Researching Camphill: Past, Present & Future

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Introduction

In 1939 Karl König and a group of other Austrian-Jewish émigrés fled Austria to Scotland and there started a community for children with additional support needs. In time this extended across four continents and one hundred residential facilities, including schools and adults centres (Bock, 1990:36-56). Based on the principles outlined by König, Camphill was established to create and maintain an environment where the economic, social and spiritual aspects of lives within the community complemented each other. The ideals of the founders were to help those who had been "rejected and misunderstood by society, to care for the land, to celebrate the Christian festivals and to live together in a truly communal manner without salaries or other remuneration for their work" (de Ris Allen, 1990:11), guided by the Anthroposophical philosophy of Rudolf Steiner (1861-1925). It was not a job as much as a way of life, with an ideal of equality and unified decision-making practices (Seden, 2003:111; Bock, 2004).

In 2013 in Scotland, twelve communities are part of the worldwide Camphill Movement (http://www.camphillscotland.org.uk/). The majority are residential training facilities for adults, with one retirement home and two residential schools. Aberdeen, where Camphill began, has the largest concentration in Scotland, with Perthshire home to three and Dumfries to one centre. Academic research on Camphill is in its infancy (Bloor et al 1988; Christensen, 2006, Cushing, 2008; Brenner-Krohn, 2009; Smith, 2011, Snellgrove, 2013), though Camphill-based writers and writings have flourished recently (Bock, 2004; Surkamp, 2007; Luxford, 2003; Plant, 2006, Jackson, 2006, 2011, Bruder, 2012), covering founding member biographies, discussions about 'curative education'[2], challenges to Camphill in the twenty-first century, alongside questions regarding Camphill's contemporary role and relevance.

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[2] Curative education explained as 'healing education' and based on Steiner's philosophy where body, soul and spirit are brought together in a 'holistic' manner through special therapies, medicine, art, crafts etc. For a more detailed discussion, see Jackson, 2006 & Smith, 2009.

Camphill has a seventy year history and distinctive language, philosophies and 'alternative' outlook and at times these practices seem umbilically linked to the very word Camphill, which transcends the specific sites as a global Movement, yet simultaneously is embedded within the locations called Camphill. The implication is that one Camphill place represents the whole, a sort of community of communities. Exploring this oscillation between key ideas of a communally-determined history and how such a history is lived, re-imagined and constructed in the present is the aim of this research review, alongside exploring the challenge and social reality of being a Camphill in the twenty-first century and the different identity-claims such a name imposes on the people working and living in Camphill-labelled places.

This review does a number of things. It starts with an analysis of important Camphill people and exploring Camphills past through diaries, archives, and other documentary sources. Documentary approaches (in all their variety), dominates the field engaged with research on and with Camphill places and people (Müller-Wiedemann, 1990; Bock, 2004; Surkamp, 2007; Selg, 2008; Brenner-Krohn, 2009; Costa, 2011). The review then goes on to explore Camphill research from within the field of community studies, as Camphill is conceptually linked to ideas about the construction, formation and maintenance of community as intentional and therapeutic life sharing practices (Bloor et al, 1988; Kennard, 1998; McKanan, 2011; Bruder, 2012; Plant 2006, 2011, 2013;). Alongside this, other research has explored Camphill from the perspective of the everyday and its importance in shaping and creating a Camphill identity, whether focussing on everyday spirituality, educational practices within Camphill places, or the importance of the social and cultural life to the maintenance of Camphill life (Cushing, 2008; Snellgrove, 2013; Swinton & Falconer, 2011; Luxford & Luxford, 2003; Jackson, 2006).

The majority of studies discussed in this review research Camphill using a variety of qualitative approaches: interviews, documentary analysis, action research, ethnography and focus groups to name a few. This is predominantly due to the suitability of qualitative methods to access often challenging and difficult populations within Camphill settings, whilst also enabling engagement with a variety of viewpoints, which quantitative approaches often preclude. That is not to say that quantitative approaches are not useful, however they face the

challenge of trying to engage with non-verbal and non-survey literate populations, alongside the wider issues of poor take up and general resistance to the generalizability of questionnaires (Baron, 2011; Lyons, 2013; Plant, 2006). As a result this review does not only evaluate research conducted (both academic and lay) on Camphill, but it also highlights gaps in current research and suggests areas for future research engagement and development.

