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Věnování

Dedication

Toto číslo je s úctou věnováno PhDr. Markétě Pánkové, zástupkyni šéfredaktora časopisu *Historia scholastica* a bývalé ředitelce Národního pedagogického muzea a knihovny J. A. Komenského, k jejímu životnímu jubileu.

Redakce časopisu Historia scholastica

This issue is respectfully dedicated to PhDr. Markéta Pánková, Deputy editor of *Historia scholastica* Journal and former director of the National Pedagogical Museum and Library of J. A. Comenius, on the occasion of her jubilee.

The editors of Historia scholastica

“Every City Dweller is, if not Ill, at Least in Need of Recovery.”¹

The *Schullandheim*

S (Rural School Hostel) in the Context of Crisis and Reform after the First World War

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Abstract Rural school hostels have hardly been the subject of interest in educational history to date. This is despite the fact that after the First World War an actual rural school hostel movement was formed in Germany and corresponding institutions still exist today. The founding of rural school hostels can be placed in the post-war context, which was characterised by crises. At the same time, their success is fuelled by a multitude of intersecting and mutually reinforcing discourses whose origins go back further. These are re-constructed in this article under keywords such as urbanisation, hygiene and community

education. While the hygienic objectives (health, nutrition, architecture, etc.) followed a logic of objectification and standardisation, the ideal of a personalised close relationship between teacher and pupils was guided by modes of subjectivity and individualisation. The combination of these two tendencies merged sometimes into ideas of pedagogical omnipotence. Moreover, the focus on the individual child was always framed by an overarching collectivising idea of community, which was to take on increasingly totalitarian traits at the transition to and during National Socialism.

Keywords Rural school hostel, hygiene, community education, progressive education, urbanisation

1 MUCHOW, Hans, 1928. Schullandheim und Großstadt-Jugend. *Pädagogisches Zentralblatt*. Langensalza: Beltz. Vol. 8, pp. 773–775, here p. 773.

1 Introduction

In contrast to the rural boarding school (*Landerziehungsheim*), the rural school hostel (*Schullandheim*)² has so far been of secondary interest in educational history.³ This is despite the fact that after the First World War an actual rural school hostel movement was formed, which was clearly reflected in contemporary educational discourse. Above all, however, the widespread impact of these institutions, which still exist today, was and is clearly greater than is the case with rural boarding schools. Their neglect has to do with the fact that they were a “bottom-up” movement. Thereby and in contrast to the rural boarding schools, the school hostel movement also lacks charismatic founding figures (cf. Oelkers, 2013).

The following analysis deals with the question of why the rural school hostel movement was so successful. The thesis is that large numbers were founded because this institution offered answers or solutions to various crisis perceptions that emerged after the turn of the century and became increasingly virulent after the war (cf. Berner, 2024, in print). These included, in particular, a general critique of modernization and civilisation, which was also articulated primarily as a critique of urbanisation, and, in relation to the institution of school, the discourse on school hygiene and overburdening. These perceptions of problems were expressed in criticism of the methods and content of schools with a one-sided focus on the intellect, which was also linked to concerns about health consequences. Many educators and (school) doctors considered the school and living conditions in the (big) cities

2 As Mayer (2020) states, there is no evidence for comparable educational institutions outside of Germany, even if related pedagogical activities developed at that time in other countries, too.

3 For a long time, the authors of historical articles were almost exclusively people who were themselves closely involved with the rural school hostel idea, for which the journal of the Verband Deutscher Schullandheime, “Das Schullandheim”, still provides a publication platform today (e.g. Kruse, 2002; Kruse & Mittag, 2000; Kruse, 1993). Pehnke (1990) provides an overview of the rural school hostel movement. For the rural school hostel movement in Bavaria cf. Petek, 1997; for Hamburg cf. Mayer, 2020; for developments in the Nazi era cf. König, 2002.

to be particularly harmful, with additional fears of moral and ethical dangers. Finally, the counter-programme to the “dirt” and temptations of the big cities, specifically a pedagogically guided form of communal living together in the countryside, was supported by the romanticising communal utopias of a philosophical and sometimes nationalistic cultural critique.

The focus of the following exposition is on the plausibility of the above-mentioned thesis and thus the elaboration of the most important discourses, from which the rural school hostel phenomenon can be regarded as emerging. These discourses are bundled under the keywords urbanisation critique, community discourse and educational progressivism. First, however, the origins and developments of the institution of the rural school hostel will be briefly presented.

