Map – The North Sea coasts of Denmark, Germany and the Netherlands, with sections of Belgium and Great Britain, showing prominent artists’ villages and places mentioned.

Given the overwhelming popularity of village artists’ colonies towards the end of the nineteenth century, and the flourishing of them all across Europe, it is surprising the subject has attracted so little scholarly attention. Recently, there has been an increase in interest, as part of the re-evaluation of regionalism in painting, such as the museum exhibitions in the cities of Karlsruhe, 1998; Århus, in 2000; and Nürnberg, 2000/01.¹ Artists’ villages were featured in contemporary newspapers and in the new, illustrated, art magazines, regularly from c.1880, although there is at least one clear reference to “colonisation by landscape painters” in an article on Barbizon as early as 1853.² Most writing on artists’ colonies has been monographic in nature. The literature has largely focussed on the iconography, with lyrical descriptions of the physical charms of the chosen villages and with much publicity given over to certain “charismatic” figures.³ These locations were places where enthusiasts collected, where stories were told and myths abounded, consequently commentators were usually given to using superlatives. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the frequent references to the more exotic characters, such as Paul Gauguin and the village of Pont-Aven in Brittany, which presents a distorted image of bohemian life and rural, social, artistic creativity. The discussion requires a more precise, pragmatic, international, comparative analysis to help give clarity to the complexities of the situation.

¹ Rödiger-Diruf, 1998; Exh. Cat. Århus, 2000; Exh. Cat. Nürnberg, 2000/01
² G.F. ‘La nouvelle fête patronale de Barbizon’ in L’Illustration, 24 December, 1853: “Colonisé par les peintres de paysage, ce village est presque une succursale de l’école de Rome, dont l’auberge du père Ganne....”
³ Typical of many curatorial publications, Knud Voss, for Skagens Museum in the 1980s, produced a series of uncritical books, that reduced the artists’ colony to only a few characters and, what became, stereotypical images.
It is instructive to examine how the discourse on artists’ colonies has evolved from the early promotional monographs and memoirs to today’s more detailed analysis of the trends of that period. Artists’ colonies are as fascinating and variable as the landscapes they inhabited. The present study emerged from a long working knowledge of this coast, its pictorial representation and the variety of artists it attracted, which does not seem quite to conform with any of the previous published material on such groups. Typically, the two most prominent historic artists’ villages in Germany and Denmark, Worpswede and Skagen, have generated an almost continuous stream of publications over the last century, mostly in their respective languages. For example, the poet Rainer Maria Rilke wrote the first book on Worpswede as early as 1903.\(^4\) It is highly subjective, romantic and has, typically, elements of mysticism, but he actually only writes on five of its pioneers and none of its important women artists, including his future wife. Most early monographs are similarly hazy and fail to extend the movement much beyond a regional context. The School of Barbizon is most often-mentioned as the precedent for artists’ villages, but many authors fail to fully describe the exact connections. None of the Worpswede colonists went to Barbizon, for example, and most of the Skagen pioneers had limited contact with contemporary French paintings, prior to their collaborations in the late 1870s.\(^5\)

One might imagine that the earliest literature on artists’ colonies benefitted from the authors knowing the artists personally or being artist-colleagues themselves. For example, when museum curator Emil Hannover wrote his astute commentaries for *Scandinavian Monographs* in the late 1910s and early 1920s, he had the advantage of extensive personal contact with these painters and their career development across Sweden, Norway and Denmark. His motivation for writing that series was primarily to promote Nordic art worldwide, although his short biographies are not without social and critical comment. The case for Karl Madsen is somewhat different, for his early writing on Skagen’s art history was taken as the authoritative version, since his first book appeared 1929.\(^6\) As the director of Denmark’s *Statens museum for Kunst*, he also was expected to publicize rather than criticize the nation’s recent cultural achievements. However, he took pains to write himself out of the history of Skagen artists’ colony, despite being one of its important pioneers and being related, through marriage, to both painters and hosts. His reputation is only now coming under serious review by the latest generation of Danish art historians.\(^7\)

Only in the last few decades have comparative studies started to be made. They tend to offer deeper insights into the professional life of a nation’s art circles, and also help place the artists in the wider modern movement. Staying with Skagen, for example, Marianne Saabye’s book *P.S. Krøyers fotografier*\(^8\) offers a fascinating and clever vehicle to explore the period’s rapidly changing studio-craft, along with glimpses of the social life in Scandinavia’s most successful artists’ colony. Many of the books on Skagen’s artists’ colony have been written by curators, such as Knud Voss’s many popular illustrated publications, including *Dansk Kunst på Skagens Museum 1870-1920, (1976)* and *Skagen i Nordisk kunst, (1989)*. They are rather commercial, abbreviated and superficial, adding little to previous anthologies, such as Walter Schwartz’s memoir, *Skagen i Nordisk kunst*, from 1952.\(^9\) More recently at the museum Lise

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\(^4\) Rilke, 1903.

\(^5\) Fabritius, 1995, p. 271, writes that Ancher saw his first work by Millet in an exhibition in the Spring of 1879, the same year that a Skagen group formed, but it is difficult to see any direct influences in subject or treatment.

\(^6\) Madsen, 1929.

\(^7\) Bøgh Jensen, 2005, p. 15. Madsen’s book is now criticised for “blurring the facts” and hiding certain events, although it was known at the time of writing that his version of Skagen’s history was undoubtedly subjective.

\(^8\) Saabye, 1990.

\(^9\) Schwartz, 1952.
Svandholm has published a number of books that better place all the participants, in order, nationally, internationally and in the context of the village society itself.\(^{10}\)

Two recent comparative texts are of note in Denmark and are also useful, but they are only concerned with the situations within the one nation and contrast entirely different periods: *Danske Kunstnerkolonier – Skagen, Fyn, Bornholm and Skagen og Kerteminde – To Kunstnerkolonier*.\(^{11}\) Both were part of art exhibition projects rather than primarily scholarly works. They introduce some interesting details, yet fail to add significantly to the standard factors for rural social creativity. Rural art groups that formed in Denmark, after the 1890s, all owed much to Skagen’s earlier success. Kerteminde, Fåborg, Fanø and Bornholm flourished at least a generation later, from the 1930s. Therefore, these two Danish synopsies are weakened through not comparing like with like; not coming to terms with the geomorphological diversity; and, promoting contrasting periods of art history that are not analogous but consequential.

Most of the studies on artists’ colonies have been descriptive rather than analytical; anecdotal rather than contextual; lacking in empirical data; and, promotional rather than critical. Until quite recently, what little comparative work that has been published has tended to be national, in the sense that they are anthologies of artists’ villages within one country.\(^{12}\) Even then, none have directly compared like with like, even topographically, so that, for instance, the two main German moorland artists’ colonies of Dachau and Worpswede are not compared; or the Celtic colonies of Newlyn and St. Ives with Concarneau and Pont-Aven, on their twin peninsulas. As artists’ villages are so geographically diverse there is no typical colony to use as a model or reference point, although forest-edge Barbizon received by far the most early publicity.

