

LET'S WORK!



A TOOLKIT FOR
AN INCLUSIVE SOCIETY

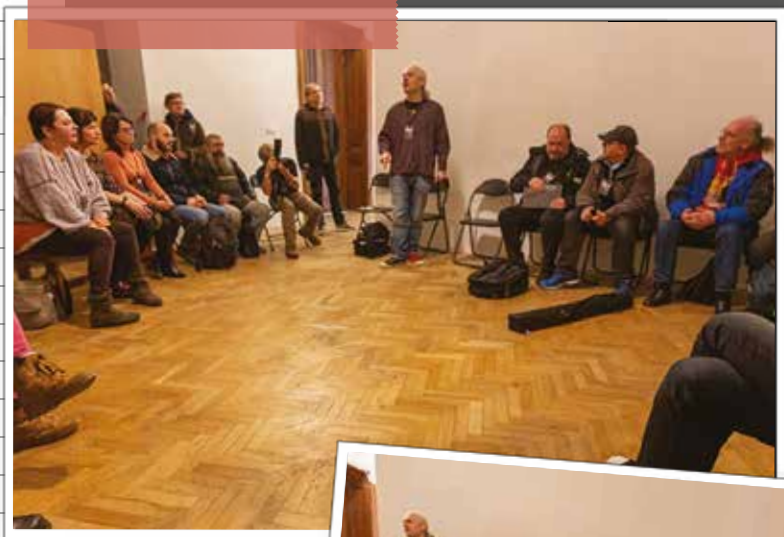


PHOTO: Divadlo archives



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A toolkit for an inclusive society

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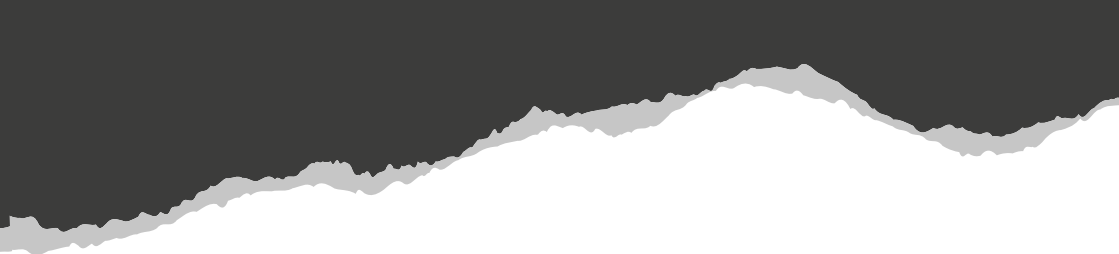
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LET'S WORK TOGETHER!

The creators of this handbook, combined, have accumulated more than one and a half century of experience in the battle for putting an end to homelessness. All of us could learn from what damage and feelings of failure can be caused, when a landlord, the boss, or a partner first encounters the fact, that their tenant, employee, or companion struggles with housing problems. Numerous studies and researches have proven that the main reason for prejudices is, clearly, the lack of knowledge. This does not differ in our case either. Homelessness is not 'up there' with the more advantageous topics, and the image of people living on the streets is fairly negative. This is what we want to change. We are dreaming of an integrative society, where no one needs to face disadvantages because they have no roof over their head, and where, instead of judging, we offer a helping hand for those in need. For this we need to provide as much information as possible for the members of society, with as many methods and as widely as possible.

The four organizations cooperating within the frames of the project Let's talk about homelessness – Learning as a tool for social integration of homeless people are the Catalan Arrels Fundació, the Selbstvertretung Wohnungloser Menschen in Freistatt with the support of Bethel Stiftung, the Divadlo bez domova in Bratislava and the Menhely Alapítvány, Budapest. These organizations offer services capable of reaching the above-mentioned goals, therefore we think it is worth presenting their activities. We have compiled this handbook especially aiming at thinking further, improving and spreading these useful practices. (We have also initiated a global action to create an open-access Art Collection in 2021, with which we expect to improve the visual image of homelessness in the forthcoming years). In our opinion it is impossible to find solutions for the problems of homeless



people without seeing and understanding their own experiences. We believe that a dialogue about the topic is only possible with the voices of homeless people. Therefore, we chose such services where the maintainer assigns a main role to those who have experienced homelessness. Fourteen useful practices are compiled in this handbook, and we have tried to present wide-ranging topics, such as education, culture and media. It is completed by, as a sort of extraordinary service, the most definitive problem faced today – the protection against Covid-19 pandemic. For this topic, a Slovakian example demonstrating the power of different kinds of cooperation was chosen.

The project was designed interactively between the participating organizations – we had originally planned to visit the four cities involved in order to learn about, and examine, the services of each other on the spot but social workers, experiential experts and volunteers were only able to travel once due to the pandemic. Nonetheless, we were able to produce the final version of this publication. Instead of personal presence, we were forced to rely on the options provided by the online surface. We sincerely hope that the result of our work does not reflect these difficulties.

The handbook aims at popularizing the idea of building similar service structures and offering help in this field. We hope our collection is of interest to everyone, although it will be of particular interest, and possibly assistance, to the experts working in the field of homeless-care, including volunteers, activists and supporters: Let's work together!



KEPE RÓBERT
Editor



LIVING LIBRARY

When: Since 2020

Where: Bratislava City Museum

Who: Divadlo bez domova

Website: <http://www.divadlobezdomova.sk>

- Objectives:**
1. To foster empathy in students toward homeless people, people with serious physical disabilities, people with psychiatric diagnoses or ex-prison inmates, through direct contact, listening to their own personal stories and asking questions.
 2. To give voice to people who usually do not have one.
 3. To empower our actors and actresses through sharing their own personal stories and responding to various interesting or difficult questions.

Target group: Students.

Homeless people, people with serious physical disabilities, people with psychiatric diagnoses and ex-prison inmates (our actors and actresses).

Teachers.

Schools, museums (institutions).

Participants: Schools – students and teachers.

Divadlo bez domova:

staff, actors and actresses.

Role of peers: Speakers.



DESCRIPTION

Living library was implemented as part of the non-formal educational program "They live among us!" within the "Smoke Mountain" exhibition organised by the City Museum of Bratislava. After visiting the exhibition and the first part of the educational program with the museum staff, the students and their teachers (20-25 people) came to the museum café, where the theatre staff explained the basic principles of the living library. There were 5 tables, upon each of them was a piece of paper with one sentence on it – the title of the living book. The students walked around the tables and chose one where they sat down. When they were all seated, our actors and actresses – the living books – came to the tables and started to talk about their own personal story, telling the students important points, moments or milestones of their lives, usually from their childhood right up until the present time. After their stories, the students could ask them what they were interested in – they could leaf through the pages of a living book – and the books answered. The students were also free to ask questions whilst the books were telling their stories. After 15 minutes they moved to another table, to another living book.

RESULTS

We have received feedback expressing a strong impact on students, awareness of how different the reality of life can be and appreciation of our actors and actresses. For most of the students, the living library was their first personal contact with homeless people, people with disabilities or psychiatric diagnoses. They got to hear various strong personal stories, react to or reflect on them, discover similarities or differences to their own lives, see the motivations and resources to overcome the obstacles or difficult moments, learn about interesting or not so visible aspects of homelessness and disabilities.

The experience also had a strong and empowering impact on our actors and actresses, who played the living books. Some of them felt the experience to be therapeutic. They like this activity, although they say that it is definitely not easy, they would like to continue.

SPECIAL INFORMATION

Our actors and actresses were trained for this activity by the staff of our theatre. Staff members also moderated and were present during the whole activity (this is important in case of any difficult situation).

In the very beginning, before the introduction of the living library itself, we invited the group of students to play musical instruments in a common circle.

In this instance there were two groups, the time frame was 30 minutes per group (each student could read and listen to 2 books – 15 minutes per book).



ENTER INTO MY LIVING ROOM!

SOCIAL TOUR THROUGH THE EYES OF THE HOMELESS

When: Continually since May 2011

Where: Budapest, Hungary

Who: Menhely Alapítvány

Website: <https://menhely-ekh.hu/>

Objectives: Providing employment and work practice for homeless people, and encouraging social dialogue.

Target group: People who want to talk about homelessness (14–99 years old).

Participants: Homeless and social worker tour guides, interpreter volunteers.

Role of peers: Tour guides and creators.



DESCRIPTION

In May 2011, based on the experiences of Western European countries, the social workers of the Menhely Alapítvány created this city walk. During the design process of the route, the homeless tour guide, together with social workers, formulated the stations and relevant highlights. The expert by experience leads most of the walks together with the social worker, whose role is to present a broader context about the legal background/social work, to complement the personal life story. This concept makes the dialogue generated by the walks flexible: although the framework is the same, each group will get a picture of homelessness from a unique perspective. For many, this is their first encounter with both a homeless person open to conversation, and an institution in the care system.