2 The Rural School Hostel: One Institution – Three Goals

In 1930, the “Lexikon der Pädagogik der Gegenwart” defined the rural school hostel under the corresponding lemma as the “home of a school in the country. School, country and home combine in the [rural school hostel] to form a higher unity. The name clearly expresses the threefold task of the [rural school hostel] idea: teaching, physical training, education” (Lohmüller, 1930, col. 857). This threefold purpose was established soon after the first institutions were founded in 1919, although there were certain shifts in emphasis over time. In contrast to the rural boarding schools, which certainly set an example, these were basically institutions belonging to individual schools, which were founded on the private initiative of teachers, parents or citizens. Located in a rural setting, they were intended to enable pupils and teachers to escape the harmful influences of city life and mass schooling for a while. Usually, the stays were organised by class and lasted several weeks. Accommodation was provided in farmhouses, former inns, boarding houses or properties formerly used by the military, which were often converted, renovated and maintained with the voluntary help of teachers and parents. Paid staff were also brought in, for example for catering.

The first school hostels were clearly linked to the difficult living and subsistence conditions after the First World War (cf. e.g. Sahrhage, 1925/1993; Homfeldt, 1990).⁴ In the cities in particular, the food situation was precarious, partly as a result of the naval blockade of Germany (1914–1919); in addition to hunger, there were also illnesses and symptoms of deprivation. At the beginning of the 1920s, there was a strong increase in the number of such hostels, initiated particularly by schools in large cities such as Hamburg, Frankfurt and Berlin. The focus was on physical exercise, recreation and healthcare for children and young people. Nevertheless, it would be difficult to explain the idea of meeting this need by establishing hostels in the countryside where schoolchildren were accommodated for weeks without the receptiveness to the contemporary discourse that was critical of civilisation and modernisation, in addition to a widespread problematisation of an (intellectual) overload of pupils by teaching (methods) in schools.⁵ The basis was the assumption of a direct causal relationship between nature and health or the city and illness. This idea was supported by countless contributions from doctors and physiologists, including some empirical evidence, but also from philosophers and sociologists who were critical of culture, all of which lent it particular credibility.

By the mid-1920s, when an actual rural school hostel movement formed, the above-mentioned triad of purposes had become firmly established. However, the protagonists were already noticing a shift

4 Earlier foundations mentioned in the literature are more likely to be holiday camps that were only later used as rural school hostels (cf. Hilker, 1925). The first rural school hostel was that of the Vittoria School (lyceum with women's school) in Frankfurt a. M., initiated in 1918 and built in 1920 in Eppstein (Taunus) (cf. Vorbein, 1926).

5 As early as 1921, the hygienist and medical councillor Wilhelm von Drigalski pointed out that in the Weimar Republic there were various effective and less costly ways of providing prophylactic or curative support to children and families affected or threatened by poverty and illness (e.g. Drigalski, 1921/2014). The financing of the stays, especially with regard to pupils from poorer families, was a constant issue. In addition, the organization and realization of school hostel stays lasting several weeks required considerable commitment on the part of the teachers.

within this triad. As the worst post-war hardships were overcome, the health aspect receded somewhat into the background in favour of education, primarily understood as community education. The teaching purpose was also discussed more strongly, i.e. to what extent and in what form lessons should take place during a stay at a school hostel. This was also a reaction to the fact that critics of rural school hostels primarily cited learning deficits (cf. Schmidt, 1925; Erichsen, 1929).

The rural school hostel movement was given a boost by the support it received from the Berlin Zentralinstitut für Bildung und Erziehung. Founded in 1915, the institute headed by Ludwig Pallat developed into the central pedagogical information and work centre in Germany during the Weimar Republic (cf. Tenorth, 1996). Franz Hilker's "Übersicht über den gegenwärtigen Stand der Schullandheimbewegung" lists 120 rural school hostels for the year 1926, with secondary schools being particularly active in founding them. Up to 1933 (250 rural school hostels) and thereafter, a steady increase is recorded (1942: 435 rural school hostels), which only stopped when the buildings were repurposed due to the war (cf. König, 2002). The publication organ of the Zentralinstitut, the "Pädagogisches Zentralblatt", regularly reported on developments in the school hostel sector, provided information on new establishments and advertised properties that were suitable for the establishment of school hostels. In 1925, the Zentralinstitut also initiated the first conference in Berlin dedicated entirely to the idea of rural school hostels (cf. Zentralinstitut für Erziehung und Unterricht, 1926).⁶ On this occasion, the Reichsbund deutscher Schullandheime was founded; its six-member board included the leading representatives of the movement Heinrich Sahrhage (1892–1962)⁷ and Rudolf

6 Further national conferences were held in Düsseldorf in 1926 as part of the exhibition for "Gesundheitspflege, soziale Fürsorge und Leibesübungen", in Hamburg in 1928 and in Dresden in 1930 in connection with the "Internationale Hygieneausstellung".

