

Camphill Village Communities in Norway

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Nils Christie

Power and influence

Camphill villages have no Directors, no King, and no Parliament. Who decides? Formally, it is simple enough. The villages hang together in one foundation with a formal constitution. At the top is the Board of Directors with members from the villages and outside, from Norway and abroad, from ordinary people and less ordinary. They meet twice a year. That is when they decide. But of course, that is only the theory.

A Board that used its power would soon be without villages. Decisions are the gasoline of social systems. Village life is based on humans who take an unusual amount of personal responsibility for their own acts, particularly vis-a-vis those close to them. Orders from above remove responsibility. The Boards are, therefore, extremely reluctant in deciding anything that has not been decided beforehand.

Before each meeting of the Board, representatives from the villages have their own one-day meeting, discussing all matters, forming an opinion on most. These ideas will be evaluated by the Board and mostly accepted. Sometimes doubt is raised, which nearly always results in a postponement until the next Board meeting. Doubts are mostly raised because ideas are not clear enough. This becomes particularly visible at Board meetings with foreign members, at present from Finland, France and Ireland. Their presence creates a situation where we all have to speak English, which is the only language we all have in common. It is a burden, but also a great advantage. Board members say less and with reduced eloquence. Problems cannot so easily be glossed over. Proposals sound considerably less convincing; the core of the problem appears. New ideas directly from the Local Boards might also be brought forward, but only ideas to be discussed in the villages. Decisions lie with those living with the consequences of them.

Local boards for each village operate in much the same fashion as the general Board. They meet four times a year, survey the local financial situation, and help to clarify matters about which the village inhabitants are in doubt. They operate as a link to the local community. But like the Board they will not decide what is not already decided.

So decisions grow out of the villages but from where? Authorities outside the villages wanted to have a formal structure with a director at the top within each village. They have got it - on paper. I think, however, that very few in any village know who is in charge at any time; I am only able to remember who the director of one of the six villages is.

Some would say power is in the village assembly. The village assembly is for all. It is a large meeting held every week for all living in the village. Guests often attend. They get a special greeting. So also do newcomers, villagers or co-workers. The assembly has a chairman who directs the discussion. Matters of concern can be taken up during the village meeting, or proposed to the chairman during the preceding week.

The meeting commences with a reading of the minutes of the last meeting. The audience pays exceptionally close attention during this reading. The repetition of last week's meeting brings it all back. Protests and comments are frequent from all attending. Complaints and proposals are many: the roads are icy, they need sand; strong protest from those who use 'sparkstoetting' (a sort of sledge to be pushed on the ice); shops are not clean enough; people are too late for meals or for work; why have not the dancing classes reopened after vacation; who has taken my bike; what can we do to produce more candles this autumn? Very often people who by many would be classified as deeply disturbed or insufficient raise questions, good questions. Sometimes those asking for the floor might have a speech difficulty. The chairman seems to be able to understand and translate the most blurred of speeches. Except from A and B who have their own secret language, languages beautiful to listen to. They receive great applause. One of them, a girl, is completely worn out after her delivery: sweaty, breathing fast as after a marathon, and smiling happily. She gets the emotional message across.

Often there are confrontations between participants: harsh words. Sometimes someone cries or leaves the hall. At the last meeting I attended, one villager had an epileptic fit. He was discreetly helped out and home, but without any intermission in the meeting. Epileptic fits are a part of life: important if given importance. Once a demonstration was staged outside where the assembly was to be held. There had been quarrels on the topic of radios. The demonstrators led by a person with Down's syndrome were in favour of private radios in private rooms. They got their way. The revolt against the unsuitable new rhythm of the day also took place here.

So matters *are* decided on in the village assembly - concrete topics of interest to those attending. Since those living in the villages are so interested in each other, it matters what is said there. There is a great turnout at the meetings. But some of the most important decisions are not easily handled between so many people: new villages to be established, new villagers to be let in, new houses to be built, and new types of relationships to the authorities.