Our walks have been visited by various groups, supported by some pubs, and sometimes by volunteer interpreters. We also offer tours for individuals and group applicants. Previously we provided salaries, to tour guides and part-time coordinators, from honorary fundraising donations, but more recently this is obtained from grants, and ticket sales.



PERFORMANCES WITH DISCUSSION

When: Since 2006

Where: Piszatory Palace,
Bratislava SK

Who: Divadlo bez domova

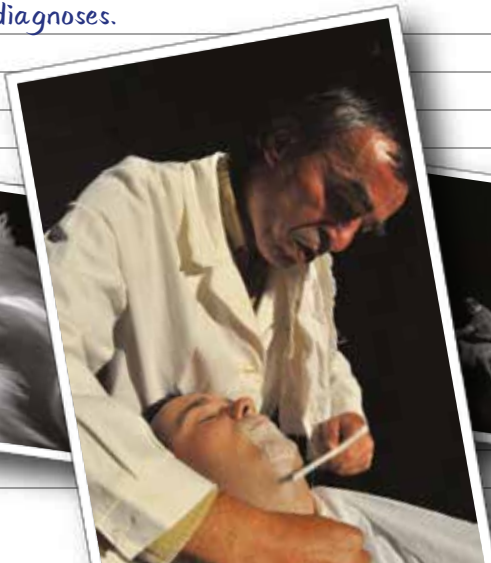
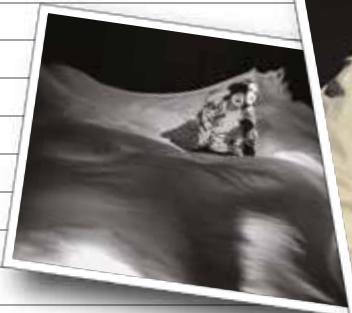
Website: <http://www.divadlobezdomova.sk/divadlobezdomova/PROGRAM.html>

Objectives: To bring unique experiences to the public.

Target group: The general public. It can also be focused on any target group. Historically we have performed for different groups of people: other homeless people, people with physical disabilities, students, elderly people, inmates, people in psychiatric care, politicians, professionals and activists in the field of work with disadvantaged or vulnerable people.

Participants: Actors of Divadlo bez domova, and the public.

Role of peers: Amongst our actors are homeless people, people with serious physical disabilities and people with psychiatric diagnoses.



DESCRIPTION

Theatre performances are one of the best practices and long-term activities which we bring to the public.

At present, we have six different theatre plays and perform at least once a month. Each performance has a different theme and also uses various theatrical tools, e.g. "Puppet" is the play where we perform with a life-sized puppet, the play "Dreams" is about the world of dreams with surrealistic elements, and "Equestrienne" is a stage reading of the book written by Uršula Kovalyk – The Theatre Principal – and deals with female issues and the transition from a young girl into a maiden.

Indisputably important parts of our performances are the discussions with the public afterwards. It is a special moment, after the performance, when the lights slowly begin to shine upon the audience and we provide opportunities for questions. It usually takes a little time at first, but once the first question is answered, people are very interested in many points: how the performance was made, how the theatre group works and cooperates, about preparations, and also about "non-theatrical" life of the actors.

RESULTS

We can highly recommend using artistic ways of sharing the phenomenon of homelessness. In our experience, the theatre has proven to be a great tool - working within the team with the actors, and outside of the team with the audience.

Theatre performances create rare, role reversal opportunities for homeless people whereby, as actors, they step out of their usual role as people receiving something from the public (support, help), and transform into people offering and giving something back to the public (personal artistic experience, results of their own work).

We have received strong feedback from pupils of elementary schools who were sharing the basic feelings of compassion. They were also surprised by how much they could learn from homeless people, e.g. open-mindedness, appreciating simple things, and home itself.

SPECIAL INFORMATION

We don't sell tickets for our performances, entrance is free. Following the performance and discussion, people can support us with a voluntary contribution, should they wish, or indeed be able, to do so. Therefore, also making our theatre performances accessible to disadvantaged people.





HOMELESS COMMONS (HC)

When: November 2017 to present

Where: Online platform

Who: A group of people who are, or have been, homeless participating as models

Website: <http://www.homelesscommons.org/>

Objectives: This campaign was created with the aim of revealing the transformation of homeless people's lives and to ultimately change society's perception of them. Homeless Commons is an image database comprising of photos showing everyday scenes with the participation of people who have experienced homelessness. All of these people have given their prior consent at being photographed in order to help fight the prejudices against homeless people.

Target group: Advertising agencies, graphic designers, general public.

Participants: 13 people participated in four different photo sessions.

Role of peers: The peers appear as models in the images. They appear in some photos alongside Arrels Foundation's volunteers and staff members.



DESCRIPTION

Living on the street is an undeniable reality about which there are still many stigmas and prejudices. Homelessness is often associated with alcohol, anti-social behaviour and violence. Images can reveal a lot about a person but what happens when we take an even closer look? Homeless Commons' aim is to expose these prejudices and explain that things aren't always black and white. The campaign hopes to show a different aspect of the people who interact with others, express their emotions, collaborate in projects and most importantly want to change how society perceives them. The series of images also include some of Arrel's volunteers and staff members. These photos were taken in different locations which are not usually associated with homelessness: a rural hotel, a restaurant and even an office complex.

The images are offered as a complete collection, in themed packages or as single images for use in print advertisements, digital publications, corporate materials, webpages and other business campaigns.

RESULTS

The most obvious result of the campaign is the increase in self-confidence and sense of security that participants were able to achieve during the sessions. Working alongside the production teams was also a very positive experience for them. At the campaign level, the images were used by various organizations like the Pasqual Maragall Foundation which is dedicated to the fight against Alzheimer's. The campaign received wide digital and print media coverage. The entire campaign, Homeless Commons, was also awarded the Special Prize for Best Historical Campaign at the Public Festival 2018 – an international social advertising festival.





MYBUDAPEST PHOTO PROJECT

When: since 2016

Where: Budapest, Hungary

Who: Budapest Bike Maffia

Website: <https://bikemaffia.com/projektek/mybudapest-foto-projekt/>

Objectives: Create and sell a calendar with photos taken by homeless people.

Target group: Society

Participants: Homeless people, members of the jury

Role of peers:

- homeless people take the photos
- vendors of the street paper (homeless people themselves) sell the calendar in the streets

DESCRIPTION

In 2019, Budapest Bike Maffia, in co-operation with London-based Café Art, announced for the 4th time its photo competition for homeless people. Volunteers of the organization handed out disposable cameras, provided by Fujifilm Hungary, for the participants to show the city the way they see it through their pictures.

A six-member jury, made up of well-known artists, chose 50 photos contriving a public space exposition in downtown Budapest. People visiting the exposition could vote for their favourites on the Facebook page of MyBudapest Photo Project. The most liked 13 photos then ended up, together with the stories of their authors, in the MyBudapest 2020 Calendar.

The calendar, postcards and notebooks made with the photos, can be purchased on Bike Maffia's homepage and in some shops and museums from October 2019. The calendar is also available from vendors of the Fedél nélkül street paper. The entire profit is handed over to the authors, i.e. homeless people.

AUTHOR: Kepe Róbert PHOTO: Budapest Bike Maffia



RESULTS

- ▾ thousands of copies sold annually
- ▾ homeless people receive income
- ▾ the project and the pictures attract media attention, interviews are made
- ▾ the project can continue indefinitely

MYBUDAPEST

2020



SPECIAL INFORMATION

Five cities joined Café Art's MyLondon project. In Toronto it is organized by Ve'ahavta Charity, in New Orleans by the students of the University of California, in Sydney by Wayside Chapel Communication Centre, and in Brighton and Hove by one volunteer person.

It is a successful project and easy to carry out.



HOMELESS FONTS



When: ongoing from September 2014

Where: Barcelona, Spain

Who: 12 people that were once homeless, led by a member of the Arrels communications team.

Website: <http://www.homelessfonts.org/>

Objectives: The goal is to collect handwriting samples from different people who have lived on the street and convert them into usable fonts as a way of sharing their stories, increase awareness, and to be used in fundraising efforts.

Target group: Designers, typographers, general public.

Participants: 12 people who have experienced homelessness: José María, Stere, Anna Maria, Luis, Francisco, Gemma, Guillermo, José Luis, Juan Carlos, Loraine, Miquel, and Salvador.

Role of peers: The peers will contribute their handwriting to the project and work with a designer in individual workshops.