7 Heinrich Sahrhage (Dr.), a leading representative of the rural school hostel movement alongside Nicolai, was a teacher from 1916, later becoming a senior teacher and head teacher at the Thae-Oberrealschule Holstentor in Hamburg. On his initiative, the association Schulheim Oberrealschule Holstentor was founded in 1921,

Nicolai (1885–1970)⁸ as well as Carl Matzdorff (1859–1938)⁹. In 1929, the Reichsbund launched its own magazine, “Das Schullandheim”.

3 The Rural School Hostel in the Context of Crisis and Reform

3.1 The Topos of the Disease-causing City

Accelerated modernisation, and the criticism of civilisation and culture that arose in response to this, manifested itself around and after 1900 in a longing for nature and a romanticised image of rural life. The war, whose destructive effects hit the cities particularly hard, reinforced this perception. The urban population suffered particularly from the subsistence crisis, and children and young people were especially affected by malnutrition and its health consequences. Although population figures stagnated around the First World War, the decades around the turn of the century saw considerable growth – which, together with

followed by a school hostel in Hoisdorf (Schleswig-Holstein). In 1933 he joined the National Socialist Teachers' League (Nationalsozialistischer Lehrerbund, NSLB) and on 1 May 1937 the NSDAP. In 1943 he was appointed state school commissioner for the *Kinderlandverschickung* – the evacuation of children to the countryside under the pretext of healthcare and recovery from 1940 – for the *Gau* Hamburg. As part of the denazification process, he was demoted to the position of teacher in 1947 – albeit only temporarily. Sahrhage remained at his previous school in the Hamburg civil service until his retirement in 1957 (cf. Groschek, 2001). On the organizational, ideological and conceptual developments and the role of the Reichsbund deutscher Schullandheime and its representatives in Nazi Germany cf. König, 2002.

- 8 Rudolf Nicolai (Dr.) was a teacher at the Realgymnasium Annaberg from 1911, and was active in the Wandervogel movement. He founded the rural school hostel in Jöhstadt (Erzgebirge) and became the East German spokesman for the rural school hostel movement. Joined the NSDAP in 1933; dismissed from the teaching profession in the course of the denazification process in the Soviet Occupation Zone. Together with Sahrhage and others, he campaigned for the revival of school hostel work after the war (cf. Pehnke, 2017).
- 9 Carl Matzdorff (Professor) was the editor of the “Schullandheime” section of the “Pädagogisches Zentralblatt”. He was a teacher and head teacher in Berlin and was the author of various textbooks for teaching biology at secondary schools. In contrast to Sahrhage and Nicolai, he distanced himself from the “ideological self-alignment” within the Reichsbund deutscher Schullandheime (König, 2002, p. 65).

industrialisation, was a central point of reference for critics of urbanisation: from 1871 to 1910, the total population increased by over 50% from 41,000.000 to 65,000.000; from 1910 to 1925, there was stagnation as a result of the war. In 1871 every twentieth German lived in a large city (over 100,000 inhabitants), in 1910 every fifth German. Between 1890 and 1910, Hamburg and Frankfurt experienced a particularly large growth spurt of 187% and 130% respectively, primarily due to immigration (cf. Nipperdey, 1990); in Berlin, where school hostels also gained an early foothold, the population grew from 613,000 to 4 million between 1861 and 1913 (cf. Statista, 2024). Urban living and working conditions were increasingly characterised by cramped living conditions, air pollution, monotony and hectic pace; in addition, political contrasts and social tensions became particularly noticeable in the metropolises. As a result, hygiene became an important field of state policy and scientific research, whether as occupational, social or indeed school hygiene (cf. Berner & Lauff, 2021; Umehara, 2013; Benack, 1990).

The physiologist William Preyer had already asserted in 1887, using data from recruitment surveys, that graduates of urban secondary schools in particular suffered from a variety of physical ailments such as short-sightedness, scoliosis and general weakness. In addition to the content and methods of grammar schools, he blamed this on a lack of exercise and poor air quality. The frequent occurrence of anaemia and diseases such as tuberculosis, scrofula and rickets were also linked to the problem of overburdening. Friedrich Schede (1933/2014) was certain that schools, i.e. “sitting for many hours in overcrowded, poorly ventilated rooms”, had a negative impact on pupils’ health (p. 161). He identified a whole “complex” of sitting-related problems. These included inferiority of the musculature, respiration and ligament apparatus, “obvious impairment of the metabolism, energy production and natural defences” (ibid.). He also saw the higher, i.e. urban, schools as a particularly unfavourable environment for the healthy development of children and young people. In addition to the damage caused by sitting, there was also “the increasing pollution of the air inside the big cities, due to the attenuation of sunlight, which is robbed of all

biological values by the haze of the city” (ibid.). Not only physical, but also psychological damage, namely illnesses such as neurasthenia, hysteria and general fatigue (cf. Cowan, 2008; Radkau, 2000) and moral degeneration were described as consequences of urban living, working and school conditions. Schede (1933/2014) spoke of a “characteristic psychological state”, which he described as a “deterioration of the mental attitude”, caused “by the noise, the nervous haste that makes metropolitan life increasingly unbearable” (p. 161).