Historical & Biographical Approaches

Historical and biographical approaches is the largest and growing area of documentary research into Camphill principles and practices. Since the publication of Müller-Wiedemann's (1994) biography on Karl König, a growing body of work has been written and almost exclusively published by Floris Books Edinburgh, arguably the largest publisher of Camphill literature in the world. This research is primarily engaged with providing accounts of the founding and post-founding generation of Camphillers (Müller-Wiedemann, 1990; Bock, 2004; Surkamp, 2007; Selg, 2008). These biographies are written in flowing and lyrical prose and conceal the early difficulties of starting Camphill behind phrases like 'this was my task' and often 'such is the challenge of the twentieth century.' Critical discussion of the presented biographies is noticeably absent, yet close readings reveal that building a life together during the second world war was often fraught and painful (Müller-Wiedemann, 1990). That said, the enduring romance of the past survives quite simply because the past can be retold in ways that serves the writer's purpose (Young, 1993).

The focus on biography has extended to the relatively recent opening of the Karl König archive in Aberdeen, the same building that houses König's study. Within the archive the collected letters and writings of König are assembled into yearly and sometimes twice yearly publications, again by Floris Books. At present there are twelve published volumes of the writings of König, from Camphill thoughts and diary fragments (König, 2008), to his own biographical writing on people such as Helen Keller, Sigmund Freud and Charles Darwin (König, 2011). König wrote mostly in German so various translators are involved in this on-going project. Equally difficult for the compilers is the fact that König requested his diaries to be burnt upon his death. This request was duly carried out by Anke Weihs (a co-founder of Camphill) and so much of König's writings are lost. Anke's decision to burn the diaries is

hotly contested as being 'true to König's wishes' and a 'great loss for us all' (Snellgrove, 2013: 33/34). The publishing of König's diaries and past lectures is currently the most prolific area of writing related to Camphill, however these publications are descriptive and offer very little by way of analytical commentary on the writings within.

Costa (2011) and Brennan-Krohn (2009) have attempted to unpack and critically explore the beginnings of Camphill through analysis of letters and diaries and to highlight to the reader the challenges and issues that early Camphill faced. Their aim is to destabilise the rhetoric that presents Camphill's beginnings as seamless and unified and today's Camphill places as fragmented and disintegrating. This is an important point, as much of the documentary research carried out on Camphill is written largely for an internal audience of Camphill people who are interested in and often work in Camphill places. The focus on the history of Camphill and the biographies of founding generations are important in establishing and reaffirming the particular social context that Camphill came out of, as well as situating such 'people knowledge' as an important element of contemporary Camphill identity. Much of these biographical and historical discussions focus on the individual within wider collective and communal processes of community building. Indeed the early history of Camphill is directly connected with the attempts to build and sustain 'a brotherhood of man'[3] understood as living and working together in a shared community. The following section explores research that looks at Camphill in connection to the contested concept of community.

Community Studies

Since Camphill began in 1939, the word community has often been attached to it, with many places called Camphill Communities and people within Camphill referring to themselves as 'living in community.' However within academic (and arguably Camphill) contexts the word community means many things to many people. It can evocatively invoke romantic images of rural perfection where people's ties to land, place and identity are clear and unproblematic viewed through the sentimental lens of static social life with enduring appeal (Crow & Allan, 1994). This is akin to the early theorists on community most notably Tönnies (1957) with his

[3] Gendered phrase, which historically did include women and children, not just men.

views on community as 'real and organic' (1957: 33) and strongly bound to place and the social groups attached to that place. As Warner & Lunt (1941 in Brunt 2001: 80) articulate:

> [Community is] located in a given territory which they partly transform for the purpose of maintaining the physical and social life of the group, and all the individual members of these groups have social relations directly or indirectly with each other.