DESCRIPTION

The idea stemmed from the fact that many people use messages written on cardboard when asking for help on the street. A typography workshop was created in which 12 participants manually wrote out letters, numbers, punctuation marks and other symbols that could be used to create a unique and complete font for each individual. After scanning the collection of letters and symbols, they were sent to different volunteer typographers around the world who helped digitize the typography. The fonts are available for download on the website and there are two types of licenses of use: Professional (240€) and Personal (19€).



RESULTS

The campaign received a lot of international attention and was covered in several different news outlets. Big Issue magazine in Australia included Luis's font in some of its articles and Big Issue Japan published a feature story on the project. An average of 20 licenses have been sold each month since the start of the project, but the greatest impact has come from media coverage that has led to numerous talks, presentations and interviews with peers who were able to shed light on their experience with homelessness.

SPECIAL INFORMATION

When the campaign was first launched it caught the attention of Monotype, a multinational company that has been dedicated to creating and commercializing typography for over 100 years. The company offered free distribution of the fonts in the US and helped to implement versions for online use. See more at: <https://www.myfonts.com/foundry/Homelessfonts/>

AUTHOR: Juan Lemus **PHOTO:** Juan Lemus



TWITTER @PLACIDO_MO

When: Since 2010 to present.

During the covid-19 crisis, we have adapted the activity to continue operating from home.

Where: The activity takes place every Monday, from 16h to 18h, in the open centre of Arrels Fundació in Barcelona. It is also spread over the internet, via the twitter account @Placido_mo.

Who: A group of people who live or have lived on the streets, coordinated and energized by a person from the Arrels communication team.

Website: https://twitter.com/Placido_Mo

Objectives: The aim is to gather the voices of several people who have lived on the streets, explain their experiences via twitter, give their opinions on poverty-related issues and interact with society to break down prejudices.

Target group: Twitter users.

Participants: There are currently 4 participants who have lived on the streets of Barcelona (Davide, Antonio, Josep and Fran).

Role of peers: The peers are the protagonists of the project and share their opinions via twitter, choose the topics to be addressed each week, the tweets to be published and the responses to be offered to the public, with logistical support.



DESCRIPTION

Every Monday afternoon, Davide, Antonio, Josep and Fran gather to give a voice to @Placido_mo. Since 2010, several people who have lived on the streets explain their experiences and give their opinions on poverty-related issues through this twitter account.

@Placido_mo has more than 2,400 followers. They are people from all over the world who are interested in the problems of the homeless, retweet and comment on the messages of @Placido_mo, and encourage their protagonists.

So far, participants have talked about issues such as: what is missing when a person lives on the streets?; prejudice, love, friendship and death living on the streets; addiction, cold and health; how do you sleep in an ATM, in a hostel and in a boarding house?; fear; holidays and non-holidays; and even dreams and projects. During the activity, they answer the questions of the followers and, from time to time, they also invite people to come to the sessions: followers, people from the City Hall who work with the topics of homelessness, professionals from Arrels who can talk about subjects on available support or housing, students from the social fields, etc.

During the coronavirus crisis, we have had to adapt and do the activities from our homes...

RESULTS

Since Twitter @Placido_mo was launched, more than 30 homeless people have explained their experiences on the street in more than 4,700 tweets. The account has reached over 2,400 followers.

For the participants, @Placido_mo is important because it allows them to feel useful, share their experiences and be heard. It allows them to interact with people with whom they might not normally have contact, resolve doubts and break down prejudices about people living on the street. Followers' questions are usually directly related to life on the street, access to hostels, etc. but in @Placido_mo we also talk about friendship, loneliness, love, childhood and other everyday issues to normalize and create empathy with the followers.

The activity also serves to establish routines, respect speaking shifts, improve expression and tolerance, and feel part of a group. It also serves to empower people in many ways. An example is that, many times, there are issues that people have never verbalized and that they suddenly want to share, beyond that we may publish a tweet or not. It serves to verbalize situations that have been lived and emotions that have not yet found words. Another example is that, dealing with more issues of incidences, such as the municipal plan to fight against homelessness or aporophobia, the participants go to the trouble of getting information in order to understand what we are talking about.

During the coronavirus crisis, this activity has also served to fight loneliness and boredom and to motivate participants who have been confined to their homes for days. In turn, it is interesting to be able to share with society the situation of people who live on the streets during the state of alarm and explain how they are living these days.

STREETRADIO – VOICES FROM THE STREET **[STRASSENRADIO – STIMMEN VON DER STRASSE]**

When: Every Thursday from 3:00 to 4:00 pm through a radio broadcast, since 2017.

Where: Citizens' Open Channel Broadcasting "RadioWeser TV", Bremen, Germany

Who: Marcus Rudolph

Website: <http://bremens.info/>

Objectives: The street radio offers a public space for people from the street to speak about their choice of topic and choose the music which will be played during the show.

Target group: People from the street that wish to talk about their issues, and the audience of open channel radio who are interested in programs about social issues.

Participants: Marcus Rudolph and guests; Open channel's audience.

Role of peers: Marcus Rudolph plans and organizes the programs, he chooses the topics and the music selection as per request. He can invite guests onto his show, and also broadcast recorded interviews.



DESCRIPTION

The Open Channel was established in the late 1970s as a countermovement to the emergence of private commercial broadcasts. In 2017, Joachim Koldehofe from Bremen, Germany came up with the idea of a street radio. The radio show is intended to give a voice to people who are primarily affected by poverty and social exclusion. Many of the people who speak on the radio mostly spend their time on the street. The street radio offers these people a space to talk publicly about their topics and select music. The weekly one-hour program is broadcast on the Bremen Open Channel (Radio Weser TV) every Thursday from 3:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.

The Street Radio show was taken over by the long-term homeless Marcus Rudolph, soon after it began. Marcus already had experience with radio programs on Open Channels.

Over the years the concept has changed somewhat. Non-homeless experts, such as politicians, scientists and social workers, are also speaking. The main topics are; little homes, events for homeless people, elections, homeless politics, etc...

RESULTS

Making a radio broadcast yourself is great fun. You can choose the discussion topics, what music to play, which guests to invite and what kind of questions to ask. Many politicians who may otherwise not have the opportunity to talk to homeless people, like to come to the radio studio.

The format of the open radio channels enable penniless, homeless and poor people to do self-determined media work. Open Channels often provide free technical introductions for beginners. Unfortunately, the range is not very large (Niche media).

SPECIAL INFORMATION

More information about Marcus Rudolph:

Self-portrait of Marcus:

[http://www.wohnungslosentreffen.](http://www.wohnungslosentreffen.de/inhalte-wir/90-marcus)

[de/inhalte-wir/90-marcus](http://www.wohnungslosentreffen.de/inhalte-wir/90-marcus)

Newspaper Article:

“Radio-Moderator Marcus Rudolph:

Ein Zuhause im Radio” [Radio presenter Marcus Rudolph: A home on the radio]

<https://taz.de/Radio-Moderator-Marcus-Rudolph/15536233/>



"FREISTÄTTER ONLINE ZEITUNG" (FREISTÄTTER ONLINE NEWSPAPER)



When: Re-founded September 2014

in new editorial office rooms. Website relaunched February 2018.

Where: Internet based online-only magazine. The editorial office is based in Freistatt, Lower Saxony, Germany.

Who: Our editors are: Hari Januschke, Jens Roggemann, Stefan Kühl, Stefan P. and Thomas Müller-Risse, sometimes assisted by different volunteering co-authors.

Objectives: Whilst editing for our online magazine, houseless and homeless people have the opportunity to write online articles in their own words – articulating their own perspectives of themes covering all aspects of homelessness and poverty.

Target group: Firstly, people who are interested in general information about, and events in Freistatt and the Freistatt region. Secondly, people who are interested in information about homelessness and social affairs from viewpoints of houseless, homeless and/or poor people.

DESCRIPTION

The Freistätter Online Zeitung was founded as a local online magazine for Freistatt and its surrounding region. Freistatt's community consists of approximately 560 people, founded in 1899 as a 'workers colony' in a vast swamp area and today's home of the largest institution for homeless aid in Lower Saxony.

About half of Freistatt's residents are living here assisted and counselled by the homeless aid of the Bethel Foundation, who provide rooms, some computers and the web space for our editorial office. Our online magazine's editorial staff consists of 5 layman editors. It's maintained extensively and autonomously by houseless people and volunteers - both with former experiences of homelessness.

We're reporting about:

- 1) Local news, businesses, institutions and selected events of our region.
- 2) Themes of social affairs: About homelessness and houselessness, welfare policy against homelessness and poverty and about general public welfare. We visit many events, meetings and conferences: Locally, regionally and nationally.