Against the backdrop of the perceptions of crisis described above, which were exacerbated by the war and its aftermath, the establishment of hostels that offered urban schoolchildren recreation seemed an effective and attractive measure. Here, pupils were able to enjoy fresh air, sunlight, sufficient exercise and adequate food. Supported by the popular *Lebensreform* movement, the fact that these were health-promoting factors was generally accepted (cf. Skiera, 2006; Wedemeyer-Kolwe, 2004; Buchholz, Latocha, Peckmann & Wolbert, 2001). It was generally accepted that the “constant time spent outdoors, in the fresh air and [...] the extensive physical activity” during a stay at a school hostel stimulated the “metabolism powerfully” (Köster, 1929, p. 378). The beneficial effects included “strong weight gain, an increase in red blood cells, a lasting increase in sleep and appetite, strengthening of the nerves, refreshment of the mind and exhilaration of the emotional life” (Schmidt, 1925, p. 711). Some physicians saw the greatest effect in the “stimulus change”, i.e. a “stimulation therapy” (Schlesinger, 1926a, p. 92). The decisive factor here was the sum of the stimulus factors and stimulus change factors, which resulted from changes in living and climate, sporting activity, scheduled air bathing and sunbathing; in short “the change in the whole way of life and lifestyle” (ibid.). Dr. Oschmann from Erfurt made a distinction between the “healthy stimuli” of the rural environment of a well-run school hostel and the “unhealthy ideas generated by the city environment” (1926, p. 124). In the city, the child receives a vast number of impressions outside of school, “which must have a confusing effect because the child is left to its own devices in processing these impressions, [while] the clarifying and organising influence of the educator is missing” (ibid., p. 123). In addition, in this

pedagogically controlled environment, “the influences of closer and wider family life, which unfortunately can sometimes be said to be almost more of a hindrance than a help, [are] removed” (ibid., p. 124).

The contrast between disease-causing city life and healthy country life was underpinned by considerable data and solidified into a topos that was rarely questioned. A rare exception was the school doctor and medical officer Dr. G. Poelchau from Berlin-Charlottenburg, who did not attribute the health condition of schoolchildren to the urban-rural contrast, but simply to the economic status of the parents, i.e. to the difference between wealth and poverty (cf. Poelchau, 1927/2014). The subject of his 1927 study was the height, weight and state of health of 13 to 14-year-old boys and girls from the affluent district of Charlottenburg on the one hand and a small village near Liegnitz (Lower Silesia, Poland after the Second World War) on the other, with the former performing significantly better. In view of the cramped and unhygienic living conditions in the countryside, Poelchau concluded that children before the war “were perhaps better housed in the modern tenements than in the poorly ventilated dormitories in the countryside” (ibid., p. 55). As far as the accommodation of city children in the countryside was concerned, he therefore saw no recreational value. Even if this was directed more against the “*Verschickung*”¹⁰ of children than against rural school hostels, the findings nevertheless scratched at the romantic myth of healthy country life or at the assertion that in the city all schoolchildren simply suffered from exhaustion and fatigue (cf. Erichsen, 1929).¹¹

Apart from such isolated opinions, the beneficial effects of a stay at a rural school hostel were considered proven by reformists of any stripe. Initial and final examinations as well as health monitoring by a doctor were recommended (cf. Bacher, 1928). Children had to be free of

10 Such placements of city children in rural households took place during the food crisis caused by the war. Positive effects that were derived from this were then repeatedly put forward in favour of the rural school hostel idea.

11 For further critical voices against the pedagogical devaluation of city life, cf. Mayer, 2020; Hopfner, 2006.

“vermin and infectious diseases” when entering the hostel; those from families with infectious diseases and “bedwetters” were not admitted. “Determination of height, weight and chest size before the start of the stay” was desirable (Schirrmann, 1926, p. 45). Professor Eugen Schlesinger, a paediatrician from Frankfurt, who came to prominence in 1926 with his study “Das Wachstum des Kindes”, spoke out in favour of “objective and numerical, precise recording methods” (1926b, p. 91). In addition to “measuring and weighing” (ibid.) and likewise according to the before-and-after principle, he proposed “dynamometric measurements” of the compressive force of the hands (ibid., p. 92).¹²

The diet was planned, with a focus on simplicity and nutritional value of the food (cf. Salffner, 1934). In addition to the dietary aspect, this was also associated with an educational intention, as the “commonality of modest meals and a strictly organised daily schedule” was expected to have an “educational effect in the best sense” (Matzdorff, 1926a, p. 87). The ideal architectural design of the rural school hostel was also discussed from a hygienic and educational point of view.

