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**Participation:
Inclusion,
Empowerment
and Routes Out
of Homelessness**



FEANTSA

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Participation: Inclusion, Empowerment and Routes Out of Homelessness

By **Mauro Striano**¹, *Policy Officer, FEANTSA*

The first question we should probably ask ourselves when expressing an opinion about participation is whether and to which extent we participate in how services we use are planned and in how policies that concern us are decided. As far as I am concerned, the main inputs I provide in order to influence the way society is shaped are expressed through my job and through the vote I give to the political party with which I am supposed to share the biggest number of views. Through voting, my opinions are expressed indirectly but do not have, individually, any power to influence policy-making. As a staff member, my job might influence, to a certain extent, the organisation for which I work but the question is which level of influence a European Federation that represents a part of civil society's interests actually has. There are surely people more politically active than me and civil society interests that probably attract more attention than homelessness but here my point is that even those who are fortunate enough to be socially and economically advantaged compared to many, do not always effectively participate in decisions and actions that affect their lives. And when it comes to those who live in poverty, the existing barriers to influencing decision making can be even more concrete.

Participation of people who have experience of homelessness is paramount and can have outcomes at different levels. Most importantly, participation should always have a positive impact on homeless people. Indeed, individuals can and should receive personal gain or empowerment from being involved

through increased confidence, knowledge, skills or awareness. Empowerment, by which we mean enabling homeless people to claim their rights and to achieve their potential and aspirations, is therefore one of the intended outcomes of participation, because an empowered person can more easily find a sustainable route out of homelessness.

Homeless service providers might be wary of participation for lots of reasons. There can be concerns about what the outcome of participation will be, particularly where it is anticipated that homeless people will have views that differ from theirs. Participation can foster fear about deprofessionalisation of the work of social workers and staff may also be concerned that they do not have the necessary skills or resources to properly implement participation and, in the worst case scenario, they have heard feedback reporting disappointing outcomes from participation. However, the benefits of participation can be far-reaching for the practices of homeless service providers since it is often of huge added value to consult with service users to better identify aspirations - and adjust practice in response. Indeed, as it is shown in this magazine issue, if the experience of those who are directly affected by homelessness is taken into account, the quality and effectiveness of services and policies does improve.

Political impact is the ultimate goal of participative approaches within service providers and beyond. People with experience of homelessness can draw our attention to particular issues difficult to imagine

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² <http://www.thehomelessperiod.com/>

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

We would like to give you the chance to comment on any of the articles which have appeared in this issue. If you would like to share your ideas, thoughts and feedback, please send an email to the editor, suzannah.young@feantsa.org.



or foresee for those who have never had to look for a home or even only a roof for the forthcoming night. I have recently learnt about a project – the Homeless Period² – that has been raising awareness about the lack of sanitary products and advocating for tampons and towels to be made available through homeless shelters, the same way the government provides condoms. It is through the voice of a woman who slept rough in Brixton, UK for 6 months that the message is spread. *“When I was homeless and I used to have my periods” - she says - “I used to end up going in the public toilets and, especially when there weren’t no places where you could get sanitary towels, end up taking a cloth or whatever ripping it up like, you know, and then using that”*. This looks like a simple request that in our wealthy, though committed, lives we can give for granted. But the reality is that these basic sanitary goods might be lacking - and we realize that fact only when a person experiencing the problem draws our attention on it.

Through involving people with experience of homelessness along with service providers, policy makers, social workers, educators, researchers and all other relevant stakeholders, participative approaches can entail policy changes that, building on the experiences of people who have a unique insight, and target real needs. However, we need to bear in mind that unavoidable time lapses between the participation and any resultant change at policy level make it challenging to ensure that participation is sufficiently empowering and interesting.

Another level on which participation of homeless people can make the difference is perceptions. There is generally limited awareness of poverty and homeless issues in society, often accompanied by myths, prejudices and stereotypes about its causes and the characteristics of people who experience it. If we wish to raise awareness about the reasons linked to homelessness and to correct – and improve – perceptions of people living in destitution, there are many participative projects that can assist.

The levels of participation of homeless people in service planning and policy-making varies throughout the European Union. Some Member States explicitly provide participation in their legal frameworks; some have very good practices of effective involvement of disadvantaged and marginalised people. However, many have not developed any participative approach and do not realise the benefits that can be obtained through participation. For this reason, the FEANTSA participation working group³ recently published a toolkit that wants to explain what participation means, which kind of participative approaches can be used and which participation tools are available.⁴ The group has been organizing seminars in different European cities to spread the knowledge acquired and increasing the level of knowledge through inputs from other individuals or organisations. Ultimately, the exchange is what counts and the possibility to express opinions and make proposals is at the core of a democratic, more open society that allows for transparency and does not leave anybody behind.

³ <http://feantsa.org/spip.php?rubrique28&lang=en>

⁴ <http://feantsa.org/spip.php?article122&lang=en>



The Piazza Grande Participation Model

By **Leonardo Tancredi**,¹ *Editor in Chief of Piazza Grande Magazine, Amici di Piazza Grande Association, Italy*

The Amici di Piazza Grande association was set up twenty-one years ago by a group of activists whose aim was the reintegration of homeless people into society. Its main activities included participation, speaking out and mutual help. It was not a voluntary association but a group of peers made up of homeless or formerly homeless people and others, with more common personal experiences, whose cultural and political roots lay largely in the CGIL (General Italian Labour Confederation) Trade Union. The founding principle was the conviction that people experiencing conditions of severe social and economic difficulty could be reintegrated into society by appealing to their underlying abilities and to the support of a community of peers. It was with this idea that the street magazine, *Piazza Grande*, was born, a few months before the association itself.

The street magazine project was based on the idea that homeless people in conditions of severe social difficulty could still have some personal abilities that might help them to get back onto their feet, to choose a path of social reintegration and return to a life as active members of society. The choice of the street magazine as a tool to trigger this virtuous process was partly dictated by chance (the founders decided to replicate the street magazine model used in London and Paris, after discovering its existence almost by accident). In some respects, however, we could say that it had to happen: what better way to lend voice and citizenship to a social group forced into extreme marginalisation than to set up a magazine?

This is exactly what *Piazza Grande* is and was particularly in the first half of its twenty plus-year existence. A magazine created from start to finish by homeless

people, who are also in charge of its distribution throughout the city. They take on the role of journalists, autobiographic storytellers, opinion-leaders and vendors, "mobile newsmen". In *Piazza Grande*, Bologna's homeless people find an opportunity to speak out which also has commercial value. Since 1993, the newspaper has been distributed in exchange for a donation. Those who distribute it earn the difference between the price paid for a copy (which is currently 1 euro and is traditionally the equivalent of the cost of a cup of coffee in a bar) and the donation.

Several months after the monthly magazine first hit the streets, the group of editor/distributors and the activists who supported them decided to take another organisational step and form an association. Not only did this development have the formal value of gaining the same public recognition afforded to the city's other associations (Bologna is historically rich in associative experiences), it was also a real step forward on the citizenship journey begun with the street magazine. The birth of the association allowed the founders of *Piazza Grande* to act as a go-between with the institutions on the topic of poverty and social exclusion and, above all, to take part in the debate on the policies to implement in order to fight them. The skill and the authority that the group can bring to the table are the product of the personal experiences of most of the members of the association as homeless people and this is definitely an unprecedented occurrence for the social and political history of Bologna and Italy. But it doesn't end there. Through the association, the idea of participation, considered as the progressive regaining of independence, finds another embodiment in the conception and construction of services for homeless people.

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A document of the association, written at the time of its foundation, states:

Piazza Grande is an association, a movement of mutual aid, of self-help which has overturned the concept of marginality, turning it into active self-promotion, transforming the passive conditions induced by welfarism, into opportunities for human resources. It is from this awareness that the strength of our experience is born.

We have tried to provide some practical answers, before progressing to those of a philosophical nature

- making the “users” leaders, making the most of human resources and the latent potential of every person.
- having the “services” produced by the same people that use them, following their performances and the methods of issue to meet requirements, transforming the activities used to manage them into opportunities to make money.
- developing occupational opportunities that can be adapted to people’s possibilities, as a transition towards a full and guaranteed income.
- launching, also in the form of enterprise, stable, regulated work as a bridge between informal economy and market.

The first “enterprise”, as already mentioned, was the street magazine but, with the birth of the association, this was followed by a workshop for repairing and selling bicycles, a dressmaking and repairs service, a second-hand clothing shop and also the street work of the mobile support service (going out in the evening to meet homeless people and distribute information and basic necessities) and the management of shelters. The involvement of homeless or formerly homeless people in all these activities is direct and regards the management of the services.

This model, despite having tangibly revealed its effectiveness, has not been immune to the signs of time and has suffered because it has not been brought up to date regularly enough.

The nature of the activity of *Piazza Grande* has forced the association to transform and evolve its commitment into a close relationship with the changes that have taken place in society. Coming into contact with homeless people every day and bringing them into contact with each other implicates a constant immersion in the reality of what it means to be poor and socially marginalised. And this is a sphere that small and large-scale social phenomena have changed significantly in the last twenty years.

It is worth assessing, for example, the influence of two macro-phenomena, the intensification of migratory flows and the spread of new forms of poverty, furthered by the economic crisis that has overwhelmed Europe in recent years, on the composition of the social group of homeless people. In today’s society, immigrants and the so-called “new poor” share not only the high risk of becoming homeless for objective and not subjective reasons, but also an earlier life experience which was not always characterised by poverty and social exclusion. These characteristics can slow down the willingness to see, in an associative context, in the possibility to speak out collectively, in recognition as a group, a tool for social reintegration so that marginalisation is perceived more easily as temporary and reintegration can be identified in the recovery of the lost status of “normality”, rather than operating as a social pressure group.

