

Synopsis:

THE VILLAGE OF THE HOMELESS

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Brann du Senon, once homeless, former biker, ex-prisoner and eternal rebel, decided to change his life two years ago.

After an eventful existence and several heart-attacks, he became a housing rights activist and bought a field in the forest of Fontainebleau, 80 km south of Paris. He repaired some old caravans that he had bought, and organised a community to host homeless people.

Since then, men - and some women – who find themselves homeless, come to relax in this improvised village. The aim is to provide them with shelter and food to enable them to consider reintegration into society more serenely.

In order to communicate about his initiative, Brann runs a website and a Facebook page giving contact information to the homeless so that they can reach the village. But the website is also a platform putting the homeless in direct contact with individuals ready to help with a shower, a meal, a job or a temporary bed.

Independent of any state-run entity, the community has its own rules. No addictions, and everyone has to give a hand: feed the animals (pigs, chickens ...), maintain the garden, fetch water in the neighbouring wells, do general repairs, and collect unsold goods donated daily by local supermarkets...

Every week, the members of the community cook up a big pot of soup and go to Paris or elsewhere to share it with people living in difficult conditions, informing them of their housing rights.

Living conditions are not that easy (no shower, no running water, electricity only eight hours a day), and community life does not fit everyone. Turnover is high; sometimes the village has only 3 or 4 people living in it, sometimes 15.

I've been documenting the daily life of this community since August 2013, spending one week per month in the village. Even if this community is not changing the lives of the tens of thousands homeless in France, it shows that locally, with little means, something can be done.