

A Rehabilitative and Recovering Garden

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Introduction

The main theories behind Green Care have taken shape already a few decades earlier. In recent years, it has been put together some international and national networks to research, bring out the knowledge and practice of Green Care and bind the agriculture and resources of countryside together. The target of Green Care is to give effective and economical rehabilitation and promote the welfare of different social and healthcare client groups (Yli-Viikari, Lilja, Heikkilä, Kirveensuu, Kivinen, Partanen, Rantamäki-Lahtinen & Soini 2009, 3.)

In this article, I represent background theories focusing most on level of social inclusion and involvement. I describe the practical development work to plan alongside my colleague student a recovering and rehabilitative garden to Hørhaven. The central focus is to represent the garden as a socially rehabilitative place and add some experiences of my own, based on literature and reflection as well.

Den selvejende institution Hørhaven is an enterprise and foundation that offers- in addition to other forms of rehabilitation - nature-based rehabilitation service for mental health rehabilitees from 18 to 65 years of age. It is situated in Søtofte, Holbæk municipality in Midtsjælland, Denmark. The inhabitants have their own flats and they work in garden, in kitchen and other duties. The concept of therapeutic community is also a major part of care in Hørhaven.

In development work, it is important to understand the theoretical frame of nature-based Green Care interventions for rehabilitees and at the same time know the practical approach of action. Target-orientation, professionalism and responsibility are the key elements of Green Care practice. These contents demand much planning, learning about inhabitants and operational environment. By using a foreign language, the development process is more demanding for the inhabitants, personnel and students as well.

Nature as a Healing Element

Roger Ulrich's "Recovery from stress" theory explains the benefits of natural environment to people who are experiencing stress. A natural environment is more stress reducing and restorative than an urban environment. (Ulrich, Simons, Losito, Fiorito, Miles & Zelson 1991, 201.) Urban environment is making it difficult to recuperate because movement, intensity and complexity increases the arousal and stress levels whereas recuperation can be achieved in a low arousal setting. (Ulrich et al 1991, 205.)

A natural environment can be experienced as an interesting and fascinating surrounding. Fascination allows the directed attention to rest and it holds the attention without effort. Kaplan (1995) claims that fascination has two qualities which are "hard" and "soft" fascination. Hard fascination dominates the attention completely and does not leave space for thinking. Soft fascination is more subconscious and holds attention moderately so there is an opportunity for reflection. (Sempik, Hine & Wilcox 2010, 74.)

According to Moore and Ulrich (1981) many natural places like forests, open countryside, wilderness, parks, gardens and city trees have been proved as a significant healing factor for mental health rehabilitee (Brack & Atkins 2016, 10). There is convincing and strong evidence of restorative effect of the nature. Natural surroundings offer a possibility to social relationships and physical exercise (Brack & Atkins 2016, 11).

Here by Danish beautiful countryside, I have seen and felt the influence of nature. Satisfied facial expressions when some walking in the forest, easiness of interaction in garden work, relaxed atmosphere when looking nature. Observation of nature in group, sharing feelings and impressions, helping and somehow understanding each other. The nature is serving a place to join in a group, have a feeling of belonging, involvement and empowerment. Sometimes working in the garden can be boring but it can be a backbone for rehabilitees. Nature itself and its impact on them can give reasons which encourage them to stand up in the morning and to do something that turns their bad thoughts away. The nature can be a place where you can feel like being a part of it and show your skills and significance to the other members of working group.

Green Care

Green Care (GC) is a multidimensional and multilevel social innovation. Even though a function like GC has been used earlier it has not been structured comparable with GC function today. Nowadays it has many new courses of action amongst social and healthcare organisations, legislation and service providers. Also, the practice of care and the chain of services are quite new. New practices are absorbed slowly on an individual, sector, organisation and society level. GC is an approach which

requires much teamwork between all operators and over the dividers of different society sectors (Yli-Viikari et al 2009, 17.)

GC is a concept to promote mental and physical health and overall well-being of a person through natural environment and elements. The methods are used in social and health care services as an intervention and an active process of rehabilitation instead of passive experience in nature. However not everything that is green is "Green Care". GC methods are used always with target-orientation, responsibility and professionalism. (Sempik et al 2010, 11-13.) These require documentation and evaluation of the whole rehabilitation process, responsibility to the client work, safe and suitable environment, equipment and animals. Green Care has an ethical orientation of the work, as well as a required education and knowledge of the professionals (Vehmasto 2014, 14.)