Website: <https://wohnungslos.info/>

Participants: The editorial team mainly consists of three plus, homeless or formerly homeless, people from the Bethel Foundation's institutions managing homeless aid in the Freistatt region ("Wohnungslosenhilfe Freistatt" in German, led by "www.Bethel-im-Norden.de").

Role of peers: Our elder editors have earned a broad expertise in reporting about 'events' such as concerts, festivals, fairs or presentations of any kind of arts. Our second themes are workshops, meetings and conferences mainly appertaining to homelessness, poverty and other social affairs. We're documenting our impressions there by way of photos, notices and sometimes interviews, which are later transformed into, hopefully, readable articles posted on the website of our online magazine. We are trying to transfer our many years of know-how to each newly affiliated member of our editorial staff. Other activities of our editors are: image processing, writing of documents, designing posters and brochures, sometimes enhancing older articles, autonomously managing our website and email-boxes on a shared web-server, occasionally and then autonomously acquiring, and sometimes repairing, used computers and technical devices for our office. These tasks are done by our staff members according to their personal skills – giving us a broad field for self-fulfilment, in contrary to the classic, often passive, role of poor homeless people.

RESULTS

Our online magazine offers work as layman editors for homeless people of Freistatt interested in writing or photography. They can practice using computers, internet research, image editing and designing websites.

We estimate that our website has added some value to Freistatt and the homeless aid of the Bethel Foundation – in contrary to our non-profit status.

Since February 2018 our website gained about 616,000 views from 220,000 visitors during a period of 2¾ years. Not bad for such a small village, in our opinion.

SPECIAL INFORMATION

Sorry, pages one and three of this list and most subpages are in German only (our main auditory was only national +Austrian until today – but translate.google.com is a handy resource in obtaining mostly useful translations – in our experience).

- List of our Authors <https://wohnungslos.info/unsere-autoren/>
- Selected Articles <https://wohnungslos.info/our-project/>
- Press Articles about Freistätter Online Zeitung <https://wohnungslos.info/presse-artikel/>



QUARANTINE VILLAGE FOR HOMELESS PEOPLE (CORONA CRISIS)



When: March – June 2020

Where: Recreation area Zlaté piesky,
Bratislava SK

Who: City of Bratislava, Ministry of Defence,
Police, Divadlo bez domova

Website: <https://bratislava.sk/sk/sprava/bratislava-ma-pripravene-karantenne-mestecko>

Objectives: To create and provide a quarantine place for homeless people during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Target group: Homeless people suspected of having COVID-19
Homeless people who tested positive for COVID-19
Social workers
All state forces (Police, Army...)
All society

Participants: Direct experience: Social workers
from Divadlo bez domova

Role of peers: Feedback about reality of homeless people during the Corona crisis

DESCRIPTION

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, a Quarantine Village (QV) for homeless people was established by the City of Bratislava (Magistrát mesta Bratislavy) in Zlaté piesky, in cooperation with other public and state entities and organizations (Slovak Aid, Slovak Army, State Police), supported by companies (IKEA, Tatra banka Foundation, Avion, JUMP Soft...), NGOs (all working with homeless people in Bratislava) and some individuals.

One of the first official places to handle the pandemic in Slovakia was Bratislava – the Capital of Slovakia – under the command of mayor Matúš Vallo. Among the first steps of prevention and dealing with the virus was building a place where homeless people could stay if:

1. Suspected of having the virus (waiting for tests and/or results of the test) – ZONE A
2. Tested positive for COVID-19 and do not need to stay in hospital – ZONE B

3. Recovering from COVID-19, tested negative, but still in quarantine – ZONE C
The QV was built in 3 weeks and worked for 2 months, until Slovakia recovered from the first wave of the pandemic.

The capacity of the QV was 50 people with the possibility of expanding to 200 people. Three people from Divadlo bez domova were working at the QV, two social workers and an emergency car driver.

Update: In October 2020, the QV was reestablished in a different location of Bratislava. From March 2020 until June 2021, the QV hosted more than 250 people who were tested positive for COVID-19.

RESULTS

The QV was a great success as it helped all of the homeless people who had to stay in quarantine. All of the people recovered from their health problems, not only from COVID-19, but their general conditions also improved and they all gave very good feedback about their stay.

All the organizations working with homeless people, city police, state police and hospitals were aware of the option of sending people suspected of having the virus to the QV.

Social workers made a "protocol manual" for the QV – which would be easy to follow in the future.

After closing the QV all the materials (hygienic products, overalls and protective gear for workers etc.) are stored for future requirements.



SPECIAL INFORMATION

The whole manual is available in Slovak for free use or inspiration.

The emergency showed the need for a similar place to be built in the future for homeless people – as a place of recovery.

One of the crucial points of a project like this is the place where such a facility might be built. This is also a challenge for the City of Bratislava at the moment, so we highly suggest thinking about a suitable place in each city – easy to access (ambulance car), hygienic (water, showers, toilets) and accommodation, most suitable if connected to nature (meadow, park, lake).

DETAILED DESCRIPTIONS OF GOOD PRACTICES



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A Program by Homeless People for an Inclusive Society



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FIRST HAND INFORMATION ON HOMELESSNESS

A PROGRAM BY HOMELESS PEOPLE FOR AN INCLUSIVE SOCIETY



WHO: Experts by Experience (people who themselves experienced homelessness in their lives).

OBJECTIVES: Raising awareness, social sensitization.

TARGET GROUP: Students and adults.

PARTICIPANTS: Experts by experience, social workers and attendees.

WHEN: Ongoing.

WHERE: Indoors or outdoors.

WEBSITE: www.menhely-ekh.hu,
www.fedelnelkul.hu/

elso-kezbol-a-hajlektalansagrol/

HOW DIFFICULT/EASY TO CONDUCT/MANAGE: 4

HOW LONG CAN IT WORK: Continuously

MIN/MAX NUMBER OF ADDITIONAL ADVISORS: 1-

NUMBER OF ADDITIONAL EXPERTS BY EXPERIENCE: 1-

MINIMUM NECESSARY INVESTMENT: 0 EUR



QUOTE

“NO ONE HAS EVER TALKED TO ME ABOUT HOMELESSNESS WITH SUCH OPENNESS AND HUMOUR. I THINK EVERYONE SHOULD PARTICIPATE IN THIS IRREGULAR CLASS.” – Anna, one of our students.

DESCRIPTION OF SERVICE

Homelessness is one of the least understood problems of society, while at the same time one of the most stigmatized. The goal of our program is to promote a better understanding of homelessness, and thereby create a more inclusive society. Moreover, our program aims at improving the sense of competence of our experts-by-experience and thereby also increasing their quality of life.

The idea of the sensitization program originates from Gyula Balog, a homeless man, who was one of the street vendors of Fedél Nélkül, the Hungarian streetpaper created and distributed by homeless people. With each magazine he also handed out his memoirs to his customers. A high school teacher took notice and invited him to give a presentation for his class. Gyula told the students about his life and struggle with homelessness, which had a profound impact on the students. Everyone left convinced that a deep conversation between a homeless person and a classroom full of students changed all participants' lives for the better. This first presentation was followed by many, eventually expanding into a program, now in its eleventh year, employing twelve presenters.

Our experience in visiting workplaces is that the benefits of these conversations affect not only the younger generation whose values are being defined at this very important age, but also adults.

THREE MAIN SERVICES

IRREGULAR CLASSROOM/INTERACTIVE PRESENTATION:

We start the presentation with a conversation involving a moderator who themselves experienced homelessness. This conversation helps participants gain background information on the societal, economical, and human rights aspects of homelessness, and also provides a platform to share their own experiences and possible prejudices. Following this, a man and a woman talk about the circumstances that led to their homelessness and how that affected them emotionally. They also share details about their current lifestyle and plans for the future. The third step of the presentation is a role-playing game, during which participants may experience stereotypical situations connected with homelessness. These games are aimed at sensitizing the participants. They are given the opportunity to experience prejudice by taking on the role of a newly-homeless person, while our experts by experience are impersonating the majority of society (a couple, police, social worker, etc.).

COMMUNAL MEAL (LUNCH OR DINNER):

Members of a certain community (class of students, group of employees, group of friends) gather for a meal at tables laid with food. One of the guests seated at each table is a person who has experienced homelessness and engages in conversation with the other guests. We suggest the Communal Meal program for charity events or programs dedicated to sensitizing society.