These context-related difficulties have cast doubts on the model of full and direct participation tested by *Piazza Grande*. The complete change in the street magazine’s editing staff, now made up of young journalists, the failure of certain individual reintegration processes, paid for in terms of isolation and substantial inability to cope with the difficulties of everyday life, make it urgent to rethink and correct the style of work launched over twenty years ago. The aim to achieve independence and full citizenship as the final outcome is still, however, the same.

“The skill and the authority that the group can bring to the table are the product of the personal experiences of most of the members of the association as homeless people.”



Connected Homeless People

By Monique Maitte,¹ Spokesperson, *Collectif SDF ALSACE, France*

“On social networks, we are human beings [...] We have normal discussions with people whose preconceived notions fade away, and whose fears unravel until they disappear completely.”

Since the Collectif SDF Alsace was created in Strasbourg in July 2008, the focus has been on using social networks. We had a life before this misery, one of us is an IT and communication specialist. Each homeless person we meet is quickly given a good telephone.

When we are excluded from housing and accommodation or want to express our refusal when faced with shameful accommodation, even what we have to say is taken from us!

In Strasbourg, “seated places” are available via the 115², a chair to sit on overnight from 10pm to 7am, under the neon lights, without access to hot water, with no snack or even a blanket.

This unsuitable location is the cafeteria of a homeless hostel, the only shared area for residents for whom it then becomes inaccessible. Should we keep quiet about this? Who can say that everything is alright?

Through the use of social networks, we can report these deteriorating conditions, this step backwards.

We started by setting up a blog that lets us express ourselves freely and without filters; we write the articles ourselves. We comment on the many illegible reports from sociologists or specialists of all kinds that only circulate amongst the elite. We comment on current events, press articles, we talk about our daily lives, and especially about the malfunctions or administrative and organisational roadblocks that prevent us from progressing and that lock us into trajectories that supposedly help us “integrate”.

We criticise NGOs that are only interested in their structure and their way of working, while broadening their scope to other sectors of poverty. There have never been so many NGOs and associations as there are now, and at the same time, there have never been so many people living on the edge. It's the whole system that's running out of steam, that creates poverty and keeps it going.

These associations have the support of politicians who are too happy to let them look after a topic that doesn't get any votes, and that doesn't do anything for their careers.

In the eyes of everyone, we do not count if we refuse to go along with it, or if we actually want to take part in action and meetings that decide have an influence on our lives.

Cities are being built without us, laws, decrees and measures are coming one on top of the other, piling up, and even cancelling each other out, all without us.

Our role is to criticise so that things will improve!

NGOs work like companies. They respond to calls for projects, go along with “principles of solidarity, humanitarianism, social aspects” in order to hit the jackpot. They don't hesitate to stab each other in the back. The way they actually work goes against the very fundamentals that they use in their communication. They hire people with 2 to 5 years of post-secondary education in order to get the contract, to get ahead. The people that they're supposed to help and support are lucky if they get unskilled work, and with no job security. If you don't toe the line, if you make the slightest comment, you're back in the street, with your bag if you're lucky.

They select and sort through us even worse than cattle, to have the quota of “successes” demanded by financial backers.

With the advent of Facebook and Twitter, we've managed to attract the attention of a lot of people, about a situation that they only see through the media prism: scraps of information, by season, in miscellaneous news, without an overview of our situation. Degrading images: alcoholics, drug addicts, or people with psychiatric problems.

On social networks, we are human beings, we fight to survive, we want simple things: a quiet corner to rest, a little place to wash and do some cooking; a minimum degree of independence. The opposite of these degrading images, the opposite of what homeless accommodation usually provides. We have normal discussions with people whose preconceived notions fade away, and whose fears unravel until they disappear completely.

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2 Emergency number for homeless people



With these virtual get-togethers, we have knocked down many barriers on all sides; people have got an idea of hope, for us and for them.

We have answered questions such as: why refuse a warm place for the night, it's better than nothing, you don't have any money but you have dogs, why have a child? etc. The questions surprised us, but we answered and bridges were built. Our image was redrawn, we were visible, our eyes could finally meet. Facebook and e-mail also work like filling in the forms that are endlessly asked of us, they keep track of these exchanges without having to carry around files that get lost, misplaced or damaged.

It's also a way of creating solid links with people we meet outside virtual circles. Friends have found family members and re-established ties with them. A father found his children, whom he sees once a month at his camp site. Now he wants to get ahead, to improve his life. The NGO he was with hadn't done anything to contact his family.

All of these communications channels have become essential given the disappearance of telephone booths. Of course, dialling 115 is still easier for those people who still do it. Associations want to be able to get in touch with us without asking how to do it. When looking for work, and for other procedures, you need a telephone with Wi-Fi. In general, society obliges us to be connected and reachable; we've made it into a tool that shows the truth about who we are; a thousand faces, a thousand stories, a thousand hopes.

Thanks to social networks, we've managed to create partnerships that help us to get ahead faster than with the associations. The Collectif SDF has a partnership with the architecture institute for habitat projects, has created an antenna for the "Morts de la rue";³ developed citizen actions, street outreach work, distribution of food, blankets, clothing, toilets, gloves and set-up showers and laundry points. We're responding ourselves to the vital needs that the NGOs and cities no longer provide for, or have even cancelled their help for. In Strasbourg, the lucky ones can wait a fortnight to have a wash, with no towel or soap.

We've managed to get our reality across, the other truth: we live in the city, we're citizens in our own right and not second class citizens, we're creating rainbow groups, with no cultural or religious problems... Solidarity is essential, and it breaks down all the barriers put up by politicians and people.

Social networks have allowed us to free ourselves from speeches, institutions and NGOs that have become institutionalised. But we still get our share of detractors, a lot of animosity, sometimes even hatred; a poor person who thinks and can do something - that tends to shatter the image conveyed by people who live on the industry of misery. We can stand our ground, and we're willing. We're determined.

But overall, since 2008, we've been attracting the attention of the media, whose interest in us and in our efforts is growing and becoming better defined. Thanks to social networks and the media, we receive gifts directly without having to justify ourselves to NGOs or endlessly fill in questionnaires. We've eliminated institutional violence, developed our ability to survive under these terrible conditions, and we refuse to spend one, two or three nights on a chair, out of fear of losing our "spot", missing out on the coffee, being cut off from friends and the group... Finding shelter means losing more than you gain.

We're alive! We're visible! We're independent! We have all kinds of talents and skills, and we aren't afraid to admit our weaknesses.

We think that the people giving speeches about us haven't really known us for a long time. The homeless population is changing, it's getting younger, with fewer illiterate people, and the massive arrival of foreigners is changing everything. The means implemented to "integrate" Roma people with whom we have problems, the abandonment of people who aren't European, seeing children in the street; all of this makes us think about the worth of your projects, arrangements, laws and decrees; and it isn't much. Categorisation is common - and it's an aberration.

We're chipping away at the concrete layer, the silence, the insinuations. We're unveiling the workings of a world that manufactures misery, and keeps the people that it excludes in the greatest insecurity.

More and more of us are refusing all of this "aid", and keeping away from the NGOs in which we've lost confidence.

But we remain very attached to the outreach workers - those from Médecins du monde and from the CCAS⁴ - to the people on the ground and some social workers. We are attached to all of these people, often on the edge just like us; they are the committed ones.

³ NGO remembering those who have died on the street

⁴ Centre communal d'action sociale - local social services



Straatvogels¹: Homeless People on Twitter in the Netherlands

By **Luc Tanja**,² *Street Pastor, Protestantse Diaconie Amsterdam, Netherlands*

Sonja: "Now I see how much fun it is, how you can make contacts. It is just nice to do. I meet people who do a lot for other people. There are so many people who help others. I didn't know that, but now I talk with them on Twitter."

Peter: "People ask me a lot of questions on Twitter, about what it is like to be homeless. That is the best part of it. So many people don't know what's going on."³

Straatvogels are a group of homeless people who were given a smartphone and were taught how to use Twitter. Each of them has their own Twitter account and their messages are reposted on the central Straatvogels account. The project was inspired by a similar project in New York.⁴

The aim of the project is simple: to see what happens when homeless people, who usually live a hidden life, become visible through Twitter. Characteristic of Twitter are the very short messages of just 140 characters, published on the internet by all sorts of people in a constant stream. Twitter is very open, very transparent, but it is also messy and crowded and it can be difficult to stand out.

We asked the participants to tweet at least once a day about their life. Through the short messages on daily routines and special events, a picture emerges of each individual and the challenges he or she comes up against in daily life. By means of this storytelling, the followers get to know the participating homeless people personally.

FOLLOWERS

People start to follow Straatvogels because they already have some kind of a general interest in the situation of homeless people. People stay with Straatvogels because they enjoy the individual voices. It is personal. If someone follows one, more or all of these homeless people on Twitter, it is only partly because they want to know more about the situation of homeless people in general. It is also about the humour,

the beautiful pictures some take or the wisdom that speaks through their tweets. The homeless people participating are appreciated because of the way they tweet, not because of the fact that they are homeless.

Because it is personal, followers also react in a personal way. In some instances, a follower has, for example, sent a reaction saying that he knows what is happening on the streets because he has been homeless himself. These kinds of reactions are like bridges between two worlds.

