

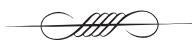
The Camphill Movement through social work experiencies

— *A discribing essay of a home for people with special need* —

Abstract

In Hungary, after the collaps of socialism, started a graduate change in the institution system for people with special need (for mentally handicapped). But, the first step to realize this change first of all based on the change of the way of thinking about those people who are living with any special need.

In the late 1990's, I was living and working in Grangemockler Camphill, in Ireland for several months, as a social worker student, realizing my practice in a home for people with special need. This essay is the presentation of my personal and professional experiencies on Camphill Grangemockler – a community that takes part of Camphill Movement world wide network¹ –, which can promote the above mentioned changing in Hungary and also provide a possibility to understand how function a special home for people with special need in Ireland.



Introduction

The Camphill movement was founded in 1939 in Scotland. Working from the educational, curative and social impulses of the Austrian philosopher Rudolf Steiner², Dr Karl König and a group of close associates started a school for disabled children, set within the context of a shared, Christian, communal life. The school flourished and led to the founding of other Camphill Communities some offering schooling, some training for disabled people and others long term employment. There are at

present 72 Camphill Communities worldwide, working as independent but affiliated centres.³

*“At Camphill the members build intentional communities with people of all ages who live with disabilities, recognizing the potential, dignity, spiritual integrity and contribution of each and every individual. For over 60 years, Camphill communities all over the world have challenged the notion of what it means to have a developmental or learning disability, and have shown that each person is a unique and essential link in the circle of humanity.”*⁴

The pillars of Camphill: founder and theories

Karl König (1902–1966) was born in Vienna, the son of a Hungarian Jewish father and

¹ Camphill plays all over the world: <http://camphill-foundation.org/map-ch-world.html> (Last access 09.24. 2013.)

² „The healthy social life is found when in the mirror of each human soul the whole community finds its reflection and when in the community the strength of each one is living.” By Rudolf Steiner’s philosophy was deeply impacted the Camphill Movement. In PIETZNER 1990.

³ <http://www.camphill.org.uk/> (Last access 09.24. 2013.)

⁴ <http://www.camphill.org.uk/> (Last access 09.24. 2013.)

Moravian mother. His medical career began at the Institute of Embriology in the University of Vienna and later he became house physician at the Clinical and Therapeutic Institute at Arlesheim, Basle, Switzerland. His lifelong work for the handicapped, began with his confounding of the Pilgramshain Children's Home in Silesia. It continued in Scotland in 1939 with the founding of the Camphill Rudolf Steiner Schools for children in need of special care. Later it grew to encompass work with adolescents and adults as schools, colleges and village communities were established in many countries. As the founder of the Camphill Movement, he was well known as a medical doctor, author and lecturer.⁵

Karl König's life-work originated with four important historical individuals. The first one was Johann Amos Comenius (1592–1670) a philosopher and educator. European education was determined for centuries by his „Great Didactic”. He dreamed about a „Universal College” which is based on pansophia and its task was to serve mankind. The „Universal College” reappears in Camphill as a College Meeting. All of the co-workers, doctors, teachers and so on take part in these meetings which are part of the curative education as well.⁶

Count Ludwig Zinzendorf (1700–1760) was a Christian missionary and a religious reformer. The Camphill basis its *raison d'être* on antroposophy and Christian morality though it is a personal matter to belong to a church, a political party or an association. The Camphill Movement is an attempt, an impulse, a community of men and women who try to live and work in common with people with special needs for a spiritual purpose. This is reflected in the interpretation of different feasts and special plays.⁷

Robert Owen (1771–1858) of Wels

dreamed about a new economic order. He envisaged common ownership in the village communities which he hoped to set up. Owen succeeded once: in his first settlement in New Lanark where he himself was able to direct the venture. The shining example of his personal life and conduct made this success possible. The Camphill Villages are organised in the same way. The origine of this obviously goes back to Owen.⁸

The previous three great peoples life-work is summerised and continued at the same time with Rudolf Steiner's anthroposophy. He was born between Sopron and Vienna. At that time he was one of many versatiles scientists. The Camphill Movement is completely inspired by his philosophy, which is anthroposophy.