Skagen comes close to an ideal artists’ colony, for it thrived in an unusual, unspoilt, stimulating yet truly remote environment; formed itself independently, yet was part of the modern movement. It produced a fine body of work that had instant appeal. It created a social atmosphere that benefitted work and fellowship; and, it had a lasting fame centred clearly around one inn that was decorated by the artists, which survives intact as a national treasure. However, untypically, only one artistic couple, Anna and Michael Ancher, actually settled in that Danish village, during its pioneering stage.\(^{13}\) Colonisation implies the gaining of territory, permanently, rather than a seasonal withdrawal, back to the traditional metropolitan art centres. A village colony not only attracted artists but also had to accommodate them, and their experimental ways. Certain innkeepers, therefore, rightly gained mythic status as hosts at the time, renown for their tolerance and understanding towards each side, as much as for their generous fish-soups.

Part of the problem of assessing artists’ colonies seems to begin with a lack of a clear definition. For example, it is most frequently referred to as a ‘phenomenon’, but this seems hardly adequate to explain their huge popularity at the time and, in most cases, lasting over a century until the present day. While phenomenon means something that exists that is remarkable, it also implies something unusual and ephemeral, whereas, it will be argued, the occurrence of artists’ colonies was entirely in keeping with the changing social, philosophical and economic conditions of the era, and was, in many ways, predictable. As they formed an important arm of the Modern Movement, perhaps ‘movement’ is a better description of these rural experiments.

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\(^{10}\) Svandholm, 2001; Svandholm, 2003.


\(^{12}\) Bodt, 2004; Rödiger-Diruf, 1998; Newton, 2005.

\(^{13}\) Many historic artists’ colonies continue today, such as Worpswede, St. Ives and Skagen. The pioneering stage may be regarded as the first wave of interest, settlement and maturity, seen in the artwork itself, the high degree of social cohesion, the relative cheapness of accommodation and an unaffected relationship with the villagers.
Artists’ colonies have never been defined with any consistency. This has resulted in many
generalisations and erroneous statements from the beginning. For example, German lexicons,
from the very first appearance of a dictionary definition in 1902, seem to have formulated their
characteristics based largely on historic Teutonic examples. This has resulted in some repeated
errors, such as the promotion of Jugendstil as an important style practised in these artists’
groups, as seen in work by Heinrich Vogeler at Worpswede. It, or Art Nouveau, was not
prominent in works produced in artists’ villages elsewhere across Europe, although elements of
the Arts and Crafts movement may be seen in the artists’ village homes, as was the case in
Kroyers’ house at Skagen. One may also take issue with the idealism surrounding statements on
their motivation, forming “for the purposes of studying nature.” Any reasonable examination of
the results of their labours shows that the artists were not primarily studying ‘Nature’ so much as
realistically representing landscapes in terms of light and colour. Topographical verisimilitude
attracted many artists. In addition, the wave of artistic interest in villages such as Volendam and
Sonderhø, for instance, had very little to do with Jugendstil or even the sea, and everything to do
with the folk costumes and customs, regional identity and the changing human landscape.

Clear distinctions are rarely made in the literature as to all the component parts that make
a successful community of artists, or even how they all came together initially. The traditional
discourse tends to isolate only a few celebrity painters, rather than concentrate on the ongoing
cooperative nature of the venture, where many contributed something to the creative whole.
Ideological notions of a rural utopia may have inspired some city artists to leave for the
countryside, but it was the spirit of mutual gain that resolved many of their practical problems
and kept the social creativity alive. Standard art histories of the period have not emphasised
enough the huge economic pressures within the art profession at that time and just how
competitive the art market had become. It is out of this lack of a full and balanced pragmatic
analysis of the conditions that lay behind these rural relocations that this present study grew.

One image of artists’ colonies that of rather backward-looking idealists, with
iconographies focussing on recording traditions. The assumption seems to be that by painting
people in folk costumes doing traditional work without signs of modern machinery they project a
moral image of an age before industrialisation, somehow better in tune with nature and spiritual
matters. The masters of the Hague School painted sail-boats not steam-boats, after all, although
ironically the Dutch landscape is largely man-made, polderland, reclaimed from the sea over
centuries by astute use of wind-power. By contrast, the sand-dune coastal ranges are entirely
natural and had been set aside for having no economic value. All this was to change dramatically
over the course of the nineteenth century and, although a few isolated artists did paint the new
order, art historians have not generally recognised the value of the social evolution of the beach
as a spur to the continual rise of coastal artists’ colonies. First health resorts then mass-tourism
brought about changes to almost every village within sight of a sandy beach and clean bathing
water. It was a delicate balance, for too much tourism overwhelmed any natural beauty, which,
in turn, generally repelled painters, as it did at Scheveningen. Interestingly, while Jozef Israëls,

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14 Brockhaus, 1902.
15 Ibidem, p. 802. “...places of abode, far removed from the metropolitan art centres, mutually chosen particularly by
painters, for the purposes of studying nature.” (trans. Pese) Three out of four of these conclusions are ill-founded. In
1995, in the original concept drawn up by Claus Pese et al., for the Germanisches National Museum project on
European Artists’ Colonies, the team deconstructed the Lexikon der Kunst (vol. 4, 1992, p. 146) definition into
seventeen characters, including: “Jugendstil”, “a petit-bourgeois rejection of civilization” and “limited contact with
reality”, all rather contentious issues based on rather a narrow and chauvenistic view, that ill-fits other countries.
back in The Hague, continued to paint pious images of the traditional fisherfolk of Katwijk and Scheveningen, the next generation, including his son, Isaac Israëls, painted the modern holiday makers on the same sands (2:1). Long before 1900, artists had found inspiration from painting contemporary leisure set on the sands, such as Anton Mauve’s *Riders on the beach at Scheveningen*, 1876, (14:6). This masterpiece shows elegant equestrians in the characteristic strong sunlight, and yet under the same dunes are parked a row of new ‘bathing-machines’. They are possibly the same white changing-wagons that appear in Mesdag’s breath-taking *Panorama*, of 1881. Here, he also painted Scheveningen’s new *Kurhaus*, the promenades and the many grand hotels. Modernists, by then, accepted the realities of the situation and were now picturing all things that happened in front of their own eyes, the seemingly ordinary and the extraordinary, the daily as well as the dramatic.

The orientation of standard rural art was slow to change from the traditional and the historic, but on the coast this artistic focus was forced to shift by the occurrence of so much change. The new iconography included stylish architecture; bourgeois fashions; swimming costumes rather than folk-costumes; donkey-rides rather than work-horses; leisure rather than work; pleasure boats rather than fishing-boats; sports and even nudity. Thus, a surprising number of avant-garde artists were attracted to these shores. Coastal artists’ colonies were at the cutting edge of change. The proximity of contrasting physical features along this sandy coast stimulated simplification, symbolism and yet more abstractions amongst the Expressionists, such as those by Schmidt-Rottluf, Le Fauconnier, Toorop, Rysselberghe and especially Mondriaan.