LIVING LIBRARY: (for living library service of Divadlo bez domova see page 6-7)
The books of the "Living Library" are people who represent groups usually

PHOTO: Fedél Nélkül + Nagy László + Jóború Adél + Markosov Sergey + Németh András Péter

stigmatized by society. These people are often victims of discrimination. People coming to our library may "loan a book" and thereby gain an insight into the life of a homeless person, by having a conversation. The conversations take place in pairs or small groups, and help our "readers" gain a better understanding of what housing poverty looks like on the level of the individual as well as on a societal level. Our homeless presenters come from the long-time, active street vendors of Fedél Nélkül, and from the activists of the City for All Group, established by homeless people. The presenters are sometimes given help by social workers, such as the staff of the Fedél Nélkül magazine, and other experts.

The main idea of the program is for homeless people to initiate public discourse. They act as leaders and organizers of the program, since they are in possession of all of the personal, social and professional background information needed, and they are capable of presenting those as well. The social workers and the supporting organization are merely there to provide infrastructure or additional support.

Monthly meetings and regular presenters' clubs help maintain the continuous growth. These are led by one expert-by-experience (the initiator) and a social worker, and are run democratically. Here we get to know each other's background, we train, we discuss our processes and formulate new plans. The accepting and supporting environment of both the presentations, and the clubs, nurture the community. The presenters' self-confidence and sense of competence grows as they get to know each other through stories and collaboration.



FROM PLANNING TO IMPLEMENTATION

The only thing needed to get started (for example by preparation or enrolment in school) is commitment, which can happen for example as part of the regular collaboration between the social worker and his/her client. As the program grows, so does the cost of operation, workload and need of infrastructure. One person is enough to provide both the liaison with the institution and the social support. For long term operation the most important step is to find a committed expert-by-experience. This person may then recruit and train others who seem fit for the program based on their story, communication and whether they have processed their experiences in order to share them with society. With 4-6 trained experts by experience one can begin reaching out to schools. Brave souls may start reaching out to companies as well.

THINGS TO KEEP IN MIND

Social and emotional support: Voluntary social work is quite an extravagant endeavour given the ever – changing circumstances of homeless people. Therefore, it is crucial that their social and emotional well-being are supported in order to help maintain their time commitment and motivation. The more stable the presenter's living situation, health, mental and emotional state, the safer the program is in terms of planning and longevity.

It is crucial to build well-defined boundaries based on mutual trust between the social worker and the homeless presenter. This should begin by dismantling hierarchical structures and be maintained with an open mind.

Presenters should all feel like equal partners, and everyone should be receiving positive feedback appertaining to their level of abilities.

It is important to remember that the training process is never done, the experts by experience are learning every day and, in an ideal situation, working together as a community.

Feedback is at the heart of everything. After each presentation the group should discuss what happened, and – if needed – personal feedback sessions should be considered as well. On the one hand the reaction from the participants, on the other, the intergroup communication, which may highlight a requirement for further support.

The most important rules are democratic process, keeping our eye on the common goal (sensitization) and treating all our members with empathy, non-discriminatively and non-judgementally.

It's about authenticity, not perfection!



RESULTS

This program inspires all participants (whether presenters, supporters or listeners) to practice respectful manners, cherish mutual professional and personal relationships, share viewpoints and collaborate on a daily basis. By being an authentic, professional and popular sensitizing initiative, this program improved the reputation of both the Foundation and homeless people. It's important to consider that the act of homeless people appearing in the role of a provider will help improve their self-worth but also the way society views them. The program also helped us reach social groups that widened our horizon and opportunities: our participation in youth education and our connection to the for-profit sector is both a chance to make a change in the world and is also a great responsibility, which we don't take lightly.

During the 10 years of the EKH program 632 presentations were organized by the leadership of 133 presenters in 232 host institutions. We have reached more than 16,000 students and adults.

FEEDBACK

From participants: "I was expecting that four people would show up and try to convince us that we should support these alcoholic people, who just do nothing on the street all day every day, but that was not at all what happened."

From implementers: "The best part is that I can now see how it makes sense for us to do this. When we go to the school, and we sit in for these 'unusual classes', and afterwards some students may stay behind for a chat or just to give us hugs. Then I know it was worth doing."

From the press: "I gained a lot during these couple of hours, despite the fact that as a professional journalist I've been immersed in the topic of homelessness for quite a while. I'm sure that for those whom this workshop meant their first encounter, were transformed by it – for good. This is the way to work for more tolerance in society: innovative, exciting approaches."

<http://www.szeretlekmagyarorszag.hu/egy-orara-hajlektalanok-lettek-a-budapesti-iskolasokbol/>





MIQUEL, 15 YEARS ON THE STREETS

WHO: Miquel Fuster/Juan Lemus

OBJECTIVES: To sensitize through first-hand experience.

TARGET GROUP: Internet users, general public.

PARTICIPANTS: Miquel Fuster, Juan Lemus

WHEN: Since December 2007 to present.

WHERE: Barcelona

WEBSITE: www.miquelfuster.com

HOW DIFFICULT/EASY TO CONDUCT/MANAGE: 4

HOW LONG CAN IT WORK: As long as the peer is willing and able to do it.

MINIMUM AND MAXIMUM NUMBER OF PROFESSIONALS THAT CAN BE INVOLVED?:

One minimum and three maximum.

THE MINIMUM AND MAXIMUM NUMBER OF EXPERTS BY EXPERIENCE THAT MAY BE INVOLVED:

As many as would like to participate as models or references.

THE AMOUNT OF THE MINIMUM INVESTMENT REQUIRED:

2500€ to start. 600€ - 1000€ yearly



QUOTE

"I SPENT FIFTEEN YEARS OF MY LIFE WANDERING THE STREETS WITH ALCOHOL AS MY ONLY, ALBEIT UNHOLY, GUARDIAN ANGEL" – Miquel Fuster

DESCRIPTION

With the goal of raising awareness about the perils of homelessness, the project was created with two purposes in mind: to explain the complex circumstances one faces whilst living on the streets (and the still complex ones faced when one overcomes homelessness) and to encourage the participation of the people, assisted by Arrels.

For individuals who have experienced homelessness, once their situation has reached a minimum level of stability, figuring out how to occupy their time becomes a fundamental issue. During his recovery process, Miquel Fuster proposed to his social worker that instead of attending the arts and crafts courses required in order to manage his financial aid from the government, he should be doing what he does best – drawing and painting. Before finding himself on the streets, Miquel was an illustrator for *Selecciones ilustradas*, an agency that worked with publishers in Sweden and England. His life took a downturn after he got divorced, lost his house in a fire, and interest in the comic industry waned due to the rising popularity of video games. While living on the streets he still continued painting small watercolours that he would sell to tourists around Barcelona.

In 2007, Miquel was invited to collaborate with the communication team at Arrels and share his personal experience with homelessness and poverty. He was initially asked to participate by sharing his experience with groups of students who visited the foundation (about 4,200 per year). He was then encouraged to illustrate a section of the monthly bulletin sent out to Arrels foundation's members and donors. The quality of his drawings and texts led to the idea of creating a space for him to express himself through his art. A blog was created under the title: *Miquel, fifteen years on the streets: A blog to return to painting*, in which he could share his experience and show his work.

On the blog, Miquel describes his first-hand experiences of life on the streets: abuse, discrimination, apathy. He also writes about the hardships and tragedies of other homeless people he met and stories of people he spent time with sharing wine or shelter. People who, like him, could never have imagined they would end up living on the streets. His account is hard to take in, but honest. His work caught the attention of the publisher Glénat and in 2010 they published the first graphic novel stemming from the blog: *Miquel, fifteen years on the streets*.

The novel received a lot of media attention. He was interviewed by practically all of the major newspapers in circulation and was invited onto numerous radio and television programs. He also won a readers' choice award for best work by a Spanish author, at the comic convention in Barcelona.

The following year, Glénat published Miquel's second novel titled *Miquel, fifteen years on the streets: You'll cry where no one can see you* and the third instalment was published shortly after, *Miquel, fifteen years on the streets: Barcelona without me*.

Miquel intended to keep publishing his stories, but the publishing house was overcome by the economic crisis and forced to close. In 2016 the original editor, Félix Sabaté, proposed the idea of creating an anthology of Miquel's work which

FROM PLANNING TO IMPLEMENTATION

The set-up is quite simple. Besides a domain or webpage to host the artwork, a computer, scanner or digital camera, materials for the artist will be needed such as painting and drawing supplies, notebooks etc.

THE PROCESS:

1. Identify and list which themes the artists want to address. This could include personal experiences they want to tell and illustrate or other themes related to homelessness (the high cost of living, the way homeless people are looked down upon, etc.).
2. Draft of the sequence. If the artist wants to portray the story more realistically, photos can be taken of the locations where the events took place, the people they interacted with, etc.
3. Editing and printing the photos as the artist requests.
4. Drawings from the artist.
5. Scanning the finished work and publishing it online.
6. Promoting the project via online platforms, printing material (magazines, flyers), social networks, newsletter, etc.