Whether a community survives and grows or stagnates and dies, depends on its underlying philosophy. It is evident from the growth and spread of Camphill, that is underlying philosophy is sound.

There was only one philosophical system for decades in Hungary, but after 1989 started a tong-term stage of change and much of it is outworn as a political system. The Marxist human definition left its mark on the all questions of handicap in Hungary and in the other communist countries as well. The Marxist philosophy⁹ states that a person become human through their labour. They rise above the animal world their use of tools. Human history is based on and developed through the forces and relations of productivity. If we pursue this line of thinking, those who cannot produce are marginalized. Among these are people with handicap. In this material view of the world anyone with handicap are excluded.

What was the consequence of this way of thinking for care of those were handicap in Hungary during the communist regime?

One of the main pillars of government

⁵ MÜLLER-WIEDEMANN 1996.

⁶ PIETZNER 1988.

⁷ STEINER 1992.

⁸ KÖNIG 1993.

⁹ NYÍRI 1983. 361–395.

thinking at the time was the 5 year plan. Quotas were set and had to be reached. Those with handicap could not reach any of the targets set. These people were excluded from society. It was all unjustise.¹⁰

I think what I have said above is important because is important how we deal with people, and how we practice our social work depends on our ideas and view of the world. If somebody accepts certain prepositions in theory then this has consequences in practice too. This is supported by experiences which I had during several months in Camphill (Grangemockler, Ballybay, Duffcarrig – Ireland) and in Dr. Waltner Károly Health Children's Home (Szeged, in Hungary).

I do not want to say that Camphill is as perfect in practice as in theory. I also do not want to say that Camphill's life-style has to be accepted by each professional.

I do write about Camphill Movement as an example. This life-style - a sort of social work at the same time - did not exist in Hungary before 2007, after 18 years of changing political and economic system.¹¹

It is not easy to judge the social workers and the professionals of different social fields with their own spiritual backgrounds; for instance Marxists, anthroposophists, liberals or Christians. All have its positive and less positive way of thinking. It is not our task to judge each other. People work out of different value systems and if the value system is good it will bear good fruit, and it is by our fruits, that we are know.

Dr. König makes a resumed all this ideas in this way: „*Only the help from one person to the other, the encounter of their higher spiritual being, an awareness of the other's individuality, without enquiring into creed or world conception or political affiliation, but simply the meet-*

ing, eye to eye, of two individualities - only this creates the kind of curative education which may counter and heal the threat to our innermost humanity.”¹²

Special features of Camphill Villages¹³

1. Constitution's aims and tasks

The aim of the movement is to look after and to accomodate people with special handicaps in residential settings. The community achieves this by tailoring its services to the individual needs of the people with disabilities.

The Camphill Communities are not institutions but real homes. Both the people with special needs and their co-workers live together as a family sharing the tasks of daily life. The role of the co-workers is to enable each member of the community to find their human dignity, and to find their place in society. They try to do this in all aspects of life in work as in leisure.

Where possible therapy is provided for those who may benefit from it. The curative education programme also helps to people with special needs to make the most of their abilities. Of course, there are regular supervisions (team meetings) as well.

2. Geographical position and relationship to the wider community

The Camphill Villages usually are located in the countryside. As the name suggests their houses are clustered together into self-contained small villages. The villages are located close to rural settlements but are completely independent of them and they are usually within commuting distance of larger towns. For example the Camphill Grangemockler is

¹⁰ PIEPER 1995.

¹¹ In 2012 the first Hungarian Camphill Community closed because of financial problems.

¹² PIETZNER 1990.

¹³ This part of the essay based on my work experiences in Camphill Grangemockler, Irland (1996–1997).

situated close to three towns: Kilkenny, Clomnel and Carrick-on-Suir. In these towns there are facilities for cultural, sport and leisure time programmes. Each Community has a number of cars and at least one minibus for transport purposes.

The Community is well integrated into the wider society and each Camphill Village has good relationships with their neighbours. The Camphill Movement is well known throughout the British Isles. On a daily basis there is a constant stream of visitors to the communities particularly from school-pupils and others enquiring about this unusual way of life. It is perhaps because the movement is concerned for the care and well-being of some of the weaker members of society - people with handicaps - that it commands such support and interest from the public at large.