The primitive conditions often found in these villages enhanced the feelings the artists had for their environment. Artists engaged the human and geographical environments more closely the longer they stayed in the countryside. Weather, rather than climate, was stressed in this new realism. The vast areas of sands produce an intense ‘Italianate’ light, yet they were also fascinated by grey mists, rain, snow, twilight, moonlight and sunsets, as well as dramatic storms. Some commentators, again, get swept away on a tide of metaphysical speculation: the “majority of Americans in Katwijk chose to portray the view of an easy open-air lifestyle”...”idly talking...watching the sea...mending nets...no mess....”\(^{16}\) This opinion seems to be at odds with majority of works from the rest of the painters, who portrayed the tragedies of everyday-life, typical to all fishing communities. This even included one revolutionary method of realism, the photograph, here typified by Alfred Stienglitz, who shot classic scenes on the same messy beach.

Prior to the 1970s, most books describing artists’ villages were of the artists’ memoir-type; subjective views with wandering narratives, full of anecdotes. They were entertaining and captured the youthful mood, but are short on exact dates, data and detail. One of the most often quoted in the discourse is the autobiography of A.S. Hartrick.\(^{17}\) Typical of his generation, this young hopeful had sought better training in Paris in one of the exciting, new, liberal, private, art academies, followed by a study-tour to Brittany, where he experienced the international comradeship of Pont-Aven’s thriving artists’ colony. He returned to his homeland, where he participated in more rural artists’ villages, including Brig o’Turk and Cockburnspath. He is a typical gentleman painter with all the wisdom of hindsight, who has glimpses of the great and the

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17 Hartrick, 1939.
good, in his case Paul Gauguin and James Guthrie, but who failed to make much progress, in his art or his career. This type of writing is full of happy tales of adventure, but short on constructive criticism or analysis. All too many histories of artists’ colonies have extrapolated from such opinions, musings and correspondences.

A certain amount of healthy scepticism may also be usefully directed towards many painters’ written accounts, especially as to the true motivations behind their writings, correspondences and even their sketchbooks. A good example of the ambiguities and discrepancies that surround certain prominent artists in colonies may be summed up by the image of Holger Drachmann (1846-1908), an adventurous Dane who soon found writing more lucrative than painting. He wrote about Skagen more than he visited it to paint, yet he became irrevocably associated with the location and its famous colony, even though, in reality, he only retired there. He also achieved his wish to be buried at Grenen, just outside Skagen, the northernmost tip of Jutland and, in effect, the whole country. However, there are no major paintings by him of Skagen, although there are some fine early, small, plein-air works. What is problematical is seen in his surviving sketchbooks, which were clearly not intended as studies, for later compositions. There are, additionally, many handsome portraits of him as a subject at Skagen, especially by his friend Krøyer, looking every bit the cultured worldly bohemian (3:1). These images are beloved by those that prefer charismatic characters in their artists’ colonies. Drachmann was a past-master at crafting his own public image and part of this promotional activity included the making of these sketchbooks. No link has been made yet between these sketches and any subsequent canvases. They were adjuncts to his appearance as an artiste, some might say a poseur, or what R.L. Stevenson called a ‘snoozer.’18 He represents one type of painter, present in many rural artists’ gatherings, who went along more for social reasons.

The first, major attempt at a systematic survey of artists’ colonies came, not from France, surprisingly, but from Germany, in 1976. Typically, it was organised by a well-respected, regionally orientated, museum curator rather than a university scholar. Gerhard Wietek’s Deutsche Künstlerkolonien und Künstlerorte19 is a fine collection of eighteen essays on twenty-three locations. Unfortunately it has eighteen different authors, so that it suffers from varying quality and lacks a consistent unifying comparative approach. However, he does successfully promote the notion of a gradation in rural artists’ communities, up from just a beauty spot to an artist’s gathering place or village, Künstlerort, similar to what the late Victorians called a ‘sketching-ground.’ In this way, Wietek does not designate Dangast as an artists’ colony nor the North Frisian islands of Sylt, Amrum and Föhr, quite rightly, despite the fact that they attracted an unusual amount of artistic attention. Following this, more recently, the Flensburg curator Ulrich Schulte-Wülwer has written terse monographs and anthologies of the many painters on Sylt and those that congregated at the nearby artists’ colony of Ekensund.20

19 Wietek, 1976.
It was not until 1985 that a book of some broader vision and scope attempted to capture this movement’s atmosphere more internationally. Michael Jacobs’ *Good and Simple Life*\(^{21}\) is highly readable and fluent in describing the mood surrounding these youthful gatherings. He makes good use of artists’ letters and writings, and seems to have gained sound advice from many local historians and curators. Although evocative and informative, its aim was not to be scholarly but popular, for it has a reasonable yet limited bibliography, with neither footnotes nor any qualified references. He picks a few artists’ colonies in each of seven countries, including the USA., but, like his previous publications,\(^{22}\) the text tends to be a traveller’s guide and an anthology rather than exposing the underlying patterns, relationships and mechanisms that drove the artists to develop such creative rural societies.

In many ways, the largest ever attempt to analyse this movement internationally also suffered similar problems, seemingly combining the shortcomings of both Wietek’s and Jacob’s anthologies. Claus Pese’s *Künstlerkolonien in Europa*, 2001,\(^{23}\) was a vast, expensive project that lost clarity trying to come to terms with so much material from so many different countries and sources. The resulting catalogue, a 600 page well-illustrated tome, contains eighteen separate monographs from nineteen authors, but they offer little that is new or comparative. Although the organisers broadened their scope to include elements such as furniture, design, pottery, weaving, literature, music and composers, into this cultural group formation, there was still a sense that this was done for reasons of the museum’s exhibition decorations rather than giving clarity and emphasis to the most common characteristics.

This Nürnberg catalogue mostly contained standard abbreviated chapters with titles such as the “Artists’ Colonies of Cornwall”, the “Artists’ Colonies of Belgium”, the “Artists’ Colonies of Hungary”, and so on. In terms of its time-frame it was also over-ambitious, stretching from the late eighteenth century almost to the present day. It is crammed with a wealth of examples and names that cover a vast span of styles, periods, techniques, methods and works from many differing stages of colonial evolution. The lack of focus is as apparent in the text as it was in the exhibition. It gave little new understanding of why these societies proved so universally popular and failed to differentiate the stages of their development. Many artists’ villages have existed now for over one hundred years and their character has naturally changed accordingly. It is still a common weakness amongst authors to draw conclusions, make suppositions and analogies from contrasting material taken from separate periods of colonial development, often from entirely different village contexts and reasons for existence.

This period saw the rise of personality-cults and self-publicists. Unfortunately, many texts on artists’ colonies suffer from over-emphasis on the more colourful characters, above those of the community as a whole. The repeated promotion of Drachmann and Tuxen at Skagen, for one, distorts their actual contributions to the group creativity and social cohesion at the beginning. Again, Gauguin is commonly elevated far above the others at Pont-Aven, including his talented Nabis colleagues, such as Sérusier, Seguin, Bernard and O’Conor,\(^ {24}\) and, of course, most authors ignore the previous twenty years of artistic colonisation in that village that provided the practical foundation and goodwill that made his exploitations possible. The same goes for

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\(^{21}\) Jacobs, 1985, includes major descriptions of at least eleven artists’ colonies from seven countries.

