CONCRIT

CASE STUDIES

https://concritproject.wordpress.com/

CONTENT

INTRODUCTION

The objective of this project is to create new educational tools in the form of a Learning Path, to train, teach and empower communities. Specifically, concentrating on 'critical thinking' and the construction and de-construction of narratives, and the use and understanding of digital media skills and literacies within civic participation.

The aim is to strengthen the self-confidence of citizens, empowering them to question social modes and values by encouraging them to question how information is delivered and consumed. Also, by developing skills that allow for personal growth and that will expand their knowledge of digital media, thus facilitating them to find their own collective voice and to support a sense for local action.

So, what do we mean when we use the term 'critical thinking'? Every day we use critical thinking in personal way to make everyday decisions. What will we eat? What will we read? Where will we go and how will we get there? Most of this critical thinking assists us with trivial but practical things that help us get through the day. But we also use critical thinking to help us understand and interact with the world around us and to make bigger decisions that have a greater impact, like, who we will vote for, who we will be friends with, if we want to have a family and so on. Most of the critical thinking we do will be guided by many factors. Our own internal moral compass that is influenced by our lived experiences, our family, our cultural background, our gender, sexual orientation, etc. But there are also external influences at play here such as politics, the media, employment, and education that will affect our thinking and decision making and that we need to think more deeply about.

Media and governments have used different types of narratives for years for create propaganda and to 'sell' a version of events that help to sway public opinion that often creates fear and division. These narratives can be pernicious and can make individuals and communities feel disempowered and marginalised by their circumstances, forgotten about, and not listened to. These feelings are often shaped by the wider world in which narratives are created that pigeonhole people into certain groups.

In modern life with high tech digital media in the palm of our hands it is quite a skill to navigate our way through all the information on the internet superhighway and to make decisions that are based on truth, in fact it's s struggle to find out the facts. Often people feel overwhelmed and powerless.

This project aims to help to facilitate critical thinking and improve digital media literacy by giving people the tools and skills to help them untangle these negative narratives and to support people to consider, to question and to assess.

To start to co-create these tools we needed to research what is already happening out there and what people are already doing. So, we worked with adult educators, facilitators, community workers, volunteers, and the groups that they are currently working with which are often excluded communities. We investigated how community narration and digital literacies are being used and explored the role that they play in civic education.

This brochure contains 8 case studies that project partners delivered in various community projects with different groups of people. Each of the case studies assessed several important points -

- how critical thinking was used
- how the participants use (or don't use) digital media
- how media literate the participants were
- if there is a general or specific narrative in which the group; are defined by/fit into/understand/want/ or don't want to be defined by
- if the workshop/session/activities can be adapted for other groups to use.

This research has helped the partners involved develop learner driven tools and methods that can strengthen individuals and communities by giving them techniques to de-construct discriminatory stereotypes and build on digital media literacies and digital media skills.

#1: CLUB 123

SELF-HELP CENTRE IN GDYNIA
CLUB 123, POLAND

Club 123 is for to adults of all ages, genders and backgrounds experiencing psychological or mental illness.

They often have insufficient resources in life, which is due to their past psychological crises and their need of support in returning to everyday social and professional activities.

Attendance of the club is only permitted if the participant has a conversation with a psychologist, during which the future participant can talk about their life situation, what motivates them to start using the Club's offer and what expectations they have.

Potential participants learn about the club and its offer from local media as well as institutions and organizations working for mental health as Municipal Centre of Social Services in Gdynia.

LOCATION

Club 1,2,3 is in Gdynia at street Warszawska 42, in the centre near the city rail and bus stop, which greatly facilitates getting to the place. However, the space is too small.

The Club's space is about 80m2: 3 rooms, an office room, a small kitchenette, toilets. The club is equipped with five modern computers with internet access, which participants can use every day during the Club's working hours.

AIM/S

Gdynia Club 1,2,3 aims to provide a safe place for adults who have experienced or are experiencing psychological crises and for people who are receiving psychiatric treatment, and to counteract isolation by providing a place where people can come and take part in social activity.

The club's offer is available to people in need of support, not necessarily with 'formal disability'.

The club was launched due to the insufficient number of accessible spaces where people experiencing mental crises can participate in social life to the best of their abilities and needs and spend time without the need to document fact of their mental problems and self-stigmatize: "I am a disabled person".

Club participants are often people who use the services of Municipal Centre for Social Services in Gdynia.

> *Everyone has the right to a crysis.*

THE FACILITATION APPROACH AND DELIVERY

An informal approach that is consistent with the nature of the place is essential and great importance is attached to voluntary participation and self-motivation. We try to make the place offer attractive with a self-help approach: you want to do something yourself, join, try, and initiate.

The club facilitator's role is one who guides and encourages the participants to take responsibility for themselves, their decisions, and their actions.

The facilitator supports conversations, discussions that broaden the participant's perspectives. They encourage the participants to be a co-creator of the process: to assist in the development of workshops, activities, training opportunities, discussions, etc. Throughout this process the facilitator is there to provide emotional support for everyone as well.

We promote a sense of independence. For example, we do not serve meals - we prepare them together with the participants. It is not a place of "care", but rather a common space for exploration and preparation for personal development to the further the life path.

ACTIVITIES

Discussions and various workshops, (photography, writing).
Group work, discussions, literary classes, and exchange of information, for example.

- Participants discussing own experiences.
- Digital skills and techniques. The use of new techniques (computer, camera) was at first met with worries and concerns, but with support the concerns and worries were dispelled.

CRITICAL THINKING

This area requires special attention. Until now, critical thinking skills have been developed through joint meetings and group discussions as well as asking guiding questions. Participants can express an opinion on the activities and creativity of others and learn to take opinions from others about their own activities, e.g., literary workshops. Participants have not sufficiently developed this skill, however some of them are aware of it. In the future, we anticipate further activities and workshops to develop this skill.

DIGITAL LEARNING

During the workshop's computers, the Internet, phones, and cameras are used. Classes on computer graphics and basic computer skills were carried out. Participants approached the classes with anxiety, but gradually they got used to the classes and acquired knowledge on how to use these tools.

We also do not have a good room for this type of activity, and it can be difficult. In addition, participants would mainly like to consume content online.

PRACTICAL OUTCOMES

There have been several practical outcomes that have come out of the sessions at the club.

- A collection of culinary recipes and poems called "Pots in Warsaw Street". Cuisine flavoured with a poem. This was produced in digital and paper versions.
- Pomeranian literary competition
- Collection of stories and poems based on stories of participants and their experiences
- Short videos about the stories of the participants
- Exhibition of participants photos
- Extension of the social garden

- Events for local community: An artistic afternoon - A Club 123 open day
- Anti-stigma actions and campaigns: "Rose from Saint Valentine", Change your head – schizophrenia don`t judge ".
- Gdynia`s and Tri City Bowling Tournament
- Trips organised by the participants.

These activities undertaken in the club contribute to: -

- overcoming barriers in the use of new technologies
- beginning personal development which includes thinking about themselves, their lives, and their relationships in a constructively critical way
- overcoming stereotypes
- better awareness of mental health issues in the local area
- finding enjoyment in life.

NARRATIVES

Every participant has their own individual narrative and answer for the question 'who am I?' and 'where am I going?'

For example -

1. I am a disabled person, and I will not work. I need help.
2. I am a person with schizophrenia, I depend on my family and the system.
3. I am an artist.
4. I am a photographer suffering from depression.
5. I am a poet.
6. I am unemployed and need support as I don't know how to use my spare time.

Every participant defines themselves in their own way. Some of the stories we have published in Pomeranian magazine dedicated mental health issues.

The club is in the centre of Gdynia and the participants are perceived by the local community through different glasses:

Perception 1 – This is a social narrative characterized by a high level of stigmatization: they cannot work, they must be dangerous, it is better not to start relationships with them, they are dependents and needy, they should be looked after and helped.

Perception 2 – They are people like us who have experienced a mental crisis and need support to recover. They deserve respect and support and a chance to participate fully in community life. We promote perception 2 for the residents of Warszawska Street and try to break down social barriers by; inviting the residents to open

days and creative afternoons, cooperating with the District Council, initiating a social garden activity.

We are dedicated to advocating Club 1,2,3 as a place for anyone who, due to mental problems, does not cope in everyday life. We encourage people to try to understand that mental health issues impact everybody and that everyone has the right to a crisis.

REFLECTION

We have observed an increase in confidence and sense of value in the participants. Participants take up new challenges. Some of them find work, some change their place of residence. Some long-term friendships have been established and for some it is a offers a specific "base" of security, a sense of community and can offer ways to find self-fulfilment.