LANGUAGE USE

The limitation to just 140 characters levels off differences in language proficiency. It remains true that those with a better command of language have an advantage, but this is less pronounced than in other forms of written text. With Straatvogels, we have seen homeless people interact with Members of Parliament while directors of shelter organisations join in the conversation.

Storytelling on Twitter is not easy and not all the participants really got the hang of how to do it. Here, my role is important. Besides the training we offered, another way to facilitate storytelling is by the selection of which tweets to retweet. Some types of tweets are not retweeted. They are too personal, too offensive or incomprehensible. We edit them out, though they are of course still accessible for the direct followers of the individual participants. This is a fine line between good editing and censorship and this has been a real learning curve for all involved in Straatvogels.

There are now 14 people taking part in Straatvogels. The project started in 2012 in Amsterdam and now has local branches in two other Dutch cities: Nijmegen ([@Straatvogels024](https://www.straatvogels.nl/)) and Groningen ([@Straatvogels050](https://www.straatvogels.nl/)). In each city, different organisations take responsibility for the project. In Eindhoven, where the project ran for a year, the municipality together with Salvation Army, other shelter and mental health care organisations and an organisation of experts by experience took on the initiative. In Amsterdam, Straatvogels was initiated by the Protestant Church, in Nijmegen a church organisation and a mental health care organisation work together, while in Groningen a group of individuals oversee the project. Straatvogels has a combined number of followers of around 2500.

1 'Street Birds', [@straatvogels](https://www.straatvogels.nl/), <http://www.straatvogels.nl/>, <https://www.facebook.com/Straatvogels>

2 [LucTanja](mailto:LucTanja@diaconie.org), l.tanja@diaconie.org

3 Quotes from an interview with Sonja and Peter, who were among the first group to join Straatvogels, made after the first year of the project. Interview (in Dutch) can be seen here: <https://vimeo.com/50526386>

4 [@underheardinNY](https://www.underheardinny.com/), <http://underheardinnewyork.com/> This project ran for only two months in 2011.



EFFECTS ON ORGANISERS

In the different cities, different organisations are involved in the project. Straatvogels has at times been a challenging project. Twitter is very direct and everything is in the open. As soon as someone is tweeting, there is direct contact with the followers. This directness is in itself already empowering.

One of the issues we encountered during the project is how to deal with criticism. The organisations that put money and time into the project have at times been heavily criticized by the homeless people tweeting. I myself have run into unpleasant discussions several times.⁵ In each instance I tried to react in just the same way as I would react if this criticism had come up during one of our group activities. The followers reacted in different ways to our open confrontations. Some grouped around the participants and rallied for them. Others saw my point and told me they were impressed by how I work.

It does take some confidence to take criticism so openly. For some of the organisations involved in Straatvogels, this has proven hard. They are not used to working this transparently. In my opinion, shelter and mental health care organisations and their clients have much to gain in learning to be open and transparent to society. On Twitter, the playing field is levelled and one could even argue that the homeless people, the clients are at an advantage. They can say whatever they want. We as organisers are bound by the rules of privacy regulations. I would argue that it is good for us to be - at times - at a disadvantage.

TWEETING WHILST HOMELESS

It was never the aim of the project to have some kind of therapeutic effect. Straatvogels is about giving homeless people a voice and allowing them to be heard and to participate in society. Still, if Twitter were not beneficial to the participants the project would come to a quick end.

For some of the participants, Straatvogels was not suited. They felt pressured to express themselves in a format that didn't fit. Within days or weeks, they stopped. For the others, being active on Twitter has

clearly helped them. Taking part in Straatvogels has meant a new way to express themselves and to be heard. It has been an opportunity to meet people outside the obvious circles of shelters and drop-in centres. Twitter is also a way to combat loneliness. Sonja, for instance, has said several times how good it was for her to be able to 'talk' in the middle of the night when she was wandering around sleepless.

Hardly any practical assistance has been generated by Straatvogels. Asking directly for money or a place to sleep has almost never been successful. This is quite a difference from the example in New York. It would seem that Dutch society works in a different way.

Several of the participants have by now managed to escape homelessness. Of course, Straatvogels is never the sole factor in this process. Twitter has however been a place where these participants could practise participating in the wider society (again). They (re) discovered that they have something to say, learned ways to express themselves and found people who listen.

PARTICIPATION

The Straatvogels Twitter project started off with followers who were interested in the general situation of homelessness and homeless people who wanted to be heard. The project however developed into something much more than just an information channel – though informing the public is valuable in itself. The followers got to know the participating Straatvogels as individuals and vice versa. The Straatvogels participated in other circles than the more closed environment of shelter and walk-in centres. Twitter proved to be a kind of practice area en route to more full participation in mainstream society. For the participating organisations, Straatvogels offered the challenge to open up and to participate transparently in society.

This is not an automatic process. The use of Twitter does help. It is direct and the limited length of the messages means that language proficiency is less important. The role of individuals who are capable and willing to be bridges between two worlds is important. As with any project, the role of enablers who facilitate, encourage and edit, remains essential.

“Twitter proved to be a kind of practice area en route to more full participation in mainstream society. For the participating organisations, Straatvogels offered the challenge to open up and to participate transparently in society.”

⁵ More about these confrontations in an interview with Mark Horvath, who first came up with the idea to facilitate homeless people's participation on social media. The interview can be found here: <http://invisiblepeople.tv/blog/2014/11/straatvogels-street-birds-homeless-people-twittering-in-amsterdam/>



Social Work with Homeless People and IT in the projekt UDENFOR Homeless Organisation

By **Tabita Nyberg Petersen**, *Street worker on the IT project* and **Bibi Agger**,¹ *Deputy Manager and Professional Leader of projekt UDENFOR, Denmark*

“The street-based work of the IT project has supplemented remedying of other daily needs on the street and helping with IT-related issues has been part of a more holistic and hands-on effort based on the needs of the individual.”

HOMELESS IN A DIGITAL SOCIETY

In recent years, Danish society has undergone a rapid digital development. An increasing part of our life is taking place on digital platforms. Most of us are on the internet daily. We turn on the laptop in our home surroundings and go online without thinking about it. Nationally, big changes with the ongoing ‘Common Public Digitalisation Strategy’, running from 2011 to 2015, are taking place and have started a digital revival of the Danish public sector. We stand at the threshold of a digital, self-service society where the individual citizen communicates from his or her home instead of going to the bank or the public services.

There is, however, a risk that homeless people will be more vulnerable because of this. Many of them do not own a computer and live a life disconnected from the digital society. There are many reasons for this. Many of them struggle with mental illness, which means that the technology may seem confusing or scary. To many homeless people, computers and technology are connected with harm or fear of surveillance. Additionally, many of the most vulnerable citizens have never learned to use the technology and participate on the platforms where today’s communication and democracy unfold.

Against this backdrop, projekt UDENFOR started our two-year IT project, which is ending this month. The purpose of the project was to support homeless people to be included in the digital society and through outreach work on the street, help homeless and former homeless people with IT-related issues. Through this work, we contributed to enhancing their abilities and confidence in IT so that they could participate in the society around them in a better way. In addition, the project has focused on increasing the attention around the challenges of vulnerable people in connection with the increasing digitalisation of the society and thus preventing further exclusion and marginalisation.

The digital arena was an entirely new area for projekt UDENFOR when we started the IT project two years ago, and throughout the project period, the leading element has been to develop and test methods within the crossover between the use of IT and social work with homeless and vulnerable people. As an organisa-

tion, we have many years’ experience working with homeless people who are living isolated from the society around them and who are often in need of immediate help on the street, addressing their most basic needs such as warm clothes, a sleeping bag or a meal.

Our experience from the street has also taught us that it is necessary to establish a trustful relationship in order to help homeless people in the best possible way. This has also been the case when focusing on help and support to use IT. The street-based work of the IT project has supplemented remedying of other daily needs on the street and helping with IT-related issues has been part of a more holistic and hands-on effort based on the needs of the individual.

The typical users of the IT project were men between 45 and 60. They were both rough sleepers, homeless people staying overnight at shelters, care homes or the like, and former homeless people. They are users that projekt UDENFOR had contact with before the start-up of the IT project and new users we have contacted during the project period. We have contacted approximately 50 users during the period.

Our approaching many homeless people has consisted of establishing contact long-term, talks over a cup of coffee and help for practical matters before opening up to the IT activities. As such, the homeless people have been part of relationships where you meet at eye level and the meetings have been taking place where they live – on the street. We have met on benches, in parks, at drop-in centres and in public libraries. It has been at the homeless people’s advantage to meet in the urban space because they know it, and this, together with a “one-to-one” relationship, has made them safe and trustful towards the street-based staff.

Through the IT project, we have learned that it is not until the users find that they can trust the street-based worker that they start opening up and pluck up the courage to participate in something new, e.g., IT-related activities. When trust is established, the homeless person dares to accept the support and reveal their insecurity and vulnerability, which is a natural part of development.

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DIGITAL INCLUSION

Over this two-year project period, we have gained insight into what it takes to be digitally included. In order to take an active part in a digitalised society, the required equipment is necessary. It means that you must have the necessary skills to use the equipment and it is crucial that you are motivated and can see the purpose of using the digital possibilities. Additionally, it is necessary to have knowledge of the technology and the new initiatives in connection with digital communication with the public system. Today, these resources are matter of course with most Danish people, but as a homeless person you are often challenged on all four parameters: access; ability; motivation and knowledge.