To understand where these matters are decided, we have to turn to the more general base for power in these villages. There are no roles that carry formal power in the villages. But certain categories provide possibilities for gaining more influence than other categories. *Seniority* is of importance. Also on this point, the villages are in contrast to the ordinary society. The repetitive rhythm of village life makes experience an asset. Those with a long life have a store of the *relevant* knowledge. Limits on dangerous tools mean also a limit to the attraction of the young entrepreneur. Collective living likewise sets

limits to fast exposures of material successes. The emphasis on learning is not put on learning 'the latest thing' but penetrating eternal problems. And there is no time for retirement in the villages. Participation ends when life ends. Old age becomes a condition, not a handicap. Because of all this, by and large, those who have been there for the longest time gain the greatest influence. Formal leaders are also to some extent chosen among these but seniority is not a guarantee of influence. Three of the founders of the villages in Norway are still living in the villages. All are held in exceptionally high esteem but only one has strong power extending throughout the whole system.

Kinship might also have been a base for power. Two generations of adults are sometimes living within the systems of villages. A family with four generations present was for some years living in one of the villages. But it is difficult to see these relations as any base for power. Very old persons represent a need of care rather than authority. And there do not seem to have developed any particular alliances of power between those generations which are actively working in the villages. Dynastic systems have not evolved.

But sex is of importance. By and large, the Norwegian villages are female-dominated systems. Homes are of visible importance. Needs of the households are in the forefront of many discussions. Males participate but do not dominate. The traditional male territory, the arena of work and technical knowledge, is not gaining any monopoly. On the contrary, considerations of 'workers' welfare' are given high priority. Cultural life is filled with themes of equal relevance for males and females. The total result of all this is that these villages do not provide the usual breeding ground for male dominance. In this situation strong females come to the forefront when decisions are made.

My suggestion would be that influence in the village is based on the fulfilment of two demands. Firstly, as a general requirement, to get influence it is necessary to cope with the demand for general participation in all of the three general areas of life: housekeeping, work and cultural activities. To cope with it all, one needs experience. Young people are here handicapped. So also are males

The second demand is much more difficult to describe in a modern society. It cannot be described as a role. It is a profile. And it has to do with knowledge. But it is not like the profile of a philosopher, or a scientist for that matter, found within usual academic settings. It is not a profile of a person who can concentrate most available time and energy on academic matters. On the contrary, power within the villages is to be found in those persons who combine the daily concrete demands of housekeeping and work with exceptional energy, in a lifelong search for knowledge from that type of literature and art seen as important within the village. One person in one of the villages had interests and a profile as a scholar but tended to be a dropout when the onions were to be harvested. He was initially highly regarded but then shrank and left the village for a role where he could specialise as a man of knowledge. Other persons in the villages are exceptionally able to cope with practical tasks in the households or within the workshops. They have great autonomy within these areas. They might install telephones, erect beautiful barns or factories against considerable opposition. They are obviously powerful. But if they are not particularly interested in cultural life, they will have limited possibilities of gaining general leadership.

The most influential person in the villages of Norway these days is a person who combines an earlier and successful performance in all the three major arenas. In particular, her life has been one long search for intellectual answers. She is a lifelong student with deep knowledge of the literature regarded as the most important in the villages, particularly the writings of Rudolf Steiner. She is also a charismatic person. Not in the misunderstood meaning of one who can seduce listeners, carrying them away by her oratorical abilities. She can do so, but is often rather dry, with a vocabulary hardly accessible to most people. Her charisma is more in the literal meaning of revealing the message, telling what sort of decisions would be most acceptable to most people. She asks what Goethe or König or Steiner or one of their commentators including herself would have thought, and sticks to that, what the Ministry of Social Affairs thinks may be food for thought, but not necessarily the last word. Her anchorage in the world of general ideas makes her in many ways uncompromising vis-a-vis authorities outside the villages: kind but without sentimentality; without compromises but always willing to try really radical alternatives. A believer in God who would love to see a village built up around Buddhist philosophy; a sceptic, full of beliefs. Such a character is the person who holds most power within the village movement of the country.