The challenge that we find are there is a very low motivation of some participants to actively engage. We know this is from years of social neglect, stigmatization, and a culture of dependency 'they are sick you have to look after them', 'I am sick I need to be looked after.'

We focus on the individuals' strengths and group narratives through a self-help movement. This involves the participants, facilitators, the close neighbourhood, and the wider Gdynia community.

We would like to

- develop ideas help for self-help
- cascade learning (knowledge transfer)
- engage participants in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of educational and training activities
- increase the emphasis on digital competences and the learning of critical thinking in various fields
- integrate new technologies more closely in educational and training activities (Photography, video, internet, etc)

The role of lived experience, storytelling and sharing are also important

in our activities. We would like to use personal experiences more in of the activities.

Combining various techniques when creating a project, such as new technologies combined with more traditional activities - conversations, discussions, spending time together and writing.

#2: THE MEN'S ROOM

WHAT STOPS US FROM BEING WELL?
PEOPLE'S VOICE MEDIA (PVM) , UK

People's Voice Media was established in 1995 and is committed to supporting people to improve their lives and bring about positive social change from the ground up. The Community Reporter movement was launched in 2007 and with this methodology Peoples Voice Media enable people to use digital tools to gather, curate and mobilise their stories.

DESCRIPTION OF LEARNERS/ PARTICIPANTS

Learners/Participants are people who use the services of The Men's Room (TMR) in Manchester, UK. TMR are an organisation focusing on men's sexual health, including complex needs such as homelessness, substance addiction, sex worker rights. Predominantly male participants, age range from 18 - 50's alongside some female identifying transexual participants. Other participants were male & female staff from the TMR and other organisational partners.

LOCATION

Training & events have taken place during Phase 1 at the following locations within Manchester, UK:

- The Men's Room
- LGBT Foundation
- Zieferblat, Manchester City centre.

The Men's Room itself was a useful space to use as it is comfortable and familiar to all participants. The follow up storytelling support session was combined with a sexual health clinic being run at the same time, which meant that there was more opportunity for TMR staff to encourage the gathering of additional stories. The main difficulties came from noise from other areas of the space / conversations & activity happening nearby, and distractions within the space.

The LGBT Foundation room worked well as a space for delivering training. It was large, bright, and professional with a full projector screen/speaker system, strong wi-fi connection and plenty of tables/chairs for participants to take part comfortably. The main drawbacks were a lack of quiet 'breakout' spaces for participants to record personal stories (a main activity of the Community Reporter storytelling/gathering methodology).

AIM/S

The main subject area is Health and Wellbeing of men working / living within the sex work industry within the Manchester area and finding out more about the things that can stop them from being well, whether physically or mentally. The participants also learnt about storytelling and gathering methods which they can now use to talk about and share their lived experiences on a global platform (i.e., the Institute of Community Reporters website).

The aim was to use Community Reporting methodologies within a 3-phase project –

1. gathering & curation/analysis of stories,
2. artistic interpretation of findings & exhibition,
3. legislative theatre - to explore the question of 'What Stops Us from Being Well'.

PVM led Phase 1 (October-Dec 2019) and continued to be involved in a supporting role during Phase 2 & 3 (Jan-August 2020). People's Voice Media were involved to provide story gathering/telling and curation/analysis methodologies which fitted well with the overall experiential approach of the project.

Skills that were gained were

- Story gathering and storytelling methods, skills, and processes.
- How to be responsible & ethical when gathering, telling their own and other peoples stories.
- Capturing video and/or audio using accessible mobile technology.
- Using some analysis and curation methods, learning to examine the raw material and form key findings which can be used to inform 'conversations of change'

THE FACILITATION APPROACH AND DELIVERY

The approach was relaxed but with a basic structure. Working with a vulnerable group with complex needs required a certain amount of flexibility and some additional 'top-up' support sessions to help keep up momentum and engagement within the group.

This approach also meant offering an opportunity for extra storytelling recap sessions onsite at The Mens Room in familiar surroundings, which were open to all participants and helped to give extra support to those who had attended one session but hadn't been able to join the second.

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These were chosen to build confidence through small step-by-step tasks and recapping, creating engagement between individual participants and fostered a relationship of trust between the facilitator and participants in a short time frame.

The practical tasks offered an opportunity to try some things out (i.e. video interviews) which participants then peer reviewed and after the peer review they had the opportunity to practice the method again, The immediacy of the practical tasks and the peer review helped them to improve on their skills from a collective understanding that was discussed in the group.

The idea behind delivering the Community Reporter training was to instil confidence in participants so that they felt that they knew what they were doing, and to then go out and individually put these skills into practice and gather their own stories from others in an independent and responsible way.

During the project, they could also see how their individual stories were forming part of a larger online archive once they were uploading them to the www.communityreporter.net site and interaction with these stories on the site was further encouraged by the TMR project staff between and after sessions.

ACTIVITIES

- Icebreakers
- Group discussions
- Group 'Best Practice' agreements
- Audio & Video recording techniques
- Peer Review
- Using mobile (phones, tablets, i-pads) technology
- Watching and analysing examples of other stories
- Uploading to a website / sharing digital stories

The icebreaker 'Offline Instagram'- (see resources) was very effective as a way of quickly and enjoyably creating rapport within the group and between trainer

and participants. It also helped to give a little background to the participants.

Screening examples of other's stories on the website was very helpful as a way of getting the participants to 'buy into' the method / training and begin interesting and powerful conversations / discussions and to establish trust.

Challenges with this project and the activities were that this group did not all utilise their personal Community Reporter accounts. So, there was a bit of a gap between gathering the stories, which the participants were able to do and getting them uploaded and into the public domain. The feeling was, that this is partly to do with the sensitive nature of what the participants were discussing and their general access to WiFi (i.e., if homeless, less likely to be able to access / prioritise mobile technology/WiFi).

CRITICAL THINKING

The main subject area was Health and Wellbeing of men working / living within the sex work industry within the Manchester area and finding out more about the things that can stop them from being well, whether physically or mentally. The participants also learned about storytelling and story gathering methods which they can now use to talk about and share their lived experiences on a global platform (i.e. the Institute of Community Reporters website).

They also used critical thinking by

- watching stories already on the Community Reporter website, and reviewed these regarding content and recording techniques
- using different scenarios to open discussion of responsible storytelling techniques and approaches
- working in small group and full group discussion / feedback
- doing specific activities ('Discuss this scenario', 'Peer Review' etc) that are embedded within the learning.

More critical thinking was also introduced and discussed during the curation/analysis day in Jan 2020. This took place both with the participants and staff so that Community Reporting could be continued to be used and supported as a methodology. This then evolved into an art exhibition and theatre piece in Phase 2 and 3 of the overall project.

DIGITAL LEARNING

Filming using mobile technology (phones/tablets)

- Using mobile technology to film was effective as it helped to keep the learning accessible (i.e. does not need expensive/pro equipment) and it meant that all participants (who have wanted/consented to) have been able to use/borrow some form of mobile tech and tell their story.
- There were some difficulties and frustrations with limitations of audio/camera quality.

PRACTICAL OUTCOMES

- A library of raw, authentic stories was uploaded to the Community Reporter website forming part of an archive of stories and experiences.
- An art exhibition (led by an artist in Phase 2), informed by the findings from Phase 1's stories.
- A video edit showing a collection of the raw stories together and screened at as part of a 'Celebration Event'.
- An edited soundscape of story clips to accompany / be incorporated into the art exhibition (Phase 2)
- A legislative theatre performance (Phase 3)

NARRATIVES

The general narrative within this group is that they are shunned and stigmatised by society. Hence them finding it difficult to access health services that they needed because of the barriers of other people's perception of who they are and their lifestyles.

The general feeling from the group was one of living at the edges of society. Of being judged and not being accepted.

REFLECTION

The most successful parts of the project were that learning and using digital storytelling skills created a sense of confidence and independence amongst participants. This could be seen through the direct feedback from participants. For example:

"It has helped me... especially with the talking to people on the spot kind of thing as I'm usually kind of anxious... but I put it to the back of my mind, and it's made me feel good".

The elements that were more difficult to manage on this project were things such as trying to keep everyone involved and a level of consistency due to participants being present for one session, but not there at the next. This was mainly due to the nature of the complex needs

of the group i.e. constantly changing personal situations with housing, financial and healthcare appointments / considerations etc. which had to take precedence over attending the training sessions.

It is difficult to know what could be done to combat these circumstances in future, because they were situations entirely outside of our (or participants') control, however, perhaps some kind of additional online check-in sessions could help, but I think the main approach to reducing this element should be centred around flexibility and effective communication between all parties.