It started in a very spontaneous, natural way. We used to have a coffee together in the mornings and Miquel explained, repeatedly, several moments from his experiences as a homeless person but also from his previous life. He had the need to express himself and unintentionally highlighted a series of issues with his stories that were common for a lot of people in the same situation as himself. Why not explain these stories through his skills? So we decided to open a blog for him. In the beginning, a single image or painting with text relating to it. After a few days of drawing and writing, Miquel showed up with the result to be scanned and published in his blog. But there were stories that needed to be explained in more than one image. For example, the unprovoked aggression he suffered by youngsters in the 'old port area' of Barcelona. The idea of explaining it in vignettes was born on the paper napkins he used to draw on while we had coffee. He started taking notes and made some drafts of the scheme, the order of vignettes, and asked me if I could take some photographs that he could use as a reference for his drawings. We did several photoshoots which, after the editing process, were printed to the sizes Miquel required. This was the first sequence of what became, in time, three graphic novels.

MANAGING:

The participants have to be fully supported, especially when talking about difficult subjects. Participants have to know that they are not alone and are totally free to choose which subjects they want to share; what issues they are comfortable talking about. It is important to enjoy the creative process and if possible, embrace the mistake: Deadlines may not be met due to distractions and concerns from daily life, but being flexible with this usually achieves better results. The process should be made as easy as possible for the artist.

RESULTS

The results of this activity can be read in very different ways. For example, participation – when he was drawing the comic, Miquel invited some users to appear as models in the graphic novel, which translated into an increase in self-esteem due to having taken them into account and showing interest in their stories. The experience with Miquel has encouraged us to invite other people to join the communication team and providing their testimonies, especially to the schools that visit us. It is difficult to calculate the number of people reached within the 12 years that the project has been running, but we can undoubtedly estimate that there are thousands. As of today (October 2020) he has two new talks scheduled (one with a design school and another online, with Spanish students from the University of Paris). The testimony of a person who has survived the street and explains it lucidly, changes the gaze of many students, not only from the city of Barcelona. Miquel has been invited to participate in art festivals and to give talks at different universities in Spain and Italy. Some professionals from Arrels have been lucky enough to travel with Miquel.

At the media level, the fact that a person who has lived on the street recounts his experiences through artistic expressionism, has attracted a lot of media attention. Being interviewed on television, in addition to empowering the person, translates into making the entity known to new audiences and consequently, in more requests for volunteering and an increase in the number of partners or donors.

At an economic level, in the case of graphic novels, the foundation acquired a percentage of each edition and was able to obtain benefits from the direct sale of the books.

FEEDBACK

From participants: *"I am grateful for the blog and graphic novels, for giving us a platform to share the work of Arrels and their mission to help people recover from this daily nightmare that continues to devour them mercilessly" (Miquel Fuster)*

From implementers: *"Miquel's voice and work reaches new audiences in a more powerful way than any organization can. He speaks from experience and his testimony is a powerful empathizing agent" (Juan Lemus)*

From others: *"Miquel's work portrays our indolence and insensitivity towards those who lost everything. That is, our collective, social and human failure" (Manuel Barrero, Tebeosfera, 2010), "The loneliness that some vignettes portray really hits the reader hard." (Lidia Penelo, Público, 2010)*

NEWSPAPERS: https://elpais.com/sociedad/2013/10/16/actualidad/1381950207_945430.html, <https://www.lavanguardia.com/vida/20191130/471961546355/dormir-en-la-calle-en-alerta-constante.html>, <https://www.lavanguardia.com/vida/20100430/53917172391/cuando-eres-indigente-causa-mas-dolor-la-compasion-que-el-desprecio.html>, <https://xarxanet.org/social/noticies/miquel-fuster-el-fred-es-horrible-se-t-posa-dins-i-et-torna-boig-nomes-te-una-peculiaritat-que-et-treu-la-por>, https://cat.elpais.com/cat/2016/04/01/catalunya/1459496442_986916.html, <https://www.elperiodico.com/es/onbarcelona/a-la-ultima/20190405/barcelona-en-vinetas-7388461>, https://www.lavozdegalicia.es/noticia/santiago/2019/10/17/miquel-fuster-dibujante-calle-mundo-luz/0003_201910517C3995.html

RADIO: <https://miquelfuster.com/2016/08/10/entrevista-en-el-programa-hoy-por-hoy-de-la-cadena-ser/>

TELEVISION: <https://www.rtve.es/alacarta/videos/linformatiu/entrevista-linformatiu-cap-setmana-miquel-fuster-va-viure-15-anys-carer-explica-seva-experiencia-comic/3699065/>, <https://www.rtve.es/alacarta/videos/vespre-a-la-2/vespre-2-miquel-fuster/3599765/>, <https://www.rtve.es/alacarta/videos/tenemos-que-hablar/tenemos-hablar-miquel-fuster-pasado-15-anos-viviendo-calle/1842130/>

FESTIVAL ERROR

INTERNATIONAL FESTIVAL OF HOMELESS THEATRES



WHO: Theatre groups and artists consisting of people who are/have been homeless and other vulnerable groups.

OBJECTIVES: To provide space for presentation, sharing, inspiration and learning of performing arts, in order to give otherwise voiceless people 'a voice'.

TARGET GROUP: General public, professionals, homeless people and other(wise) disadvantaged people.

PARTICIPANTS: Performers/actors/actresses - consisting of current/former homeless people and other(wise) disadvantaged people, aided by professionals.

WHEN: Annually – the last Friday and Saturday in November.

WHERE: Palace Pisztory – Štefánikova 25, Bratislava, Slovakia

WEBSITE: www.divadlobezdomova.sk/divadlobezdomova/FESTIVAL_ERROR.html

HOW DIFFICULT/EASY TO CONDUCT/MANAGE: 3

HOW LONG CAN IT WORK:

We hope, for many years to come.

MINIMUM AND MAXIMUM NUMBER OF PROFESSIONALS

THAT CAN BE INVOLVED: 5-15

THE MINIMUM AND MAXIMUM NUMBER OF EXPERTS BY

EXPERIENCE THAT MAY BE INVOLVED: 5 and more

THE AMOUNT OF INVESTMENT REQUIRED:

minimum of 10,000 EUR.



QUOTE

“PROVIDING A GREAT OPPORTUNITY, ONCE A YEAR, TO EXPERIENCE THEATRE PERFORMANCES WHICH CAN SHOW US CLEARLY THAT ART IS FOR ALL AND CAN BE ACCOMPLISHED BY PEOPLE FROM ALL WALKS OF LIFE.” – Patrik Krebs, principal of Divadlo bez domova

DESCRIPTION

International festival of homeless theatres, ERROR, has been organized by the whole team of Divadlo bez domova since 2006. Our basic motivation to organize the festival was to create a space, where homeless theatre groups can meet their theatre colleagues from different countries, exchange their experiences and perform in front of a large public audience. Since there are very few homeless theatre groups in the world and among our actors and actresses there are not only homeless people, but also other(wise) disadvantaged people, we also invite theatre groups with artists from vulnerable or marginalized environment, e.g. ex-prison inmates, people working within the sex business, people with Down syndrome, people with hearing impairments, orphans, children and teenagers from underprivileged environments etc. Once a year, it provides an opportunity for all of these participants to form a unique international theatre community.

The festival offers the general public an extraordinary opportunity to see theatre groups and performances that are usually very rarely possible to see. Festival visitors can meet disadvantaged or vulnerable people in a very different role than they are used to. Other professionals working with disadvantaged people visiting the festival can become inspired by the theatre work/performances, therefore leading to more theatre groups.

Regularly, theatre groups come from Czechia, Hungary, Poland, Slovenia and Slovakia, but throughout the years, theatre groups from Finland, Spain, Norway, France, Portugal, Netherlands, Turkey and many others, have also taken part and performed in the festival.

From the very beginning, we were curious about the possibilities of creative work and development and we wanted to learn and get inspiration wherever possible. We soon came to realize that there is no research, know-how or source readily available, where people who work with homeless people in an artistic way can satisfy their needs and curiosities. It is in many ways pioneering work with hands-on learning. Meeting the Czech theatre group, Ježek a Čížek (which no longer exists) in Prague, for the first time was an important starting point. The following year (2006) we started the tradition of inviting theatre groups from abroad on the last Friday and Saturday in November and the festival ERROR was born.

Visegrad Fund has been a key partner and donor of the festival from the very beginning, which is continuously supporting the event and helping to develop it into a great event, with a conference and other modules. Due to the fact that we are running different European projects, mostly under Erasmus+, we also include extra modules: bigger conference, workshops, lectures etc. when relevant.