The equipment and furnishings of the hostels were increasingly based on objective criteria; with regard to guidelines, reference was repeatedly made to the regulations issued jointly by the Hamburg Health Department, the High School Authority and the Working Group of Hamburg School Hostels (cf. Clemenz, 1930/2014).

3.2 The Rural School Hostel as an (Educational) Community

If one looks at the rural school hostel literature of the Weimar Republic, it is noticeable that the educational idea of community increasingly came to the fore. And it was this aspect that continued to make the institution particularly attractive within the National Socialist educational programme after 1933 (cf. König, 2002). The health and hygiene discourse and the community discourse shared a rejection of the city. In the course of an increasing popularisation of cultural criticism, the

12 On Schlesinger’s tabular measurement method cf. Schlesinger, 1933; on Schlesinger’s contribution to “constitution research” cf. Schlesinger, 1930.

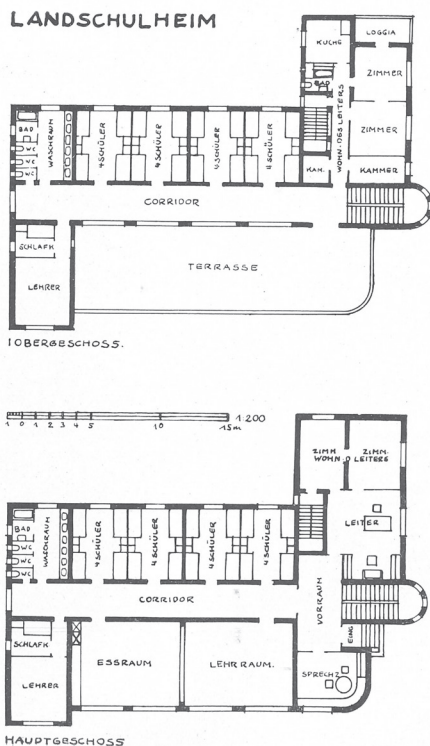


Fig. 1. Floor plan of a rural school hostel according to the architect Ludwig Hilbersheimer, Berlin (Hilbersheimer, 1926).

city became a symbol of alienation, uprootedness and hostility to life, whereby the hectic pace, anonymity and superficiality of city life lent its inhabitants a special character. In his essay “Die Großstädte und das Geistesleben” (1903), the cultural philosopher Georg Simmel noted an increasing “heightening of the nervous life” (p. 188) in the metropolises, caused by the diversity of constantly changing sensory impressions. This leads – as a protective reaction – to a specific mental character of the city dweller, which manifests itself in a tendency towards intellectualism, objectivity and egoism. Simmel contrasts the hectic hustle and bustle of the anonymous big city with rural or small-town life, which flows along at a slow rhythm and was characterised by closeness and familiarity.

The discourse was strongly dualistic, with Ferdinand Tönnies' (1887) influential juxtaposition of community and society providing an important reference (cf. Steinhaus, 1998). This pair of opposites was joined by others, such as culture/civilisation, soul/spirit or nature/technology. Thus, for M. Horn in his article "Die Bedeutung des Schullandheims für die großstädtische Jugend" (1930), technology and civilisation, the increasing needs of consumption and mobility, as they characterise the "metropolitan man", are not only to blame for the physical inhibition and atrophy, "but above all also for the inner, purely human concerns of the metropolitan youth" (p. 528). Heinrich Sahrhage, the leading Hamburg school hostel pedagogue, made a similar assessment: "[T]he much-vaunted advances in technology and the economy [inhibit and destroy] the human-forming forces of life. [...] The rural school hostel leads back from metropolitan civilisation to homeland-conscious culture, from book knowledge to direct contact with the things and events of nature, from school to real life" (1931, p. 212). All in all, the rural school hostel provided a "completely youthful community" (ibid.). This experience was particularly important for city children, as city dwellers generally lacked a sense of community and responsibility, which in turn manifested itself "as a deficiency in the civic sense" (ibid., p. 211).