Ecotherapy is one of the GC approaches. It results in solution-based forms of practice where a person is looking for a natural relationship with nature and benefits from it. The approach has an idea to take care of environments which improve community well-being. According to paradigm of ecotherapy a person's involvement includes two levels: a micro-level in a therapeutic process and a macro-level in wider social processes. The view in this approach guides a person to feel himself as a part of nature's wholeness and at the same time makes him to consider reciprocity towards the ecosystem. The ecotherapy dimension is guiding a person from micro-level to social macro-level and strengthen the way of thinking. It also enables people to make behavioural and social changes in a one's life and in a society. (Sempik et al 2010, 43.)

Mental Rehabilitees with Schizophrenia

The ability to make relationships and to care about other people and capability to work is defined as a part of positive mental health by the World Health Organisation (WHO). According to the definition, there the mental health is in balance when an individual can stand the normal anxiety of life and is able to accept the life events which cannot be controlled. Mental health is there for a feeling of contentment of life and ability to make social relationships and capability to make use of your own skills, competence and creativity. (National Institute for Health and Welfare 2017.)

Schizophrenia is the most common mental health disorder which includes psychotic symptoms and disintegration of mind. Schizophrenia has an impact on thinking, feeling and behaviour. It can cause trouble in activities of daily living, in working life and relationships and a person can be socially withdrawal. (The Finnish Association of Mental Health 2017.)

The mind is a changing part of human's psychophysical whole which adjustment to the environment changes (Hari, Järvinen, Lehtonen, Lonka, Peräkylä, Pyysiäinen, Salenius, Sams & Ylikoski 2015, 135). The mental health, its problem and function can be observed through changing variation of different states which are

affected by psychological, biological and social factors. Different characteristics and symptoms of individuals are not automatically a sign of a problem but essential is the functioning and fluency in whole. (Hari et al. 2015, 135–136.)

Mental Power Levels

There are differences between human's mental power. In research, it has been found four levels of mental power. At the bottom of the mental power pyramid, the power is directed inwards a person. A person's capability of involvement is to be alone with himself and he do not want any interruption. The second level of mental power is to pay attention to social surroundings which means participation with emotions but the person does not have enough power to take active part in action. The third rate of mental power is active participation. It means involving himself in doing something together. A person is a part of action where a group is giving and sharing, organising and helping each other. On the top of the mental power pyramid is the outgoing involvement level. At that level, a person has so much mental power that he can lead a group of people. He can creatively plan, start and complete a process with the group. He hardly needs any help in the process. (Stigsdotter & Grahn 2002, 6-7.)

A person's mental power levels must have been taken into consideration when developing nature-based interventions and places like gardens. A healing place should have a spot to be alone and just be. Maybe somebody, who is sitting there in nice natural environment and just relaxing, can hear some voices from behind a garden fence and become interested in it and set off. There should also be a place where you can see the group and join them emotionally and a place to join the group and work together. In a healing place, there should be an opportunity to run a group. Mental power levels have likely not so sharp outlines when a person can move between them.

Developing a Garden for Rehabilitees

The healing garden development plan is based on the needs of the Hørhaven organisation. Our task of the development process is a part of bigger GC framework development. It was challenging, to connect the garden planning to a social work viewpoint. But when the theoretical frame was ready it helped greatly to think the needs of all the participants and tie the theories to practice. After a slowly thinking process, I settled on an idea of two separate targets. The first target was the development work with the key persons of the organisation and the second was to get to know and work with all the people in community to whom the garden will be planned. We got the basic idea and guidelines about the garden from leader of the training place.

When designing a garden, it is necessary to focus on the people the garden is intended for and the same time consider the theories as a foundation stone. (Stigsdotter & Grahn 2002, 5.) The garden is a place where a person can just be, experience and work. It depends on people's capability of how he can absorb from the nature and how strong his mental power is. (Stigsdotter & Grahn 2002, 5-6.) The meaning is to build a garden where the observer changes into a visitor. Architecture and visual aspects are relevant. The senses must be taken into consideration. The hearing, smell and taste, temperature, balance, muscular senses are significant. (Stigsdotter & Grahn 2002, 6.)

The garden will be a place to join the group, to work together and just be and enjoy. The inhabitants were not so much involving in the development process but when the plan is fulfilled it is time for them to step forward. In garden, it is possible to rehabilitate through using GC target-oriented methods. When a person gets resources and examples through interacting and working he can use those experiences and knowledge in his own daily life.

Healing garden is like a message of life and lust. It is a part of nature and culture and it represents the circle of life from birth to death. It is constantly changing, organic, growing spot where it is possible to feel security, hope and life. Maybe it gives you feelings of calm, safety, strength, sensuality and beauty. In healing garden, it is possible to use all your senses. (Stigsdotter & Grahn 2002 61, 66.)