Each participating theatre group is invited, and hosted, by us. We organize the venue of the festival including all technical requirements, accommodation, food and everything necessary for the performances. The only contribution from the partner's groups is to cover their travel costs, which is also a big commitment from their side – we may be able to help with these costs if the need arises.

The event itself takes place over 2 days. On the Friday afternoon there are usually 3-4 performances. We organize the ERROR Conference for the Saturday morning, followed by 5-6 afternoon and evening performances.

We try to adapt the program to the needs of the theatre groups for example, on the Friday we accommodate the "easier" productions or those groups that know our conditions well. The last performance on the Friday is usually our performance. There is more time on the Saturday, therefore accommodating the more complicated or time-consuming performances/preparations as necessary. Also, if we have theatre groups with child-friendly performances we plan them for the afternoon.

The conference is a very important part of the program, to which all leaders of the theatre groups and other professionals are invited. We ensure those who work with homeless people or other vulnerable groups are introduced and have a short, but clear, opportunity to introduce their work. Another important part is planning possible future projects, finding partners and informing them about similar activities. Exchange of know-how on so many levels is also taking place, e.g. fundraising activities or possible grants and support from international institutions, like Erasmus+, Creative Europe, Visegrad Fund and others.

From the practical point of view here are some more suggestions:

- Organize the event in a place which is fully under your control (own space, or space where no other events are happening at that time)
- Cooperate with longtime partners and suppliers (technical support, accommodation, food)
- Invite artists who know your conditions
- Invite just a few new theatre groups – so they can adapt and maybe, in the coming years, bring more appropriate performances (more understandable to the international public, easier to prepare, more suitable to the technical reality or room...)
- Organize accommodation within walking distance from the venue
- Organize good quality food, preferably in the venue and divide it into segments for example, breakfast where they are staying, lunch and dinner in the venue – to avoid people getting lost. It is wise to divide dinner into 2 stages: first course (e.g. soup), then a performance, then a second course
- Each group, especially new groups, need a personal guide who will take care of the practical issues and is able to translate basic information
- Financial support for this kind of event is essential
- If possible, it is welcomed to involve more stake holders, e.g. municipality, educational institutions, artistic activists, other NGOs working with homeless people...
- We have a strict sober rule during the festival which applies to participants and visitors alike

Another important aspect of the event is to involve more stake holders, like local politicians or decision makers who might be more aware about the needs of homeless people or people in need. Emphasis on artistic values and interpersonal, cultural and social issues may bring different solutions to this broad problem. It is also important to highlight the educational and sensitising aspect of this project and it can be a new way to invite students or other professionals from social work or similar fields to experience a new ambience and context in which people are active and can formulate their statements and needs.

FROM PLANNING TO IMPLEMENTATION

Preparation for the festival is full-time work, which runs throughout the whole year, beginning with the evaluation of its previous edition. We are in constant contact with other theatre groups and organizations and, where possible, we look for new ones to invite. We need to book the theatre hall, write projects and apply for funding (Visegrad Fund is the main grant, but we also look and apply for other grants). It is important to take extra care when booking accommodation for participating theatre groups and food services (catering). We must plan the distribution of work among the team members in advance, so that we have enough time capacity for the most intense preparations, which come 2-3 months before the festival. We must have specific numbers of people coming to perform from each participating group, their needs for individual performances, other invited professionals, and preparing detailed time schedules for the whole festival. We collect, translate and prepare all the materials and information for graphic production and printing the festival posters, bulletins, invitations, etc. We intensify our PR activities, write a press report, and very often we are invited to promote the festival on TV, radio or in the newspapers. We have learned that it is good to keep in constant contact with good quality and affordable accommodation and food providers.

MANAGING

Organizing and managing an international festival means dealing with different unexpected and unpredictable situations or circumstances. Many theatre groups working with homeless people or other(wise) disadvantaged people might have their own difficulties in preparing a new play or organizing their trip to the festival. We need to allow for possible changes and be ready to adapt the program schedule accordingly. Therefore, we try to have a backup plan with extra program material that we can put in place if necessary. Constant contact and communication with participating theatre groups and professionals throughout the whole year is very important. It is also good to think on a smaller scale.

RESULTS

Organizing an international festival is a big step in the life of the whole organization or theatre group. It has a strong impact both on members of organizational team (professionals) and actors and actresses. It is a great opportunity for mutual sharing, inspiration and learning, because usually there is a lack of similar events or projects in their own country. Implementing professionals can meet their colleagues from abroad and see the results of their theatre and artistic work, which is often an important starting point for future cooperation. During the whole process of preparing and implementing the festival, they are constantly learning things which may be new for them (PR, technical information, management, translation etc.). This



is very similar for actors and actresses, who are involved in the organization of the festival. They become creators of the theatre hall, stage builders, technical support, cleaners, translators, speakers in the media, catering assistants etc. Every year they look forward to meeting their theatre colleagues from other countries and watch their performances.

Both professionals and actors/actresses involved in organizing the festival receive a financial reward for their work, which will depend upon the amount of grants received. Audience capacity during the festival performances is usually full, and there is no barrier between the general public and participating actors and actresses, who are watching the performances of their colleagues. There is no entrance fee, so the festival is also available for other people being, or living, in difficult conditions. If festival participants or visitors from the public speak about the festival, they often appreciate its cordial atmosphere, whether in the theatre hall or in other festival spaces (café etc.)



FEEDBACK

Very often, participating theatre groups and their actors and actresses express their wish to come back again next year. For some of them, the last Friday and Saturday of November are regularly booked for the festival. We, as organizers, see the festival as an inseparable part of our long term theatre work. ERROR festival also has a relatively strong media response, there are usually reports, interviews and other programs reflecting or speaking about the festival on TV, radio, in newspapers /magazines or on the internet. "The International festival ERROR was a diverse mix of genres, themes, participants and spectators. Such a pleasant Babylon in the centre of Bratislava, where everyone tried to speak to and understand everyone, at least during the festival. Although it may just be my opinion, across the groups I felt respect, tolerance and the desire to create. As if theatre really were an almighty tool for understanding." Hana Strejčková, festival participant, translated from Czech, published in: I love Error (No. 3), Divadelní noviny, published on 27th November 2018, available online: <https://www.divadelni-noviny.cz/i-love-error-no-3>

"It opened to bring people together from different countries with different experiences who are open to listening to each other. This is really, really wonderful. It gives me a feeling of being home, and also an opportunity to learn." Dipl.-Ing. Manfred Weule M.A., festival participant, speaker of Adventure Life, ERROR 2016



WOHNUNGSLOSENTREFFEN HOMELESS PEOPLE'S MEETING

WHO: Homeless and former homeless people, supporters and invited guests

OBJECTIVES: Bringing homeless people together:

enable exchange and networking, develop programs and statements, plan and arrange actions and projects, set up public relations and self-representation

TARGET GROUP: Homeless und former homeless people

PARTICIPANTS: About 120 people

WHEN: Since 2016 one week end of July (Sunday to Sunday)

WHERE: different locations in Germany, so far Freistatt, Lower Saxony and Herzogsägmühle, Bavaria

WEBSITE: www.wohnungslosentreffen.de

HOW DIFFICULT/EASY TO CONDUCT/MANAGE: 2

HOW LONG CAN IT WORK: until there is no more homelessness

MINIMUM AND MAXIMUM NUMBER OF PROFESSIONALS THAT CAN BE INVOLVED?: 3-20

THE MINIMUM AND MAXIMUM NUMBER OF EXPERTS BY EXPERIENCE THAT MAY BE INVOLVED: 60-120 or more

THE AMOUNT OF THE MINIMUM INVESTMENT REQUIRED, IN EUROS:

50.000 €/year minimum



Wohnungslosentreffen

Kommt alle!

**Alles verändert sich,
wenn wir es verändern!**
Armut, Ausgrenzung, Obdachlosigkeit
und Hilflosigkeit sind keine Naturgesetze.

Sommerncamp Freistatt 2016
Diskussion, Aktion, Rahmenprogrammes, Zeltplatz, kostenlos

So, 24. Juli - So, 31. Juli

Anmeldung & Info: www.wohnungslosentreffen.de

QUOTE

“EVERYTHING CHANGES WHEN WE CHANGE IT! – POVERTY, MARGINALIZATION, HOMELESSNESS AND HELPLESSNESS ARE NOT NATURAL LAWS!”