Consequently, the main part of the work in the IT project has been to support the homeless people in connection with the above. We have referred to public places with computer equipment and the street-based worker on the IT project always carried an iPad or laptop in her satchel when she went about in the streets. We have also directed homeless people to places with free Wi-Fi in the urban space.

An important part of the project is offering individual support to the homeless people so they can develop their IT skills and we have been working according to a line of thinking based on involvement and active participation on the part of the users. We have tried to train the users to be able to use a computer, a smartphone or an iPad and to make use of the internet for seeking information. The individual's development has often taken place in small steps but we have learned that it is important not to underestimate the significance for the individual to learn new skills and feel "like all the others".

Homeless people live a life in which they often feel different and left out. We have learned that the build-up of IT skills may lead to a feeling of success, which again may lead to positive changes in other areas. We also believe that it can have a positive effect on people when they are an active participant in their

own life and that it also makes sense to support the homeless people to get the information they seek, such as opening hours of drop-in centres, halfway houses, embassies and public offices through the internet. Therefore, a pivotal task of the IT project has been supporting them in these processes.

Another challenge has been to motivate homeless people to enter the digital area, but experience has shown that it is easier when you know the person and you try to motivate them by taking the life situation of the individual as your starting point. When the technology makes sense to the homeless person, motivation to learn more and to participate follows.

Through the project, we have gained the real and unique knowledge that, unfortunately, there are only a few homeless people who know the present possibilities of technology. Most of them do not have the necessary knowledge of what is stirring in relation to the public system and the new rules of digital communication in connection with the ongoing 'Common Public Digitalisation Strategy'. Unfortunately, this also implies that they do not know the significance this will have for them as citizens, in relation to their rights and their duties.

In future, it is important that work in this area take place at street level so that homeless people know the kind of digital initiatives that exist in society. This is to ensure that, just as other citizens, homeless people are properly informed and prepared to make independent decisions about what they wish to participate in. Through the IT project, we have learned that many homeless people do not want the digital communication with the public system as the intended time saving element makes no sense in the homeless universe. Additionally, many homeless people have no trust in the system, which is not made better by communication becoming faceless. If we are to succeed in including homeless people in the digital society, we have to think out of the box and use alternative methods to include them. An outreach, attentive and hands-on approach is our best bet on a tool that works.



Citizen Advocacy: People Standing up for People

By Margaret-Ann Brünjes,¹ Director, Glasgow Homelessness Network (GHN), UK

On the theme of participation, GHN coordinates SHIEN (The Scottish Homelessness Involvement & Empowerment Network) and a training and consultancy based social enterprise 'Involving Expertise'

It is well understood that the space we live in affects our health, happiness and well-being. There is also a strong link between the quality of where we live and our social and economic opportunities.

But conversely, people in the greatest housing need are often provided with the fewest or least desirable housing options. Independent advocacy can serve to rebalance this issue, with most European countries recognising the importance of providing advocacy services for people who are homeless or in housing need. This is either delivered informally (for example, as part of a social worker's role in a homeless service) or as a more specialist independent advocacy service.

INDEPENDENT ADVOCACY

Independent advocacy might be described as:

"a way to help people have a stronger voice and to have as much control as possible over their own lives. An independent advocate will not make decisions on behalf of the person/group they are supporting... [but] helps them to get the information they need to make real choices about their circumstances and supports them to put their choices across to others."

Its purpose is:

- **Safeguarding** people who are vulnerable, discriminated against or who services find difficult to serve;
- **Empowering** people to express their own needs and make their own decisions;
- **Enabling** people to get information, explore and understand their options, and make their views and wishes known;
- **Speaking** on behalf of people who are unable to do so for themselves."²

The need for independent advocacy will always exist, even within perfect systems. This is because some people will always need extra time and assistance, more information, their rights or wishes represented or their options explained and implications considered.

For advocacy on housing matters, this is often undertaken in a professional-client relationship - where the independent advocate is a paid professional acting on behalf of a person in housing need.

CITIZEN ADVOCACY

In Glasgow, we have tested taking this one step further. Instead of paid professionals, it is local citizens (including those with experience of homelessness and housing need) who volunteer their time to advocate on behalf of people who have a housing or homelessness problem.

The principle that underpins this approach is that the involvement of local people in local housing matters - especially people with an experience of homelessness, poverty, inequality or exclusion - will create more community ownership of housing issues, raise awareness of housing challenges and assist local people to advocate for their community and each other.

THE APPROACH

The project is called 'Navigate' as volunteers help people navigate complex housing and homelessness systems.³ We have over 30 local volunteers who come from a diverse range of backgrounds - activists, university graduates, students, social workers, professionals and people who bring life experiences and important stories. They all share a real passion about housing and homelessness and constantly inspire us!



There are a range of important factors that influence the best housing outcome for homeless people and families. These include:

- Location
- Size and Type
- Accessibility
- Cost
- Security of Tenure
- Safety and Security
- Waiting Time

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² Scottish Independent Advocacy Alliance (2015) <http://www.siaa.org.uk>

³ Please get in touch if you want to discuss Navigate or if you run a similar approach in your area - we'd love to swap notes! Thanks to Comic Relief, Oak Foundation and Glasgow City Council for resourcing the Navigate approach.



The Citizen Advocates are trained and supported to help people fully consider these factors when determining their own housing option or goal. The Citizen Advocates get alongside people and always act on their behalf - supporting them to navigate complex systems, make good decisions and communicate those decisions to housing and other 'officials'. Their key mission is to support people to:

- Find and use information
- Make a decision
- Communicate a decision
- Represent their rights

BENEFITS FOR HOMELESS PEOPLE

• **Taking Time Out**

The Housing and homelessness system can be confusing and worrying. Getting support from an advocate provides people with as much time as they need and a safe space to find and clarify information and ask questions. It also provides tools to help people make an informed choice about their housing situation for themselves and their families.

• **Having Someone in your Corner**

... who is not paid to be there! People using Navigate will have shared and relatable life or local experiences as the Citizen Advocates. This is a solid foundation for mutual understanding and trust.

• **Reality-Checked!**

Navigate depends upon 'word of mouth' between local people with a housing problem more than any traditional marketing or promotion techniques. This community based approach engages peer and personal social networks and recognises this as the best way of transferring knowledge and supporting change.

• **Supported**

Derek Holliday was one of our first Citizen Advocates, and also takes part in FEANTSA's Participation Working Group. He says:

"I know how difficult it can be to work your way through a problem when there's lots of information you need to know and lots of services you could access. I get a great amount of satisfaction from helping people and hope that I can make their journey just a wee bit easier".

And one of Derek's clients said:

"They gave me the right support where needed, took me seriously and were very sympathetic and understanding. I would have been stuck without this service."

SOME FINAL THOUGHTS AND THEORY

There are a number of theoretical frameworks that underpin how Navigate has been co-designed and co-delivered. On a small, community based level, we want Navigate to link with a growing network across Scotland and the UK who have adopted the principles of 'coproduction' - an assets based approach that might be described as:

"... a new vision for public services which offers a better way to respond to the challenges we face - based on recognising the resources that citizens already have, and delivering services with rather than for service users, their families and their neighbours. Early evidence suggests that this is an effective way to deliver better outcomes, often for less money." ⁴

In the UK context, coproduction theorists are presenting a growing body of evidence of the broad benefits to society if coproduction were to be adopted as the primary approach in the design and delivery of public health and social care services:

"The reason our current services are so badly equipped to respond is that they have largely overlooked the underlying operating system they depend on: the social economy of family and neighbourhood... [by] focusing entirely on people's needs – rather than what they can contribute – services have tended to disempower their users and have done little to prevent needs arising in the first place. The combination of these factors has added to demand, particularly when access to professional help is rationed to those who are deemed most needy. Since services largely ignore people's abilities, their continuing need has often become their only asset in their battle for help." ⁵

"[By] focusing entirely on people's needs – rather than what they can contribute – services have tended to disempower their users and have done little to prevent needs arising in the first place."

⁴ Boyle, D., Coote, A., Sherwood, C., Slay, J. (2010). Right Here, Right Now. NESTA | NEF

⁵ Boyle D., Harris M. (2009). The Challenge of Coproduction. NESTA | NEF



Nothing About Us Without Us!

The Own Keys Project – People Who Have Experienced Homelessness Develop Services

By **Carole Brady**,¹ **Raija Maunula** and **Vlada Petrovskaja** (*The Own Keys Project*), Finland

The 'Own Keys Project' of the No Fixed Abode NGO² was created alongside, and to support, the Finnish National Programme to Reduce Long-term Homelessness (PAAVO II, 2012-2015). The aims of the national programmes are to entirely eliminate long-term homelessness in Finland and for people to have adequate housing support. Furthermore, the aim of both the No Fixed Abode NGO and the national homelessness programme is to establish appropriate services aimed at homeless people. Therefore, it is important that people who have experienced homelessness themselves participate in the planning processes.

THE PROJECT IN A NUTSHELL

The PAAVO programme includes 10 cities in Finland. The Own Keys Project operates in four of these: Lahti, Tampere, Kuopio and Jyväskylä. The project aims to secure the voice and experiences of homeless people and people who have experienced services, for example services for the homeless or substance abusers, and for them to be heard when the cities plan services as part of the PAAVO programme.

Experts-by-experience employed by the project (project workers) compile grassroots knowledge for the development of municipal homelessness services. For example, project workers, together with locals who have experienced services, participate in planning the content and/or the functionality of the activities developed or the building designs. When the planning is done by the service users themselves, the services respond better to the needs of the user. The use of the services becomes more efficient, which results in the services becoming more cost-effective.

