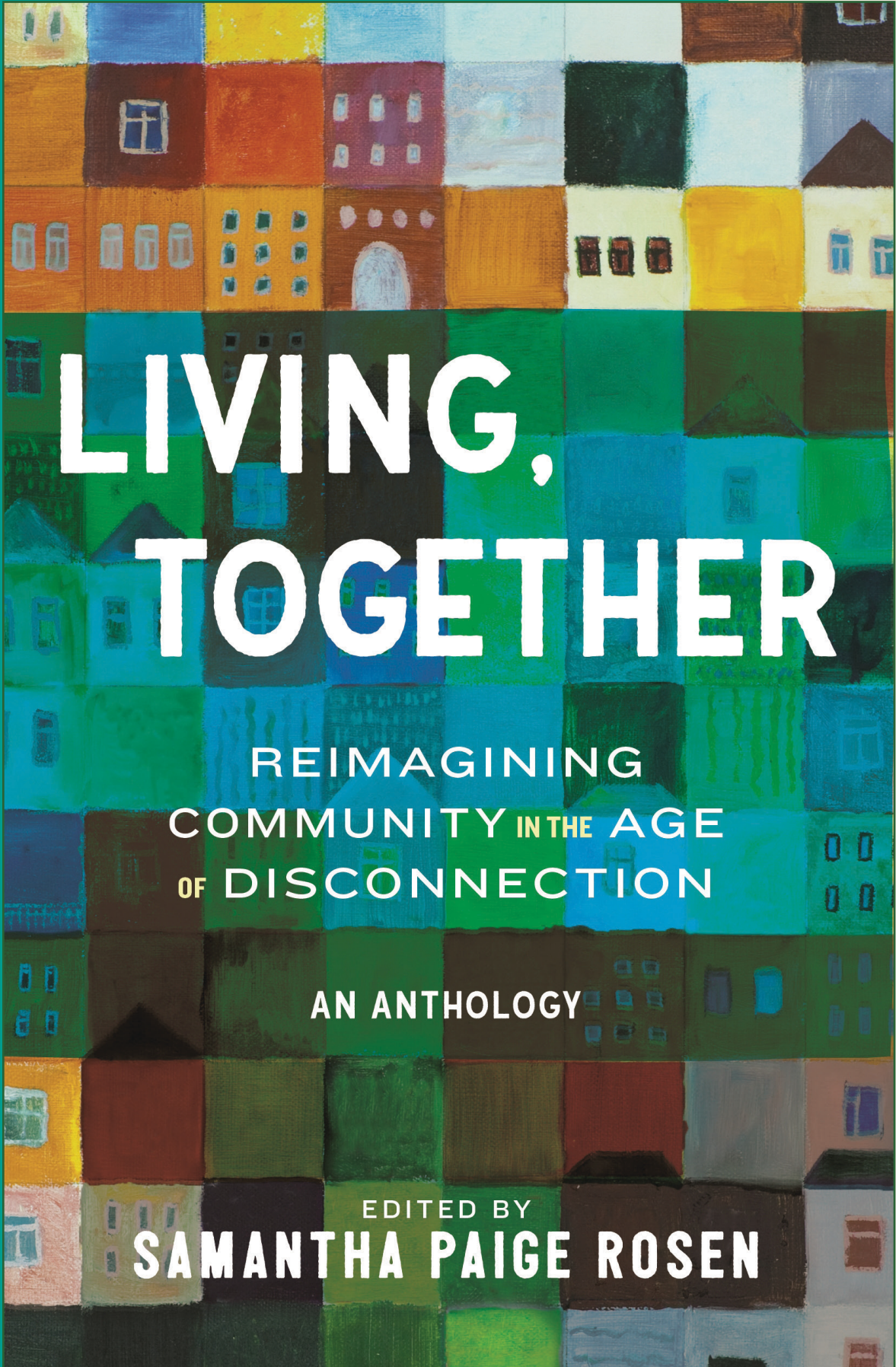




LIVING, TOGETHER

REIMAGINING
COMMUNITY IN THE AGE
OF DISCONNECTION

AN ANTHOLOGY

EDITED BY
SAMANTHA PAIGE ROSEN

DISCUSSION GUIDE



FROM THE AUTHOR

Dear Reader,

I'm so glad you've found your way to *Living, Together*. I came up with the idea for this collection after being surprised by how much I enjoyed living with my parents in my 30s. It made me wonder what other ways people in the U.S. might be living that are less familiar in our individualistic and nuclear family-centric society. I wanted to encourage myself, and readers, to challenge the assumptions we've been raised and socialized with around communal living and interdependence.

The most freeing thing I learned is that those who've taken communal living from an idea to reality have reframed their thinking around it again and again, or they've gotten rid of the frame entirely. Communal living can look as informal as friends deciding to live together with intention or several generations of a family living within walking distance from one another, or as formal as building a co-housing community from the ground up. It can last forever or for a season of life. Opening ourselves up to the flexibility that's within the very nature of communal living makes this practice—and its benefits—more accessible to us all.