The other potential problem was down to group dynamics and occasional tensions between one or two individuals. This was dealt with through support from the organisation staff, who had a knowledge of specific relationships which might cause strain, and it was also combated by ensuring that these individuals were never in a situation where they were required to work closely together. It was also assisted through arranging (prior to the sessions) to split up groups of stories to neutralise tensions i.e., loading specific sets of stories onto separate tablets so

that curation sessions could be conducted without conflict.

Overall, the learning was effective and that it was a meaningful experience for participants as shown through their personal feedback given after a story gathering session, and from the feedback at the Christmas Celebration event where a selection of the stories and a thematic edit were shown to a wider group and from the feedback following a live story gathering session which took place at the event.

"Bringing humanity to real people"

"The ability to facilitate real change from the grass roots"

"Totally positive non-judgemental vibe"

In terms of the aims of the Community Reporter training itself, this was shown to be effective as the participants all created, recorded, and uploaded their own stories, post-training, with consideration of the Responsible Storytelling best practice guide they'd created as a group.

#3: PODCAST WORKSHOPS

COMMUNITY ARTS PROJECT
STAND 129, AUSTRIA

Stand 129 is a community arts project situated on a market site in Vienna's 10th district. In this very lively and colourful district of Vienna, typically seen as a "migrant's district". Stand 129 offers a wide range of cultural events, with the aim to create new networks within the local community.

DESCRIPTION OF LEARNERS/PARTICIPANTS

The participants came from various groups, some of which emerged from the BLM movement, while others already existed before and were interested in networking Black people in Austria. Accordingly, all participants identified themselves as Black. The group of participants was relatively heterogeneous, although they could all be described as young adults (18-25).

Their family backgrounds are diverse; some of their parents are first generation migrants, some second generation. Some of the parents were also born in Austria, and some of the parents are white. The participants themselves are partly born in Austria, partly in other countries. The gender orientation and identification are diverse, but the majority identifies as cisgender women, for a total of eight BPOC women and three BPOC men. The participants were students, young trainees, and workers, all well-educated and politically aware. It was noticeable in the discussions that the group was very intensively engaged with being Black in Austria at the time and brought with them both personal and political

activist knowledge as well as theoretical knowledge.

LOCATION

The 10th district is one of the most populated ones in Vienna and, although the average migration rate is nearly the same as in the city of Vienna, migration is very much more visible in the centre of the district.

The sessions took place at Kulturhaus Brotfabrik and the last session was conducted online via Zoom.

AIM/S

Stand 129's main goal is to build bridges among different (migrant) communities, autochthonous Viennese inhabitants, and newcomers through art and culture.

THE FACILITATION APPROACH AND DELIVERY

Preparation

As indicated above, the planning of the workshop outlines began at the beginning of 2020. This resulted in a collection of tools from different participatory art fields, which are used to activate the artistic and creative potential, as well as team building activities, theatrical methods for better expression, speaking and acting. We also collected radio methods such as interviewing and technical set-up. Methods exchanged with the international partners at the Radio V.I.T.A Joint Staff Training and in the project's Radio Workshop Guide were included.

Finally, the activities proposed were:

- Training voice use
- Icebreakers
- Getting to know each other
- Listening
- Speaking
- Body use
- Speaking at the microphone
- Better audibility
- Finding topics
- Conducting the interview
- Experimenting with sounds
- Editing
- Recording
- Writing stories

The toolset was adapted to the individual sessions and the needs and knowledge of the participants.

The group worked on the technical set-up needed for the recording during the workshops, considering that the participants would continue working outside the sessions. The facilitators selected the editing programmes and software that would be presented and used. They could count on the technical knowledge and a stock of microphones, mixers, speakers, laptops, and mobile recording devices that were used during the sessions.

For the implementation of the sessions, the premises of the sister project Kulturhaus Brotfabrik was used to have more space and to be able to keep the distances required by Covid-19 measures. The safety of all participants was ensured at all moments, through a constant disinfection of microphones and recording equipment, spacing, ventilation and hand disinfection.

RECRUITMENT OF PARTICIPANTS

Stand 129 started to promote the Radio V.I.T.A project and related workshops early in 2020 through different channels like newsletters, Facebook account and through different institutions associated with them.

During summer 2020, several Black Lives Matter protests took place in Vienna following the violent death of George Floyd in the USA. During this time, several initiatives, discussion groups and associations of Black people and people of colour were formed, such as "We are Vienna too" and "African Diaspora Austria". Stand 129 supported the demands of the protesters and seeing the urgency to create space and favour exchange for Black people and their perspectives, they used Radio V.I.T.A. as a good opportunity to make them visible.

The communication within the group took place mostly informally via WhatsApp. Stand 129's coordinating team knew one of the participants through personal networks and used this contact to announce the project and the possibility of participating in radio workshops. Interested people got back to the organisation, so a WhatsApp group was created to discuss the project, the idea behind it and possible dates to meet. This resulted in a group of 12-13 participants. The participants were very much filled with the spirit of the demonstrations and very motivated to change things. Something like an activist drive was forming.
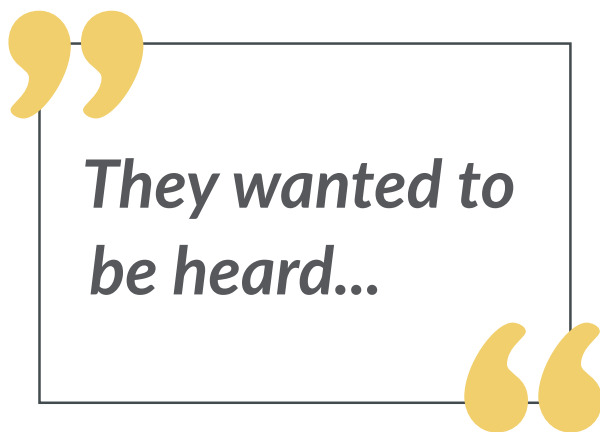
THE WORKSHOPS

The pilot Radio V.I.T.A workshop in Austria was held in four sessions and was attended by 6-9 participants. The Austrian facilitators were Özge Dayan-Mair and Mbatjiua Hambira.

Özge Dayan-Mair is an actress, cultural mediator and trainer and has been working as a radio journalist in

Istanbul. Since 2005 she has lived and worked in Vienna and is part of the core team of Stand 129 since 2014. She is program coordinator at Stand 129 and conducts workshops.

Mbatjiua Hambira is predominantly responsible for coordinating Stand 129's European projects and supports Stand's cultural programs. He studied International Development at the University of Vienna and received his M.Sc. in Socio Economics from the Vienna University of Economics. In addition to that, Mbatjiua works as an A&R, musician, songwriter and producer with various artists and labels in Austria and Germany.

> ## *They wanted to be heard...*

ACTIVITIES

The workshop is called Sugar Honey Black Tea and it combined tools from mainly three methodological worlds:

1. Theatre: A wide array of theatre tools was used (liberating exercises for body and voice use, storytelling, articulation and breathing exercises), including exercises to react spontaneously and to increase creativeness and awareness of the moment.

2. Radio: The facilitators tried to derive tools from participative radio approaches to empower the participants regarding self-expression, further fostering their creativity and talking about topics important to them. Another aspect they worked on was helping participants to get familiar with journalistic radio/audio and editing techniques.

3. Community Arts: Stand 129's general approach to community arts includes a focus on process rather than product. It is about participants having fun in creative processes and focusing on doing, without feeling the pressure of having to produce a polished product that must meet external demands. In this way, participants discover talents, learn new things, and engage in mutual exchange. It is important to be guided by the wishes and needs of the participants and to let them largely determine the structure and concrete content themselves. This is especially true for a workshop that deals with very sensitive issues such as experiences of discrimination and exclusion where the participants share painful and often traumatic memories.

The aims of the workshop were as follows:

- To give space for the perspectives of the participants.
- To provide support for the implementation of creative ideas.
- To encourage and release creative potential.
- To have fun.
- To create a sense of belonging within the group.
- To provide a space to share and reflect on life circumstances.
- To provide basic technical knowledge of radio.
- To provide inspiration for own projects and ideas.
- To provide opportunities for new cooperation, networks, and synergies.

During the four official sessions (three face-to-face and one online via Zoom) the relatively open structure of the workshop meant that participants quickly gained a sense of ownership and decided to pursue a podcast project from the beginning. From the very first session, it became clear that the project would be more complex than originally thought, and it transformed from the originally intended "classic" workshop structure to a podcast studio.

We worked on the essential elements of a podcast:

- Identifying topics.
- Podcast idea.
- Elements of the podcast (interviews, discussions, theoretic inputs, moderation).
- Roles / distribution of tasks.
- Implementation.
- Technical knowledge.
- Distribution.
- Music / Jingles.