The project workers in the participating cities put together a network of homeless people and people who have experienced services. The aim of this network is to participate in planning the services and to activate homeless citizens, as well to influence attitudes. The goal is to create a permanent working method, which provides reachability by forming a bridge between marginalised citizens and the municipal organisations responsible for housing solutions.

NATURE OF THE PROJECT

The Own Keys Project is an innovative development project. The nature of the project can be described in the words of one project worker:

"It seemed that I had entered a dark room wearing a bag over my head, and there I was bumping into the furniture."

The project has no clear, independent steps. All the steps are linked and often encounter matters that cannot be controlled by the project, for example, the internal resources of the cities, timetables or different stages of building projects. The work of the Own Keys Project workers does not include any ready-made, pre-phased operations or, for example, using existing interview forms, although this type of activity would be the easiest to place in municipal organisations.

Work is work-based learning, and in the No Fixed Abode NGO project, the worker is an equal member in the work community. The working method is linked to the NGO's participation principle: it is built from the inside, it is a process that concerns the person as a whole - and as such, it is more demanding and slower. The aim is also to guide the local, experienced service users to equal citizenship, out of the role of being the target of the services. Established advocacy is a different thing to a single expression of opinion in response to a specific question about a specific item.

The project touches on critical observations made by researchers on empowering administrative measures and the problem of passive citizens: what are we talking about when we talk about participation or empowerment? If a person participates in the processing of pre-defined topics in a pre-defined manner and at a pre-defined time, can we talk about participation, or is it something else? (Meriluoto, Taina 2014)³

IMPLEMENTATION

The project workers and local people who have experienced homelessness have participated in, amongst other things, planning the content and / or functionality of additional housing units in a building, renovation of housing units, day centre activities, as well as the evaluation and emergency unit. The content of the project varies between the cities. Advocacy has been reflected in developing the activities of both the public and the third sector.

In one of the project cities, information gathered from experience was used when renovating a housing unit. People with experience were able to influence the

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² No Fixed Abode NGO was established in 1986 by homeless people themselves. Participation has been the main principle of the organisation from the very beginning. Homelessness is not an individual attribute - it's all about circumstances that can be changed. To create impact on society, the organisation works on a grass-roots basis, having direct contact with homeless people: e.g. a day centre with housing advice and guidance towards services; floating support; case management; night-time outreach social work; night centre. www.vvary.fi Funding: Finland's Slot Machine Association www.ray.fi and own fundraising.

³ Meriluoto, Taina, 2014, Expertise-by-experience as a technology of citizenship. Unpublished PhD research plan.



type of housing and for what target group housing will be provided in the future. They have also participated in planning the working models that support participation and empowerment. For this purpose, the social services of the city developed e.g. activities of social stewardship.

It has been essential to plant the practice of expert-by-experience in all the participating cities, keeping the team together, motivating the participation of people, as well as changing attitudes. A relevant part of the work of experts-by-experience is also to evoke critical discussion. Time is reserved for exploration of the working methods, as the working cultures of the project cities and the ability to use the expertise of experience can vary. Experts-by-experience employed by the project have highlighted that the building of trust is their first task.

OBJECTIVES

In each of the four project cities, the project carries out an ongoing self-assessment of the implementation of the project and, if necessary, activities have been phased. New aims have continuously been set depending on the needs and possibilities of each city. Locally-assembled networks of experts provide information about existing services and consider the development needs.

One important objective is to lower the threshold in the utilisation of expertise by experience. New operating models are embedded in such a way that participation is not only occasionally part of the administration, but well-established practice. The project aims to get the local experienced service users to support, and to work beside, the service system and its development.

CHALLENGES

The progress of the project has faced challenges when the original PAAVO II programme changed in the project cities. This is due, amongst other things, to the tendering stages of service providers, appeal processes, prolongation of planning processes, as well as the precarious financial situation of the city or partner organisation.

Utilisation of expertise by experience was not clearly planned by all the cities involved in the project. Therefore, it was first necessary to equip both the organisations of the cities and the local experienced service users. When the Own Keys Project was instituted, there was the perception that the role of the experts-by-experience would have been more clearly agreed on with the project cities. At the beginning of the project, the idea was to gather the groups of experts-by-experience, to participate in planning, and provide an opportunity to influence and to see the result of the work. However, the project workers had to be able to adapt to the changing plans of the PAAVO II programme.

Meeting the objectives according the schedule set out by the project cities has also been challenging because of the inflexibility of the services and the tight schedules of the staff.

Municipal service organisations have the capacity and intent to utilise the knowledge from experience. This applies to both the customer service work and decision-making positions. They want to take into account the wishes of the customer base, but for one reason or another, do not know how to face the people with experience of homelessness as equal development partners.

A number of questions have also arisen concerning, for example, the professional obligation of secrecy, the use of time by the experts-by-experience, commitment to the whole process and compensation. At various stages in the project it has often been discovered that in order to keep track of achieving the objectives set in the project cities, project workers should spend at least half of the project time in the city. Due to limited resources, this has not been possible.

As the project has progressed, it has been noted that factors that affect the ability of experts-by-experience to cope with the workload are the negative attitudes of professionals towards using them. Furthermore, having to tell their own life story repeatedly in order to achieve credibility was considered to be burdensome. Some of the project workers felt frustrated because of the resource constraints of the cities. The cooperation has resulted in many good ideas, but the implementation has been prevented because of a lack of money. Experts-by-experience have also mentioned that the burden of work is increased by the slow progress and the difficulty in detecting the results of work that may not be visible until many years later.

SUCCESSSES

A clear change in attitude towards the experts-by-experience in the project cities has been a major success. A trusting relationship has been formed with the operators in the field of homelessness. The experts-by-experience as well as locals who have experienced homelessness want to be heard more and consultation is requested to develop services.

Housing units renovated or built during the project have, through the planning of the experts by experience, become more resident-friendly and serve the needs of the residents. In one of the participant cities, a room in a housing unit under construction was divided by a partition wall to change a single space into a one room with kitchen home following a proposal made by an expert-by-experience. For the outside space, a summer kitchen with electricity was designed for community purposes.

During the project, a network of people with experience and local knowledge has been created for each



“The project workers and people with experience have been invited as experts to train researchers, as well as professionals in social and health care and in the construction sector.”

city in the project and the cooperation with local operators has been strengthened. Local experts-by-experience have clear areas of expertise and the main areas of interest are, for example, gaining support for people with substance abuse or helping them with errands and the authorities. The project workers and local expert-by-experience have visited each other's cities. Comparison of collected observations and practices is important for structuring and consolidating expertise by experience. Also, professionals involved in the project have shared their experiences with each other. In three cities, debates have been organised and dialogues have taken place between workers from organisations and civil servants, as well as with people with experience. At the heart of the mutual discussions has been the significance of the work done by the experts-by-experience.

The project workers and people with experience have been invited as experts to train researchers, as well as professionals in social and health care and in the construction sector. They have participated, for example, in events organised by a project of the Finnish Ministry of the Environment and in a number of seminars. In addition, the project workers have been heard in international fora, for example, by invitation from Members of the European Parliament and in empowerment workshops organised by FEANTSA in different parts of Europe.

The possibilities for disseminating the working methods developed in the project have arisen not only through the partners but also through the scientific community. The project team and a post-doctoral researcher are currently preparing an article for a book for social care professionals and researchers. The emphasis of the book is on the various possibilities which introduce the status of service developer alongside client status.

SPECIAL EMPHASES

At the early stages of the project, it was noted that in order to enable cooperation, priority should be given to building a trusting relationship with all partners. Building a trusting relationship is a long process. The project workers have discovered that as much as half of the total project time could have been allocated to the building of trusting relationships. In general, it has been difficult to convince a person with a long-term homelessness background that he really will be heard. Changes in plans and schedules in the project cities have caused problems in re-building trust.

The trust of both government agencies and personnel is as important as the trusting relationship with service users. Trust has been needed, for example, when the project workers have had to adapt to the changing plans of the cities and breaks in the project, as well as changes in contact persons on both sides. From the very beginning, the project workers settled in on a kind of middle ground, a vantage point from where she/he is able to form a picture of the needs and the possibilities of the city and to evaluate the city's attitudes and willingness to cooperate.

The project has constantly encountered attitudes that define and colour the attitude the service system has towards homeless people and the development of services for them, the experts-by-experience and cooperation with them. In addition to the prejudices of the staff and management of the service system, they can also be found within the homeless themselves. When building a relationship based on trust, the experts-by-experience have to constantly justify their own role in the development work, work over the sectors and direct the advocacy work in many directions.

One of the tasks of the experts-by-experience is to motivate cooperation. The existence of a confidential relationship is not by itself a guarantee that the cooperation will be successful. Getting official parties to commit to concrete development measures is as challenging as motivating local experts-by-experience. It is essential to take into account that the tasks of the experts-by-experience are not to replace the workers, but rather to work alongside them. Therefore, the tasks of the experts-by-experience should be delineated and realistic compensation should be provided as a reward for the labour. When offered the opportunity to influence the comfort of homeless services, this motivates them to do development work, but when the number of working days increases, the ability to influence and to be heard is not sufficient alone.

NOTHING ABOUT US WITHOUT US

None of the services under development will succeed if they are being developed without service users. Some public authorities were initially prejudiced towards this project, but gradually a common language and understanding of humane encounters and deploying knowledge of experience have been found.

Successful cooperation is a consequence of being heard. Being heard is possible when people dare to be a human to a human.