The plan of a healing garden includes a vision of using all your senses. You can sense smell of herbs and berries. You can touch wood, stones and water. You can see fire, flowers, structure and form of garden. You can feel the paved path under your feet and hear wind. You can experience and notice the garden as a detached place with its cover and shelter. When you are in garden, you can communicate with nature and learn about it and yourself, your reactions and maybe share your thoughts and feelings with your "sisters and brothers". The power of nature can give you strength to interaction when the action is guided like in Social and Therapeutic Horticulture. Through common activity in healing environment a person can maybe find his resilience.

The garden plan takes shapes, materials and interaction into account. There are many pleasant roundish shapes for eyes, for example in benches and gates. The garden plan includes natural materials as wood, bricks, stones and grass. There are plants, bushes and trees. In place like that, you can relax and have a feeling of healing which is proved by research's. There are spots to work, sit and gather together. In our visits to Health Forest Octovia (<http://ign.ku.dk/octovia/>) in

Copenhagen and Ringsted Crisis centre (<http://www.ringsted-krisecenter.dk/aktuelt/2015/01/sansehave.aspx>) we got many ideas for garden planning.

The planning process called for accumulation of knowledge in many ways. A big part of development work was to read, understand, write and assimilate knowledge of GC theories and practices. We made interviews, negotiations, observation, questionnaires, presentations, talks. We also planned and drew pictures where our proposals to healing garden were. Because of different languages, our supervisor and leader of the training place took care of a presentation of the garden plan to parties. That was the first part and target of a garden planning. After presentation, we got some feedback. We wish that our spoken proposals, written and drawn plan is useful when realizing the garden. I believe this forthcoming garden increase rehabilitees ability to function and expand the odds to use GC methods. Solution to apply GC methods in daily life enables inhabitant's recovery more possible and diversifies enterprise's services.

The second target was to get to know inhabitants, personnel and environment. Our supervisor had planned it great. We worked with inhabitants and personnel in many ways, walked, made trips, were available, had conversations, ate one's meals together etc. Through this interaction, we could know a few needs of them. We also had a good possibility to explore the surroundings. Working and interacting together gave us a possibility to join the community and show our interest to their life and well-being. We got valuable knowledge and experience about customs and habits. We became the temporary members of the community. In this community, interaction was natural and equal. All the members had their responsibilities and tasks which is aiming at normal life.

How Can a Garden Support a Rehabilitee Socially?

Social isolation is one of the main reasons of poor life management to mental health rehabilitee. Many of them suffer from weak connections to their families, friends, local communities and society. That shows how important the social capital is for health and happiness. Social isolation can often appear as a reduced life quality, depression and low self-esteem. Social inclusion is a way to have a feeling of coherence which means ability to confront different life situations. (Brack & Atkins 2016, 7.)

The individual's point of view the inclusion is an experiential entity of belonging, making and feeling. It is the result of complicated and complex process. The central experience of inclusion is confidence, commitment and being heard. (Jämsén & Pyykkönen 2014, 9.)

In therapeutic communities, people are keeping company with each other in an organised and structured way. Many mental health rehabilitees are living outside the society so the therapeutic community offers them a better place to live in. It is possible to a person to find and use his maximum social potential. Working together is a method and the group processes are the key to growth and change. (Haigh 2008, 338.)

One of the GC methods is a Social and Therapeutic Horticulture (STH) which is a method to improving well-being through horticultural activities in more generalised way. It can also be used in therapy. The rehabilitee can feel like there is a meaningful job to do as a gardener or farmer. There a rehabilitee can engage in social interaction, assimilate daily routines and structure. Social inclusion can be achieved through meaningful activities in a structured environment where promotion of social interaction has been taken into consideration. (Sempik et al 2010, 29-30, 105.)

The horticultural school (among three schools of a healing garden) viewpoint is on acting in the nature. The activities affect on health and are healthful their self. Action is what a person needs as a creative person. A person can use his body and mind and feel the pleasure and get reward. He can feel harmonization and commitment when his capacity meets the challenge. In nature, he can forget the time and himself. There he can get the flow-experience and have other stimulating cognitive and physical processes. (Stigsdotter & Grahn 2002, 5.)

Social inclusion is one of the main themes in GC practice. Sempik et al (2005) and Burchardt et al (2002) have argued that STH enables social inclusion through nature-based, structured environment and activities. Burchardt et al (2002) have presented four keynotes in social inclusion. These are consumption, production, social interaction and a political engagement. Through these social activities, the participants can get more social opportunities, they can be a part of active, working and learning organisation. The participants could also be part of decision making and have access to goods and services. (Sempik et al 2010, 105.)