\(^{22}\) Jacobs has written a number of anthologies for the publishers Phaidon, including *The Phaidon Companion to Art and Artists in the British Isles*, with Malcolm Warner, 1980; and, with Paul Stirton, *A Guide to European Painting*, and even a travelogue on Transylvania.

\(^{23}\) Exh. Cat. Nürnberg, 2000, ed. Claus Pese

\(^{24}\) Boyle-Turner, 1990.
St. Ives, where the second wave of artists is mostly written about to the exclusion of the first, almost half a century before, even though it included some major international talents, such as James McNeill Whistler, Walter Sickert, Hélène Schjerfbeck and Anders Zorn.

The Germanisches National Museum’s huge 2001 project took years to organise, won substantial sponsorship and tried hard to achieve a result with its pan-European agenda, but its omissions were many and errors crept in with the need to delegate. It did not really achieve clear definitive conclusions. One example of how other efforts have achieved more with less came just after the Nürnberg exhibition at the Singer Museum in Laren in 2002. Unfortunately, there was no catalogue, but the rooms, in some cases using the same pictures lent to Nürnberg, gave a more meaningful sense of progression and appreciation of the subject, ably mirrored in the succinct texts on the gallery walls. Finally, Claus Pese and his team chose to muddy the waters further by confusing the geo-political elements. It is admirable that they promoted Mitteleuropa, Eastern European and Scandinavian artists’ colonies, much marginalised groups in the standard art history books of the period. Yet, as their title included “Europe”, it was noticeable by their absence of any mention at all of Spain, Portugal or Italy. What of Sitges in Spain, Nazaré in Portugal or the Florentine landscapists, the Macchiaioli? These errors are also found in another major book published that same year, Nina Lübbren’s Rural Artists’ Colonies in Europe.25

Lübbren’s study is the most scholarly ‘synopsis’ yet on this subject. She is particularly artful at using correspondence and memoirs to create an image. However, her text all too frequently wanders into hypothetical speculation about artistic motivation and how painters look at the countryside, at the expense of more sound patterns for their rural relocation and cooperation. She is most keen to promote certain German artists’ colonies, even though they are less typical of the movements as a whole. For example, much space is given over to Dachau as an artists’ village. There is no doubt it was extremely popular with painters, over hundreds of years, as she states, but it already suggests a category of geographical and social association that contrasts markedly with the new found vitality present in village artists’ colonies, after 1880, namely those at Worpswede, Ahrenshoop, Laren, Domburg, Skagen and St. Ives. The fame of the local beauty spot, the Dachauer Moos, so close to the city of Munich compromises the development factors she herself mentions elsewhere, such as accessibility, unspoilt character, community spirit, immersion and a sense of ‘other.’ Dachau was not so much a rural artists’ colony as a suburban playground, in the same way that Scheveningen is problematical, for it naturally attracted all the Hague School painters who yet continued to live in that elegant city. These peripheral metropolitan gatherings were very convenient and explain the popularity of colonies at, for example, Tervueren, a woodland village on the eastern edge of Brussels; St. Martens-Latem near Gent; Darmstadt’s artists’ centre; and so on.

Another area which weakens Lübbren’s approach to this subject is the absence of certain influential contemporary leaders and groups of clear international importance. For example, the Hague School masters had a high profile and clearly stimulated art markets globally, yet they hardly warrant a mention in her thesis. She also omits to mention the impact made by certain progressive teachers, namely, Professor Eugen Dürck at the Düsseldorf Art Academy; Professor Augustus Allebé at Amsterdam Art Academy; or, Jules Bastien-Lepage, whose compositional and painting techniques were closely followed all across Europe and North America, and whose entreaties to go to the countryside, engage with village life and there form groups caused many painters to risk travel and join artists’ colonies, thus encouraging many Swedish painters to settle in Grez and young Brits to return from France to start coastal colonies, for example.

A common conceit in the literature on artists’ colonies, especially in anthologies and the more-romantic monographs, is to promote these groups as fulfilling a strong desire to live together in a rural Arcadia. However, many participants were neither friends prior to their move nor did they share similar political opinions. One sees little or no lasting signs of utopian life in villages around the North Sea. They appear to share hopes rather than dreams and were, mostly, simple collaborations of independent, yet like-minded, modernists rather than deeply dogmatic brotherhoods. They shared all the natural joys, clarity and idealism of youth, when free from the burden of institutionised correctness. But every silver lining also has its clouds, and this mostly took the form of money, another subject disdained by many authors. The youngest of the Worpswede pioneers, Heinrich Vogeler, for example, is usually promoted as a fine example of a utopian idealist, evident in the large number of monographs and articles from the beginning, in what was regarded as German’s most ‘radical’ rural group. Yet, they neither lived together nor formed a lasting collective. Vogeler’s socialist ambitions were fuelled, some might say warped, by a major early inheritance rather than from sales. He would never have survived on the income from his paintings alone. It is also surprising how quickly the Worpswede painters separated from each other into their rather conventional suburban homes, especially those houses they designed and had built. These were neither cottages nor in the vernacular, but solidly bourgeois.

There are a number of books that are not directly related to the subject of artists’ colonies yet which shed light on the period, the trend for rural art and the rise of new art markets. For example, in The Netherlands, many books have been written on The Hague School, the only dominant art movement seriously to challenge early French Impressionism at the time. This study reasserts many of the findings of the art historians who put together the prestigious international exhibition in 1983 called The Hague School. Major contributions for this came from the editors Ronald de Leeuw, John Sillevis and Charles Dumas, who focussed on the rise of Romanticism and Realism, and the heyday of its landscape painting and genre pictures, as seen from a Dutch perspective. In essays, such as ‘The Vogue for Holland’, by Hans Kraan, and, especially, ‘Art Dealers and Collectors’, by Charles Dumas, an excellent starting points to understanding the period is gained. They describe the new financial system that evolved with popularity and thus set the basis that spurred on later generations to form their own action groups, including village artists’ colonies, out of their own frustrations with the system.

Another important ancillary work of note is Chris Stolwijk’s meticulous analysis of the thriving Dutch art market, Uit de schilderswereld in de tweede helft van de negentiende eeuw, 1998. It is one of the few scholarly statistical studies to be made on the art market of that period, in any country. Saskia de Bodt had written extensively about the useful role played by Brussel’s thriving art market in the development of Dutch painting and this also has relevance internationally. In addition, the avant-garde art clubs of Brussels were crucial catalysts in the progress of modern art and marketing modernism, an emphasis found in studies such as Tibbe’s Les XX en de Nederlandse Schilderskunst, 1883-93, and Block’s Les XX and Belgian Avant-Gardism, 1868-1894.