This 'iron link' (Brunt, 2001:89) between community and place can be expanded to cover more ephemeral connections (Mason 2008) dependent on social contact and the symbolic cultural categories of the daily life within community which binds people together in 'common purpose'. Research by (Snellgrove, 2008) argued that community within Camphill settings is used in particular ways, most noticeably around ideas of 'common purpose' and 'common goals.' Theoretically, notions such as 'common goals/purposes' hinges on mutual feelings of solidarity (Crow, 2002) which helps to shape an attachment to specific ideals, certain people and geographical locations. This can best be understood as a material and 'emotional community' where "issues associated with identity, identification, belonging and solidarity can be expressed through this idea of organisation" (Hetherington, 1998: 84, Cohen, 1985, 1982, 1986). Simply put, the rendering of community as connections between people and place, needs to include other cultural markers and networks where people can 'imagine' (Anderson, 1991) a sense of 'communal achievement' and identification.

In contrast to these perspectives, the perceived unchanging nature of community can be viewed as insular and defensive, wary of 'outsiders' and reluctant to embrace modernisation (Barth, 1969). Today the dominant understanding of the term community is usually followed by the proviso of 'slipperiness,' 'too vague and variable' in its definition and applicability (Amit & Rapport, 2002:13), should come with the "health warning that it is a highly contested and polysemic concept" (Neal & Walters, 2008:280) and is 'impossible to define with any precision' (Alleyne, 2002:608). This led Snellgrove (2013) to reject community and instead focus on the everyday as a more useful concept with which to explore Camphill in the 21st Century and is discussed later on in this review. This theoretical angst and vagueness aside, community persists as a word and a field of empirical investigation, whilst within

Camphill research, community is usually discussed either from a Therapeutic Community standpoint or within an Intentional Community framework.

Within Therapeutic Community work, Camphill is mentioned most strongly in Bloor et al's (1988) research. Here Camphill featured as one of eight empirical sites where the authors conducted ethnographic research on the variety of therapeutic communities, their structure, lifestyle and ethos. Camphill here is explained through Anthroposophy and Steiner's ideas on the evolution and development of the human spirit. Anthroposophy is a complex and esoteric branch of philosophy, but is here discussed as a spiritual science manifested into practical activities and solutions for the daily work with a variety of disabled children (Bloor et al, 1988: 39/46). Subsequent therapeutic community studies mention Camphill briefly in passing and then under the headings 'alternative communities' or 'Christian based communities' (Kennard, 1998: 21). Due to the fact that Camphill does not conform to the traditionally understood concept of therapeutic communities (with their centralising of group discussions to highlight and resolve issues, the necessity of conflict in resolving issues and the Freudian exploration of the unconscious), Camphill has remained a footnote in most therapeutic community work and is mentioned only in passing (Kennard, 1998: 100).

This has led to Camphill being discussed under the heading 'intentional community', though here too Camphill has often occupied a marginal position in intentional community studies (McKanan, 2011: 82). Plant (2013) has written a comprehensive historical account of the development of intentional communities and linked the changing nature of intentional community formation to Camphills own changing structure and practice. Bruder (2012: 23) argues that the most important element of viewing Camphill through the lens of intentional community has been the "aspect of communal living with shared purpose." The 'shared purpose' element of Camphill has been discussed by McKanan (2011) and Christensen (2006) as a focus on the importance of living and working with Anthroposophy. In both these studies Anthroposophy becomes a set of practical as well as ideological approaches to everyday living in Camphill places. Much is made of the idea of 'brotherly living' and also the importance of the Fundamental Social Law[4] to the maintenance and establishing of

[4] One of the pillars of Camphill: the idea that you are not paid a salary but work for the sake of work, and your returns are a 'gift, and an act of love' (König, 1960: 55).

Camphill identity. Importantly Christensen points out that the 'ideal' Camphill place does not exist, but is to be continually striven for as Camphill in the 21st Century is 'different ideas existing side by side' (Christensen, 2006: 64-65). However many of these 'ideas' can be seen as a resistance to the dominance of disability movement rhetoric centred around increasing choice and consumerism in connection to care. Camphill in contrast is positioned as offering 'equality of results' over 'equal opportunities' where everyone within the community both 'receives and gives' (Christensen, 2006: 69).

This act of giving and receiving has been discussed as a 'middle ground ethos' that seeks to create communities where neighbourliness and a 'cooperative culture' are actively fostered and encouraged (McKanan, 2011: 84). This is done through the importance of everyday practices where much of a Camphill identity becomes evident. As a result, much of the discussion around Camphill and community (whether intentional or therapeutic) ends up moving away from macro level descriptions towards a more micro level approach that deals with explaining Camphill through specific practices and approaches. The following section will now look at research that explores Camphill through a focus on everyday life.