Of Course, as I have mentioned yet, Camphill is an international movement and it gets its volunteers from all over the world in addition to this the movement avails of the services of professionals from outside the community, such as nurses, drivers etc. Most of these latter groups are on the pay-roll of the government.

3. Buildings

Each Camphill Village is comprised of three or more residential houses within close proximity to one another. A typical house has eight or ten bedrooms, a bathroom, a laundry-room, dining-room, kitchen and so on. In other words it is like a family home except on a larger scale. These houses are real homes for the people who live in than.

The houses typically are of brick construction but only wooden furnishings are used for the interior. This is for philosophical reasons connected to the organic life — style — what is known as the antroposophical way of furnishing. This philosophy permeates all aspects of their life eg. food, soap, washing up liquid etc. are all organic produce and all waste products are also recycled.

Another important building in a Camphill Village is the community Hall. This is the place where concerts, meetings, morning gatherings and other activities take place. The first Camphill hall was designed by Gábor Talló, a Hungarian architect, who was a founder member of the first Camphill Village in Scotland.¹⁴

Every Camphill Village usually has a small, well stocked library and depending on the size of the community there are often farm buildings, a weaving mill or other workshops on site as well.

4. Community structure and management

There are four different groups of people in each Camphill Village. The group are those who come for a short visit (usually less than a week). These are people who are interested in the life of the community but are not in a position to give a commitment and therefore are not part of the community as such. They get an opportunity to experience some parts of the daily life of Camphill but are not given any responsibilities. There is usually space for some visitors in each village.

The second group of people are those who have given a commitment for a number of months. These people have health insurance paid for them by the community, they have responsibilities and take part in the daily life. They attend everyday meetings of the community but they are not invited to management meetings. Students on placements make up a large percentage of this group.

The third category is comprised of single people who have been with the community for more than one year and who sometimes make a lifetime commitment. They are full-members of the organisation and have all the responsibilities and benefits attached to it.

The core group of the village are the families, the married couples and their children who are the cornerstone of each community.

¹⁴ PIETZNER 1988. 53.

All village members excluding the visitors are known as co-workers. They share responsibility equally and have the same benefits. However the single and married groups of long term co-workers have over all responsibilities for house and community management.

The community are „college” meeting is the wellspring of Camphill’s work. The whole community of co-workers participates in it except visitors. These meetings occur roughly on a monthly basis or when emergency matters arise. Decisions are made on a consensus basis¹⁵ and everybody’s opinion is heard and respected and no final decisions are made until agreement is reached all round.

Every Camphill Village has a councillor a member of the community who volunteers to represent its interests at regional level. As there is no hierarchical structure in Camphill. He or she is not a leader as such but rather an advocate who tries to bring their village’s views to the regional council. The regional meetings are held twice a year. Councillors and professional people from outside of the community who have associations with it eg. doctors, teachers, politicians are entitled to attend.

There are seven Camphill regions all over the world: Irish, English, Scottish, Central-European, Scandinavian, American and South-African.¹⁶ One or two delegates from each region attend an international meeting at the beginning of each year. The agenda at these meetings is often concerned with important issues relating to Camphill life and involves a review or reflection on how life has been in the past year and how it might be improved. Representations on councils at regional and international level are wholly dependent on volunteers from within the communities rather than on academic achievement or qualifications.

In general this system works very well as

it means the representatives are in tune with the need of their people and it avoids all the pitfalls of institutionalization.

5. Work routines and division of labour

Although they are the same association every Camphill Village is independently organised. Each one is a separate unit and they decide on a local basis the type of work that is done.

The settlements have different specializations eg. glass engraving is the main form of work at Botton Village in England, arts is the mainstay of Duffcarrig Village, while curative education is the chief concern at Glencraig Village.

At Grangemockler Camphill there are four different fields of work: weaving, farm-work, gardening¹⁷ and woodwork. Each area has a permanent „supervisor” who is responsible ensuring that the work gets done. The supervisors are not bosses as such but rather facilitators who help out with the work themselves and ensure that everything runs smoothly.