DIGITAL LEARNING:

The participants learned about podcasting and gained basic knowledge about technical requirements for making radio.

Digital skills gained

- Online audio editing
- Recording audio
- Using audio recording equipment
- Using mobile phones and devices to record audio

- Saving and archiving audio files
- Use of social media 'What's App' to connect and communicate

Process Description

The workshop consisted of four meetings in total, over a period of two months. The meetings lasted 4-5 hours each except for the last session, which consisted in an online audio editing workshop of 2 hours. Due to Covid-19 restrictions, it was only possible to have sessions of a maximum number of ten participants.

Each session began with a warm welcoming and presentation of the session and continued with warming up exercises and icebreakers to activate the bodies and voices, followed by voice and articulation exercises, which were always related to the specific program of the day.

All workshop sessions were different from each other and related to a specific topic chosen by the group. After the first day, the main responsibility of the facilitators was to provide the necessary artistic and technical inputs to help the participants implement their ideas in the best way.

It is important to note that (except for a few icebreakers) all the exercises were recorded for participants to get used to the microphone and to acting in the context of a recording. All discussions and conversations were carried out as if they were part of a programme. There was the microphone, a moderator, and clear rules for conducting the conversation. This led not only to a special radio atmosphere, but also to more effective and balanced conversations.

The first day started with group dynamics and activities to create a safe space to share openly without the fear of being judged. The facilitators presented the project, its goals and plans and asked the participants about their connection to the topic and medium of radio. This allowed them to learn more about the participants' familiarity with radio. The participants were also invited to express their wishes and expectations. After that, the focus was on what constitutes speaking on the radio. For this, some theatrical exercises on expression and articulation were used and followed by activities designed to get to know one's own voice.

Afterwards, the facilitators showed them mobile recording devices and the possibility of recording with a smartphone. The participants were invited to leave the workshop rooms and explore the premises of the Kulturhaus Brotfabrik to record sounds, emotions, and statements.

Finally, the group had a first listening session and talked about saving and archiving audio files. The session was also dedicated to interviewing. The facilitators gave input on how to interview people without interrogating, how best to approach topics, what methods and types of

interviews are available, etc. This was combined with practical exercises: one-to-one interviews and moderation of a group discussion. Afterwards the group reflected and discussed which method is the best in which situation. During the interviews and brainstorming sessions and discussions, the focus was always on which topics would be suitable for the podcast, how they should be prepared and for whom they could be relevant. This made it possible for the participants to express their personal perspectives on the one hand, but also to make them understandable for the audience/society. A feedback session marked the end of the first day.

The second session gave the participants the opportunity to start digging deeper into the topics. The main questions of discussion were: "How can we use radio to talk about these issues that have never been spoken about openly in society? What can radio be? Who do we want to reach? How should we format the issues to have a more compact podcast?" After this session, a WhatsApp group was created, which the participants are still using to stay in touch and for future planning, but also to share information about interesting events, new music to check out, project calls, demonstrations, memes, and so on. Before the participants came together for the next sessions, they were in touch with each other nearly every day. They were developing new ideas, recording some samples with their mobile phones, and sending them to each other for comments.

On the third workshop session, the participants, guided by the facilitators, worked on a 'jingle' and introduction parts for their podcast. Prior to the session, the participants had written short introducing texts, in which they introduced themselves and told why they took part in this project. The texts were supported by many audio effects, sounds, music, chosen by the participants. At this time, the group was already closely connected with each other, but they were invited to talk and share more. The trust created empowered them to reach the young Black youth, to help them by showing how to stand strong and united against discrimination. They were all encouraged to use radio as a medium for this. They all had many ideas, so this session was especially about choosing concrete topics, formats, division of work and deciding the further working schedule.

The fourth and last session was online and dedicated to those participants who wanted to learn how to edit audio. There was theoretical input on digital audio workstations, file formats, mono vs. stereo files and tracks, sample rates, bit depths, and so on. Then the group worked on concrete recordings, opened the DAW, created a new project, cut the audio, changed the volumes, added music, created fade ins - and outs and effects. Afterwards,

they exported and archived the edited recordings before a feedback and Q&A session.

CRITICAL THINKING

The main topics of the workshop covered areas related to being young and Black in Austria/Vienna, but also everyday issues concerning students and young adults' lives – from within the perspective of Black people: Self-awareness and awareness of others; Transnational Identity - Sense of Belonging – Attributions; Sexism; Gender identity / Gender inequalities; Activism; Culture Clash; 1st vs. 2nd generation; Colourism; Mental Health; Democracy & Participation; Belonging; (In) Visibility; Love; African Spirituality & White Christianity - Intersectionality & Transformation; Internalised Misogyny - Expectations of "the Black woman." Just to name a few.

During the workshop, the participants opened up a lot without any fear of each other. The group created a space for laughter and discussion, a healing space where painful experiences could be shared, and new strength and confidence could be gained. The group decided to work on a podcast for Black and POC teenagers and adolescents, meant to support them in their development and to deal with topics such as Black hair, sexual liberty, religion and so much more that has no place in the white majority discourse. The podcast they worked on became a guide for young black people living in Austria, with some advice against (hidden) discrimination and prejudices, which will help them to have an easier and self-determined life.

PRACTICAL OUTCOMES (KNOWLEDGE GAINED, SKILLS LEARNED)

The skills that participants improved upon thanks to the workshops ar as follows:-

Self-reflection: the participants had the chance to reflect on themselves and on their role within a team.

"I reflected on myself thanks to the interaction and discussion with the other participants."

"Stating my opinion out loud and having people give me numerous new perspectives about my idea and about my way of thinking."

Goal setting: thanks to the participation in the workshop, they acquired new tools to approach goals more effectively.

"The importance of specific goals is now very clear to me. It is not only important to know what you want but also to know how exactly you want to get it."

Networking: the participants were able to analyse group dynamics and work together as a team.

"I was able to meet new people and connect with the BPOC community in the workshop."

"It was a big group with many different personalities. That exposure and the project itself needed you to be able to communicate properly and build connections with one another, which led to improved networking skills."

Problem solving: the participants thought about ways to solve problems creatively and decided not to give up, even in the face of challenges.

"Because all the material was very new to me, I felt I was constantly facing new challenges and also growing from them. It was a good balance of figuring out things by ourselves, but then being guided and taught the best ways to handle issues."

Self-confidence: the environment created within the group made possible for participants to feel comfortable and boosted their self-confidence.

"By overcoming one problem every time we also improved our confidence"

"I felt very self-empowered and self-sufficient due to the freedom given to us as participants."

Communication skills: through the workshop, participants practiced how to adapt their way of communicating to a radio setting, to actively listen to others and engage with the content of the discussions and to speak in front of the group.

"Throughout the podcast we learned how to respect someone's time when they speak without interruption and how to keep a good debate going."

Self-motivation: some of the comments about self-motivation were:

"I was really motivated to work together and actually get something done, together as well."

"I learned many new things, which made me even more motivated to learn more. I realised how much I don't know and how valuable this knowledge is."

REFLECTION

The group of participants connected so well that they met three more times without the facilitators to make recordings and to do interviews. They also went to a rally against racist police control and violence, and they cooked together.

And the group continues to exist after the official end of the workshop and want to continue working on the podcast - precisely because despite hundreds of recordings, there was no finished programme.

All sessions lasted longer than planned because the participants felt a great need to exchange in this group constellation; in fact, the sessions were originally planned to last 3 hours but ended up lasting 4-5 hours. The fact that all participants had similar experiences as Black people in Austria created a feeling of solidarity and empathy. The discussions within the sessions were embedded in this safe space, where participants could finally say what they had never dared to say before, for fear of incomprehension, condescension, and racist defense mechanisms.

The two facilitators, who come from different artistic fields (theatre and music), found that working on a new medium, radio, was a very enriching journey.

The group that they worked with was truly motivated and powerful. They wanted to be heard. The whole process was full of strong expressions, feelings, topics, and creativity. The workshops were based on participative methods and doing, working, learning together were the most important issues for the facilitators rather than the final product.

During this project, the group of participants and the facilitators built a safe space and have worked together in a focused and motivated way. The facilitators were proud of how the group developed and it was great to see how the participants supported each other.