'This type of power is one with built-in limits. Again, this is so because of the demands in the villages that all participants have to function in all major tasks. This demand hinders leaders developing who have not been exposed to all sorts of challenges. Some belief systems foster rather peculiar leaders: fanatics who take their believers from the USA to the Caribbean and there encourage them all to commit collective suicide; or leaders who abuse their followers, economically or sexually; or leaders who turn the whole thing into factions of political extremism. But leaders of that type need distance to develop, distance from their followers and distance from the trivialities of everyday life. Confronted with the demand to prove excellence also in the task of changing napkins, to treat the mad with respect, to pick vegetables, to perform as Mary or as a thief in the play, they just cannot make it. The leaders who do emerge in the villages come so close that the whole set of norms of the daily life is activated. If they were to forget the norms of care and tender concern, they would not be in a position of leadership. The chances are also great that they will not forget, being that close.

All participants have to function with all tasks. But with this restriction others follow. Particularly, this creates limits to the size of the total system of villages that can hang together. Changing of napkins takes time. To be tied to the daily tasks means limits to time used in governing others. With growth the system will fragment, which is all for the good. If the network of villages grew large under one coherent system of leadership, things would have to be organised in other ways. Power would be formalised, bureaucracies created, clear lines of command and hierarchical structures established. The rewards built into the present village life would not be there. Work would be labour. Decisions would be made far away. Demands for compensatory rewards would be raised and differentiated salaries reintroduced. Villages would be converted into institutions and it would all be lost.

Rewards

All formal organisations we know from the sphere of work have numerous rewards built in: a ladder of promotions, with differences in salaries, in titles, in office space, in equipment provided to do the job. Often people are seated according to rank around tables for lunch or for meetings. The most important member will often arrive last, when they are all ready, so that none of his important time is lost. When the meeting is over, he - it is nearly always a he - leaves before any other. The right to use power is often seen as a part of the reward system. Sometimes it is seen as such an important part that other rewards can be minimised.

The villages have next to nothing of the usual rewards built in. Promotions do not exist; there are no positions to be promoted to. Responsibilities for tasks do exist but no task is seen as more important than any others. And none are allowed to develop as more important. If anybody tends to put too great an emphasis on any particular task within the village, that person is often encouraged to leave the area and move into other tasks. The accounting system was to some extent centralised and brought to perfection by one person with a talent for computers. He was gently, and sometimes not so gently, encouraged to go into farm work instead. The bakery increased its production steadily. This is going too well was the verdict; so large a production of bread indicates that other values are given too little attention. To counteract production, key personnel were given important challenges in the area of cultural life.

The closest one could come to a position of formal rank was probably to be a member of a team of experienced villagers who moved around in other villages to give advice. During the last weeks of writing this book I learned that the team has been dissolved. It was felt that it lessened the importance of the Board of Directors. To be a member of that Board is also an indication of trust. But the Board tries to minimise this by inviting everybody who is interested to attend most of the Board meetings. What is free for all cannot be used as rewards for a few.

An analogy to village life is family life but then in a special form, a form that combines old-fashioned families and modern ones. Village life resembles *old-fashioned families* in containing many members with common ties. All households are large and the village as a whole can be seen as an even greater unit of extended kinship. Small celebrations take place in the individual houses but the large ones are for all living in the village. When a child is born, it is of general concern. The Christening is a public event, with a celebration open to everybody. So is marriage and so is death. Family life in the village is an open life with all attending.

The similarity to the *modern family* is in the authority structure. Paterfamilias (mostly in the form of the Materfamilias) does exist within some households but with few visible signs of privileges connected with the position. In some cases, mother- or father-figures can be observed who do not take their equal share of the menial tasks but usually they take more than their share of these tasks. It is also difficult to establish an authoritarian role in the house. New and mostly young co-workers will appear in the houses. They will come with standards from the surrounding society. They just do not accept the old style but complain or leave. The villages have had such cases. Many also have children of their own. It is striking, and a matter of surprise, how the ordinary child and youth culture of Norway has put its stamp on these children. The villages have no television, very little of

the values of the consumer society and great emphasis on spiritual life. But the children are of the usual sort, often noisy, rebellious and representing a common culture where any display of old-fashioned authority is flatly rejected. To bring up a child is a soft matter, to help a youngster into adulthood is like getting a salmon up from the river on so vulnerable a fishing rod that it can break at any moment. Authority is of limited use. In addition, there is the fact that house parents are continuously short of time. They have their work and their cultural life. The problem in most households is lack of time and will to take responsibility for decisions and necessary work, rather than any overdose of authoritarianism.