Everyday Life

Everyday life within Camphill settings is a highly structured affair, with routines, rituals and repetitive practices playing an important and often overlooked role in the shaping of Camphill and its identity. Everyday life within the following research contexts has been written about in both explicit and implicit ways by a variety of people. For some, the everyday life of Camphill is the place where the education and socialisation of the child/adult occurs and where the possibility to practice curative education or social pedagogy is enabled. These writers are primarily engaged with the challenges that doing 'good' practical work with children and adults with a variety of disabilities entails (Jackson, 2006, 2011). Such literature calls on particular notions of self and being and the various ways the child/adult can be socialised into a 'whole' awareness of themselves (Moraine, Hansen & Harrison, 2006; Henderson, 2006; Tanser, 2006; Ehlen, 2006). Such writing is primarily concerned with developing behaviour strategies for children and adults that often come to Camphill with a range of violent, troubling and dysfunctional behaviours. The idea underlying all such behaviour management strategies is the fundamental principle that learning, accepting and conforming to such socialisation principles has the potential to transform residents and pupils

into successful functioning people who can live meaningful and worthwhile lives (König, 1994, 2010; Monteux, 2006; Lanyado, 2003; Cameron and Moss, 2011)[5].

The public presentation given on websites and within brochures for Camphill places is that within these settings the *whole* adult and child is *treated* and becomes part of a meaningful home/school life and will experience and be part of many culturally rich events that are part of the everyday life of the Camphill place (Snellgrove, 2013). The important points to stress here are the issues of holism and treatment. König in his early writings argued that the disabled child contained a whole pure and untouched soul that was not affected by the outer physical and emotional signs of disability and difference (König, 1952, 1994, 2010; Monteux, 2006: 26). The aim of curative education (later Social Pedagogy) was to enable that wholeness to come into being, facilitated by the people who worked with the child and the environment the child inhabited. König described this process as 'becoming truly human', which was as much about developing the surrounding environment to facilitate this aim as well as working with the 'inner life of the child.' Through this work, the whole and complete child could flourish and grow and continue to show 'wonder and awe' for the world around them (König, 1994: 87). The idea of an internal world that can be brought to life through the everyday life of Camphill as well as this work enabling a wholeness to occur has been discussed by Jackson et al (2006) and more recently by Snellgrove (2013).

The important thing to stress here is that the significance and distinctiveness of Camphill is explained through everyday practices. The rituals of morning and evening circles, singing seasonally appropriate songs, attending school and workshops, alongside a variety of festive celebrations – basically the environments people work in, the lives that the children and adults will lead in the Camphill settings are as, if not more powerful than a label of autism for example. Christensen (2006: 78) points out that Camphill's strength and uniqueness lies in its ability to provide meaningful lives for people where Government integration policies would provide choice and isolation. Falconer & Swinton (2011) further argue that the everyday life of Camphill facilitates a variety of spiritual experiences and encounters to be fostered and made visible through significant relationships and the working life of the places. Everyday

[5] See Smith (2009) for mentioning Camphill in connection to residential care practices for children with a variety of disabilities.

life within this research is where Camphill is both created and sustained. The creation and maintenance of Camphill is an on-going process that is never static but one of repetitive practice and active participation for all concerned. As a result, the research presented here argues that Camphill and Camphill identity can be most strongly evidenced through the repetitive daily structure and materially saturated environments of the Camphill places where a particular kind of social self is worked into being. Camphill identity as a result is very practical and focussed on what can be tangibly seen and evidenced, where even discussions of a more spiritual ephemeral nature (Swinton & Falconer, 2011) are grounded through personal relationships and the rhythms of daily life (Christensen, 2006; Snellgrove, 2013).