Covid-19 had a major negative impact on the implementation of the workshop. In the beginning, Stand129 was able to conduct sessions with a maximum of ten participants, but had to stop after the third one and, since then, the team has only been able to conduct one online session. In the meantime, the group tried to organise autonomously, which made things more difficult. Apart from the issues directly concerning the workshop, the participants suffered from the effects of the lockdowns, the distance learning, the restriction of contacts, their obligations at home like home-schooling and the general insecurity, which is partly reflected in the chats through frustration, negative feelings, partial listlessness (because of the unplan ability of processes) and resignation to fate. Even though the Radio V.I.T.A project is now coming to an end, Stand 129's team hopes to be able to continue accompanying the group on its path and the joint podcast.

The satisfaction with the trainers (5 out of 5), the contents (4,9) and the results (4,8) were very high. All participants would recommend the workshop to others. One reason for this is the open workshop structure, which produced a sense of ownership. However, the participants complained about the interruptions due to Covid-19. Frustration is also evident from the comments received and one participant wondered how the project would have been without the influence of the pandemic.

When asked about what else they would have liked to learn through the workshop, some participants commented that they would have liked to go deeper on the same topics that were discussed during the sessions. Others stressed the frustration they felt because they believed that they could have learned more in a "normal" situation.

#4: MAP ME HAPPY

ADULT EDUCATION AND RESEARCH
COMPARATIVE RESEARCH NETWORK , GERMANY

CRN was founded in 2007 and is based in Berlin, working in the field of adult education and research. CRN specialises in training activities within the areas of intercultural competences, intergenerational learning, mobilities and migration. CRN is also practised in creating and performing evaluation and dissemination processes.

DESCRIPTION OF LEARNERS/ PARTICIPANTS

This method can be used for any target group because the practice is focused on understanding people's needs through empathy and essentially, can be adapted to suit any group of people of all ages and backgrounds.

LOCATION

This activity can take place anywhere, but a public space is ideal because it has the advantage, that it is visible for all to see and there is the possibility that it will attract many pass-byers who could potentially participate.

Open spaces are perfect, but the mapping could take place as well in a school, gym, or similar space.

AIM/S

The aim of 'Community Mapping' is to create a feeling of positive ownership of a space for the citizens who live and work there. 'Community Mapping' is often a starting point to discuss what is worth preserving, what might be changed and what is missing in a neighbourhood, and this leads to an engaging discussion on change (this might be by architecture, social, legal etc.).

The 'Community Mapping' that CRN facilitated in Berlin-Wedding is part of a bigger programme to help the local citizens to strengthen ownership, create action plans to identify better and overall to make the area safer, cleaner, and more attractive.

CRN uses this method in the framework of their participatory programmes. The project is an experiment in modern participatory approaches.
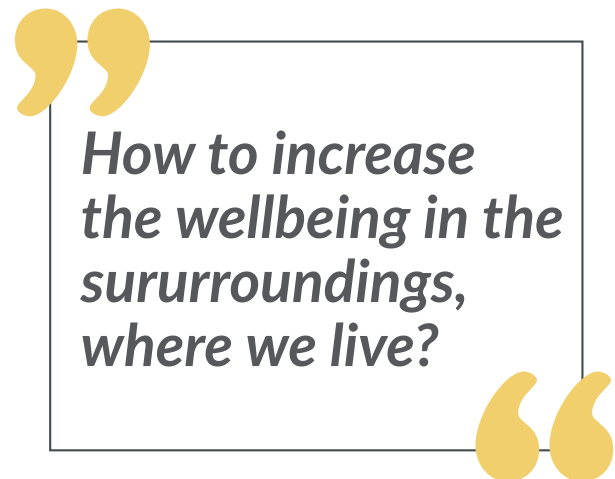
THE METHOD

The 'Map Me Happy' method helps to get people to become aware of how they feel about a certain neighbourhood, area, space, place, etc by asking people to use their 5 senses to allow a deeper understanding of their relationship to a place. The method supports people to think about the changes they might like to see, things they want to stay the same and to shape the future of their local area. The method promotes discussions with other community members and ensures that the process is led by the participants. It is a very effective method to use when co-creating neighbourhood planning and can be applied to other types of community projects.

To get a broad view it is better to undertake this method in an open public space, so everyone is given a chance to have their say. However, there may be specific focus or target groups which will benefit from being in a closed group. So closed/targeted groups can and should be involved but it is still important to get a broad view and have 'open' sessions in public places, so everyone has an opportunity to participate. This 'broader view' of an area ensures that the mapping does not just capture specific perspectives (e.g. of school children, elderly) so that wider discussions in the community with different perspectives can begin.

To illustrate: On one public event two homeless people started to talk with a migrant youth gang about how much they both like a specific green space. This led to both groups realising the value of the public space, understanding that they both had a common bond and that they were unlikely allies. Realistically they probably wouldn't have struck up a conversation like this before, the mapping gave them the opportunity to do this.

However, this would not have been that easy in an indoor space.

> *How to increase the wellbeing in the sururroundings, where we live?*

THE FACILITATION APPROACH AND DELIVERY

To get people involved it is important to have a public campaign, that announces where and when the mapping will take place. As already indicated in the method it should be a public or open accessible space.

The mapping event uses oversized maps of the area outside which is made by using an aerial photo of the specific neighbourhood/area or with huge A0 – A1 printouts indoor.

A facilitator uses the map to ask people to find their own apartment/school/workplace on the map. Using a non-formal approach conversations start, and people are encouraged to start to discuss with others about their favourite places. It is important to give people that chance to ask specifically about changes or the preservation of spaces.

The local community work in their own time and the facilitators collect the participants ideas, feelings, motivations in 'one to one' talks and rouse bystanders to join in.

The facilitators need to have a 'hands off' approach to mapping process and the discussions, but they need to record/collect the discussions they hear.

The facilitator role is one of a mediator who collects the stories and opinions of the participants 'one to one' talks but doesn't lead or influence the discussions. The mapping itself, the creation of the map and the discussion are not structured and should be led by and fully in the hand of the participants.

Through sensemaking and reflection discussions, either online or in so called "Zukunfswerkstätten" (Utopia Labs),

the community comes together and co-create recommendations and planning scenarios, taking over the leader- and ownership of the developed narratives.

Resources needed are: - a map, stickers, or post it notes with the five senses (see, hear, feel, smell, taste) pens, as well relevant questionnaires, and a team of facilitators.

The whole process is one of stealth, it happens rather invisibly, people's conversations lead the way. This 'hands off' approach is an intentional element of community mapping as this way people aren't influenced or led helping to discover integral thoughts, feelings, and ideas of the participants.

SKILLS THAT WERE GAINED

The participants learn about: other perspectives on the public space they inhabit, about ownership of public spaces and how to increase the wellbeing in their surroundings. The method ultimately increases people's capabilities to create action plans, articulate thoughts and contributing to decision making.

Hard skills: Digital/ video skills, online map making, using GPS based apps.

Soft skills: critical thinking, structural debating, exchange of knowledge, communication, articulation of thoughts, participation.

PRACTICAL OUTCOMES

The process has been a success. For example, in three events in Berlin-Wedding more than 200 spots where mapped and a similar number of motivations was collected. It helped to identify the "favourite" spots in the neighbourhood and to launch a discussion on how to keep them "favourite", this resulted in 12 community action plans, which have now been implemented.

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CRITICAL THINKING

Critical thinking is explored through the discussions and sharing of positive experiences and emotions among the community members. Through this discussion they start to review the common shared space with a positive eye, shifting media and external narrations aside and explore their common enjoyment of the space they live in. The participants usually become aware of the gap between their perception and the external perception of their neighbourhoods.

Starting from this point, relevant local media reports and narratives can be analysed and compared to the reality of the community members. During the process, they extend their knowledge, find counter arguments and be more aware of media narratives and the real human experience.

NARRATIVES

This method helps to develop positives narratives from local people's perspectives, often in deprived areas. As each individual maps local places concentrating on the; look, sound, smell, taste or feeling. They find places where they get inspiration and have positive thoughts.

By doing this the people create counter narratives, to the mainstream ones. So often these areas are described as dirty, unsafe, and unliveable, which are often intensified through media. Besides providing outsiders with new perspectives, the narratives are also aimed on building a community, when people realise, they are not the only ones liking the area (or at least some parts).

In this way the method encourages narratives that develop a sense of communal ownership, resulting in a common responsibility to either preserve or change the area, based on the community needs.

REFLECTION

Strengths: Community co-creation process, playful but serious approach, reaching wide impact and outreach, highly visible and accessible for all

Weaknesses: you need to work in public space, usage of a set of materials, to make it fully effective several facilitators are needed.

Opportunities: Helps to co-create policy recommendations, citizen led planning and future scenarios, helps to increase community building and cohesion.

Threats: Public event, might be exposed to political intervention, people might map negative emotions and responses.

Effectiveness: We consider the method very effective. Both by learning and by resources. The materials produced enabled us not just to do one event, like we had foreseen but to use the materials for 4 more mapping events, and this hadn't been anticipated.