Consumption in social inclusion means that participants have a possibility to have the services and sorts of goods that other people can have and access, for example they can get organic food. Engaging in production means valuable activity either voluntary unpaid or paid work in common job markets. Social interaction is a way to have cultural identity and social networks. Self-determination, empowerment, involvement and participation are signs from a political engagement which means

one's possibility to influence on his life and environment as a decision- maker. (Sempik et al 2010, 105.)

Healing Elements through Social Connections

In his recovery narrative, Aidan Moesby tells that recovery is a chain of events where a person by himself is building meaningful and satisfying life with next-of kin, peers and professionals. On his point of view, he describes a bereavement story. At first, after his mental illness diagnosis, he tells about a loss of his job, friends and many relationships. Luckily, he had relatives and some friends who supported him. He ponders that recovery is not happening in isolation but it needs social inclusion, for example meaningful social roles. Working with and for peers make him feel positive about himself and affirm his place in the world and in the same time rise self-esteem and confidence. It is necessary to feel things, have a respond, to imagine and at last to create, he tells. He emphasizes collaboration and shared responsibility which improve recovery when working and acting together. (Moesby & Cleminson 2013, 18-20.)

One side of a recovery story is above. It is commonly known that we humans look at other people to find out ourselves. Working together with peers and professionals and looking on them especially in nature gives a double opportunity to a recovering process. It is based on a recovering impact of nature but also on sharing our lives with others. We can find our own wishes, hopes, plans, dreams, ideas, aspirations and recourses in a recovery process with support, help and lead given by other people.

Building a community, relationships and interaction help in recovery. In the garden, it is possible to sit by campfire, have meetings, negotiate and make decisions in a free and easy atmosphere. It is nice to be up to together in meaningful tasks, taking care of plants and picking up berries. The target is to have a feeling of coherence and a meaningful role. Sometimes when working, we must feel some uncomfortableness but it repays back to us. After working we can see the results of our work and get satisfaction of it. When somebody works for somebody else and himself it shows his significance for members of a group but also for himself. This feeling influence on himself and the others which confirm community spirit. These episodes are like circle which feeds itself.

Reflection

In Maslow's hierarchy of needs is mentioned about the need of belonging. I can give you an example of my own. We came here in Denmark for the first time, three months earlier. It was confusing to

find a train and know where to step out of it. Everywhere we heard strange language and unknown people and we did not know anything about public transportation, places and names. We were like lost when we mostly needed somebody to help us. It is so sad to only manage alone with internet and be apart. So, I can imagine how difficult it is to mental rehabilitee to join in a group if his mind is somewhere else and all feelings are like my (and us) panicky mind was then. It is no shame that we need each other to guide our ways.

Ecotherapy viewpoint leads me thinking about harmony between human and nature. A human and nature benefit from balance between them. We ride on nature because of our needs, so it is necessary to take care of our common world. Interaction with nature for example a hiking trip shows me how reliant we are in water and food which are served by the nature. What we give to nature, it gives it back.

I am impressed and surprised how openly we were taken in the group in Hørhaven. All the inhabitants and personnel were so open to accept us. I think it is not easy to accept strange people into a well-knit community. They still had will to cooperation and I realized their optimism toward us. They all wanted to be in interaction and they were willing to meet us halfway. They used a foreign language -English- with us and struggled to use it. They really tried to communicate and showed their interest in us. This experience shows human's willingness to relations even though it is not so easy.

At first time, in my life I have done something like this project. Green Care as a concept and with its methods has been somewhat familiar to me earlier but now I have learned much more about it. To find out what is the social side of garden planning took a long time. During this project, I found the basic idea to carry out a place to interact and get experiences and measures for rehabilitee's daily life. In practice, this means as extensive ability in mental, social and physical function as possible. These abilities confirm widely recognized well-being. I have learned many GC approaches and methods through the theories and practices. I would like to use this learned knowledge and skills in my future job.

Conclusion

In this article, I have described the background theories and development work to plan a socially rehabilitative and recovering garden in our training place Hørhaven. The focus is in GC's rehabilitative nature. In this small development process, the most vital and condensed message is an approach of

nature as a healing element by using the socially recovering GC methods which have impact on individual and society level.

I believe that in the future the GC nature-based approach and activities are amongst the central rehabilitation forms. GC is, and will be, a widely researched and developed approach which includes a view of healing and recovering action in the nature. With GC's target-oriented work it is possible for a rehabilitee to join in society and recovering groups. This inclusion makes well-being and prevents unwellness. A garden is a part of nature, a place for inclusion, recovery, a symbol of life which all gives us an attitude and measures of emergence.

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