In addition to the subordination of egoistic self-interests through the integration into the communal order of purpose and values, two positive consequences were associated with a stay at a rural school hostel. Firstly, it was hoped that living together in equal, simple conditions adapted to rural life for all pupils would have an equalising effect, levelling out different social classes and promoting understanding among the children. Above all, however, the aim was for the relationship between teacher and pupils to benefit in the sense of pedagogical relationship (cf. Nicolai, 1926). In order to emphasise the experiences and impressions gained together, the pupils were encouraged to keep a diary of their stay or to write reports (cf. Reinhold, 1926). Memory books and albums for the teachers have also been handed down, some of which may have been created spontaneously as a kind of expression

of gratitude and affection. The new medium of photography was used extensively, especially to record joint activities.

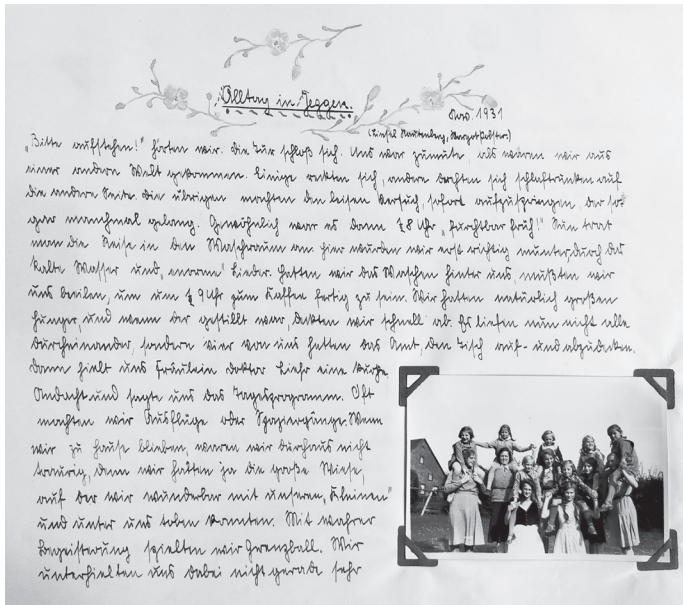


Fig. 2. Album of class DIIIa of the Elise-Averdieck-Gymnasium Hamburg: Stay at the rural school hostel in Jegggen, autumn 1931 (Elise-Averdieck-Gymnasium, 1931, StaHH 362-2/22_101).

Finally, the rural hostel situation was recognised as offering new opportunities to gain insights into the nature of individual pupils on whom educational influence could be strengthened accordingly (cf. Reinhold, 1925). For example, Erichsen (1929), in response to parents’ fears that their children might end up in “bad company” in the hostels, points out that “out here they can be educated more systematically and observed more closely than at home, where they are all left to their own devices for part of the day” (p. 324). Dr. Gersdorf from Leipzig (1925) came to a similar conclusion when he stated: “In the city, what is attempted to be planted in the pupils in the mornings cannot flourish. In the rural school hostel, the teacher can really be a guide. In the city, the image of the teacher and his influence disappears as soon as the school

doors are closed” (p. 465f.). Schmidt (1925) speaks in this context of an intensification of “permanently correct” assessment and “essential” influence (p. 711). Köster (1929) sees the greatest benefit of rural school hostel stays precisely in the boarding school community. Egoisms and special interests were suppressed here in favour of common tasks and goals. In contrast to normal school life, the teacher could be a “human being and educator” and the educator-pupil relationship was freer and more confidential. “In this influence on the inner life of his pupils he will then find his true satisfaction” (p. 378). The idea prevailed that teachers and pupils could meet on an equal footing, with the former taking on the role of friend and comrade, affectionate supporter and helper.

This idea of reducing hierarchy must at least be seen as ambivalent. The view of the school hostel educators on the advantages of living closely together is generally an instrumental one. The focus was on gaining the trust of the pupils in order to gain insights into their “inner life” (cf. e.g. Nicolai, 1928). Sahrhage formulated this rather bluntly in 1933 when he wrote: “In the rural school hostel, the teacher has an irreplaceable opportunity to monitor and influence his pupils and all their habits, not only in the way they work, learn, play and socialise, but also in the way they sleep, dress, wash, eat and carry out their domestic duties” (1933/2014, p. 156). Precisely because the nature and performance of the pupils were “largely physically determined”, Sahrhage hoped that the class teacher’s observations in the rural school hostel would provide important insights into the correct assessment and individual treatment of the pupils (*ibid.*). According to Dr. Clemenz (1930/2014), the head doctor of the school community at the Thae-Oberrealschule in Hamburg, doctors were able to not only spot incorrect or irregular nutrition and sleep disorders during the stay at the school hostel, but also child psychopathologies.

