

COMMUNITY WORK MODELS AND PROVIDING LEISURE ACTIVITIES

ZUZANA BUDAYOVÁ¹, LUCJAN ZOLTEK²

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¹ Catholic University of Ružomberok, Faculty of Theology in Košice, Theological Institute of Spišské Podhradie, Spišská Kapitula 12, 053 04 Spišské Podhradie (SK)

² Catholic University of Ružomberok, Faculty of Theology in Košice, Theological Institute of Spišské Podhradie, Spišská Kapitula 12, 053 04 Spišské Podhradie (SK)

Contact: doc. PhDr. Mgr. Zuzana Budayová, PhD., M.Ed., email: zuzana.budayova@ku.sk; Mgr. Lucjan Zoltek – email: bjorn_HWiM@interia.pl;

Corresponding author: doc. PhDr. Mgr. Zuzana Budayová, PhD., M.Ed., (email: zuzana.budayova@ku.sk)

Abstract:

Background: The text focuses on models of community work, their characteristics, and their application in social practice, based on the concept of Botek et al. (2017). **Methods:** It presents eight models of community work that differ in strategy, worker roles, and target groups, yet often overlap in practice. Particular attention is given to the model of community planning of social services as a tool for citizen participation in local community development. **Discussion:** The paper further discusses the role, skills, ethical principles, and competencies of community workers. **Conclusion:** The final section presents community centers as spaces for community development and leisure activities through various forms of therapy and engagement, contributing to social inclusion, personal growth, and an improved quality of life for community members.

Keywords: community work; community planning; community worker; community center; social services; leisure activities; therapy; community development

Introduction

Kinkor [12] lists eight models of community work that are currently common, and at the same time points out that they are not clearly separate, rather they overlap. For each model, it presents its strategy, main role and name of the worker, examples of work, with which type of clients this model is usable and finally selected key texts for the given model.

- Community care – an effort to improve the situation of residents by helping to cultivate social networks and volunteer services. A social worker is an organizer of lay care, a volunteer, is involved in home and neighborhood care. It is used when working with seniors, citizens with disabilities, families with small children.
- Community organizations – the goal is to improve cooperation and relationships between various social institutions. A social worker acts mainly in the role of manager, coordinator, organizer. An example can be councils for voluntary services.
- Community development – helps to create self-help groups, social networks and supports volunteer work in the community. The aim is to help groups acquire skills, thereby increasing awareness and improving community life. The social worker has the role of a facilitator who supports the group in acquiring the necessary skills and self-confidence to improve the conditions of their own life in the community. Examples can be various community groups, groups of tenants, owners.
- Community education – supports the creation of a more balanced relationship between the community and education. The social worker accepts the role of an educator and facilitator. This can include, for example, community schools, adult education.
- Social/community planning – the aim is to improve service planning. It includes an analysis of social conditions, the creation of appropriate strategies, the definition of goals and priorities, the mobilization of resources, the implementation of the program and its evaluation. The social worker supports participants, empowers them. Examples are areas where development is rediscovered.
- Community action – is direct, local action aimed at conflict, usually class-oriented. The community worker acts as an activist. This group includes, for example, the squatter movement or the social rights movement.

- Feminist community work – focuses on improving conditions and services with regard to the needs of women. The social worker acts as an activist and an empowerer. Examples include various women's centers.
- Anti-racist community work – consists in the establishment and operation of groups that were created to support ethnic groups and their needs. The community worker accepts the role of volunteer activists. An example is the Racial Equality Council.

In our opinion, all of the above models can be applied to a greater or lesser extent in social work, also considering that the meaning and goal of social work is not only to achieve changes on the client's side, but also to change their surroundings. Regarding community care, Kinkor [12] states that it focuses on such an arrangement of services (especially health and social) for groups of people living "on the margins" (people with disabilities, seniors, with mental illness) so that they can remain in their community and live a full life there. It is the opposite of institutional care. Community education, by focusing on adult education, can be used, for example, in working with the unemployed or the socially excluded.

Community development could help to solve the problem of socially excluded localities. Anti-racist community work will also be important in our conditions, which could help to address the negative approach and attitudes of the majority, especially towards the Roma minority. Community planning in the field of social services is regulated by the Act on Social Services, which obliges municipalities and regions to participate in community planning of social services. Regions were obliged, and municipalities were given the opportunity, to prepare medium-term plans for the development of social services [1].

Given that community planning is focused on social services, there is, in our opinion, great scope for the application of social work. For this reason, we will discuss this model in more detail in the following chapter.