Rewards in the villages are, therefore, more like rewards in ordinary families of a relatively democratic type, which means there are none, except respect and love and no hope of anything more. No ceremony for the mother of the year, no particular attention for the father, the aunt, the obedient son - just ordinary life, led according to ordinary standards. In contrast to formal organisations, there is no specification of goals, nor are there rules for how these goals ought to be reached. The lack of specifications for goal attainments means that performance cannot be measured. No winners can be found. *She was a good mother.* But why? If children were to sum up during the funeral, they might have trouble in finding an exact explanation of why and how. It was probably something of the atmosphere, the flow of daily events, myriads of encounters, hopefully a majority of them good. Within organisations ladders are to be climbed, goals to be reached. Family life is its own purpose. The process is the goal.

In the villages all life resembles family life. This creates one particular problem: What to do with those who get tired of the multi-task existence and think they deserve some special attention and rewards? What to do with status seekers where status is no commodity? Within other types of social organisation two solutions are used. Such people get honorary positions of some sort or they are forced to leave the organisation. But neither of these solutions is easy to apply within the villages particularly not the expulsive one. Villages are not easy to leave. It is a unique world with so many attractions that ordinary society will seem meagre fare both for those contemplating leaving, and for those who might wish them to do so. And after years in the villages nobody has money to start a new life. All needs have been cared for but all surplus money has been ploughed back into the village. It is also felt as a breach of one of the most basic rules to push people out if they have been in for a long time. Villages are for the whole life cycle. This is what the graveyard in the village tells us.

Honorary positions are equally impossible to distribute. No formal rulers exist. This takes the meaning away from honorary appointments. And there is no increase in privileges with increasing age or with particularly good deeds performed. The burden of physical age is so small compared to other burdens visible in abundance within any village. Age is, therefore, an attribute of limited interest. Nobody pays attention to the legal pensionable age. Without usual salaries and with an abundance of tasks in need of attention, people work with these tasks until they literally cannot function any more. This is all for the good, compared to the consequences of age outside the villages but it is bad if one wishes to use age as a criterion for obtaining privileges.

Those not satisfied with just being decent are thus in trouble, and the village with them. This is the cost of such a system. Honorary positions are not available and cannot be without a breach with the basic demands of general participation and equality in the importance of all tasks.

Villages do not offer possibilities of vertical mobility, but the horizontal one remains open. Both villagers and co-workers move around to a considerable extent. They move inside the village or between villages both in Norway and internationally. Only a minority will have remained in the same house for more than three or four years. Most often individuals or couples move, but sometimes great parts of households. Shifting of place of work also happens. These possibilities for moving seem to function as a sort of safety valve. A household might get sour. A person might be felt as intolerable, or feel that the others are. But a house or a whole village might also be in need of a new member. The same is the case with places of work. The moves thus have the advantages of a lack of clarity. They might be the result of a push but also of a pull; they might be the result of strongly felt needs in the mover to leave or they might be the result of needs in the old household to get rid of the mover, or in the new household to get just her or him. An irritant in one setting might prove a resource in another. An extremely noisy extrovert might be a problem among equals, but a blessing in a very docile household. And here comes the advantage in the fact that all households as well as all villages are organised according to the same basic pattern. A move means new people and new social constellations but not new forms and rhythms. Many villagers go abroad. They visit foreign villages for days or years. Often they do not speak the language and are classified by authorities as retarded. But the rhythm and system of the village they come to is not unfamiliar. A few days after arrival, they function in the new system.

One other route of escape or reward is open to those in the village: it goes into inner depths, meditatively or intellectually. Villages are places for reflection. The small moments of silence before meals and before meetings help participants, again and again, to correct the course. Village life is a life in turmoil with an abundance of tasks with a fight to get it all done in time. Nonetheless, it has at the very same time qualities of tranquillity which give room for moves towards inner resources.

Are villages institutions?

The kind doctor was fond of Vidaråsen, as an excellent institution, open for experiments, with lots of human contact. But still, for him, it was an institution. It was not real life. It would therefore as a matter of course be an improvement if humans moved out of the village and into real life. Those close to the villages have another view. They look at the villages as the real life, maybe ¹extraordinarily real. They agree that life in institutions might often have less satisfying aspects, but claim that the villages are very far from being one. Are they right?