Jan Toorop, an enthusiastic member of Les XX, from the start, continues to attract biographers. Together with recent catalogue raisonnée on artists such as Emile Nolde,

26 Ironically, one of the iconic images of the pioneers of the artists’ colony at Worpswede today is Vogeler’s huge (175 x 306 cm.) canvas, Summer evening, 1905, (also called Summer evening at the Barkenhoff) set on the terrace of his new, large, personally-designed, villa with select members of his family and friends.
27 Leeuw et al., 1983. This exhibition was shown at the Grand Palais, Paris; The Royal Academy of Arts, London; and, in the Gementemuseum, The Hague.
29 Bodt, 1995¹; Bodt, 1995²; Bodt, 2004; Bodt, 2006.
Piet Mondriaan and Paula Modersohn-Becker, much material is now available on the careers and the studio practices of leaders that sheds new light on the development of artists’ colonies.30 Domburg’s importance as an international centre for the avant-garde is also omitted by both Pese and Lübbren in their European surveys. In Reünie op’t Duin – Mondriaan en tijdgenoten in Zeeland,31 Francisca van Vloten, amongst others, asserts its importance. As all the catalogues survive, such data reveals much on the studio practises of the progressives. Despite the presence in Laren of a first rate art museum, The Singer Museum, which publishes art history books and a regular bulletin, there is, surprisingly, no single dominant synopsis of this, the richest Dutch artists’ colony. Lien Heyting’s De wereld in een dorp is comprehensive, but largely anecdotal. Typically, it leaves many practical questions unanswered, such as: the group Tien, their rise and exhibitions; the dealings of the Larensche Kunsthandel; and, the schemes of hotelier Jan Hamdorff. Earlier monographs, such as by Jan Koenraad’s Laren en zijn schilders – Kunstenaars rond Hamdorff,32 still remains vague on many topics. There is no evidence that Laren’s famous artists’ hostel, for example, was patronised early on because it was either cheap or comfortable. Jan Hamdorff took little interest in painters, it seems, until quite late, in contrast to the early appreciation they received from the Spaanders in Volendam, or the Brøndums in Skagen. Comparisons remain unresolved in the literature, yet Lübbren, to her credit, recognises early on the crucial role of such hoteliers in the rise of the vital community spirit. Despite a wealth of documents held in local and even hotel archives, the exact relationships have yet to be fully analysed. As the more-commercial books have often prevailed, then descriptions become anecdotal as in the 1979 book, Volendammer Schilderboek, by B.W.E. Veurman, which has only slightly been improved upon by the recent publication of Volendam Schildersdorp, 1880-1940,33 despite the authors having better resources. There are, surprisingly few definitive scholarly studies on most Dutch artists’ villages, despite each having fascinating art histories. Katwijk-aan-zee has won distinction in the discourse as a result of the dedicated research of J.P. van Brakel on artists’ occupancy. In a series of publications, such as Katwijk in de schilderkunst, from 1995,34 he has collated the resort’s registered artists’ lodgers to show the different patterns of association. One may find details of all the hotels, inns, pensions and smaller logements, who lodged there and their provenance, together with local taxes paid by the dozen or so resident artists. There is no other such statistical-based study of an artists’ colony, as yet. However, there remain some innate analytical problems to do with proximity, for Katwijk differs widely from Skagen, in terms of easy accessibility. The artists’ villages situated close to cities, as was the case with Tervueren, outside of Brussels; Dachau to Munich; even Giverny and Grez to Paris; and most colonies in Holland, all attracted innumerable peripatetic artists, more than those truly remote locations of Skagen, Betwys-y-Coed and Nidden. Van Brakel’s otherwise admirable study cannot take into account the artists who caught early morning trams to Katwijk, who worked all day long on the beach, met at favourite inns, participated in group activities and yet caught the last trains back to Leiden, Amsterdam or The Hague, without thus being ‘registered.’ One thinks of Jozef Israëls in this regard at Katwijk, for he certainly worked on its beach, joined in the artists’ money-raising events for the village orphanage and joined the art exhibitions, but is not present on any of Brakel’s lists.

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33 Brinkkemper, 2006.
34 Brakel, 1995¹; Brakel, 1995²; Brakel, 1982.
There are several scholarly works that have influenced the course of this study, but which do not, in themselves, describe the development of artists’ colonies. The ground-breaking study on the rise of French Impressionism, *Canvases and Careers*, by H.C. White and C.A. White,\(^3\) point to reasons of institutional failure as the major motivational driving force for seeking alternatives. Taken together with Albert Boime’s *The Academy and French Painting in the Nineteenth Century*,\(^4\) they provide a wealth of exact information about the environment and mechanism of French official attitudes to art, that also lend themselves readily to most situations across western Europe. These studies were the spring-board for examining other data from academies in Copenhagen, Amsterdam, Antwerp, Düsseldorf and London. There appears to be no doubt that considerable tensions were building up throughout the art profession by mid-nineteenth century and the lack of academy reforms helped shape the seeking of a wider basis for career development. *Marketing Modernism in Fin de Siècle Europe* (1995) by Robert Jensen further opened this area of research, that seems to have alluded many art historians of this period. The assertions of the Whites, Jensen, and others, describe just how international were the new art market networks and show how the old one, the Academy-Salon System, gave way in dominance to the other, the Dealer-Critic System. Huge investment, in reforms, now came from the new generation of independent art dealers, who better crafted and packaged modern art. Artists’ colonies may be seen as adjuncts to this new system, for artists gained in confidence and self-determination from free-trade and free-association.

The focus of the present research is shaped by a sense of geography and time. The physical borders are perhaps the easiest to justify as so many artists’ colonies were located on the coast and next to water, as opposed to being nestled in mountains, on plains, in moorlands, in forests and on farmland. The rocky coasts of Brittany, Normandy and Cornwall hosted many artists’ villages, that are invariably referred to in the standard texts. They have an obviously dramatic coastline, characterful and picturesque. Less attractive, perhaps, yet just as inspiring to a wide variety of topographical painters was the long sandy shore of the North Sea, that spans Denmark, Germany and The Netherlands. One might extend this down through Belgium and into France, but these three nations already exhibit enough of a range of material to illustrate the causes and development of most artists’ colonies, without much reason to extend the study area further. It is unnecessary to attempt to detail all the artists’ colonies in all the countries of Europe, yet it is more meaningful to draw upon more than one nation’s characteristics. This coastal zone offers a sufficient number of clear examples of well-developed rural artists’ communities. It also offers a good cross-section of differing art histories, selling mechanisms, attitudes and outlooks, but not too many as to confuse the overall patterns of social creativity.

Around mid-century, Denmark was small, diminished by wars, yet it had one well-organised art academy, which held its major salon annually in its capital city. Copenhagen was then the largest city in Scandinavia and its art circles were, arguably the most important in the region. The pioneers of Skagen’s artists’ colony were central to events that unfolded across the whole region. Germany, by contrast, was rapidly expanding in size and in its economy. It remained polycentric, even after confederation, seen, not least, by its continued north-south divide. It had many old, established art academies, only a few of which were truly progressive, but, just as typically, the gap was also growing between the notion of intellectual freedom and

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\(^3\) White & White, 1993. Their book is mentioned in Lübbren’s bibliography but neither their findings nor the crucially important Dealer-Critic System.