Community planning

The term community has many meanings. Krbcová et al. [15] this term expresses "certain groups of people in which close social ties exist. These people have common goals, cooperate, and feel solidarity with other members of the community." These may be groups that are geographically defined, i.e. people living within a municipality, region, microregion, etc. or groups that are characterized by a certain common attribute, e.g. mentally ill, elderly people, mothers with small children, but also include communities based on cultural, intellectual, lifestyle, such as artists, students, squatters.

Within all these communities, so-called community processes take place, which are beneficial for the members of these communities.

A similar opinion is held by Johnová and Čermáková [11], who emphasize the definition of the term community for defining community social work, when it concerns more than just residents of the same area. "These are people who have the same interests, values, are in solidarity with each other and are interested in each other." This work deals with the community at the local level given geographically, which means a group of people living in a certain area, either a municipality or a city. Residents of these municipalities or cities use local public services (education, transport, health, public administration), shop in local stores, or even work here. Therefore, it is very likely that they meet, perhaps even know each other, if they have a certain relationship with the place where they live. Community planning is a method that deals with planning various areas of public life at the municipal or regional level. The preparation of community plans according to this method is primarily attended by those who are affected by the area being processed, and the final result depends on the support of the majority of participants [26].

According to Korimová [14], it is therefore important that all participants in community planning are able to conduct a dialogue, negotiate with each other and accept compromises. In practice, various methods of community planning can be used. The choice depends on the municipality and the specific goal that is to be achieved by this community planning.

According to Matoušek [21], the most common methods are: - action planning, which can be characterized as a meeting in which local development issues are mostly addressed; take place between experts and community residents who are knowledgeable about the issue, - planning weekends, when residents are involved in community projects by submitting proposals themselves and experts only help in processing these proposals, or with the help of advice they regulate these proposals appropriately, - creating a community vision is related to the future development of the community; here, actors from the general public meet to jointly design plans with the help of which they will achieve specific goals in the future. As mentioned above, one of the methods of community planning is community planning of social services (hereinafter referred to as KPSS). According to Hartl [7], this term appeared in a strategic document entitled White Paper on Social Services, published by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs of the Slovak Republic. "Since then, the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs has begun to deal more significantly with the issue of KPSS and support these projects. KPSS is implemented at the local level, i.e. it is based on

decentralization processes, with the aim of involving local residents in this creation and thus supporting solidarity between them, or self-help in the given community, i.e. municipality." [5].

The result of this planning is a written document called a medium-term community plan, with the help of which social services are planned in a certain area. The creation of KPSS is primarily about cooperation between those who provide these social services, who commission them and who use them. These participants negotiate among themselves and seek the most appropriate solution that is in the interest of the majority of participants. This is what makes KPSS different from strategic plans of municipalities, where, on the contrary, it is not appropriate for the general public to be involved. An important aspect is that these services meet the needs of the community, solve adverse social situations, but also strengthen neighborly relations, reduce tension between minorities, etc. It is also possible and beneficial to use this planning to create new social services according to current local needs. Currently, more complex so-called care plans are increasingly appearing, which also include other goals that are not entirely social services, but touch on this area [27]. The aim of the KPSS is therefore primarily to strengthen the social cohesion of the community (in this case the municipality) and support social inclusion and prevention of social exclusion of individuals and groups [4].

Krbcová et al. [16] state in their book that the main aspect of the community planning process is the participation of the so-called triad, i.e. all those affected by this planning, whether sponsors, providers or users. These participants cooperate to create a certain plan that will be beneficial for everyone, but above all will meet the needs of citizens or users. The sponsors who participate in this planning process are those who are responsible for providing social services, i.e. they are primarily municipalities and regions. It would be good to mention here, since it is important, as mentioned above, that this planning of social services is in line with the needs of the inhabitants of this municipality or region, i.e. the funds that sponsors spend on these social services are really spent effectively [7].

"Providers are those participants of the KPSS who offer and provide these social services. Whether they are non-profit organizations, individuals or other providers. Their participation is very important because in this way they find out what services are of interest in a given community, i.e. what social needs the citizens of these communities have" [27].

And the last, probably the most important participants in this planning are the recipients of these social services. In short, these are citizens who are

disadvantaged in some way (e.g. on the labor market) or are in an unfavorable life situation and these services should help them in this situation. Their participation in this process is also beneficial because they are the ones who evaluate these services, especially their quality and availability. In addition, other participants learn from them which services are missing in the offer, and therefore they can update the offer of social services accordingly. In addition to these participants, other entities involved in the provision of social services may also participate in this planning process, such as experts, authorities, health facilities, employers, etc. [16].