Four attributes are typical of most institutions. Firstly, most of the time is spent within a limited geographical area. Work, leisure, sleep, all take place within the same building and with the same people around all the time. This is typical of institutions. And it fits the villages. Here there is communal living, day and night. It is a life in deep contrast to the

¹ Vidaråsen Landsby, founded in 1966, is the first of six Camphill villages in Norway,.

life led by the ordinary family members in ordinary life where most members leave both home and neighbourhood for work and leisure, and then often associate with several sets of people who do not know the other sets. So, on this account, villages are similar to institutions.

The second characteristic of institutions is the strong differentiation between staff and non-staff. Important staff members claim to be experts. They often have received a specialised education. There is the army in white, the doctors and nurses; or the army with keys locking up people; or those with the power of age: the old ones in boarding schools or the young; ones in old folks home. There are those with access to private offices, to staff meetings, to special canteens, or to separate tables in the common canteen. Most often all these staff members have authority over all non-staff.

It is all basic for institutions but not for the villages. As we saw, various features of village life minimise the difference between us and them: the system of roads and tracks as a functional alternative to staff meetings, the sharing of all tasks and the belief in the dignified soul. And above all, guards and nurses go home, they also have a life outside the institution: house, family, leisure. Their time in the institution is labour for money. In the village they all remain, some forever: living close, acting together, working together, and relaxing close to each other. It is a totality but then a total community, not a total institution. In a paradoxical way the villages are more total than most total institutions described by Goffman in his book, *Asylums: Essays on the Social Situation of Mental Patients and Other Inmates (1961)*. If anything, they are more similar to ships than hospitals.

A third attribute of institutions is that life there goes on according to a master plan. It is a life with a common, specified purpose. Prisons and hospitals are prime examples as are special homes for children, for students living at the school, for old folks or for various categories of handicapped persons. Punishment, treatment, education or care becomes the central purpose.

That villages have not the purpose of punishment goes without saying. Nor are they places for incarceration or isolation in any form. None are prevented from leaving if they so wish. People come there, first for some weeks. If they like it and the village accepts them, they can stay on. The question of treatment is more complex. Another word for treatment is healing, which means to make people whole again. In that sense, the villages are places for healing. But this healing is not a temporary activity; it is a continuous and everlasting process. And it is a healing for all living there, not only for those supposed by authorities to be deficient. The village people do not regard their villages as places for a temporary stay but as places for life. As to the conventional meaning of treatment the villages are clearly not places for that activity. There is no treatment for having Down's syndrome. Through early tests and abortions one can prevent the very existence of such persons. Through facial operations one can to some extent make people with Down's syndrome look like ordinary people. The village people are against both 'solutions.' Instead they believe in creating communal forms which are good to live in for extraordinary people. Treatment goes on in the villages when people get sick but not treatment against being different. Education is also given at Vidaråsen and in the other villages. Some people learn to read and write, or knit, or play the flute or to practise

eurhythmy. Most people listen to lectures or music several times a week. But that is part of life, of everybody's life. Education is not in any way the specific purpose of the stay.

And what about care: the answer would be the same. Villages are full of care. And again it relates to everybody: care as a part of life. But the purpose is not care. The purpose is life. On this point, however, it is more difficult to draw a line. Particularly, institutions for old folks and for the permanently handicapped are similar to the villages in not necessarily being temporary arrangements.

Then to a last point: institutions have many of *the same sorts of people* around: prisoners, patients, pupils, old people, handicapped. Is that also the case in the villages? The answer depends on whose perspective is applied. From a conventional point of view, there is generally more of one particular sort within the limited space of the village than are found in the usual society outside the village. There are more with pensions for disabilities and many who receive financial benefits. From this point of view, therefore, villages are similar to most institutions. They have - as institutions - relatively more persons of the same sort gathered within a limited area.