\(^4\) Boime, 1986.
the state control of art. The Dutch situation was the most enviable of the three, for it has a long continual history of producing fine art and artists. It was in the best position to exploit the changing tastes of both Paris and London. Lacking industrial sprawl, its landscape remained largely unchanged, quiet and extremely appealing to many enthusiasts internationally.

It is foolhardy not to include the major influences Paris and London exerted on the evolving trends in nineteenth century art. Generally speaking, Paris attained its cultural height by attracting artist migrants, émigrés and exiles, while London had the economic clout and trading wherewithal. This study only reaches out beyond the three main countries of the study area in order to obtain better examples of factors in support of the central tenets of the research. The study region consists of a 1,000 mile-long coast, consisting of a narrow range of dunes and sandy beaches, together with the Frisian islands, the polders, water-meadows, marshes, bays-shores and flood-plains. They have a physical and cultural unity, affected by their proximity to the North Sea. The marshes and peat-bogs of the Teufelsmoor, north of Bremen, demand inclusion, yet they are at the extreme edge of the Frisian coastal plain. Here, Wilhelmine Germany’s most famous radical artists’ colony, drew inspiration from the wet-lands. Similarly, Laren-Blaricum, at the southern tip of the Zuiderzee, is also included. It too is barely more than one meter above sea-level, an atmosphere not of the dry dusty plains but of the deeper-toned, peaty heathlands.

It is debatable whether the School of Barbizon was an artists’ colony, but its fame was such at the time that it acted as a model, a prototype and a Mecca. It had a demonstrable effect on many aspects of the development of modern art and the formation of rural groups. Accordingly, here, one chapter is devoted to its pioneering processes. The links to Dutch painting and contemporary artists are clearly set out in such books as *De School van Barbizon*, edited by John Sillevis and Hans Kraan. Barbizon rose slowly in importance owing to a specific set of pressures bubbling up in France, yet it gained by maintaining ties with that metropolis and from developing international connections, almost from the start. The take-up of Barbizon’s discoveries in other countries varied enormously and these aspects are described more fully in the chapter, “The Politics of Pleinairism.” If the Norwich and Copenhagen Schools, to give but two examples, had even half as much publicity as Barbizon received at the time, in the press and in novels, then Realism and colonies would have spread much earlier and further afield. The purpose of this chapter is to show that a number of elements existing for artists to go to the countryside long before Barbizon, but artist were less free to fully exploit the situation. Many qualifying factors formed independently of the developments in French art, as part of the growing interest in greater realism across most of Europe. Only in a few yet powerful cases did politics enforce state censorship and control, although there was general indirect pressure. Thus, distinct and cumulative effects of anti-academy feeling arose in most countries, which combined philosophically with growing pressure for action amongst the young and the disenfranchised, especially after the pivotal European year of radical revolution, 1848.

As artists’ colonies were thriving in most countries by the early 1880s. The time-frame of this study extends a few decades prior to this wave of interest in order to explain the seeds of this movement. However, the pace of rural settlement was by no means

equal across the study area, or Europe. The colonisation process, once a village was discovered, also varied. For example, Fritz Mackensen was clearly the first of the artists to arrive in the tiny village of Worpswede in 1884, but it was not until 1889 that he persuaded fellow classmates and friends to join him (4:1). Even then, they did not all settle immediately in the village. This again raises issues to do with a quantitative definition, or, how many participants does it take to make a colony and at what critical point are they a collective, as opposed to just a group of painter-friends visiting a beauty spot, as at Dangast?

Curiously, of the dozen or so main factors that are recognised as in some way constituting an artists’ colony any one or two elements may be absent or unfulfilled without too much overall loss. For example, there may not be a village inn to welcome them, or, if it did exist already, it may still not have enjoyed welcoming them. Attitudes were as important as motivations. Newlyn’s colonists had no hotel to lodge in, or inn, or even a bar-room to call their own. By contrast, Worpswede’s inn was only mildly helpful to the influx of poor artists. Yet, Volendam’s one hotel seems to have grown up mainly because of the arrival of artists. This indicates that elements of a non-artistic nature had a bearing on events and so village attitudes had far-reaching consequences on the rise and character of any artists’ colony. In the case of Worpswede, it is accepted that the pioneers quickly settled down into their separate houses. On the other hand, Volendam’s artists greatly enjoyed life in their communal club-house, but no artists settled in the village. Some Dutch coastal villages attracted painters long before the mid-nineteenth century. Fishing villages such as Scheveningen and Katwijk were already used to cultural tourism and tolerant of strangers setting up their easels outside and inside their homes, sketching in the lanes and on the beach. Villagers, here, easily accommodated the new generation of artists and welcomed the possibility of sitting or modelling for the painters, for the right fees.

The relationship between villagers, artists and tourists is equally varied and fascinating, as they all struggled to overcome preconceptions. It was crucial to harmony and sustainability. Many of the delicate social problems were resolved by the pioneer artists, such as asking girls and women to sit and model, or not working on the Sabbath, and so there had to develop an artists’ social centre or club, usually the inn. Those villages located inland, in farming areas, seem to produce fewer social conflicts, but on the coast, especially the sandy coast, where tourism expanded rapidly, many financial issues were in competition. The attitude to commercialism is a key issue here, and with it the temptation to make picturesque images that become stereotyped, parodied and manufactured for easy consumption. Yet, in the cases of Domburg and Laren the art produced and the nature of the village community became more cosmopolitan, not less. The village of Domburg managed to host a peculiar set of avant-garde artists’ for over a decade, set in the heart of its exclusive resort, but, by contrast, when the railway finally made it to Skagen, P.S. Krøyer complained bitterly about how it was ‘discovered’ by tourists. Some authors, such as Lübbren, group these artists together with tourists, as agents of social destruction, but this is a complex issue. Tourism could be a positive force for change and bring about modernism and money to villages which otherwise would have continued suffering grinding poverty and hopeless squalor.

A keen sense of time is a recurrent theme in these villages, amongst the host community and the artists. Many of the earliest painters came in search of pre-industrial societies and landscapes. Others were interested in the rhythms of the seasons. Traditional activities, such as old working practices, harvest festivals, customs, and especially folk costumes, were given greater prominence in the new genre. The notion of a folk-costume itself implies a time-past, when regions were isolated and there was still a strong visible sense of local identity and status.
Soon enough, by the 1880s, there was also a sense of time lost, as villages modernised. Isolated communities, such as Skagen, that had previously only witnessed people in their working clothes and occasionally in their Sunday-best, now saw tourists in the latest fashions. Some artists, such as the Toorops and the Kroyers appear stylishly dapper although most painters were more relaxed and pragmatically attired. Typically, on the Danish island of Fano, girls no longer wished to wear their distinctive folk costume and be mocked as ‘country bumpkins’ when they went out, so that already the old traditions were being weakened by evolving social and economic factors.

