occupies this role but requires more capacity and a closer linkage with existing governance structures within UK agriculture including the National Farmers Union (NFU) and The Landworkers Alliance to ensure a more joined-up approach. An opportunity exists to pilot a 'social farming' certification, so consumers recognise they are purchasing products with an added social value.

7. Develop Networks of Model Farms and a Community of Practice

Sharing learning and developing networks is essential to ensure the development of therapeutic farming. A range of approaches can be identified that cater to different groups ranging from young children to older people with dementia. The various offers must be categorised whether by farming type or service user (e.g. Disabled, in recovery, Homeless) to ensure that different groups can share best practice. An umbrella organisation that has a place for all types of social farming is positive but needs to be the ability to split the practitioners into specific thematic areas (Children/Disability/Adult Mental Health/Homelessness recovery etc.) to gain the most value from the network.

Farms are selected for best practice and can similarly outline operational funding models as the Monitor farms that currently exist in the UK to promote conventional farming practice. Training and exchange are essential for those who have limited knowledge of social farming in the UK. Capacity building is critical not just for farmers but also for service providers to understand referral pathways. Commissioners and policymakers need a clear understanding of the impact of farming to ensure funding and resources are available.

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Barriers to entry for those who may wish to join networks need to be considered, and measures put in place to mitigate. Increasingly distance and online learning create an opportunity to upskill stakeholders and build networks without high costs.

8. Media and Advocacy

In the UK awareness of social farming and its benefits is limited, much of the current discourse related to the environmental impact of agriculture, including the consumption of meat and effect of agricultural practices on the environment. Repositioning agriculture as more than an industrial process that produces food that feeds the nation to a space that demonstrates its cultural and social centrality requires a deliberate strategy and the participation of many stakeholders. It requires a collective effort to ensure that the more extensive public benefits of farming are understood, and it is multi-dimensional producing food, providing ecological services and social/cultural value.

The current environment where farming is frequently being discussed in relation to the UK's exit from the UK and what the post Brexit farming environment will look like creates an opportunity to promote and build awareness of social farming benefits at this critical juncture. Social farming champions are required who can engage with the media while developing a shared and agreed narrative that can have multiple cross-cutting benefits. Promoting social farming but also ensuring the benefits of the natural environment and the critical position of farmers is clearly articulated.

9. Economic Models

To identify and encourage more farmers to diversify income streams and undertake social farming requires promotion and demonstration of viable financial models. The concept of social enterprise is becoming more frequently adopted in the UK but is rarely used concerning agriculture. Practical support measures from the central government to support capital and revenue costs is needed. Social prescribing creates an opportunity, but more information needs to be in the public domain over what commissioners and other customers will pay for these services. Academic institutions and organisations (School for social entrepreneurs) exist in the UK that can assist in the development of agriculture-based social enterprise models. Including quantifying the real cost of non-food producing services provided by agriculture whether environmental, cultural or social.

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Once these have been identified and costed supported packages can be developed to ensure that farmers can be appropriately reimbursed for the services, they provide utilising full cost recovery methodologies.

10. Learning and Reflexivity

A range of knowledge needs to be captured and value more fully analysed and understood in terms of the importance of social farming. Further research is required into what works well and what are the barriers to more farmers becoming involved in this area of work. Academic institutions from the land-based sector need to be incentivised to undertake learning in these areas, which can be transferred into the sharing of knowledge through structured learning. Diversification remains a theme in academic study related to agriculture. Still, the social and cultural value of agriculture needs to be viewed as a core output produced during agricultural practice as opposed to an externality with limited relevance. Food production has become the primary focus of policy as industrialisation and mechanisation have progressed. Still, farming retains an essential role as a provider of a multitude of other vital services.

11. Building Effective Partnerships

Facilitating transformative change requires the ability to influence decision-makers and ensure that messages are clearly articulated utilising available evidence. They involve the building of effective partnerships with others who desire this or similar outcomes and then delivering vital messages. Synergies exist with organisations that have agricultural and non-agricultural perspectives, and they need to come together to influence and facilitate change. Examples from agriculture would be the Land Workers Alliance, The Biodynamic Farming Association and Organic farming representative bodies with non-agricultural organisations including Homeless Link, Crisis, Shelter and the Emmaus Federation.

Changemakers need to understand and recognise the value of social farming to improve public health and opportunities to benefit those facing homelessness and complex needs. Further resources can be allocated to piloting interventions, and support frameworks are in place to allow the growth of the sector. A universal strategy can be agreed, adapted and implemented to have the most significant potential influence.

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Annex I

Main Organizations & Contacts

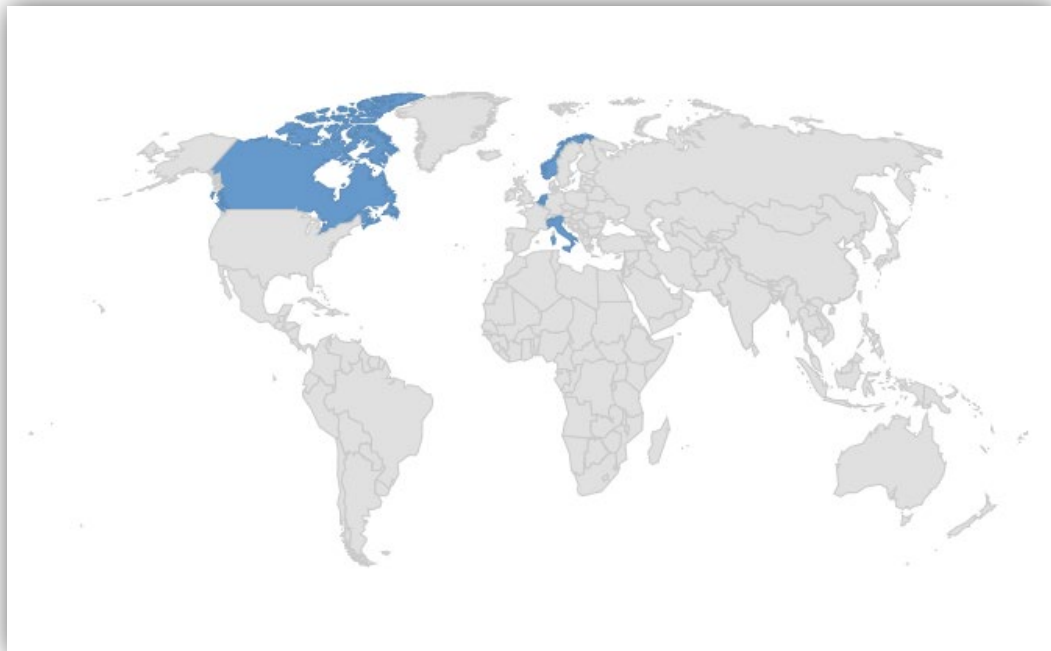
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Paulo Andrade	Member of Community	San Patrignano
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Stefie Servranckx	Communications Manager	Atelier Groot Eiland
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Jos van der meer	Community Leader	Emmaus Haarzuilens
Canada		
Matt Johnstone	Director	Sole Food Farms
Julia Common	Founder	Hives for Humanity

Annex II

Countries Visited on Fellowship Travels

September and November 2019:

- **Belgium**
- **Canada**
- **Italy**
- **Netherlands**
- **Norway**



(CMO Reira-<https://cmoreira.net/visited-countries-map/>)