Community worker

According to Rosinski, Matulayová and Rusnáková [29], the mission of a community worker is to find social priorities and significant needs of the selected community and to encourage its residents to recognize their problems and try to manage them with the help of available services. For this purpose, he informs various groups of residents about the possibilities of solutions and encourages them to discuss their problems and at the same time to organize joint actions aimed at eliminating the given problems [13]. Community workers are often involved in supporting the community development process [13]. Kinkor [1] further states that the demands placed on a community worker in terms of his knowledge and professional skills. With the development of community work, these demands are becoming greater [13].

Empathy, the ability to understand human feelings and the ability to help clients “manage their personal and social problems” [6] are needed. He should have knowledge of the fields of philosophy, sociology, psychology, social work, social policy and economics, which results from the need to have knowledge about humans and the dynamics of interpersonal relationships [13]. As a professional, he should be able to live in the midst of conflicts and tensions and maintain a professional approach to them. Given that the demands of different groups in the community are often not in line, he should be able to listen to individual interest groups in the community and facilitate and support negotiations between them. He must also count on constant tension between the needs of community members and possible resources [13]. Because the community worker is constantly under pressure to defend various interests, his personal integrity, i.e. his personal philosophy and style of work, is essential. It is not only about the aforementioned interests of different groups in the community, but also the pressures of the bureaucratic state apparatus not to bring

change to the current state. He must not be afraid of making an enemy of any group [16].

Furthermore, he should be able to help community residents to participate in the entire process, motivate them to work together, and be their support throughout the entire process from decision-making to project implementation. He tries to make the community understand not only its general problems, but also the problems of certain groups [16]. The community worker supports and seeks the characteristics and resources of the community and its individual members, notices and appreciates the positive experiences that its members have gained in the course of solving problems in the community. He offers his services and support to community members, but leaves the final decision up to them. The community worker must involve them in solving the problem, otherwise the chosen solution will not work. This is the responsibility of the community worker, along with the effort to ensure communication between interested parties, to propose procedures and possible solutions. To do this, he can use his authority or the authority of the institutions he represents. It strives to ensure that power and the responsibility associated with it are distributed equally among community members. However, the greatest responsibility for change in the community lies with its members [27].

Conceptual thinking is important for a community worker, which “presupposes the ability to generalize the available information at a high level”. It is predicated on three intellectual processes – analysis, interpretation and interaction [27]. One of the skills of a community worker is to write a project. Also important is their ability to recognize when it is the right time to end their work and hand over their competences to local residents [27]. In addition to knowledge and skills, the success of a community worker in solving community problems depends on their values and how they influence the values of the community. A community worker should be “ahead” of the community, which means, for example, that they come up with their own ideas and visions, but at the same time they should constantly listen to its residents. The ability to self-reflect and a functioning feedback system are important. Kinkor [12] further points out that since community work is a universal method that is applied in many areas and at the same time a very variable method, because each situation requires a different solution, creativity is required from the community worker, the implementation team and the community residents [3]. At the same time, if a community worker finds himself in a difficult situation, he should ask for consultation or supervision. According to Kinkor [12], these are mainly situations when:

- the behavior of clients or other target groups is very strange, hostile, hateful;
- the difference between how the community worker and the community see problems and priorities has deepened;
- the public administration is not willing to cooperate;
- the current donors are not willing to continue financing the project;
- the citizens have not accepted him and he has difficulty finding a way to communicate with them;
- it is difficult to decide who should become his client and thus has the right to his help and support (author).

According to Kinkor [12], a community worker can in practice occupy two different positions in the community, namely dominant or partner:

- In the dominant position, the community worker is perceived as an expert who presents ready-made instructions to the community. This type of worker gives priority to the goal over the process. This role is often rejected by the community.
- A community worker with a partner position is based on what is available in the community, based on its values. He gives suggestions, but at the same time encourages others to do the same [27].

Community centers

Community centers in Slovakia began to emerge after the gentle revolution in the 1990s. However, their roots can be traced back to the First Republic, in the form of various associations in which people gathered and sought to work for the benefit of the community. Community centers provide an opportunity for people to meet, spend their free time and solve problems, both personal and community problems. Within community centers, users have the opportunity to obtain education in a certain field or develop personal talents. A community center should work with the entire community of people living in a given area. Also thanks to the increasing amount of free time in the 20th and 21st centuries, community centers are becoming an important space, especially for two groups of the population. The first group consists of children and youth. The second group is seniors [24]. Community centers abroad are established community facilities that offer a set of activities, such as educational courses, retraining, social services, cultural events, volunteering, etc. In Slovakia, community centers are developing only very slowly. This is due to the lack of local tradition

and tradition in public policy. Nevertheless, some non-profit organizations are established as community centers. Their representatives often draw inspiration from abroad, for example, in the Netherlands, Great Britain, the United States of America or elsewhere [20].