However, individualisation found its limits in the overriding purpose of the community formed during the stay in the hostel. With this in mind, the advocates of the rural school hostel movement recommended a strict organisation of the hostel stay with a structured daily routine. A day at the school hostel should begin at around 7 a.m. and

end at 9:30 p.m. According to one suggestion, the joint activities should be interrupted after lunch by a short rest period in the rooms or outside on the lawn, during which playing and making noise were “strictly forbidden”. It was also forbidden to stay in the bedrooms outside of the specified quiet times (Zentralinstitut für Erziehung und Unterricht, 1926, p. 122; similarly Salffner, 1934).

3.3 Rural School Hostels and Educational Progressivism

When reservations were expressed about rural school hostels, whether by parents, teachers or school authorities, they usually concerned learning deficits that could result from the interruption of regular school lessons. In the course of time, especially when the worst of the post-war crisis and its health consequences had been overcome, teaching increasingly came to the fore (cf. Hilker, 1926). The amount of time devoted to (formal) teaching probably varied in practice. The Hamburg school authorities, for example, began to prescribe a daily three-hour workload. However, in the understanding of rural school hostel education, this was to be clearly divided from learning at school and thereby drew on a large reserve of progressivist concepts. The buzzwords were concepts such as community school, educational teaching and inner school reform, and special attention was of course to be paid to physical education. The general aim was “to allow the blessings of the large but costly rural boarding schools to benefit public schools” (Lietzmann, 1922, p. 114). The most common point of reference was the work-school method alongside rural boarding school pedagogy, with Hermann Lietz and Georg Kerschensteiner being the most prominent proponents. In addition to the work-school method, didactic and methodological concepts such as the weekly work plan and project-based learning were frequently mentioned, and there was repeated reference to “occasional”, “experiment-based” or “focused” teaching (cf. Sahrhage, 1931). There was a general criticism of the “materialistic, scientific view of the 19th century”, which was to be overcome by “recognising emotional life and inner, moral values” (Nicolai, 1928, p. 365). Thus, by turning to the “school of work and education”, the proponents of the rural school hostel movement wanted to distinguish themselves from

the “school of learning and knowledge” as an expression of a “materialistic age” (ibid., p. 209). Teaching was therefore less about imparting knowledge and more about shaping attitudes. This presupposed the new type of relationship between teachers and pupils living closely together in community as described above.

The necessity and significance of the pedagogical “gains” associated with rural school hostel pedagogy also had to be conveyed because, especially in the case of secondary schools, it required considerable additional effort. In higher school classes, the pupils were taught by several teachers or the teachers were responsible for several school classes, as the subject-specific teacher system prevailed. Since those who remained at home still had to be taught, i.e. not all teachers could travel to the school hostel, it proved useful to implement a type of weekly lesson plan that focused on selected subjects and interdisciplinary lessons (cf. Jaspert, 1926). For this reason, what were known as “occasional lessons” were deemed to be sensible: based on natural and cultural phenomena such as the weather, agriculture or local trades, subjects relating to nature, local history or economics were worked out more or less spontaneously (cf. Aevermann, 1926).



Abb. 6. Mathematik-Unterricht im Landheim der Musterschule Frankfurt a/M.

Fig. 3. Geology lessons in the quarry (Zentralinstitut für Erziehung und Unterricht, 1926).

For example, under the heading “the development of bread”, the production of this food from grain cultivation to the bakery could be traced in the form of a project. Sahrhage (1926) also envisaged the teaching of a “school hostel sociology” (p. 59) for the lower and middle grades of secondary schools.¹³ The basis for this was community life in the hostel, which was characterised by the students taking on different tasks and roles in rotation. This was supplemented by excursions, gardening and handicraft lessons, among other things. Agriculture provided the opportunity for a wide range of theoretical lessons (chemistry, biology, geography, astronomy, economics, etc.). In order to cover the subjects as broadly as possible without reverting to textbook-style teaching, it was suggested that contemporary studies (cf. Lüdemann, 1930) and foreign language lessons (cf. Sahrhage, 1926; Erichsen, 1929) be taught using various German and foreign-language newspapers. The top priority was to move lessons outdoors whenever possible (cf. Lietzmann, 1922).

4 Conclusion

For all their diversity, the rural school hostels had several things in common: more or less far away from urban civilisation, in a natural landscape that offered as many different stimuli as possible, classes or groups of pupils and teachers came together for a few weeks to form a living and learning community. In addition to community-building and real-life, hands-on learning, the third purpose of a stay at the hostel was healthcare. The daily routine, as exemplified here by the Zerpenschleuse school hostel (Brandenburg), was as follows: In the mornings, three hours were devoted to lessons in the main subjects – primarily natural sciences, German and local history, as there was a lot of illustrative material available for these subjects; in good weather, lessons took place outdoors. Once a week, a maths teacher and a history

13 Erichsen (1929) also used the term “school hostel sociology” (p. 323), referring to a civic education that conveys the cultivation of community spirit, including a reverence for supra-personal purposes, as fundamental for living together in the school hostel.

teacher arrived, as well as a drawing teacher and a sports teacher. After breakfast, everybody went swimming, air bathing and sunbathing. Then lunch was eaten, followed by an hour's rest. In the afternoon, learning took place in free study groups; they went for walks in the village and played sports and games. After dinner, pupils and teachers got together to sing and make music, read or play board games. There was also the opportunity to develop photos. On some days, they undertook hikes and excursions (cf. Zademack, 1927).