Empowering People, Improving Services: Participatory Audits in Homeless Services

By **Maarten Davelaar**,¹ *Independent Researcher and Expert on Homelessness and Participation*, **Jodi Mak**, *Researcher, Verwey-Jonker Institute* and **Carmen Salvador**, *Director, Stichting Volksbond Amsterdam, The Netherlands*

At least two aspects of participation are highly relevant in the struggle to end homelessness. First, practitioners and researchers stress that an emphasis on developing talents, skills and more self-confidence is essential for increasing individual levels of participation and also key to success in reintegrating homeless persons into society. Without neglecting the need to address personal problems and the structural causes of exclusion, practitioners maintain that approaches that do not include a clear focus on personal empowerment are bound to fail. There is also a second aspect to participation, that of people influencing daily practices and strategic decisions in services they depend upon. So far, this aspect has attracted less attention in the homelessness sector. However, from both the perspective of individual wellbeing and that of quality of services and policies, much can be said in favour of engaging service users in shaping services and policies.

The PAja!-method combines both sides of participation.² PAja! is the Dutch acronym for Participatory Audits in the homeless, youth and general welfare sector. From 2008 on, the approach has been developed, implemented and adjusted by researchers, practitioners and service-users in the Netherlands. It aims to:

1. empower clients and increase individual levels of participation
2. assess and improve the quality of services in the field of homelessness, care and welfare
3. foster a culture of participation in services
4. detect gaps and weaknesses in local policies and local cooperation

The idea behind PAja! is that users of care, housing and support facilities evaluate the quality of these services. In essence, the PAja! method facilitates and encourages clients to take part in assessing and improving the quality of services and influencing (management) decisions that affect them.

EXPERIENCES

The method was first tested in a pilot with young homeless people in Amsterdam (2008-2009) and has since been deployed in several other major cities in the Netherlands, like The Hague, Utrecht and Almere and has included other client groups such as adult



(homeless) users of activation and job rehabilitation centres and residents of housing facilities for homeless persons with severe psychiatric disabilities.

Participatory Audits centre on the potential and needs of service users and can therefore only be organised with services users at the heart of the audit process. The audits can be held in one service at a time, or simultaneously in several organisations. They might be focused on, for example, housing facilities or daytime activities, but also include a broader range of local support programmes. There is no single route for starting a project. The initiative could be taken by, for example, an independent user-platform, a service, a group of services or local government.

METHOD AND STEPS

PAja! combines a number of participatory tools, like peer research, peer education and peer advocacy with the concept of a user-led examination of how well service providers are operating. PAja! works closely with and depends on local partners for co-creating projects: (local) services providers, client groups, client councils and advocacy and support organisations.

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² For reasons of simplicity, we leave other aspects of participation, such as political participation, unspoken here.



The method itself is simple and straightforward, and consists of seven interconnected steps or phases, described in a manual:

1. Start up and teambuilding: a user team is formed. Management and staff of services who take part in the audit are informed. A professional working for a service organisation or a new or existing local user platform can take the lead in creating the team. Often but not necessarily it will be someone who has experienced homelessness.
2. The user team is intensively trained in communication, interviewing, presentation and debating skills. Staff of services involved might also take part in training: a train-the-trainer course is optional so that future audits and user audit teams can be supported more easily by service staff themselves (under a light form of supervision by an independent PAja! expert).
3. Peer research: the user team interviews fellow clients on their opinion about the support they receive and the conditions under which they have to live. How are things going? And in what way do they think the quality of the services could improve? The team analyses the results, assisted by a professional researcher or a social worker with sufficient research experience.
4. First audit meeting: armed with the experiences and knowledge of the – often – ‘silent majority’ of service users, the client audit team meets with representatives of a service to present the results of the examination and propose and discuss possible improvements. The meeting ends with an agreement on proposals for improvement.
5. Proposal implementation phase: management and staff at the organisation, preferably in co-operation with user team members and other users, work on implementation of the proposals and after a few months the client team assesses the improvements made.
6. Second audit meeting: the service representatives and user team discuss the quality improvements. The client team decides whether or not an organisation meets the criteria for receiving a certificate.
7. Communication and celebration of results via social media activities, publications and / or a conference. This conference might lead to follow-up activities on further individual empowerment of the team members or to changes in local policies and co-operation.

The division of labour in a Participatory Audit is a clear but not rigid one. Partners involved can take up different roles. The central role for the user team, however, is vital to each project. The team can consist of clients of one service or of several services. All members should be ‘experts by experience’, although it is not a necessity that all be users of a homeless service at the time of the project.

RESULTS AND IMPACT

Research by the Verwey-Jonker Institute since 2008 indicates that in general the objectives of the method are reached. Service users realise that their voice counts in evaluating the facilities where they reside, but also what skills they need in the process and how to develop such skills. PAja! projects have shown that the active and self-styled involvement of the participants leads to their empowerment. Directly, via improving skills and developing talents, and indirectly, by obtaining more control over their (housing) situation and the way their support needs are met. Organisations working with the method have experienced that alongside creating better outcomes (higher levels of participation, higher levels of client satisfaction), a carefully performed assessment provides a wealth of information about the organisation’s ins and outs. The organisation obtains a clear evaluation from the client’s perspective, as well as practical leads for quality improvement. In addition, several organisations working with the method have invested further in the empowerment of users and share decisions and responsibilities with their clients. And municipalities, other public authorities and charitable funds can employ the participatory-audit approach in addition to other evaluation and accounting methods in their relationships with subsidised organisations. The instrument provides a tool for transparency and conscious quality improvement. Moreover, it can detect and address gaps and shortcomings in local policies and services.



Examples of the impact of PAJa! projects include:

- Personal empowerment of participants: staying involved in user platforms, getting back to school, finding jobs, new social contacts
- Direct improvements in services: better (distribution of) food; fruitful discussions on house rules leading to the adjustment of rules or a better understanding by clients; new activities for clients e.g.: more demanding activities, sports, arts and culture
- New patterns in interactions between users and staff/workers: better mutual understanding and informal contact, less tension and aggression
- Sustainable changes towards a more participatory culture: more user-involvement, transforming client councils, new ways of communicating
- New information on gaps in services and local policies, e.g. on housing, health, job rehabilitation and debts), fuel for local co-operation

CO-PRODUCTION

Participatory Audits are about engagement, interaction and learning. They aim at creating a supportive environment in which it is acknowledged that different people have different sources of knowledge. User expertise is necessary to allow services to operate effectively. The method tries to bridge the gap between research and practice. It follows the tradition of participatory (action) research (see Blackshaw & Woodhouse, 2010, Hardwick & Worsley, 2011) and centres on the co-production of ideas. It is playful and creative, yet serious. It helps services to practice what they preach: to expand participation to day-to-day management decisions and thus help people regain control over their daily life.

EUROPE

As developers of the method and core partners of the participatory audit network in the Netherlands, we hope to expand the approach to other countries, to test whether the method is adaptable to new contexts. We invite local client platforms, homeless and youth services and local authorities across Europe to work together to develop new projects.

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User-team gives Audit certificate to daytime centre, The Hague, 2013.



Schrägi Vögel Cooperates

By **Karl Flückiger**,¹ *Reformed Church, Zürich Canton, Switzerland*

Schrägi Vögel (strange birds) is more than a theatre group. It is a place where marginalised people can meet and feel at home. The effect goes beyond the rehearsal hour. The participatory approach used by the Schrägi Vögel theatre company is based on the following principles: theatre, self-help, agogics² and a welfare and social approach.

OUR PHILOSOPHY

We believe that everyone has their resources, even if they may be hidden. We want to discover and promote them. Our theatre group provides a suitable environment for this. Each person joins as she/he is, with her/his strengths and weaknesses. This can result in conflicts. Conflicts are part of life. They are even important for development. Our challenges are to resolve the conflicts, understand others, try to express what we think and want, make compromises, find solutions to reconcile our differences and go on together. We are convinced that there is a solution for (almost) every problem. Despite these struggles, an atmosphere of respect and of acceptance reigns in our group. Thus, mutual trust is built up more and more. It helps us to take off our masks.

Everyone should be integrated into the workings of the theatre, in a way that is possible for her/him. There will be challenges, but no excessive demands. Each individual is an important part of the group, and cannot be replaced. Nevertheless, the group remains flexible and dynamic to absorb the actors' irregular pattern of attendance.

THEATRE

Drama forces the actors to move in a group and to be tolerant towards others. Due to the specific circumstances of the members of our ensemble, many live solitary lives. The theatre group gives them a social network; it also creates contacts and friendships beyond the group. Their social skills will be strengthened and frustration will be reduced as tolerance grows.

Through body work and role-playing skills, we practise performing and social skills, self-perception, conflict resolution skills, verbal and nonverbal communication skills, flexibility and spontaneity, self-esteem and more.

Everyone learns how to stand and to express themselves verbally and physically. Creativity is encouraged. During the joint development of theatrical scenes, the actors can incorporate their life experiences. Not in a provocative, aggressive or even violent way this time but rather bringing in a positive way of thinking about it for the audience.

Such theatre promotes contact and communication between different social classes, different lifestyles and worldviews.

SELF-HELP

Schrägi Vögel builds on self-help and agogical techniques have a subsidiary function.

To see that other people share the same fate is a relief: without having to say much, you are understood. The experience of solidarity leads to learning new coping strategies that set energies free.

Schrägi Vögel needs a variety of talents such as craftsmen (set design, props), technicians (light and sound), cooks (for the theatre company and entertaining the audience), general helpers (ushers, help during the interval), so it is possible for anyone to join the theatre group. There is a place for everyone. This gives a feeling of being needed, which is an essential part of motivation in life.