But seen from the perspective of the village, the matter becomes quite different. Villagers are characters, types, personalities. They are similar because of their difference from the majority, but at the same time individually different. Institutions often extinguish differences. Sometimes numbers take the place of names, uniforms or state provided clothes make everybody similar, and so also do compulsory haircuts and rooms or cells stripped of private belongings. In contrast to this, village life accentuates individuality and also, to some extent, eccentricity. From that perspective of the village, the situation is therefore the opposite. It is in the external society that everybody is of the same sort, pale copies conforming to the basic demands of industrial society and its need for consumption of the products. The villages are a system where differences between individuals are allowed to develop and where individuality reigns.

To sum up: these villages are similar to institutions in having all aspects of life going on within the same limited area. Seen from the *state point of view* they are also *similar* in having many of the same sort living there. But seen from the perspective of the villagers this aspect of the situation is the opposite. They are also different from institutions in not being organised around a rational, specific purpose, and particularly in not accentuating any split between me and you, between us and them.

Is village life ordinary life?

Not in the statistical sense. Not if we use industrialised societies as examples of what is ordinary. People in the villages know each other nearly all by their first name. And the first name is used. People meet continuously. They are important to each other. They hate each other, love each other and go out of their way to make both known. They help and hurt and care. Villages are vividly alive. They are typical tightly knit communities.

The contrast is striking when we move from villages and back to ordinary urban life. These societies are large and they are based on specialisation. This creates conditions for inequality and for segregation. Also within these large types of system there exists a mutual dependence but that is between roles played by easily exchangeable persons. The complex system of technical and social tools must function but that does not depend on

one person. Roles have to be filled, but performers are exchangeable. It is also in the interests of smooth functioning to make large categories similar, exchangeable. But at the same time these systems will easily consist of people foreign to each other. Most people are linked up in some sort of network. Nonetheless, the majority of those physically close to us are people we do not know.

Aliens have always existed, on the periphery of the hunter's district, outside the village, outside the small town, creating fear and anxiety. With the growth of the city, a completely new situation occurred for most people. The trademark of the modern city is the close alien. The unknown ones came close, crept into the same building but remained distant.

Compared to this type of society, the villages are different. They are tightly knit. Villagers are dependent on each other, not only as roles open to everybody but as persons. If anything, the villages are closer to medieval small towns than to any modern settlement. But even this does not quite fit. Seen from the outside, particularly from the state's point of view, these villages contain an extraordinary number of humans who would not be able to cope with life in ordinary society. They have in their midst an extraordinary number of those with a right to a pension, or who are in need of some sort of extraordinary assistance. Here they also differ from the prototype of the medieval town. Old-fashioned towns had a more even distribution of people some - of all sorts. A concentration of one sort was only found within some quarters of some towns. Such quarters were often called ghettos.

The village as a ghetto

In one interpretation of history the word 'ghetto' stems from the Italian word *bourghetto* - a castle for protection or for expulsion. The old prisons grew out of the castles - some rooms deep down underground or up in a tower, a lonely view for the princess fallen from grace. Ghetto life has two aspects: persons are brought there against their will or they gather there for protection.

In more recent times ghettos are most closely associated with ethnicity: Italian or Chinese communities in New York, Turkish in Berlin, Scandinavian settlements for pensioners in Spain. But behind this easy use of words lingers another image, the one of shame for Europe and death for Jews. Ghettos were those parts of cities where Jews were restricted to live. It was where they had their synagogues, schools and centres of learning; it was where they worked and lived. And it was where they again and again were victims of massacres, in olden times as in recent. Killed inside the ghetto or deported to the gas chambers from the ghetto. There are not exactly good vibrations from that concept.

Nonetheless we do not change realities by shying away from words. There are people who compare the villages to ghettos and rightly so. There are similarities and we have to investigate. But here a dilemma comes up. If it is true that Camphill villages come close to ghettos but ghettos give everybody bad vibrations should we not then immediately try to dissociate the villages from that terrible word? But that would be to give Hitler and Himmler a triple victory. Then it was not only the Jews who were exterminated. Then it was not only the ghettos as physical structures, houses, shops, synagogues which were burned. It would also mean the extermination of ghettos as a linguistic symbol for an *idea*

of an important form of social life. The national socialists and their predecessors through centuries could kill and burn. But if we lose concepts each time evil forces overwhelm their realities, we lose more than the battle. We lose the heritage, we lose the links to what was fine in the old idea and eventually the ability to learn how to preserve the species. We would also desecrate the memory of those living in these forms. We have instead to rescue the idea of ghettos, find out what was their essence, see if they contain values and a framework for life which are also of importance in modern societies

But compared to ghettos, we find a fundamental difference when we come to the villages. Those living in Camphill villages might be seen as similar to other villagers by the state and by outsiders but this is not the villagers' own perception. They see differences between themselves and similarities with people in the external society. What gives villagers an identity is pride in the village as a social form, not pride due to ethnicity or any belief in being God's particular favourites.