Curiously, ‘Creative Destruction’ is now recognised as a potential agent for regeneration and innovation. It may be the result of human conflict or huge natural disasters. It brings an opportunity for modernisation that may have otherwise rumbled on more slowly. One severe storm devastated Scheveningen’s traditional fishing fleet, a centre of attention for many artists. The consequences are examined in relation to the movement and settlement of artists. Artists saw the old landscapes and villages as the last remnants of a more spiritual way of life and wished to record them in detail before they disappeared. George Hitchcock, writing in Egmond in 1887, wrote: “Holland has entirely escaped the commonplace utilitarian spirit of our times is too much to expect, but to this wind-swept, half-submerged corner of earth it has been last to come.”

World War I seems the appropriate point to finish this study, not only because of the traumatic social changes that occurred as a consequence of that conflict, but as most of the colonists had, by 1918, moved on, died or lost their creative freshness. It is interesting to note that the artists’ colony at Domburg was within ear-shot of the killing-fields of Flanders but not a single war-painting seems to have resulted, even though they saw refugees and wounded crowding the little resort. Modern art changed markedly by this time, communications improved as well as the critical reasons to settle in the countryside.

This study concentrates on the pioneering stages of artists’ colonies, when the artists reached their first plateau of success together; when long friendships formed amongst like-minded strangers; mutual benefits were recognised, accepted and developed; new ideas were nurtured and the living was easy, or as Michael Jacobs chose to call it “The Good and Simple Life.” In reality, it was often neither. Previous studies have made the error of comparing the whole colonial period as some kind of unit, when, naturally, there were distinct waves of interest in the move, in their work and in joining a group. Discovery, development and sophistication are commonly recognised stages in many cultures, and here fresh exploration gave way gradually to settlement. The pioneers helped to enlarge and decorate the inn, until it almost overflows. This is often the time before the village turned into a busy resort and pastiche emerges. The artistic evolution of these pioneering stages may be seen by changes in subject, from landscape to genre, for instance; by changes in technique, from Impressionism to Expressionism, for example; by changing attitudes to commercialism; and better organisation, into group shows or galleries. Inaccuracies have occurred in the discourse when authors have compared the early works of the pioneers with later products of the more-settled ‘branded’ market.

This study also recognises some of the ambiguities of the situations, yet attempts a balanced account of the practical reasons for this movement, the push and pull pressures, the realism as much as the romanticism. The enthusiasm for painting en plein-air took them to the countryside, but what made them choose one particular village over another? One of the crucial reasons seems to be the character of the village inn or hotel. Much remains to be detailed about this relationship, for Robert Louis Stevenson’s popular opinion of such innkeepers as merely

38 Hitchcock, 1887.
credit-brokers does not seem to be applicable outside of France.\textsuperscript{39} What treasure was it that only a few hoteliers recognised in those first impoverished artist lodgers? There appears to be little detailed objective analysis of these hotels and their extraordinary role as go-betweens. This study-area is fortunate to have three major examples of artists’ hotels, two of which have large surviving art collections, of more than regional importance. Examination of these enterprises, their proprietors and their registers reveals a wealth of fresh material about the habits of the artists and their close relationships to their hosts and village societies.

One new and productive area of research is with the guestbooks from these village artists’ hotels. Several registers have survived from the period before WWI and are here examined and compared for the first time. Two of four major registers are from hotels in this study area, Volendam and Skagen. These are usefully compared with those from Barbizon and Giverny in France. Just as indicative are the hotels’ collections of artwork given and made by the colonists. The Hotel Brøndum art collection forms the basis of Skagens Museum. Its famous decorated dining-room and its paintings are well documented. The Hotel Spaander’s vast art collection is less well documented. Much useful primary material remains to be sorted. The special nature of Hotel Spaander’s decorations and huge art collection warrants a separate study in itself, for it has never been substantially removed from the original site. From a sociological point of view, these hotel collections offer some of the most reliable empirical insights into the artists’ relationships to their working environment and their hosts. Many works were completed and given to the proprietors in situ. In addition, analysis is made of the panel decorations, the trompe-l’œil paintings, the graffiti, as well as the gifts of pictures, sketches, drawings and cartoons, as they were an immediate response to their new found environment and characterful communities. These hotel decorations have a special collective quality all their own because they were for show in the host community, as opposed to a distant metropolitan perspective.

One of the major areas of this present research that differs from others is that it asserts the ubiquitous problem of money. ‘The Financial Imperative’ is not just about money, costs, national economies, market forces, demand and supply, although they all contribute to the decision-making processes when artists consider their careers. This section tries to combine notions of economics and affordable technological innovation as vital elements overlooked or under-appreciated in the standard art histories of the period. By using these two indices it is hoped to explain patterns within the chronology more successfully. The two factors are interestingly related, for innovations are not truly applicable until they are cost-effective, by manufacturer and customer alike. Even the timely invention of the collapsible paint-tube had problems: patented in 1841, it took decades for it to dominate the market and totally replace the cheap traditional bladder containers. Many innovations are re-examined in this light, including the contributions of paint manufacturers and artists’ suppliers, new means of transport and communication, new publishers and printers, new professional societies and the new generation of art dealers.

Links have frequently been made between the spread of railways and the rise of rural artists’ colonies, but this relationship is by no means clear or simple, judging by this study-area. \textit{Fin de Siècle} Europe underwent huge social and economic changes, and these artists’ villages must be viewed as more than retreats from the modern world. Rural art centres were places of fresh experiment that took full advantage of the newest processes available, including transport, equipment and the rising new art market itself. Each innovation is here reviewed in context, so as

\textsuperscript{39} Stevenson, 1884.
to better understand the tensions in the art world the time. Career choices had to be made all the time, for the century was witness to some of the most extraordinary changes ever, in science, philosophy, politics and pictorial representation. First lithography and then photography presented fresh challenges to the whole of the art profession. There was a host of new pressures, not culturally specific, yet all in competition, that seem to arrive, or mature, in the 1880s, which caused a demand for a serious collective response, seen by the forming of many exhibition societies all across Europe, including: Pulchri Studio (NL), Als Ik Kan and Les XX (B), Den Frie Udstilling (DK), New English Art Club (GB) and the Berlin Sezession (D).

