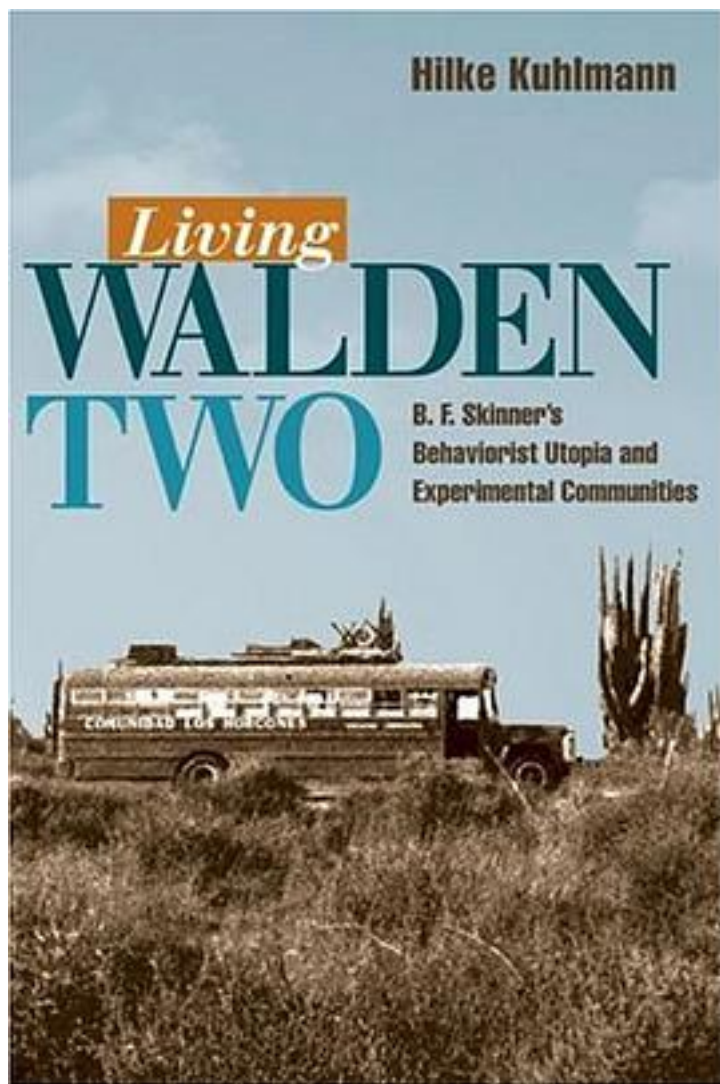


Living Walden Two



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著者:Kuhlmann, Hilke

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In "Walden Two", behavioral psychologist B. F. Skinner describes one of the most controversial fictional utopias of the twentieth century. During the 1960s and 70s, this novel went on to inspire approximately three dozen actual communities, which are entertainingly examined in Hilke Kuhlmann's "Living Walden Two". In the novel, behavioral engineers use positive reinforcement in organizing and "gently guiding" all aspects of society, leaving the rest of the citizens "free" to lead happy and carefree lives. Among the real-world communities, a recurrent problem in moving past the planning stages was the nearly ubiquitous desire among members to be gentle guides, coupled with strong resistance to being guided. In an insightful and often hilarious narrative, Hilke Kuhlmann explores the dynamics of the communities, with an in-depth examination of the two surviving Skinnerian communities: Comunidad Los Horcones in Mexico, and Twin Oaks in Virginia. Drawing on extensive interviews with the founders and key players in the Walden Two communities, Kuhlmann redefines the criteria for their success by focusing on the tension between utopian blueprints for a new society and communal experiments' actual effects on individual lives. Hilke Kuhlmann is an assistant professor in the American Studies program at the University of Freiburg, Germany.

作者介绍:

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