The community strengthened their feeling of belonging and created counter narratives to the media, focusing on why people like to live there and not, as in the media, on crime or trash.

The method of supporting people to lead discussions helped to create spontaneity and informality and this was a real asset. Helping "unlikely" discussions to occur between parents, homeless people, and youth gangs, particularly focusing on how to protect a green space.

The project led to the creation of local action plans, which have been implemented by the neighbourhood. Additionally, we launched a discussion on the value of the public space and on media discourses in general. The experiences in a co-creation project, enabled empowerment, strengthen participation and increased activism.

Using this method of mapping as a co-creation and co-exploration tool of a community is very effective and can be used in many settings and as well in other contexts. Working with positive emotions, launching positive conversations, which bring the community together, and alongside this creating space where critical thinking is developed and encouraged. This method is a valuable tool that can be used in many learning/teaching and activism contexts.

#5: ESCAPE WORLD

- TOWARDS THE ACTIVITY OF PEOPLE AT RISK OF HOMELESSNESS"
ARTISTIC AND SOCIAL ASSOCIATION FEERIA/ POLAND

DESCRIPTION OF LEARNERS/ PARTICIPANTS

The people involved were in transition from being homeless to having their own places to live and beginning to look for work. They were all on a new journey. They were all adults of varying ages, genders and backgrounds.

LOCATION

Project took place in the space of the Culture Consulate in Gdynia (workshops and rehearsals) and in the Gdynia Główna Theater (premiere of the performance).

AIM/S

The aim of the project is to draw attention to "others" - those who are removed from the mainstream of social life and who are absent from official discourse. In each of our projects we believe that in each human being there has creative potential that should be released and ennobled. During 'Cultural Utrecht' a previous project we discovered that the participants wanted to participate in culture. It

was an emotional need that they wanted to engage and develop their own creative potential, as evidenced by the statement of Mrs. Elżbieta:

"I did not know the people with whom I will perform here, but we are familiar. You have to go out between people. Show that the homeless can also happen to anyone."

THE FACILITATION APPROACH AND DELIVERY

An informal method was the best approach for this project. We considered the rotational nature of the workshop and the possibility of more participants joining in. In addition, the work did not have to be associated with performing on stage, participation was voluntary.

FreeDOM participants, when asked why they wanted to continue participating in the project, mentioned the success of the previous project, the desire to continue to work in this group, and the opportunity to learn acting.

To begin with we wanted a group process and inspiration from the participants' history and their interesting personalities - including those who did not want such high social exposure as performing on stage. The participants' life experiences and stories of their lives were the basis of the play and this involvement helped them to see themselves as creators with important things to say.

During the 14 hours of drama workshops, participants had the chance to learn the principles of creating theatrical scenarios and building dramaturgy. Above all, the workshops were an invitation to contribute to creating a script based on their own stories.

Participants in the workshops enjoyed exercises in pairs and getting to know each other in conversations. From the statements it can be concluded that teamwork and the development of creativity were the greatest value of these workshops for the participants and revealed a great need for community. It was important for them to tell their story, mark their input and voice, and be part of the group.

One of the respondents noted that thanks to participation in the project, people they knew expressed an interest in what they were doing, and they felt respected. The lecturer noticed that the workshops in which the whole group participated were most effective. The joint creation of the hero, his features and vicissitudes involved the participants very much.

In the case of people who were more introverted, the psychotherapist or street workers present at the meetings encouraged to get them involved. Simpler questions were asked at the beginning and then encouraged to develop

them.

An exercise with a story about using the metaphor of a fairy tale at the very beginning turned out to be too complex for the participants. Therefore, some of them did not complete this task at all, others did not quite understand it. They preferred to talk about themselves directly. Keeping things simple helped the participants to achieve and produced better results. The participants felt strongly motivated to continue working.

> *They were all on a new journey...*

SKILLS THAT WERE GAINED WERE

During the project theatre tools and skills were used, which helped the participants to expand their social competences and prepared them to create their own piece of theatre.

As follows:

1. dramaturgical work during which participants learned about writing for theatre/drama and used the acquired skills to transform their own stories into a dramaturgical form.

2. workshops that focused on acting and movement exercises

3. stage work, which involves translating written stories into live theatre.

Additionally, there was the challenge of preparing and presenting an artistic event - a piece of theatre inspired by the biographies of the participants.

The program was designed to meet the needs of self-fulfillment and social needs of participants. Helping to create changes that –

- are conducive to raising self-awareness
- encourage accurate assessment of own value
- strengthen existing resources
- require the use of renewed and acquired skills
- develop communication skills
- help with the ability to express their own needs

- restore a work value.

During the script workshops, participants had the opportunity to learn the principles of creating theatrical scenarios, building dramaturgy, developing writing skills, using, and increasing literacy, and fostering individual creative potential. They acquired new communication skills, which is one of the most desirable competences on the labour market.

Acting and movement classes developed not only reflexes, the ability to function in a group, but above all the skill of self-presentation, awakened ingenuity, a sense of humor, released spontaneity and allowed to individuals to accept their bodies. Creative work finished with the presentation of results, a piece of theatre. This allowed them to shape a sense of responsibility for their own activity and gave them a chance to show that they could be capable of taking up a professional job.

PRACTICAL OUTCOMES

By participating in activities that stimulated creative potential, imagination and integration, the participants had the opportunity to change their attitude from passive to more active, constructive, and less demanding.

In the area of "self", undertaking creative work will come down to the implementation of such social rehabilitation goals as:

- motivation to change
- acquiring the ability to identify your own hobby
- undertaking work on weakening defense mechanisms
- shaping the ability to perceive own resources
- hierarchy of goals
- forming a new identity.

The final part of the project, the show "Escape World" staged at the Gdynia Główna Theater gathered about 90 people in the audience. It was undoubtedly the climax of the project and the most satisfying moment for both the participants.

The effects of months of struggle, in which the participants worked so hard on their own personal development and overcame so many barriers, was crystallized in one moment. Presenting the piece of theatre to a wider audience raised awareness of the plight of people who are homeless, helping to break down stereotypes, and at the same time rewarded the actors with a public acknowledgement of their time, effort, and collaborative work.

The public presentation of the performance brought the best out in the participants. They felt appreciated, and this gave them strength and confidence. The performance was very well received by the audience, which significantly strengthened the self-esteem of the performers. Participants felt strengthened by the fact that many people asked them for autographs after the presentation. It made them feel appreciated and important.

During the meeting summarising the project, they remembered this moment with great satisfaction. People who took part in the workshops but didn't perform in the show came to the premiere because they felt that a part of them was also included in the performance. That their voice was included, and the performance was also about them.

CRITICAL THINKING

The area of critical thinking included:

1. deconstructing the stereotype of homeless people (unsuccessful, in need of support, low self-esteem)
2. exploring the stereotype of people leaving homelessness among employees of organizations, institutions, and residents of Gdynia.

DIGITAL LEARNING

The performance used visual effects and video material from one of the actors who recorded with a go-pro camera. During the performance, recordings of the realities of life of homeless people were shown, that actors commented on.

NARRATIVES

There is a general perception of people who are homeless that they have substance or alcohol dependency. That they it is better not to start relationships with them, as they are dependents and needy, and they should be looked after and helped, that they are unintelligent, and that they are unsuccessful and are worthless.

As indicated above in the Critical Thinking section, an important element of the project was deconstructing theses stereotypes and societal narratives that are put 'pinned onto' people who are homeless. Helping the participants cope with society's narrow minded and ignorant observations.

REFLECTION

The project helped the participants to break down personal barriers. They learned to work with each other, to strive for certain outcomes. They strengthened their feelings of independence and responsibility for themselves and others. Some learned to deal with stress. The project reduced their sense of loneliness, they were

appreciated by others, they made friends, they expanded their circle of friends and most importantly believed that they deserved more.

Building a relationship

It was very important to build a direct relationship with participants, not only during classes, but also outside of them. Going for a walk, a phone conversation helped to participants to engage positively. However, it was important to set personal boundaries (no phone conversations under the influence of alcohol or too late at night).

Group stability

Keeping the group stable at individual workshops allowed participants to reach a higher level and delve deeper into the proposed exercises. It was important that a regular person attended every session, either a psychotherapist, street worker or coordinator.

Contract with participants

For this project it was very important to have a written the contract with participants. This had symbolic significance and helped to make the participants understand the importance and the value of their contribution to the project.

Permanence of dates and place

Meeting times and venue should be fixed and agreed in advance.

#6: ACTIVE PARENTS!