The system is built totally on teamwork. At the morning gatherings the needs of the day are assessed the human resources available and the work is divided out accordingly. This is usually done by the long-term co-workers because they have a greater knowledge of what needs to be done. As in any team there is great room for flexibility and people can choose whatever area of work they like on any given day, having regard to the needs of the community. Sometimes there is a possibility for people to work in pairs rather than as part of a larger group. This model of everyone working together sharing authority and responsibility equally is very central to the movement’s philosophy and goes back to its origins in the 1940’s.¹⁸

¹⁵ KÖNIG 1993. 33–45

¹⁶ See the map on page: <http://www.camphill.org.uk/> (Last access 09.24. 2013.)

¹⁷ STEINER 1984.

¹⁸ PIETZNER 1988. op.cit.

6. Characteristics, medical condition and health-care of people with special needs

The people with special needs in Camphill usually have an intelligence quotient over 40-50, which means they are in the moderate to mild mental handicap category.

Down's syndrome is one of the most prevalent condition of people with special needs. Many of the people with mental handicap suffer from depression, epilepsy, nervous diseases and enzyme deficiencies. The latter condition causes mental retardation and short stature and sufferers also have a large head and premature wrinkles. Other conditions peculiar to people with mental disabilities include Exophthalmic goitre (thyroid deficiency), oligophrenia and autism.¹⁹ Each Camphill Region has its fullyqualified doctor with special training in antroposophical medicine.²⁰ This special doctor visits all of the villages of the region every year spending a number of days with each community, and in this way gains an intimate knowledge of the medical and other conditions of the people with special needs. Following this visit the doctor writes a medical report on his clients. On a day-to-day basis usually natural organic medicines (not artificial) are used - pharmaceutical medicines are used in emergencies or in cases of last result.

7. The works, activities and therapies for people with special needs

First of all, there is equality in every Camphill Community, which means everybody has a status of equal standing. They do not use the words nurses nor patients in the movement for those who live in Camphill.

As it mentioned earlier (compare 5.) everybody goes to different workplaces during a day like in a big family. All member of the community play a significant role in daily life.

The profits or quantities of the work are not important but it is to find sense in every moment.

There are plenty of spare time activities eg. folk-dances and music, sports etc. in Grangemockler Camphill. Every second week some people of the community take part in a hydrotherapeutical gymnastics programme at the nearest town. There's singing, listening music and chiming as a therapy and also euritmy as a therapeutic form of motion.²¹ Arts are in the center activities in many Camphill Villages, sometimes like therapies eg. painting therapy.

At the end of the week walking tours and excursions are organised to different places. The several mini buses and cars make the travels easier.

In general we can say that Camphill Life is organised so that each member of the movement may join to the daily programmes as well as co-workers and people with special needs: all this makes the atmosphere more homely and friendly.

8. Treatment. Connections between co-workers and people with special needs

On the one hand, the daily life connection between co-workers and people with special needs is based on tolerance and empathy. In fact this means to adopt to these people day after day who are in need. The client is set free from any inhibitions in this atmosphere.

On the other hand, a very important fact is the cooperation between co-workers and people with special need. Both the co-workers and the mentaly handicaps work together. Every human being is able to do daily activities to a certain level, even handicaps though sometimes they need help. The cooperation calls for intervention occasionally for those who are in need, without disturbing their freedom.

Of course these ideas are difficult to turn into reality. There are arguments and quarells between the Camphill Village inhabitants at

¹⁹ The effects which autism has were excellently portrayed by Dustin Hoffmann in the film Rain Man.

²⁰ BETT 1978.

²¹ STEINER 1983.

times. Usually these oppositions are solved in the community meetings. These meetings are official forums in order to clarify personal problems as well.

The spirituality and philosophy of Steiner also gives guidance to the community members. Also Steiner pedagogy is permeated among the Villagers.²²

In addition to the daily six hours work, most of the time is spent for recreation (the timetable also varying by communities). In all this it becomes visible that the simple face to face connections are the most important experiences for both: those with handicap and also for the people who share their time with them. What is more, their whole lives usually are experiences hour by hour and day by day.

