



IDEA AND REALISATION OF THE B.R.O.T. COMMUNITY CONCEPT

Introduction

The concept of the B.R.O.T.¹ community is an attempt for a successful answer to societal changes. Research projects have framed this concept.²

The societal change may be roughly described as the development of societal subsystems and the individualization of life course.

Four factors have been shaping the development and implementation of the B.R.O.T. community Hernalts, Vienna: Signs of overcharge from the nuclear family, increasing bureaucracy, new movements in the Roman-Catholic parish Hernalts in Vienna, and the research project of the Institut für Ehe und Familie (IEF).³

The listing's order reflects the chronology from a first idea, its condensation and final realization. Because persons had been ready to dedicate a long-term engagement in this innovative project, its implementation has become possible.

In 2006, an over B.R.O.T. community has been founded in Kalksburg, Vienna. Since Jan 1, 2010 people have started to settle there.

1. Signs of overcharge from the nuclear family

In 1973, on the occasion of the 20th anniversary of the Katholischer Familienverband Österreichs⁴ (KFÖ), the first "Badener Symposium" took place.

The intention was described as followed: to achieve a basic change in attitudes towards fellow human beings. The quality of life is described by the quality of how humans interact and live with each other. There was no attempt to substitute families, but to identify causes and reciprocal effects that lead to the signs of overcharge. (Helmuth Schattovits, at time acting President of KFÖ).

The symposium identified – among others – the following solution statements

- The nuclear family needs integration into the base community, so that new possibilities of communication are established (Haimo Gastager, psychiatrist)
- To find a way between extreme positions between such of an egoistic individualism and such of a collective loss of oneself. We need to find life styles that have neither been fully identified nor tested yet (R. Reichardt, sociologist)
- It will be crucial to establish a new distribution of tasks also around the nuclear family, e.g. in the geographical sense, neighborhood-level (E. Matzner, finance scientist)
- The opening of the nuclear family towards specific tasks and towards individuals outside the family. By this, the family will be integrated into a larger community; a community consisting of families, a "family of families". (J. Millendorfer, system analyst)

To realize the "family of families" in everyday practice, a model had been created which ran – only in the beginning – by the name of "family convent". As this name had caused various misunderstandings (primarily in the theological context), it was dropped.

Also the wording of "family of families" was given up as the project also wished – and still wishes – to include singles, childless couples a.o.

As the optimal structure of "small living environments" was in focus, this wording was used.

¹ B... Beten, Pray – R... Reden, Talk – O... Offensein, Being Open – T... Teilen, Share

² For details see also: Klar, S., Schattovits, H: (1988 u. 1993) Integratives Wohnen als soziales Dienstangebot und Umsetzung einer sozialen Innovation, Forschungsbericht, Institut für Ehe und Familie, Wien ; ISBN 3-900872-03-1, ISBN 3-900872-14-7

³ Institut for Marriage and Family

⁴ Katholik Family Organisation of Austria

Original German

2. Increasing bureaucracy determining the society

In March 1982, the research project named "Task planning and new forms of organization in public administration" was completed with a final report. It had been prepared at the Institute for Ergonomics and Business Science, Vienna University of Technology (H. Schattovits).

Two findings will be presented as examples for causes and mechanisms which have a direct link to the challenge mentioned above.

- The uncertainty of modern mankind roots in substantial changes in socially caused conditions of existence: Social security in the sense of whole safety has been lost in many cases, and has been substituted by both system security (external safety, objective, e.g. social systems of public law) and selfconfidence (to be attained, inner security, subjective, e.g. in education system). The author considers a minimum of homogeneous environment – we would call it small living environment – to be a further necessary element (F. X. Kaufmann, sociologist)
- These results refer to the fact that a continuing individualism does not only mean a new range of possibilities to lead a individual life, but it also demands the individual to secure their future and search for sense. The latter seems to become more and more difficult, and scientists have talked about a "human dilemma" which arises due to a growing gap between men and world. (2. report Club of Rome)

If substituting the three above mentioned elements – system security, selfconfidence, and homogeneous environment – is not possible, but will be tried this results in ineffective problem solving. This is the case e.g. when system security is noticed only. Even big efforts will not be able to solve the problem of security. Instead, bureaucracy will simply grow. Effective problem solving is hence calling for adequate consideration of all three elements, and this means in our time to especially focus on selfconfidence and homogeneous environment.

Moreover, the research project report is mentioning feedback effects:

- The growing influence of public regulation deprives society of their ability to organize itself (E. Matzner, finance scientist)
- The demand for our responsibility and competence to care for each other in everyday life is decreasing to the same degree that professionals take it over. (R. Liljeström, sociologist)

Such feedback effects in the organization's work performance that the problem solving efforts applied so far do not bring about solutions, but rather add to problems.

As mere postulation of new behavioral norms does not necessarily lead to changes of behavior (H. Reinermann, system analyst) and financial crises of the state are also such of the old methods (J. Schumpeter, economist), new aims and methods for problem solving had to be sought and applied. The conscious considering of self organization can serve as one such approach (C. Badelt, social economist)

With the research project "administration", the idea of commune based housing as a social service was expanded by the aspect of direct benefit for society and state.

3. Renewal movement in the parish of Hernals

The two aspects outlined so far describe the idea as necessary for people (social aspect) and beneficial for the state (economic aspect) – a general statement that holds true for the current phase of the industrialized society.

Such insights in the problem structure and possibilities for solving them might usually not be sufficient to realize them in one's own daily life or to motivate others to do so.

The initiative to realize social innovation not only needs the understanding of its necessity and benefit. Rather, further elements come into play.

Such elements seem to be present in a powerful motive and when there is a feeling for possible success. Both can grow in a Christian community – but of course not only there.

Christian congregations are mentioned here because such a community is crucial for the project and also because the majority of Austria's people belong to a Christian church.

Original German

Also, no other institution has such an deeply structured organization. Finally, the grace of charity provides the institutions's basic element – at least in its requirement.

The second part of reasoning is naming favorable settings so that the project will not be a singular event but will probably result in further projects.

During the second half of the 1970s, and following the model of the parish renewal, J. Koller, minister of the Vienna parish Hernals, arranged concrete initiatives for a renewal of people and parish guided by the gospel.

The reform of hearts and social relations are basic focal points. The establishment of small communities that would regularly gather in member apartments was an important aspect within the renewal process.

As a matter of fact, a few such communities have been established, differing in commitment and outline. By no means have they only focused on themselves. Rather, they have engaged in several services for the parish and beyond, or have supported individuals to get engaged.

The experience with the parish and in communities have made the living in a community appear to be desirable, necessary, and beneficial – both for single individuals and the parish congregation. Hence, this idea has been brought to the parish council and has been discussed in the context of using existing real property owned by the parish.

In May '83, the parish council decided to further follow this idea, though there was no consistent notion on aims and form.

4. Research assignment for the Institute of Marriage and Family (IEF)

In December '83, the IEF submitted the research project "integrative housing as a social service" to the former ministry for construction, technology. (H. Schattovits)

In January '85, we received the written confirmation for a grant. Still in January, the work commenced.

It appears superfluous to speculate whether the project would have been started (yet) without the research assignment.

Certainly, the research assignment has contributed the ultimative success to start with the project. In this regard, one phrasing that has been used in the parish council seems quite telling. When the research assignment was granted, somebody in the executive board said: Now, it is becoming embarrassingly concrete.

*Helmuth Schattovits 2010 03 07
Original German*