The actors gain structure in their lives; appointments help them perceive the importance of punctuality. Suddenly, it is necessary to communicate.

And, last but not least, doing theatre is fun and brings many beautiful moments to lift us above the grey of 'everyday life'. People who do not have "much to laugh about" at first glance, find their humour again, they can refuel. New, sustainable relationships are created and self-esteem, hope and confidence are nurtured.

Self-help groups – according to research – make a contribution to public health in general. Social capital is invested and multiplied. Participants in self-help groups become more confident and responsible. Some even dare to get involved politically.

Self-support groups are not a substitute for agogical or therapeutic treatment by specialists. They can complement each other, but not replace it. It is observed that participants in self-help groups are increasingly looking for support.

In most self-help groups, the average proportion of women is 71%. Not so in Schrägi Vögel: two-thirds are men – a significant gender success!

AGOGICS

The Schrägi Vögel project manager of is trained in both areas of agogics: social support and theatre education.

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² The word "agoge" in ancient Greek meant "rearing" but in this context it generally means leading, guidance or training. We know it in pedagogics, while agogics deal with adults. It's the science of leading people, groups and communities.



THEATRE EDUCATION

The task of the drama teacher includes both artistic and educational aspects. Theatre education will have an emancipatory effect. Through fun games it promotes self-knowledge and self-confidence in the individual. The teacher requires five key skills: leadership and artistic, organisational, promotional and theoretical skills. The drama teacher must structure her/his work her/himself. Just as diverse is the way s/he works, as director, teacher, motivator, consultant and team-mate at the same time.

SOCIAL SUPPORT

Social monitoring is part of everyday life. It takes place in the Schräi Vögel living environment. If people have difficulty dealing with the responsibility for their physical, mental or social situation, support is there. The support worker discusses every step prior to their execution with the person receiving the support. The goal of each person in attendance is getting their autonomy back.

Our Social companion

- empowers people to carry out roles, promotes self-organisation
- creates community and opportunities to meet
- builds on situations in which socially disadvantaged and socially privileged people may be able to support each other actively towards inclusion
- enables access to important systems, networking
- accepts eccentricity.

THE WELFARE AND SOCIAL APPROACH

.. explained through a story:

A man was attacked by thieves. They stripped him, beat him, went away and left him half dead. By chance, a priest was going down that road. He saw the man and carried on going. A Levite, who came to the place and saw him, carried on too. But a Samaritan, who was on the road, came by, saw him and felt compassion. And he went to him, pouring oil and wine on his wounds and bandaging them. Then he set him on his own beast of burden, and brought him to an inn and took care of him. The next day he took two silver coins and gave them to the innkeeper, and said: Take care of him! And what you spend beyond that, I will repay, when I come back.

The actors reflect. First **the Samaritan**: Three people were going that way, and they each had to look where they were going, their eyes were open. Apparently only I had enough sight to feel compassion for the downtrodden. I do what needs to be done. The face of other arouses a primary humanity, in which the other is not someone who threatens me, but someone with whom I walk in a "wonderful powerlessness" - says Emmanuel Levinas. The sight of the downtrodden becomes an internal appeal. It is not based on reciprocity and an agreement of equality at

first. I feel the complete exposure of the other. Although such original experience of the other is a challenge to myself, it is also salutary. "To meet a man's face means to be kept awake by mystery."

Compassion and action belong together. Compassion alone hurts. But action through solidarity aims to alleviate distress first and then help the other to his/her feet, and help myself to go further too.

Priest: Yes, I was absorbed in thoughts of the tasks that are expected of me. I see: religious officials are not motivated to do tasks nearby. My view is obscured by 'churchliness'. The story told by Jesus is certainly a critique of religion.

Levite: This veiled religious view is only one among many. In our society, obfuscation may be diagnosed as victimisation (he may have done something wrong, he should have to pay for it), appeal to self-efficiency (pull yourself together, you'll make it), allegations of manipulation (he just wants my pity), too much concern (helping others makes them passive, dependent, even stupid), help is abused (most of the money falls into the wrong hands and does not serve the people directly affected), the helper industry helps itself (social workers keeping people helpless so they do not lose their jobs).

The innkeeper: Here comes the Samaritan bringing an injured person. I am not pleased. But I realise the Samaritan thinks ahead, he plans his actions. He is looking for me as I am head of the inn and that makes me another helper, and he will pay for my services on his own. He has found immediate help, and after a few days he wants to come over to plan the future steps.

The injured man: I was glad, that someone saw me and did not ignore me. He has just mended my aching wounds. This Samaritan was my neighbour. His help shows me behavior that is deeply human - and his generosity shows me the love of God. I was beginning to think, no one will take care of me. Not even God, his representatives were indeed passing by.

A spectator: Jesus told this story. He himself could indeed do as the Samaritan did. He shows us how God is.

A woman: Jesus himself was treated like this man on the roadside was. God is experiencing himself as flawed. He knows deeply how people are on the roadside.

The Facilitator: We want to raise money to have a fund for similar situations, so inns do not refuse to give their services if generous people like the Samaritan should not come by.

Samaritan: And we need to consider how the robbers can learn a profession of their own, so that they do not have to harm others, to keep themselves alive.

"Theatre education will have an emancipatory effect. Through fun games it promotes self-knowledge and self-confidence in the individual."



Participation – Theory and Reality in Warsaw

By **Adriana Porowska**,¹ *Director, Camillian Mission for Social Assistance, Poland*

“If someone refuses to be admitted to [...] a facility [...] they are written off, as a person, by the society, by the officials, and also by some of the people working in the facilities for homeless people. It is then said that such a person ‘chooses homelessness’, even though they might be saying that they want a flat.”

Participation, understood as taking part in making decisions about one's life, appears to be the only solution that could successfully solve the problems faced by the people undergoing a homelessness crisis. However, in Poland, where assistance for homeless people usually takes the form of intervention provided almost exclusively by charities, participation is not included in the plans for new solutions.

There are rare mentions of participation in some documents, but these are tokenistic nods to political correctness, and not an expression of a genuine intent to involve homeless people in creating their own assistance plan. This is amply confirmed by the low number of programmes which even simply ask people what kind of assistance they need. It is assumed that what is needed is shelter, food and clothing. Nobody talks about independent living accommodation, or a living wage.

Sometimes healthy, able-bodied people who work full time don't have enough money to rent a flat. Those who suffer from physical or mental illness have no chance of achieving independence. There are shelters, hostels and soup kitchens. Streetworking is often limited to providing information about available places in organised facilities. If someone refuses to be admitted to such a facility because they want to be able to function independently in the public space, they are written off, as a person, by the society, by the officials, and also by some of the people working in the facilities for homeless people. It is then said that such a person ‘chooses homelessness’, even though they might be saying that they want a flat.

A good example is a story of a woman who, for many months, lived in a tent in a street. There was a lot of attention from local and national media, officials, social workers and the municipal wardens. She refused to move to a homeless hostel. People phoned the council to say that it was a scandal to have her living outdoors during the freezing weather. There was a lot of hand-wringing due to her refusal to live in a shelter. At the same time, the media were reporting that she was receiving a regular pension and that she lost her flat because of rent arrears. Social workers and a psy-

chologist decided that a nursing home² should be applied for, and that this woman should be transferred from one end of the country to another, to where she had had her last official address. According to the regulations, it's the council of a person's last official residency that is liable for housing them if they become homeless, and it's in that council area that the person is entitled to a place in a state nursing home.

After many months, the press reported that the lady was forcibly transported to such a home, and that she left it after a few days, an intention that she had already declared. A place in a nursing or care home, designed for people who are sick or unable to perform daily tasks, is very expensive. It would have been much cheaper to rent a flat for this woman, and give her some specialist support. It would also, obviously to us, have been in accordance with her wishes and consent.

Polish legislation doesn't provide for asking people their opinion about the assistance they need. The lady we mentioned above is just an example, there are many more just like her. And the issue doesn't just concern homeless people, although due to the stigma and lack of family support, it is significantly harder for them to make their voices heard and have their rights recognised.

We have studied, and even translated into Polish, the FEANTSA “Toolkits on Participation”. But we have not been able to introduce any larger-scale changes. We are frustrated with what seems like banging our heads against a brick wall. We are very grateful for all the advice and tools, but we have many problems with implementation. We struggle with very limited financial resources, and despite our criticism of the system in Poland, we also focus on emergency intervention. Our staff have many daily duties. There is also a barrier in the form of learned helplessness of people who have been institutionalised for many years in the current facilities. They expect a bed for a night and food, and they don't believe in the possibility of change. Helping them often takes the form of pushing them to take the next step. We work on increasing the motivation to seek work and then to find independent accommodation to rent. A psychologist

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² Under Polish law, nursing homes are run by local governments. Stays in a nursing home are due to a person requiring full time care because of age, illness or disability and the person not being able to function independently in daily life. Homelessness is not a condition for placing someone in a nursing home.



and a social worker spend a lot of time on individual talks, supporting and motivating people. We respect our users' right to self-determination. We don't talk about possible changes in the shelter, but about what people's expectations are, and we try to show them that what they want can be found somewhere else, in their own place to live, and that achieving it requires effort, a huge effort, on their side. Introducing genuine participation in facilities such as shelters for the homeless is extremely difficult. We believe that a shelter is a temporary solution whose role is to help a person dealing with an acute crisis: loss of documents, lack of income. A place for a person to gather strength, get their papers in order, and regain their independence as quickly as possible. But the financial resources that are available - as far as we know the lowest in Europe, as the daily funding per person in a homeless shelter in Warsaw is approximately 3 Euro - turn the implementation of textbook participation principles into token efforts.