The goal of the movement is to make these experiences useful for the basic human integrity.

9. Finances

There are several financial sources of Camphill Communities.

First of all, a newly settled Camphill place is sponsored by the government and by other Camphill places which are in good financial situation. The Camphill Villages with stabil financial background usually make money in different ways. The sources of money depending on the profile of the community: glass engraving, wood-work, farming, weaving and so on.

There is an active life-style in Camphill. This means that members of the community are able to cover a large part of the expenditure by their daily profit though making profit is not the main goal of the Movement.

The government, some foundations and the families of the people with special need also give financial assistance to the Camphill Villages. Sometimes the Communities are supported by other necessities for life (food, field

for working on it, whole farm etc.). Once a year there is an „open-day” at every Camphill places which is very similar to the picnic in May: families and visitors are spending a whole day in the open air with barbecue, contests, picnic and so on. There are three goals of this day: one of them to introduce briefly the Camphill life-style. The second one is simplify to be together with the visitors. Finally to collect some money by contests (the participation is possible by paying a symbolic sum of money for it).

10. Training and assistance for co-Workers (education, holidays, spare-time)

There are some Rudolf Steiner Schools and „antroposophical” colleges all over Europe which are independent of the Camphill Movement. These provide a wide range of courses and other facilities for anybody who is interested in this form of education.

Usually the introduction courses to the Camphill life-style are for those who want to join the movement. These courses provide wood-work, gardening, farming, weaving and so on, according to the co-worker’s needs and interests.

At the colleges there is higher education connected to antroposophy. The different faculties are euritmty, music, arts, medicine and several therapy faculties. The participation fees for both the courses and colleges are sponsored by partly by the movement and partly by students.

Each day at Camphill Villages ends with recreation programmes. After the daily work one of the co-workers organises folk-dancing, euritmty or other activities.

Everybody who belongs to the Camphill Movement has a day-off a week. This is a sort of mental refreshment. At the week-ends walking tours and other excursions are organised by the community which covers all the necessary expenses. Also possible are visits to the cinema and theatre or other cultural programmes.

Five weeks per year are the usual holidays

²² STEINER 1985.

for both co-workers and people with special needs. All costs during the holidays are sponsored by the community (including travel and other expenses) because there are no wages at Camphill villages in accordance with the Karl König ideal (pocket money is available for each member of the community). All other income and expenditure are controlled by the community.

11. How the people with special needs become a member of the Community?

Usually the people with special needs can get into a Camphill home through their parents, doctor or social worker. Each Irish county has a health authority. This centre has all the relevant informations about different local homes and institutions, including Camphill places. Parents with the help of the social worker or doctor consult the health authority and choose between the possibilities.

There is a term of probation for new members of a Camphill home which lasts a couple of weeks. During this time it will become clear whether the Camphill life-style is suitable or not for the mentally disabled person and also for the Camphill Community. There are some mentally handicapped people who cannot adopt to the Camphill life-style, such as those who had a completely different life-style before.

During the year there are several exchange programmes between Camphill Villages. This means that some of the residents are able to stay at another Camphill home for a while. For those who stay in the same community for a long time, changing their milieu

could be useful at times. After a couple of weeks the residents go back to their original places. All these exchange programmes are arranged by co-workers.

Everybody is free to leave their Camphill home any time they wish but this happens rarely. Their removal to another home or institute is organised by parents or by the doctor or social worker.

Conclusion

I have to ask at the end of this essay what is the point of this paper. How can the previous sentences help in this particular question of Hungarian social life?

First of all, this essay provides a service of information. It helps to inform us about homes which exist on the other side of Europe for people with special needs. Unfortunately the Hungarian Camphill Community in Velem closed up for economic reason. Hopefully it will open soon again.

There is another question. Why do not recommend Camphill Villages as training places for Hungarian pedagogy, social work and other students and professionals related with the topic? The villages are open to students and there are appropriate training coordinators and supervisors available too.

Hopefully in Hungary will continue soon the work for people with special need not just state institutions and Christian communities, but also in Camphill Movement. *

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