VOLKSHOCHSCHULE
VHS BERLIN MITEE (ADULT EDUCATION CENTRE), GERMANY.

There are 12 adult education centres in Berlin that are independent and are run by the districts. Together, VHS fulfil the city's mandate to provide continuing education. Guaranteeing citizens, a wide range of educational opportunities for lifelong learning. Promoting social integration and opportunities for active participation in social processes and their shaping.

VHS are committed to democratic values and are politically and ideologically independent and stand for openness and respect for people of different cultures.

For VHS, learning is successful when there is a motivating atmosphere, individual knowledge, experience and interests are taken into account, diverse and innovative methods that promote individual learning are used and the learning environment is modern and professional.

LOCATION

The activities take place in the school. Sometimes in rooms of Schulsozialarbeit (school social work) or so called "Elterncafé" (café for parents), Schulküche (school kitchen) or any suitable room in the school.

DESCRIPTION OF LEARNERS/ PARTICIPANTS

The participants are parents of children in the schools, families, parents in general.

Some of the participants know each other. They come together by invitation of the school and the social work department of the school.

Participants are all parents of children going to the same school. There is a mixture of social classes, different types

of family-structures (single parents, etc.), different language and cultural groups (big Turkish and Arabic community but also a lot of families from the Balkans).

AIM/S

To provide information, to connect and to develop networks and support for parents.

To encourage parents to understand their rights and to see all the possibilities of participation. This project is open for everyone, but it is aimed at parents who have German as a second language.

The aim is to establish an autonomous working group who set the agenda with topics and schedules that are relevant to them. During the first steps, this is encouraged and empowered by organising meetings, inviting experts, moderating discussions.

Because there is such a mixture of social classes, different types of family-structures different language and cultural groups it is often important to recognise, to name and to solve problems or difficulties in the school community or communities nearby.

The programme offers support, expert's assessments and simply space, to meet, to discuss and try to find solutions.

> *How is it important for every single person to be engaged with their child's school system?!*

THE FACILITATION APPROACH AND DELIVERY

The approach is informal that is flexible and open.

The parents learn about the topics they have requested, but generally the "meta-learning" is to participate and organise actively in internal and external school structures.

It is a participative structure; the organisation of the facilitation reacts to the feedback and input from the parents and designs the activities with them. Events are organised with the facilitators supporting the parents sometimes with experts and sometimes without.

There are presentations, discussions, and activities that explore the organisational structures of the school system to help the parents have better understanding of how the educational system works.

The participative structure of the project determines the approach, and the school timetable determines the timescale and schedule. They tend to meet 1 or 2 times a month.

SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

The participants develop skills that support them to; participate in school activities, recognise important topics and problems, and discuss them. The overarching aim is that they might be able to organise meetings for themselves, highlight key-topics in parental school life or in general.

CRITICAL THINKING

The participants are encouraged to use critical thinking during the meetings through group discussions and exchanging experiences. Sometimes different kinds of external stimuli can be helpful and used to create a discussion, etc.

NARRATIVES

There are stereotypes at play here for parents with a second language, that they are ignorant and not interested in the schools' activities when it is often because the parent doesn't feel welcome or included in schools' activities. These stereotypes are exactly what the project wants to breakdown by encouraging engagement and empowerment of the parents.

REFLECTION

Upon reflection we recognise that co-working with multiple players inside and outside the school to engage with participants has been successful and there have been effective and useful seminars/discussions on topics that came from the interests of the participants.

Having an unsteady number of participants that are not yet a core group has been challenging. But we recognise that we are still at the beginning.

It would be good to raise the profile of the programme and get a wide-spread name and gain quality assurance

then we could spread out in other schools and neighbourhoods of Berlin and other cities.

Building awareness of how the important it is for every single person to be engaged with their child's school system so the parent can have ownership, can participate, and are confident enough to organise, to advise, to communicate, and to be heard.

To create more engagement, it will be important to demonstrate the unique aspect of the programme: the participative way, to name and even change things by one's own action. rance then we could spread out in other schools and neighbourhoods of Berlin and other cities.

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#7: RIONE MONTI

RESEARCH, TRAINING, IMPACT ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION PROGRAMS FOR INTERVENTION PROJECTS IN THE FIELD OF SOCIAL POLICIES
LABOS FOUNDATION, ITALY

This project was delivered with the support of Labos Foundation, which was founded in 1985, by the association "Upter Solidarietà" in one of the oldest neighborhood of Rome - "Rione Monti".

LOCATION

The project was realized in "Rione Monti" (the historical denomination uses the term "Rione" instead of neighborhood) and was delivered in different locations.

- The headquarters of the association, where the training activities of the volunteers and some of the project meetings took place.

- Several informal places in the neighborhood, such as shops, cafes, houses, where meetings with the inhabitants were held

DESCRIPTION OF LEARNERS/ PARTICIPANTS

The project's participants were the residents of "Rione Monti", with a special focus on the people living there for generations.

Most of the people living in the district know each other and they are a part of a neighborhood committee.

The participants shared a common interest in improving the neighborhood.

AIM/S

The aim of the project was to enhance the value of the territory through the stories of the inhabitants of the neighborhood. By reminiscing and remembering "Rione Monti" in the past and co-creating new proposals for the future improvement of the neighborhood.

Objectives of the Project were to -

- tell the story of the district through the history of its inhabitants.
- contribute to the enhancement of the territory, and its positive change through the stories of the neighborhood.

Remebering "Rione Monti"...
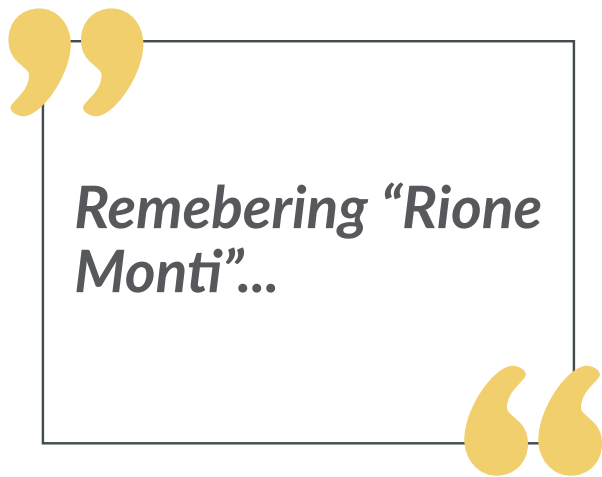
THE FACILITATION APPROACH AND DELIVERY

The working approach was informal with participants playing an active role in all the phases of the project. From the conducting of the interviews to their analysis, and to the creation of the final publication.

The project followed those stages:

- Stories were collected by a group of young volunteers that had been trained in interview techniques, and on how to transcribe a story and to create an interview track.
- Identifying recurring categories in the stories the group of volunteers carried out an analysis of the interviews.
- A draft of a collection of memories were created and sent to the narrators to receive their feedback.
- A final version of the collection of stories was created and an E-book was made. The E-book was then disseminated in the territory, in free form, through

creative commons license.

There was a final event in the territory to share the project with many inhabitants, also in the presence of the contributors.

CRITICAL THINKING

The project saw the application of critical thinking when considering life in the "Rione Monti" and mainly focused on the following aspects:

- understanding the cultural roots of this area of Rome and its identity.
- exploring the current problems of this area.
- reflecting on what could bring improvements to this territory.

SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

The participants developed:

1. The ability to share and tell the stories of the territory. Reflecting on the transformation of the territory.
2. The ability to collaborate with others to produce proposals for neighborhood improvements.
3. The ability to co-create an e-book with the stories, the reflections and the proposals for the District.

PRACTICAL OUTCOMES

The main outcomes of the project were:

- interviews with the inhabitants of "Rione Monti", in text, audio and video format.
- a collection of the inhabitants' memories and reflections.
- a final community event for the inhabitants.

DIGITAL LEARNING

The volunteers that collected the interviews learned several digital skills, such as:

- how to conduct audio/video interviews
- how to edit materials, with audio and video editing programs
- how to improve their ICT skills in general.

NARRATIVES

- The general narrative was one of cherishing the old life but embracing change and new ways of doing things. Helping the older residents to get to know the younger ones and vice versus. Combatting the general

perceptions and narratives that older people have about younger people and that younger people have about older people.

REFLECTION

The project was successful, and its success was linked to the fact that was based on an autobiographical narration methodology and it enhanced the heritage of the district.

The aim of the project was to enhance the resources of the district "Rione Monti", full of history and traditions, so this type of methodology was perfect for this purpose.

One aspect to be improved was certainly the advocacy - that is - the ability of the project to influence the management of the territory. This is the main challenge to face for future similar projects.

