Social street work: An substantiated explanation model of methodic acting
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Citation for published version (APA):
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Table of Contents
ESWRA Welcome Message 1
International Review Panel 2
Conference Programme 3
Key Note Speakers 6
Themes and Sub-themes 9
Additional events and Workshops 10
Posters 12
Overview 14
Presentations 18
Special Interest Group Meetings 180
Workshops and Symposiums 182
Guide to local stuff 204
Edinburgh Essentials 205
Participants 206
Key venues 222
In this century, research on children in child and youth-welfare remarkably increased on an international level (Ruch, 2014; Munro, 2011). Researchers’ interest in children, living in residential child care or in foster families, spread over (Pösö & Eronen, 2015; Winter, 2015; Goodyear, 2011). However, residential child care represents still predominantly a black box in terms of everyday life of children living in there (Thiersch, 2013; Böcker Jakobsen, 2010). Moreover the perspectives of children under eight often are not taken into account, as if there still exists a lack of credence given to young children (Holland, 2009). Especially in Italy research on children living in residential child care and in foster families has not been carried out yet (Bellotti, 2014). The practice research I am going to present aimed to throw light on the everyday-life of children, on their meaning making and acting in a residential child care unit in Northern Italy. In this research children were conceptualized as social actors, as Productive Processors of Reality (Hurrelmann, 1998) who engage actively in shaping peer-group-relationships and the intergenerational order. The research study relies on a Children’s Rights Perspective and to the concept of lifeworld-orientation (Thiersch, 1986). Research was carried out in a residential child care unit in a familial analogous residential group – from May to June 2015. An extensive step-in-step-out-ethnography was adopted to explore the perspectives of children aged from 6 to 12. In accordance to children’s capacities and interests participative methods were integrated to bring in also the voices of young children and children with cognitive impairment. The researcher took a lead-author-role (Mayal, 2008). The research process was accompanied by a critical reflexive process. In the analyses of the relational scenes a phenomenological-interpretivist view (Ferguson & Ferguson, 2000) was adopted. The illustrated scenes formulated in thick descriptions (Geertz, 1973) in which adults and children co-construct reality, give an insight in their everyday-life-relationship-dynamics. The perspectives of children become visible not only in a variety of observable forms (shouting, protesting, questioning) but also sometimes in subtle interests (observing, playing) and unspoken questions (falling in silence). I argue that, if adults are capable to grasp interests and concerns of children in such subtle moments, these interactional-moments become meaningful moments for children. By entering in a dialogue – which also could mean, by playing with children – they even represent crucial chances for children to enforce self-efficacy and to widen social competences. In comparing different micro-scenes – certainly these are embedded in a specific socio-political, economical and organizational context – factors and dynamics that may widen or restrict self-efficacy of children, reflect. Focusing on perspectives of children leads to enrich adult-professional-perspectives on children, to widen knowledge about children, to reflect in which way professionalization of social workers could be developed further and – last but not least – to enforce social workers’ competences in co-creating meaningful experiential spaces with and for children.

Keywords: residential child care, lifeworld-orientation, child-centred residential care
Participation in leisure activities and socio-cultural action as a promoter of neighbourhood social cohesion and improvement of the quality of life of citizens.

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The communication we present is part of the first phase of the research project ‘Leisure, socio-cultural action and social cohesion’ (2015-2017) funded by the Ministry of Economy, Industry and Competitiveness of Spain (EDU2014-57212-R). It is an investigation that arises from the need to delve into the correlation between leisure activities and sociocultural action directed to children, teenagers and young people and social cohesion of the territory. It’s also important to advance in the knowledge of how these practices promote social cohesion in working-class neighbourhoods. This has led us to prioritize criteria, methodologies and actions that generate a significant impact on the construction of social cohesion of the neighbourhood in which they are developed, as well as the promotion of good practices identified in diverse socio-educational centres.

Methodology used to carry out this study was a mixed design (quantitative-qualitative), of participatory sequential exploratory data analysis (DEXPLIS). The information was collected simultaneously in 4 districts of two autonomous communities of Spain, specifically Catalonia and the Basque country. The quantitative results have guided the subsequent collection of qualitative data and the establishment of dimensions from which we have analysed the in-depth interviews. For the results presented in this paper, the following techniques has been used 285 questionnaires to residents of the neighbourhoods of Prosperitat (Barcelona) and La Peña and Otxarkuaga (Bilbao), and a total of 38 qualitative techniques, 26 interviews in-depth to significant people of the neighbourhoods (14) and professionals of sociocultural entities of the neighbourhoods (12) and 12 life stories to significant people.

A relevant factor is that working-class people, mostly immigrants from other regions of Spain and from other countries, configure these neighbourhoods. They have a high perception about their social cohesion as a territory, 87% of neighbours consider their neighbourhood to be cohesive (52%) and 55% consider as very cohesive. After analysing the quantitative and qualitative data, the main results of the research refer to the following indicators that we will present in detail in our communication. There is a relationship between the relevance of neighbourhood participation in leisure activities and sociocultural action and the positive perception about the social cohesion of the neighbourhood (a), participation as an starting point for the improvement of social cohesion (b), the perception of the neighbourhood network as a previous step towards the perception of the neighbourhood as a cohesive environment (c), the perception that the social cohesion of the neighbourhood is a previous step towards the commitment and the construction of social cohesion beyond the neighbourhood, throughout the city (d).