Traditionally, the discourse has painters exploring the countryside looking for unspoilt environments. In the chapter Thematic Trends, the evolution of nineteenth century iconography is re-assessed. Along the coast, marine painters were naturally the leaders. Topographical artists arrived to give weight to village character after mid-century. Out of the School of Barbizon, one new branch of subject matter gained prominence, folk genre. However, there is no simple linear progression in the rise of most rural artists’ colonies, for artists had many motivations and a diverse range of interests and styles. A growing interest in Realism, as promoted by Courbet, for example, certainly lay behind much rural art, but it took on slightly different forms in different countries. In Germany, Naturalism was thought of as the urban wing of Realism, but elsewhere Naturalism is associated with the bravura brushwork of artists such as Anders Zorn, Peder Severin Krøyer and John Singer Sargent, all of whom spent some time in coastal artists’ colonies. Other studies have concentrated on the ideological drive behind painting in the countryside but this present study examines the pragmatic probabilities that occurred to unsettled professional painters, especially the young and disenfranchised. Economic theory recognises the advantages of specialising, so that one finds, at Newlyn, figure painting dominated yet, just a few hours walk away, at St. Ives, landscapists prevailed. By way of total contrast, Domburg’s artists’ colony managed to display as many as fifteen different artistic styles all at the same time.40

This study primarily concentrates on painters, most of whom had received some degree of formal training. For reasons of time and space, other artists, such as writers, musicians and craftsmens, are not much dealt with here, although a few are mentioned when they played an early and prominent role in the development of specific groups, as the poet Rainer Maria Rilke did at Worpswede. The pioneers of artists’ colonies included a broad cross-section of the modern movement, including architects, sculptors, calligraphers, novelists, journalists, composers, poets, philosophers, illustrators, designers, weavers, photographers and print makers, who joined these rural forums of debate and, to a greater or lesser extent, affected each other’s work.

This approach is, of necessity, inter-disciplinary, for there were so many factors that came together to form such groups and sustain their enthusiasm for social creativity. A working knowledge of geography, geology and geomorphology, along with other natural sciences, was necessary to fully understand the physical environments of these locations. Social sciences and a sense of history helped contextualise the regions, period topographical interest and how folk-art was viewed. The political climate ever changes, but its failings always help to encourage alternatives, as it was with the new art markets. Some of the latest sociological research also helped clarify the foundation of cultural group formations. As this is a study in art history, much research is focussed on period studio-craft, the chemistry of painting and pigments, the geometry of composition and perspective, the evolution of new equipment and materials, teaching methods, academy curriculum, award systems, exhibition rules and regulations, improved printing methods and intellectual copyright laws, and the history of art criticism.

40 Vlooten, 1994¹, p. 43.
The purpose of this research is to provide the first pragmatic, systematic, comparative and critical analysis of the development of village artists’ colonies and so to position them in relation to the rise of modernism in art and design. To do this it was necessary to analyse more than the standard iconographies. The widest possible range of sources is attempted the better to understand the decision making process of the time, both to go to the countryside and stay there working. This study concentrates mainly on the pragmatic and social factors that informed those decisions and especially the simple financial effects on all these elements made by the rise of new art market, the new generation of art dealers and print-publishers.

This study only includes a minimal amount of autobiographical material and correspondence in order not to repeat already well-documented conclusions. For example, one may take it as read that the vast majority of the artists benefitted from the move and had fond memories of the time they spent in artists’ colonies, demonstrated by the many biographical anecdotes, the huge number of participants, the frequent returnees and the dedications on the gifts to village innkeepers. Effort has been made to include the most recent studies, summaries and critiques on the factors in question. There have been few international comparative studies made on this subject, but a bibliography is included to offer specific and general guidance to various aspects of the period and countries covered by this research.

A long working-knowledge of this coast has made this broad approach possible, yet many new sources of material continue to be discovered that give demonstrable support to certain critical factors and also point to new areas of research, such as from the hotel guestbooks, hotel art collections, artists’ suppliers, paint manufacturers and many different kinds of exhibition catalogues. This region houses some major art museums on or near the coast, most of which own works by its leading talents. There are also many village museums and local archives along this region which help considerably with understanding the local historical context and show the exact nature of the countryside and its inhabitants at that time. In addition, many private collections and galleries house primary material, so that invaluable assistance comes from curators, archivists, historians and, in a few cases, the families of the artists involved.

The works produced in these artist’ villages offer the easiest introduction to the subject, yet only a tiny fraction of the total amount produced are visible or accessible today, despite many recent efforts to publicize and computerise museum collections. The conclusions of previous authors were taken into account but, in order to reduce the technical shortcomings of certain lines of inquiry, much re-evaluation of material is necessary. In order to map out fully the waves of interest in these artists’ villages, constant textural and pictorial references are employed, together with an emphasis on the chronological placement of particular actions and events. This is important, as certain artists’ discoveries remained unpromoted at the time, unrevealed to the general public, to art collectors and even colleagues and friends. A prime example of such anachronisms in the context of colonial development is that of Paula Modersohn-Becker, whose personal achievements at Worpswede now attract considerable critical acclaim, but whose work at the time remained largely a secret until her untimely death.

Much research here is focused on a thorough knowledge of contemporary art catalogues. In a small country, such as Denmark, with only one central annual salon, at the time, one major art circle and one art academy, with few private art galleries, a more complete pattern of the events, sales and trends is possible. This contrasts to the polycentric Germany situation or the international complexities of the Dutch art market. As the period saw the rise of the notion of the ‘nation state’, additional discussion focused on the role of the huge international expositions, that became common after mid-century. The politics behind these chauvenistic events was
complex, yet they also had an affect on publicising artists’ colonies, as states endeavoured to appear modern and progressive.

Some of the most difficult areas of this research deal with detailing the money matters, despite having always been an integral part of an artist’s career and life. It is often an area that is hardest to qualify. The spectacular sales are the ones that get written about, such as the Sécrétan auction of Millet’s *The Angelus*, (25:4), but not the everyday exchanges. This particular sale also confirmed the presence of speculators in the new market, which also affected modern art. Most of the primary exhibition catalogues, however, do not contain the prices artists were asking for their creations. One of the new salvations, from the artist’s point of view, implicit in the rise of the Dealer-Critic system, was that painters were now liberated from the need to sell their own work, to put a price on it, even to haggle and to explain it all to prospective clients or a collectors. Village cooperatives helped artists gain greater confidence and self-determination. They were, in turn, modelled on those mechanisms which had previously only been available to only a few successful, established names. Fully-integrated, village artists’ colonies may, therefore, be seen as answering many practical problems in the context of marketing modernism.

5:1 – Domburg, Summer, 1911.
Photograph of the opening day of the artists’ stylish new exhibition hall – showing Jan Toorop (third from the left), his daughter ‘Charlie’ Toorop, Jan Heyse, Ferdinand Hart-Nibbrig, Jacoba van Heemskerck and the philanthropist Marie Tak van Poortvliet. NB: the hall sat directly on the sands and appears to have no fenestration beneath its roof. It blew down for the final time in 1921.

6:1 – Grez-sur-Loing, c. 1880.
This motley group of artists shows the fun they often organised, here a fancy dress party in the Hotel Chevillon, as a welcome break from their serious intent. Robert Louis Stevenson, in the kilt, is to the far right, and Fanny Osbourne, half seated, is to his right.

Artists’ colonies served as a refuge for many kinds of people and in all times of trouble. Here, Willy Sluiter (left) overlooks a group photo-session, behind the Hotel Spaander, including some Franco-Belgian artist friends and one rather bedraggled Spaniard, Manuel Benedito, during the time of World War I. Elsevier’s *Maandschrift*