#8: ABOVE AND BEYOND

CREATIVE WRITING AND DRAMA
COLLECTIVE ENCOUNTERS, UK

Leaving

If I leave, will he find me?
I won't be leaving him alone
Can I live without the love of my family?
Do I have the confidence to start over?
I smell freedom, but
I can taste the blood running into my mouth if he does find me
I feel lost alone and frustrated

Collective Encounters is a professional arts organisation specialising in theatre for social change through collaborative practice. Using theatre to engage those on the margins of society, telling untold stories and tackling the local, national and international concerns of our time.

LOCATION

It took place in the Kindfulness Coffee Club's community space in Bootle, Liverpool, UK. It is a small area, with sofas and chairs and so it was impossible to get people up and moving, so everything had to done while being seated, which meant more creative writing and less drama activity.

DESCRIPTION OF LEARNERS/ PARTICIPANTS

People from the local community who are in danger of becoming socially isolated. Some of them knew each other and some of them were new and didn't know anyone else.

These were people who have used the coffee club either by referral from local services or they have attended by their own accord.

AIM/S

The aim of the sessions was to get people sharing their stories and looking for commonality and to get people imagining a better future.

It is part of a bigger programme, which is a grass roots Theatre for Social Change project in Bootle, Liverpool, UK. This was part of the development stage to get people to share what is important to them and to develop creative responses to highlight what they wanted to say.
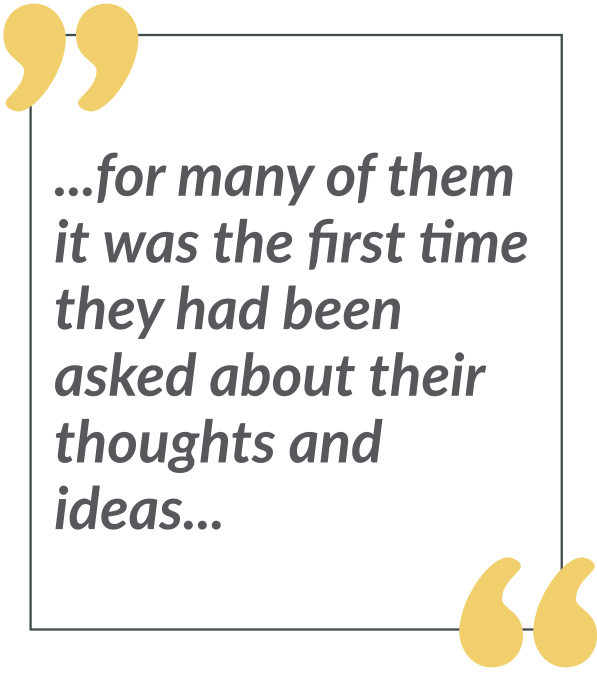
THE FACILITATION APPROACH AND DELIVERY

It was a facilitated session in an informal community hub. It was a 'drop in' and participants varied from week to week, so there needed to be a looseness about the approach. To be able to welcome new people in at any point during the session. So, the facilitator needed to be aware of this and openly welcome interruptions during the session. There were also people with multiple-complex needs so all exercises had to be short to hold focus and attention.

As always with a 'drop in' flexibility is key, lots of people have huge barriers to being creative, so a soft start was needed. Encouraging people to come into the space and

'feel it' before participating in the activity was important.

The first sessions aim was used to gauge the confidence and to build trust, the second sessions aim was to get begin to get creative and enable people to share. By the third session people were able to make choices and steer the session.

As always, a 'go round' was the first activity to get people speaking in the group and sharing something about themselves.

> ...for many of them it was the first time they had been asked about their thoughts and ideas...

ACTIVITIES

Photo poems.

People the wrote poems from the perspective of being inside a photograph of the local area, (This was effective as people were able to imagine and begin to tell stories about community and started to develop a community narrative).

The stories that were developed from the activity were both individual stories and collective stories and they were developed through poetry based on photos of the community, storytelling around objects and character creation

From this activity the participants learnt about how to tell a story form one piece of stimuli, a photo.

It also enabled the participants to gain confidence to speak in front of people and to be part of a group this is very important as this is the beginning of an ongoing long term community project. The activity has helped the participants develop speaking, listening, and storytelling skills.

Creative writing and drama.

The set of poems that were created form the Photo Poems activity will be displayed on the walls and as well as creative materials that will be used in the devising of a play.

CRITICAL THINKING

Throughout the sessions the participants used critical thinking skills. People were encouraged to question how they got their information and to discuss truths and how we know what is true.

Through the Photo Poems activity the participants explored perspective and emotions. Asking questions about how other people feel about things. This encouraged the participants to see things from other people's points of view.

This was quite powerful as for many of the group it was the first time they had been asked about their thoughts and ideas. Each week their confidence in questioning grew and people came in with articles that had spoken to them.

DIGITAL LEARNING AND MEDIA LITERACIES

When the activities started, we didn't use any digital tools but after Covid 19 we used computers and tablets to continue to work 'online' with participants.

We found that when we were in lockdown people needed to focus their thoughts on coping with the changes to their lives – we used newspaper articles etc for people to respond to. We created several films that used headlines as timelines, and we responded to the headlines.

We also realised that not everyone wanted to be on Zoom, so we did Creative Fridays a series of creative exercises that were sent out on WhatsApp – where we sent out a stimulus and a way that people might respond to it in a creative way. People were encouraged to send us back what they had done.

All their poems and stories were collected and when we came to create "The Legend of the Mernix" a piece of digitally born participatory theatre the work that this group produced was put with all the other stories and poems and informed the piece.

NARRATIVES

During the sessions people recorded thoughts and stories and told the story of their area, they talked about the decline in industry, the rebuilding and regenerations, poverty, and deprivation, but they made it clear that

although these were issues that impacted on them, any theatre we created needed to reflect on it, but also it needed to be about hope, resilience, and connectivity.

REFLECTION

On reflection the timescale of three weeks was a good timeframe to get people interested and we were able to build on learning, and the activities were effective for this. The activities provided the group with transferable skills and many of them chose to join a core group who will go onto create a piece of theatre.

There were a lot of opportunities to learn and to place questions, and the participants were self-monitoring when it came to how much they would be involved.

There were challenges. There was a mixed energy in the group and many of the group had mild to moderate mental health issues, so some people were unable to think about the world on a global scale as they found it very upsetting.

CONCLUSION

The case studies helped us to look at different ways that critical thinking, digital skills, and media literacy can be included in informal civic education/participation and helped us to determine what has been effective and what can be developed and improved upon.

We also wanted to explore how, if at all, these methods and activities could be adapted to suit different groups. And one of the main conclusions from the key learning that has come from these case studies is that the workshops/sessions/activities from all the 8-case studies can be adapted and applied to other groups. This means that there is great scope for these important subjects to be implemented in all types of civic participation.

Also, we learned that embedding these subjects into interesting and meaningful projects will sustain better engagement and get better outcomes.

We can see from the case studies that arts activities have a powerful impact and are an excellent medium for individuals and groups to express themselves and explore issues. This is also the same for practical activities that have clear and robust outcomes such as producing podcasts, films and screenings, art events, recipe books, community cafes, etc. And if these outcomes/products are shared with others, creating a connection to the wider world, the positive impact on the participants involved can often be increased.

This need for connection to the wider world is another reason why Concrit is so important. Creating digital and

virtual platforms and increasing digital skills and media literacies in areas of society that are excluded will help to encourage people to be more connected and hopefully to have the tools to speak out. Giving people the confidence to tell their stories, give their perspectives, ideas, and reflections on the world that they live in, about the things they feel are important to them. Increasing these skills will also give people the opportunity to find relevant information that is meaningful and helpful for them.

Another key learning point that we have looked at is the importance of participant engagement and how challenging it can be. Engagement is often the hardest part of any type of community development/education/ participation work. Trying to get to the people who could really benefit from the projects, is difficult and sometimes near impossible. Barriers to engagement are a problem such as language, lack of aspiration, dis-trust, demotivation, lack of confidence, health issues, social issues (homelessness), learning difficulties, disabilities, and mental health issues. These are just a few of the barriers that community organisations/educators/ facilitators and activists must try to break down.

We have recognised that to create meaningful, relevant, and appropriate outcomes and engagement it is crucial to meet the needs of the group and/or individuals within the group. Therefore, to go along with the Learning Path we have created a Groups Needs Assessment sheet that

will help facilitators identify any barriers to engagement and participation. As we know that having a good understanding of the group or the individual/s beforehand will ensure that the facilitator/educator can provide sessions that are accessible and relevant to the participants. This will not only help with positive and relevant outcomes but also with effective engagement.