We admit it honestly, but remain embarrassed and ashamed by the situation. In a facility serving 100 men, there are two social workers, an employment advisor and a part-time psychologist. Even employing an additional staff member such as an activity coordinator would make it easier to implement more changes.

We know that other facilities work just like we do, and have the same problems. Just like in Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs - shelter and food are at the very base. When we apply for funding, we focus on money for fixing the roof, buying food, paying for the electricity bill. We do, however, implement housing programmes, for example supported accommodation. Since 2012, we have been running a programme of training apartments for working people with low incomes. We rent the flats on the free market and then sublet them to our clients. We have problems running this project, as many people, used to staying in a shelter for many years, prefer to remain there rather than move on to independent accommodation. In such situations, our staff members - usually the psychologist - work with the person and try to demonstrate the positive difference living in an own flat might make. The main reasons for this mental block are usually a fear of change, loneliness and a worry about relapsing into drinking. We organise meetings with tenants of the training apartments so they can themselves tell people in the shelter what life beyond the walls of an institution housing a hundred people looks like. They can say themselves how they learn to make decisions

about their own life. And the changes that we see are really positive, and surprising. Taking responsibility makes a remarkable change to confidence and self-esteem.

We also run advocacy programmes. Currently, the Camillian Mission for Social Assistance is a partner in the *Ius Medicinae* Foundation project devoted to promoting the idea of 'Housing First' in Poland. We have obtained funding from the Batory Foundation 'Citizens for Democracy' programme.

We must admit, though, that implementing the changes will require a lot more work. We focus on changing individual lives and improving confidence and people's psychological state. In February, we organised a Flash Mob 'Home-less-ness is NOT a choice!!' ('Bez-dom-no to NIE wybór!!'). We promote a change of thinking about supporting people in a homelessness crisis, we want to raise awareness about homelessness among as large a part of the population as possible. We know how many people don't get the help they need. Support for homeless people should be significantly more based on housing programmes. Long-term homelessness and living on the streets should be seen as failures of the whole system, not lifestyle choices.

Our activities involve the shelter residents, who, together with the staff, plan the best ways to express dissatisfaction with the current situation of homeless people. We have introduced weekly meetings for the residents, we have a Community Council in the shelter, which is composed of residents and has an influence on the way the hostel functions. The people experiencing homelessness connected with CMSA participate in all meetings concerning planning the assistance for them, they travel to meetings organised by the Ombudsman, and to the European Meetings of People Experiencing Poverty, and those run during the annual FEANTSA conferences.

Our activities, and the changes we implement, have not gone far enough. We are saying this being fully aware of how much more work we have to do. Work that will be done with those who live in our shelter. We are beating our breasts and apologising - not to the readers of the magazine but to those who are experiencing this lack of change.



Participation: From Unawareness to Practice

By **Marta Olaria**,¹ *Advocacy Team, Arrels Fundació, Spain*

THE ORIGINS: DISCOVERING THE CONCEPT

After I attended my first meeting with the FEANTSA participation working group in Brussels seven years ago, I went home absolutely downcast. Everything I listened to during those days was like science-fiction to me, and I did not really understand what was going on.

I come from a background where service-user participation is not essential. And I use the present tense because, although much work has been done over the past few years, we are still far away from the position more advanced countries are in.

I am sure that during the 27 years of existence of Arrels Fundació there had been some examples of participation, isolated actions or small projects always depending on the willingness and capacities of professionals, but there was no real participatory culture or conscience, in the terms by which we understand participation today. Of course, an idea of what participation was had always existed, but it was far away from the one agreed at the FEANTSA working group and used especially in Northern European countries.

I would say that before encountering the European group we were moving in quite a classical scheme: service users were the ones to be provided for, cared for with our best intentions. But their voice was not really heard and, to be honest, distrust in them was a general feeling. I can assure you we were doing our best and our intention has always been to improve the living conditions of homeless individuals who are in an entrenched situation, to work with those homeless persons in Barcelona that we would define as 'chronic'. But, and to use one of the slogans of the working group, we were not 'sharing the power' with the persons we were working with. The first thing a person would encounter was a social worker or educator interviewing him or her about his or her life, trying to fill all the blanks in the form to start the right protocol so as to get him/her into a social follow-up programme. Service users did not have a say in what they wanted in life, in what they needed. A clear routine was established and, if it had worked for so many years, why not go on with it?

So I first heard about user-led organisations, real decision-making debate forums, homeless persons being engaged in advising their local policy makers on how

to plan those policies, etc, in the FEANTSA working group. Too far away from my reality. I even thought of leaving the group. But then I thought again and decided that I would probably not be able to implement exactly the same things I was experiencing, but I could adapt them to my reality at home, trying to do my best.

FIRST STEPS: HOW DO I IMPLEMENT IT IN MY ORGANISATION?

The first thing I was sure about was that I needed the support of the board. If I was to start a change in our mentalities I needed the board to back me. I had to convince them. It was not easy, since at that time Europe, and everything that was happening there in our sector, was not a valid reference point and the board reacted accordingly. It took me some time to prove to them that to work in a real and effective participatory way was, apart from more democratic, a genuine way to improve people's lives, which was our main goal. I kept on showing them examples from other countries while at the same time telling them about how we could make it happen here.

After a while, I sensed a change was taking place in them and that I was somehow given the permission to start spreading the participation concept around.

To start with, I created a participation working group in Arrels, which included service users, staff and volunteers. We were around 12 people, most of them already sensitive to participation in one way or another. I presented them all the work that the European working group had done up to that time, the definition of what was understood by participation being the key point.

Our first move was to discuss that definition, to answer this question: was the FEANTSA definition of service-user participation a valid one for us? Could we accept it and embrace it? This debate took us quite a long time, but this may have been the main important point in our process: time. Arrels was not in a hurry to implement or start working in a participatory way, since we understood that the change in our mentalities was too big to make quickly. People, everyone, needed space and time to discuss it, to express their opinion, even if it were a negative one. It was the first time service users were attending a meeting in the same conditions as the other attendees.

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Once we had accepted and embraced FEANTSA's definition as a valid one for us, it was time to spread the word around the organisation. We are talking about a medium-sized organisation, with around 40 workers, 200 volunteers and some 150 service users in social follow-up programmes at that time. There was quite a lot of work to be done. As I have said before, people needed time and space. We started planning training sessions in participation, in groups, facilitated by me and some other people from the working group. We spent a year doing this, since it was not an easy task. We wanted everyone to understand that we were not only talking about participation in a tokenistic way, where service users decorate the day centre for Christmas or write a poem for our magazine, which were good initiatives, but were not what we were talking about. We were talking about decision-making, about service users being able to decide their own lives, relying on our support to go on, but having the maximum amount of control possible over the process. Our intention was that once this first step was understood and accepted we could move on to the next step: service users should have a real say in our daily activities in Arrels, in designing services, etc.

WORKING IN A PARTICIPATORY WAY: A REALITY

From that moment on, everything was much easier. On the practical side, we started by creating the necessary structures to facilitate participation. Without these, you may find yourself with a powerful discourse about the benefits of participation, but with nothing to fill it in, no real action. To create structures means to invest, both in economic and human resources, so the organisation has to be fully committed to it. We tried different ways and tools until we found the ones that really work, or at least have done until now. Assemblies, for instance, were not very participatory, since the same few persons always spoke and the rest said nothing. Suggestion boxes didn't work either, since people did not like to leave their propos-

als or complaints in writing. We had to accept that not all the tools are good for everyone or everything, that we had to allow ourselves to try different options until we had the best result and that these options could change over time. We have to be flexible to adapt to new realities.

Presently, I am happy to say that nearly all the people related to Arrels have undergone a deep change in mindset and are willing to work in a participatory way. In answer to service-user requests, they are able to become volunteers in any department they may feel they would like to help in, just like any other volunteer. Some service users have become part of the staff. We hold monthly debates, divided into small thematic groups, discussing and making proposals to improve the services provided to service users. Last January, two service users joined the board, for the first time in our history. Most important of all, service users are given, from the moment they enter our organisation, the opportunity to decide about their lives, knowing that they are not alone.

To work in a participatory way is possible, but not within easy reach in some countries or cultures. Being part of the FEANTSA group helped me to open my mind to different ways of working, better ones if our real objective is to allow homeless people's lives to gain dignity. I needed my colleagues' support to go on and to be able to start a change at home. And I am really thankful for that.

Our way of looking at things has changed: we do not receive the person we are attending as an empty beneficiary that we have to fill with our knowledge and practice, but as a human being with decision-making capacity, who needs time and respect to make his/her own decisions. Like everybody else, service users mostly know what they want and surely know what they do not want. As we say in the group, they are the experts.

“We had to accept that not all the tools are good for everyone or everything, that we had to allow ourselves to try different options until we had the best result and that these options could change over time. We have to be flexible to adapt to new realities.”

This series of images is by Miquel Fuster and is called "Marcando Límites" (Setting Boundaries)

MIGUEL,
15 AÑOS
EN LA
CALLE

MARCANDO
LÍMITES



*Miguel, 15 Years on the Street
"Setting Boundaries"*

This series of images is by Miquel Fuster and is called "Marcando L'imites" (Setting Boundaries)



This series of images is by Miquel Fuster and is called "Marcando Límites" (Setting Boundaries)



"People live here, you know!"

"And what do you think I am, an animal?!"



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