The village as a collective

In the wake of drug problems in society, collectives for drug users have developed. Many of them have a social form rather similar to the villages. People with drug problems and their helpers often share basic life conditions; they live together in the same households, they work together and they take part in the same cultural activities. But there are also important differences. Collectives have important differences between us and them. Life in the collectives is also a planned life. Life goes on according to a treatment plan or an educational plan. Life has an explicit purpose. Those with drug problems are to reach a position where they can cope with the problem. And life in the collective has to come to an end. The goal is to be able to live outside the collectivity. Life in the collective is supposed to be a life in progress: first year, second year, and then third year filled with trust and privileges, with clients supposed to be models for newcomers and with persons nearly ripe for life in the ordinary society.

Only a minority actually stays on until the last stage. Some of those who stay and also some of those who run away earlier, sometimes declare that they actually would have wanted to stay on, maybe mostly using it as a base to come back to, but in some cases forever. These express a longing for the collective form, for the ideals, for the communal living. Some also make it; they come back as staff.

Seen from the perspective of the villages the major problem with the collectives is exactly what some of these youngsters express. Life in a good social system becomes somewhat unreal when it is only for treatment or training, and with a definite end. From the good life, appealing to ideals and mobilising warm social relations, those living there are pushed back into forms of social life, which are far from collective and with an emotional temperature on quite another level. From the village perspective, it seems natural to suggest that collectives are a good thing, but that they should never come to a forced end. Those who want to stay on should do so forever.

Impossible, would be the answer from society and also from many workers in the collectives. Then the whole thing would choke, there would be no empty places for new drug addicts. But again, from the village perspective, one would suggest the obvious solution: let new people create new collectives. The old ones would probably be able

slowly to earn more money and need slightly reduced support from the social welfare system. Generation after generation of new addicts might thus be able to move into new collective systems. Drugs would then really be a powerful factor in shaping the social fabric of a country.

But again, a statement as to the impossibility of the idea would come, this time from professional circles. If collectives were not for treatment, what then with the treaters? What about professional standards, case-loads, utility and knowledge of how to bring it all to an end? If the master plan, utility-thinking and the clear goal collapsed, and if the role of client collapsed, then the professional role would also collapse. Then only ordinary standards for life would be left in the collectives. So, it will not happen. But *if* it had happened, the present collectives would have been social systems close to what the Camphill villages are today.

The village as a village

To understand what villages are, an attempt has been made - I hope with care and concern to describe these tender species. Then, an attempt has been made to understand even more by comparing villages to other social arrangements. Total institutions have been one. We found some important similarities but also basic dissimilarities. Our villages are not institutions and therefore not total institutions either but they are more total than the ordinary society. More close to our villages were ghettos and collectives but here too fundamental differences remained.

What then is a village? The Camphill villages have something from all these other types of social systems but they are also different from them all. They are peculiar. So peculiar that we have no general concept for them, no word in common use which immediately tells people what they are. A communal life, with many of one sort together, without other goals than life and understanding, for such a life we are without immediately understood concepts ready for use. So, let us accept to call them just villages.

Villages are not part of the Norwegian heritage. In a land mostly filled with stone, the distances between the fields were so large that households were forced to settle apart from each other. Also, when it comes to Central European villages today, it can be doubted if they belong to the same species as the villages described in this chapter. The old villages came closer, even if they had their class differences and their rulers within and from without. But they also had qualities of cultural life and cohesion, close to what is found within Vidaråsen and the other places. Modern life has extinguished villages as a major form of social organisation. Maybe the extraordinary needs of extraordinary people will help to re-establish a model of a social force which is good for most people. Maybe the extraordinary ones might initiate a push towards an intellectual debate on how to convert parts of cities into conglomerates of more or less independent villages.