Beyond the specific practice of communal living, I'm certain that a greater emphasis on social and emotional interdependence could alleviate some of the cultural, political, financial, and environmental turmoil of this era—which brings me to you. I've been told *Living, Together* has made readers feel hopeful about the future. The greatest thing to come out of this project would be for you to channel that hope into questioning and discussing—and even planning and acting—toward a future that is not just “living” but sustainable, resilient, and joyful.

Your friend,
Sam

Samantha Paige Rosen's writing on identity, culture, and the arts has appeared in the *Washington Post*, *Harper's Bazaar*, *ELLE*, *Slate*, *Them*, *Literary Hub*, and elsewhere. She earned her MFA from Sarah Lawrence College and lives outside of Philadelphia, where she is a freelance writer and editor, a writing tutor and coach, and an amateur potter. *Living, Together* is her first book.



Author photo by Laura Piccoli

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. **The writers and organizers in *Living, Together* reflect on what they learned growing up about independence, the nuclear family, and the concept of home.** What cultural narratives or personal assumptions have shaped the way you think about these things? How has this book invited you to look at them differently?
2. **Many of our ideas of what makes a home are rooted in heteronormative and gendered assumptions.** How did the essayists disrupt these assumptions through communal living? Did their situations make you think differently about your definition of “home” and how yours functions?
3. **This anthology offers a glimpse into how other cultures and countries prioritize community over the individual.** What lessons can Americans learn from these stories? How might we look to these cultures’ traditions to expand and deepen the Americanized ideals of “home” and “community”?
4. **This book speaks to a sense of collective identity among folks who live together.** How does communal living inform that sense of collective identity and what communities may benefit most from it?
5. **Chronic illness is largely excluded from dominant American narratives of independence and nuclear family life.** In what ways does *Living, Together* show us how communal living can serve physical, social, and emotional needs, especially for those who are chronically ill?
6. **Family relationships can shift with communal living, especially in multigenerational households or caregiving situations.** If you are in a shared living situation with family, what role has communal life played in how you relate to each other? If you are not, consider how your family relationships might change in such a scenario.
7. **This book celebrates “chosen family” or family that doesn’t adhere to traditional nuclear standards.** How do the essayists reject the idea that, to lead a full life, one must have the love and support of their biological family? How has your own chosen family enriched your life?
8. **As more people live to old age, compassionate conversations around aging and elder care are essential.** How do the *Living, Together* essayists approach these topics through communal living? How do their experiences speak to your own thoughts, feelings, or anxieties about aging and caregiving?

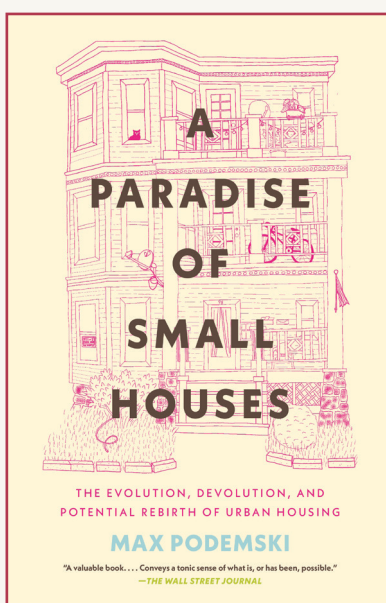
DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

9. Throughout the book, essayists emphasize the importance of communication and intentionality. How do these values nurture your own relationships, and how might they foster thriving communal living arrangements?
10. This collection also acknowledges the costs of communal living and interdependence. What obstacles did the essayists prepare for or encounter? Which challenges might you face with communal living and how would you approach them?
11. Some communal living scenarios are temporary, whether by design or circumstance. How did this book make you think differently (or perhaps for the first time) about short-term living arrangements?
12. The last section of *Living, Together* explores a kind of “communal living” that extends beyond housing structures. What does it mean to have “a communal mindset” and how might you bring it into your daily life?

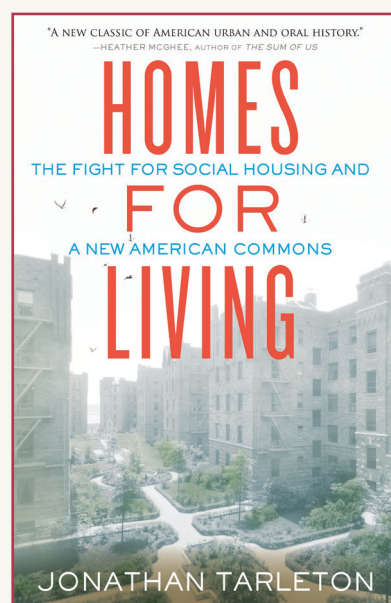
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