A community center can be considered as the crown of a tree when community work develops and needs to be established. Conversely, a community center can also be considered as a root ball from which a trunk (common idea, goal) begins to grow, which gradually branches into branches and twigs, each of which can carry another idea [9]. Each community center has its own specific origin, functions and development. Each community center, like community work and community projects, is based on the needs of people in a given community. We would like to point out that great caution should be exercised when mixing the meanings of the words “community center” and “community work”. One may be based on the other, but their coexistence may not be a necessary necessity. In some excluded localities, community centers are being established as one of the first. This responds to the needs of people to meet in a safe place, which is a neutral ground on which the community can develop and discuss problems. [8].

In other localities, they arise only during development, when the need for a safe space arises, e.g. for children, youth, or as a place of employment for women or men [25]. Sometimes it is created in the last stages of community development as a work that required a lot of skills and experience to build. In some communities, it does not arise at all. The main goal of community work is not to create community centers, but to work with the community and develop it. The community center has several functions, as can be partly seen from the previous text. The community center should be a safe, neutral place. It should be a suitable space for residents to meet, where members can solve identified community problems using community and social methods with the contribution of the core group and community worker. The community center should provide the opportunity for community education for the residents of the given location. Various long-term and one-time cultural events and activities should be organized here according to the traditions of the location and region (and of course in connection with current government regulations). The community center should also provide space for meaningful and healthy leisure time, whether passively or actively, for different age groups. Last but not least, it should provide employment to some members of the community, whether in the form of voluntary or traditional employment in workshops, as community workers, maintenance workers, cleaners, etc. [30].

The community center serves as a support system for community work. We can understand it as the paths along which community and social work operate smoothly. It is a kind of infrastructure for community work. Basic activities, or services, take place in the community center. They are social, cultural and multicultural, educational, environmental, leisure and support for their use. Social services are provided to socially disadvantaged people with the aim of improving their quality of life, or integrating them into society to the greatest extent possible, or socially protecting them from the risks that these people are exposed to [22].

The community center should provide basic social counseling, social services in outpatient and field form with a focus on solving adverse social situations and social inclusion [17]. Community centers offer programs and leisure activities for their users based on mapping their interests, but at the same time they very often offer community center spaces for various interest leisure clubs and associations. Cultural and multicultural services and educational environmental services are combined in most cases with leisure services, and in the case of a low-threshold center for children and youth, it is then very difficult to distinguish between individual categories of cultural, multicultural and educational, leisure or environmental services and programs in some programs. Cultural events and services enable the cultural life of the entire community. Organized events represent a space for the cultural life of the local community. They provide an opportunity for communication on an informal level and thus for creating better relationships. They provide a gateway for communication between minority groups and the majority group and vice versa [10].

Providing hobby activities

Activities are carried out in the facilities and the facility's employees use elements of therapies: occupational therapy, activity therapy, development of work skills, music therapy, art therapy, bibliotherapy, basal stimulation, reminiscence therapy, canistherapy and others.

- Occupational therapy. The term occupational therapy means work therapy or treatment through employment (it is composed of two words – ergon = work and therapy = treatment). Occupational therapy is a complex process that helps the recipient of social services to the maximum possible degree of autonomy and independence. Occupational therapy is not an alternative

to the traditional medical model or the "icing on the cake of rehabilitation". It is not a doctrine, but a perspective. A perspective on the person rather than on the disease. A perspective on the person for whom meaningful activity can be a certain hope. The goals of occupational therapy are aimed at maintaining, developing, supporting or compensating for the loss of ability in the sensorimotor, cognitive, psychological or social areas. They are aimed at achieving a satisfactory level and balance in performing self-service or work and leisure activities, at a better sense of one's own success and personal well-being and integration into society. They are based on the individual abilities and needs of the user [2].