Conclusion & Future Recommendations

This review has explored the variety of research engaged with exploring Camphill in the past and present and raised a variety of points and issues that could be taken up in future research. It has shown that a focus on biographical and historical accounts have dominated the work done on Camphill. Much of this can be seen as a desire to reconnect with the past and to try and understand Camphills early beginnings. Since the founders have died and many Camphill places are facing change and upheaval, reading the diaries and biographies of past Camphillers can provide a sense of security and a clear compass in difficult times. It is also comforting for the past can be read and understood in the present in ways that suit the purpose of those doing the telling (Young, 1993). That said, much of this historical and biographical work is largely descriptive and a more critically sustained approach to the evaluation of these documents is required. Costa (2011) and Brennan-Krohn's (2009) work is a beginning and could be further elaborated and explored.

Equally the discussion on community tends to focus on more macro level patterns of community formation, organisation, disintegration and rebuilding. Whilst interesting theoretically, it is clear that community is primarily useful within Camphill settings as an example of everyday practice. This also explains why the everyday becomes a site for continued research, as it can be observed and explained, where other more conceptually problematic terms become entangled in explanatory difficulties about whose definition counts most. The everyday and its connections to practice runs through much of the later studies on

Camphill, whether this is connected with developing study groups to further a knowledge of anthroposophy (Luxford & Luxford, 2003), or in the passing of the day within a Camphill place filled with rituals and activities: practice continues to be the area where much about a Camphill identity is explained and justified. Snellgrove (2013) argues that repetitive practice is a key area where the social self of the adult/child/co-worker comes into being, done through the structured everyday life of the Camphill places. Swinton & Falconer (2011) state that the everyday is where the spiritual lives of adults take shape and come to have meaning for them through the work they do and their relationships to people around them. McKanan (2011) and Christensen (2006) also highlight the importance of the everyday as places where collective intentions and ideals about anthroposophy are put into practice. It is therefore clear that the everyday is of crucial importance to understanding Camphill both in the past, but also in the present. Through focussing on different elements of Camphill life, these authors all situate their arguments around the importance of Camphills structured everyday life and its centrality to Camphills identity. Crucially this research highlights that defining the ways that Camphill should be lived and managed is subject to change over time and place and relies heavily on whom one is speaking to, the Camphill place the research was conducted at and the particular socio-legal contexts it must operate in.

As a result certain gaps in research output become clear. The dominance of the staff and co-workers perspective is present in all of the research. Camphill principles and practices, whether historical, organisational or based on everyday observations, favour the literate views of (often) long-term staff, Swinton & Falconer (2011) and to a lesser degree Snellgrove (2013) the exception. As a result, more research that addresses the needs and viewpoints of a variety of residents whether children or adults is required.[6] At present this silencing of the voices of residents is problematic, particularly when much of the avowed claims made by Camphill is to provide a voice and meaningful life to just such socially marginalised groups of people. There are of course problems associated with undertaking this kind of research, not least of which is the challenge of doing research with non-verbal participants, something that Cushing (2008) has explored.

[6] See Lyons 2013 Newton Project that is incorporating resident's views. Also Catherine Reilly is currently undertaking a PhD at Queen's University, Belfast on the lived experience of learning disabled teenagers in a life sharing therapeutic community (Glencraig).

Alongside this, there is also a gap on research that deals with the managerial aspects of leadership and the distributed leadership of which Camphill has historically (and to greater and lesser degrees) continued with today. Plant (2013) and Bruder (2012) have suggested ways that Camphill should try and become more responsive to change, however more research is needed to explore how effective current policies and practices are in this area. This is particularly important when Camphill leadership is confronted with external socio-legal challenges which it is not suitably trained in or aware of the long-term implications (see Botton Village). This is made all the more pertinent as Camphill faces an ageing population of both staff and residents and much will be lost if there is not sufficient practical steps taken to transfer the necessary knowledge and acquired skills. All in all more research on succession planning within Camphill places would be welcome, as there is much to applaud within current Camphill practice and successful transitional leadership would enable these practices to continue and flourish.

Finally, the majority of work discussed here has been done by enthusiastic and interested staff and students (undergrad and postgrad) with the odd piece produced by academics (Swinton & Falconer, 2011; Bloor et al, 1988; McKanan, 2011). Very few have been subject to peer review and journal publication. More research that is produced within robust and rigorous research criteria is required, as this would enable a wider and more critical readership to actively engage with Camphill, and would go some way to fostering a mutual exchange of ideas about the ways to theorise, write and live Camphill in the 21st Century.

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