During their stay, the residents enjoyed normally five nutritious meals, with a typical menu being as follows:

- 1st breakfast (8:00 a.m.): semolina soup, white bread, sandwich
- 2nd breakfast (10:00 a.m.): milk, 2 sausage sandwiches
- lunch (12:30 p.m.): blueberry soup, savoy cabbage with mutton, currants
- afternoon (3:30 p.m.): milk cocoa, 2 rolls with plum jam
- evening (6:30 p.m.): rice with sugar-cinnamon, 2 sausage sandwiches (Köster, 1929, p. 378).

After the war, the main focus was on the recovery of children and young people with health problems, but once the post-war crisis had been overcome, the rural school hostels were now to function as “youth training centres” in a general sense (ibid.). According to Köster in 1929, “[w]hat is still healthy and strong in our national body today should be fully preserved for our healthy next generation. Training young people is a service to the people and the fatherland” (ibid.). The well-known paediatrician Eugen Schlesinger named the “ultimate goal [...] the *improvement, the rehabilitation of entire closed classes, entire age groups*” (1926, p. 90, emphasis in original). “[O]bjective and numerically, [sic] exact methods” were decisive for the success of “recreational care” (ibid., p. 91, emphasis in original). And not surprisingly, he demanded: “The rural school hostel itself must be in close contact with a doctor” (ibid., p. 102, emphasis in original).

In line with Schlesinger's demand, a clear tendency towards objectivization, standardisation and quantification was noticeable with regard to the daily structure, nutrition, furnishings and equipment

of the hostels (i.e. in the area of hygiene in particular). Chest circumference, height and weight of the pupils were recorded and evaluated before, during and after their stay in the hostel, but standards were also issued regarding minimum distances for the arrangement of beds in the dormitories, air space per child, window size, number of lavatories, etc. (cf. Brunn, 1930/2014). In countless reports and articles, one comes across plans for daily routines and nutrition, and in almost every case reference is made to the impressive quantitative expansion of rural school hostels (number of facilities, number of places and stays) (cf. Hilker, 1926).

An overview of the literature on school hostels reveals that the educational aspect of community-building became increasingly important over the years. Motifs such as the national community and the subordination of the individual to higher “supra-personal purpose[s]” were increasingly used (Reinhold, 1926, p. 7). The idea of (pedagogical) leadership now also emerged more frequently (cf. Nicolai, 1926, 1928; Lüdemann, 1927; Hirsche, 1934). This emphasis was flanked by teaching which, in addition to the natural sciences, focused on local history and thus the “cultivation of the sense of home” (Matzdorff, 1926b, p. 125) and the “German spiritual life” (Lietzmann, 1922, p. 125).

Overall, a tendency towards objectivization and standardisation can be observed in the area of hygiene, while subjectivity and individualisation were the guiding principles in the ideal of personalised close relationships between teachers and pupils. In some cases this certainly merged into ideas of teachers’ pedagogical omnipotence with regard to deeply investigating and influencing every individual pupil. The focus on the individual child was always framed by an overarching collectivising idea of community, which increasingly took on totalitarian traits.

In conclusion, the rural school hostel can be described as a product of different, intersecting and mutually reinforcing discourses, reform concerns and movements (criticism of civilisation, romanticising community utopias, hygiene discourse, rural boarding school movement, etc.), which united a large number of actors (educators, school councils, doctors, medical councils, architects, etc.). This is probably the reason for the attractiveness of the institution and its long survival to

the present day. Both the community and the health discourse identified a fundamental civilisational evil in the big city; the important concept of educational teaching and the community ideology were related to each other. Furthermore, the ideology of community and the emphasis on the (comradely) pedagogical relationship essential for the new progressivist teaching concepts were also linked to each other. And finally, the intimate relationship between educators and pupils also served a pedagogical-clinical view with which the teachers were to observe and monitor the hygienic and moral behaviour of the children (socialised in the family and in the big-city environment and therefore judged as problematic by the educators) for the purpose of promoting health and community. The rural school hostel flourished under National Socialism, survived the division of Germany (in the GDR as Houses of the Young Pioneers) and also proved to be adaptable to new discourses afterwards (ecology, environmental education, sustainability).

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