- Occupational therapy (therapeutic process taking into account age and type of disability) - emphasis is placed on social, manual, volitional performances, stimulation programs within the framework of individual and group forms of intervention in conjunction with the training of a specific procedure for solving a practical problem.
- The development of work skills is carried out in the textile, weaving, ceramic and carpentry workshops and in the premises of the facility. The user can participate in simple outdoor work, in the arrangement of the premises of the facility, in flower care, in cleaning work in the form of training, become familiar with the kitchen environment, and can participate in the aestheticization and decoration of common areas. [19].
- Art therapy means treatment with fine arts. Its result is not evaluated from an aesthetic point of view, what is more important is the process of creation, its notice period. An important aspect is the support of creative abilities and mutual respect. In the method of art therapy, the main emphasis is placed on the healing potential of creative activity. Art therapy can have a relaxing and educational function when we can develop the client's artistic technique and skills. It also represents a therapeutic function when the work is not evaluated but the feelings and the process of creation itself is supposed to lead to relaxation, activation for activity and relaxation [28].
- Music therapy is a treatment method that uses music as a therapeutic tool. The condition is that we let our feelings and ideas flow freely according to the musical mood. Music therapy strengthens empathic abilities, teaches communication, contributes to the expansion of expressive abilities. Music therapy can be implemented as a simple form of listening to music with elements of relaxation.

- Among the interesting features of this facility, we would like to mention canistherapy, which has been implemented regularly in the facility for a few years now, and cognitive training. Canistherapy is based on the assumption that a dog is the most reliable and often the only friend of a person in loneliness and illness. It uses this partnership and has the task of inducing positive social and psychological changes. Group canistherapy of the type AAA (animal assisted activity), AAE (animal assisted education), AAT (animal assisted therapy) is implemented for users twice a month by an external canis team. We classify memory training as a non-pharmacological approach in the care and treatment of people with dementia, but also as an activation technique in working with users. The recipient's abilities and skills can be strengthened by the following activities: memory training: it is aimed at supporting memory, strengthening self-confidence and learning to use techniques to improve memory and self-image in everyday life and cognitive training: it is a modified memory training that focuses on cognitive functions as such, in addition to memory, also on thinking, attention, judgment, speech, etc. Its goal is to maintain cognitive abilities [18].
- Snoezelen. The essence of this concept is to provide individual and naturally continuous sensory stimulation in an acceptable and non-stressful environment. It is implemented in a very pleasant, specially designed space using light, sound elements with elements for gross and fine motor skills and support of the vestibular apparatus. The goal is to evoke sensory sensations as well as stimulate vision, hearing and all senses towards balance and health. In the concept of basal stimulation, therapists try to establish communication with people with a change in the field of perception and communication by offering stimuli and movement. Communication channels in the communication process can be all sensory organs. In the concept of basal stimulation, we are talking about the possibility of using, according to the state and abilities of the user, these communication channels: somatic, vestibular, vibratory, auditory, optical, olfactory, tactile-haptic [14].
- Bibliotherapy – uses the effect of books on the user. Bibliotherapy uses literary works, but also one's own creation. It is assumed that literature gradually reflected all the problems of humanity in different ages. In this way, recipients of social services can confront their own opinions with the opinions of the heroes, but also with others in the group and together seek various solutions to conflicts. Reading together creates a feeling of closeness and an opportunity for confidential conversations. The

technique of unfinished stories is often used, where the user can continue and evaluate how important a given solution or another one that is proposed would be for the hero. Bibliotherapy also includes writing letters, messages, poems, diaries, biographies, short stories, fairy tales, and scripts. Phototherapy or light therapy is a therapy that uses light rays. Its beneficial effects have been proven in the ancient past. It has been found that light at certain wavelengths can induce various healing reactions in the human body. It is also appropriate to use phonotherapy or aromatherapy with phototherapy. Relaxation is the induction of physical and mental relaxation. It is therefore intended to remove unnecessary and inappropriate tension (not everything that is physiologically impossible). Types of relaxation: Relaxation methods based on muscle relaxation: Massage - causes blood circulation in the skin, stimulates the lymphatic system, affects muscle tone, stimulates blood circulation (methods - Dorn method, cupping, Breuss massage, lava stone massage). Other relaxation options: Aromatherapy – a relaxation method that uses fragrant substances. Aromatherapy substances can be consumed by inhalation – burning fragrant herbs and absorption – in the form of a bath, massage [23].

Conclusion

Community work represents an important tool for social integration, participation, and the development of local communities. Its aim is not only to assist individuals but also to improve the overall quality of community life by activating its members and supporting mutual cooperation. Community planning of social services enables the effective involvement of all stakeholders – local authorities, service providers, and users – in the decision-making and planning process. The role of the community worker is indispensable in this process, as they facilitate communication, promote participation, and help resolve conflicts within the community.

Community centers, as institutional bases for community work, create spaces for education, cultural and leisure activities, thereby strengthening social cohesion and preventing social exclusion. Providing leisure activities through various forms of therapy and engagement contributes to personal development, creativity, and the social skills of individuals. In this way, community work represents a comprehensive system of support that combines professional social intervention with the active participation of citizens in community life.

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