DESCRIPTION

The idea and concept of homeless people's meeting was developed by an interdisciplinary team. The initiator was the long term homeless activist Jürgen Schneider. In 2006 Jürgen set up a website with information for homeless people (www.berber-info.de), in 2013 he founded an association for the self-help of poor people (www.armutsnetzwerk.de). Then there was Frank Kruse from Bethel Foundation (www.bethel.de), head of a facility for the homeless in the village of Freistatt, where the first homeless people's meeting also took place. Peter Szyuka, from the Diakonische Werk Niedersachsen (<https://www.diakonie-in-niedersachsen.de>), supported the idea of promoting the participation of homeless people and brought in the aspects of community organizing and empowerment. And last but not least Stefan Schneider (www.drstefanschneider.de) from Berlin brought with him some experience in setting up social projects with poor and homeless people (street newspaper, emergency shelter, meeting point etc.).

The background to this was the experience that selected homeless people are usually invited on conferences about homelessness and only play a marginal role there. Or, on the other hand, newspaper and radio reporters or television crews look for homeless people on the street to use their statements and opinions for their reports, especially in the weeks before Christmas. And thirdly, charity-organisations very often speak "on behalf" of the homeless – without being in contact with them. All of this is very far from the self-advocacy of homeless people.

So, it was soon clear, that it is necessary to develop your own format to bring homeless and formerly homeless people in a position to exchange, to network and to carry out their own positions, actions and projects. After some debates the idea was formed of inviting up to 100 homeless and formerly homeless people ("a critical mass") from all over the German-speaking area and beyond to a one-week meeting. Everyone was aware that this was an experiment with an uncertain end. It was also clear that the non-homeless organizers were unable to pre-determine the outcome. In Germany, we had remarkable homeless meetings in 1929 ("Vagabunden-Kongress"), in 1981 ("Berber-Treffen") and in 1991 ("Kongress der Kunden, Vagabunden, Obdach- und Besitzlosen"). It was a new idea to have three consecutive annual meetings. The intention was that the participants could gather with the prospect of being able to meet again the following year.

These meetings were promoted through several channels. On the one hand, well-known homeless groups and institutions were contacted, and the homeless and former homeless friends from the European network of homeless people, Hope (www.homelessineurope.eu) (founded in Copenhagen), was involved and invited, also the homeless and former homeless members of the "Armutnetzwerk". There was a name "Wohnungslosentreffen" (homeless people's meeting), a website of the same name (www.wohnungslosentreffen.de), posters that were sent to institutions working with the homeless and station missions. The homeless support organizations were asked to distribute the information via their email-lists, asking them to pass on the invitation to homeless people and to support them in case they would like to attend the Wohnungslosentreffen. In some cases, the organization team was

personally at events and answered questions from homeless people, for example at the vendors meeting of the street newspaper "Asphalt" in Hannover, Lower Saxony. As a result, three people from this group also came to the first homeless people's meeting. In the first month before the meeting, lots of questions had to be answered, for example, safety for women, bringing dogs, payment of social assistance, etc.

It was clear at the planning stage that all of the participants are extremely poor and cannot pay participation fees nor for travel expenses, accommodation and meals. Registration was online (which was an obstacle for many), but other forms of registration (by phone, by postcard) were also accepted. In some cases, tickets were sent in advance. Travel expenses were generally reimbursed.

Accommodation was organized in tents and in field beds, there were few beds in the guest house (which led to distribution problems at the following meetings). The main kitchen of the facility organized the catering, and some volunteers had to come for the distribution of food for breakfast, lunch and dinner, washing up and a lot of other work.

The organizers set the following rules: No drugs, no violence, no sexual harassment. Alcohol was not allowed in the official venues, but was tolerated in the background of the event. Almost all participants were able to follow the rules, only in a few cases was it necessary to remind them and in three cases it was necessary to exclude violent participants from the event.

From the start the participants accepted the motto "Poverty knows no borders". This was brought in by Jürgen Schneider in the first debates. This motto was a good protection against racist views. It helped us to remember that poor people (for example homeless and refugees) should not let themselves be played off against each other. It was at the third meeting that we realized that it was best to start the day right after breakfast with a plenary session with all of the participants. With good moderation and, if necessary, a loudspeaker, it is possible to have good discussions with 70 or 80 people. The plenary session is a good forum to address problems, disputes and conflicts, announce news and changes of the program and to talk about the most important topics and positions.

At the first two meetings, the focus was on the participants' self-image. There have been long discussions about it. Finally, the decision was made that the people who met each other at the homeless people's meetings, see themselves as Selbstvertretung wohnungsloser Menschen ("self-advocacy of homeless people") - so the name was finally found. And in the same session a group of 25 people worked together on a mission statement:

We are the platform for self-advocacy of homeless and formerly homeless people who have set off.

We are committed to a better world, to overcome poverty, exclusion, abuse, deprivation of rights and homelessness, and to improving concrete life situations.

Everything changes when we change it!

We are different and diverse. We are groups, clubs, individuals, projects, initiatives, supporters, and like-minded people.

We network and work together on the basis of self-determined rules.

Homeless people's meetings have quite a good documented tradition in Germany. The Bruderschaft der Vagabunden ("Brotherhood of Vagabonds"), led by its charismatic founder Gregor Gog was one of the first groups to organize the Vagabunden-Kongress ("Vagabond congress") in Stuttgart in 1929 with around 300 participants. The Bruderschaft also published its first street papers and organized vagabond art exhibitions. When the fascists came to power in 1933, this group was destroyed and its members persecuted.

Then again in 1981 a Berber-Treffen ("Berber-meeting") in Stuttgart with approximately 50 participants (and many more journalists) and in 1991 in Uelzen a Kongress der Kunden, Vagabunden, Obdach- und Besitzlosen ("congress of the hobos, vagabonds, homeless and dispossessed") with approximately 200 participants. At all of these meetings, some important and long-standing contacts were established and the meetings also reached a certain level of publicity, but they remained unique events. A real network and sustainable structures could not be established or, as the example of the Bruderschaft der Vagabunden shows, were destroyed.



FROM PLANNING TO IMPLEMENTATION

In the beginning there was the vision that it would be possible to bring 100 homeless people together to get something done together. The main problems are that such events cost a lot of money, and poor people like the homeless cannot be expected to raise their own financial contribution. A very important argument was that these meetings are necessary because this is the only way homeless people (can) build a lobby. Three vital points:

First: The costs of travel to and from the places the participants are coming from, the organization of accommodation and meals and drinks must be calculated. Additional costs for advertising, helpers, culture, technology, etc. have to be added.

Second: It is important to find a place that is ready and able to accommodate and cater for such a large group. It is possible to do it in a hotel of course, but that costs a lot. Campsites and leisure facilities are more suitable. It would be good if this place is accessible / handicapped accessible.

Third: accessibility by public transport, because the majority of homeless people will come by public transport.

RESULTS

The idea that a large group of homeless people spend a week together and talk to each other works. Conflicts like drugs, violence, disputes, sexism were much smaller than expected and could be solved by clear rules.

With the help of moderators, a good, respectful and fear-free discussion culture was developed. A great diversity of perspectives and living conditions became visible. People became more confident, learned to express and articulate themselves and learned to work together.

Over the years, a large network of homeless and former homeless people and supporters has developed with friendly relationships and mutual help and support. But not all participants have joined the network, some have left, doing their own projects, with only weak connections to the others. However, the integration of so-called "difficult" or "unadapted" people is still a task and requires a lot of patience. Almost all inquiries (lectures, contributions to discussions, statements, interviews, etc.) are processed by a group – and not by individuals. This is more stable and gives a complete picture and protects the individuals from being instrumentalized by professionals.

More and more social workers, scientists and politicians understand the approach and are able to act on an equal footing with the homeless people. But it has to be requested every time, that homeless people should receive a payment for their work (advice, information, interviews, etc.).

Clear statements and public protests such as "Housing for the homeless instead of counting the homeless" are extremely important in order to anchor the self-advocacy of homeless people in the public and political perception.

FEEDBACK

From participants: "I would not have thought I would develop like that: that I get my teeth apart to talk about our concerns." (Dirk Dymarski) (<https://taz.de/Selbstvertretung-wohnungsloser-Menschen/15723789>)

From implementers: "For me, a homeless person myself, it is important to make sure that everyone is clear that we can also do something. We want to speak for ourselves. If people realize that, that's already a big step in the right direction." (Jürgen Schneider)

From others: The self-advocacy of homeless people / homeless meeting has grown dear to my heart. It's great to see the commitment with which women and men are politically committed to affordable housing, better healthcare and more safety, especially for women on the street. We are happy to strengthen and support this commitment. Together we thought about how speculation buildings can be used as living space. (Maria Loheide) (Social Director of Diakonie Germany) (<https://www.facebook.com/Maria.Loheide.Diakonie/posts/die-selbstvertretung-wohnungsloser-menschen-wohnungslosentreffen-ist-mir-schon-a/2364894903568730/>)

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