

## The role of community/participatory planning in Roma integration projects (Mátyás Sain)

-handout-

Among communities living in deep poverty community planning cannot be separated from community development.

ISSUE	PROBLEM	SOLUTION
<b><i>On community development in general (why to do it?)</i></b>		
Client/problems based solutions	People living in deep poverty are clients of a social services network. They need to maintain their status as client in order to get allowances. The pile of problems is unsolvable.	Instead of focusing on problems, we should focus on assets (asset based approach).
Active community involvement	A community is often only a group of people living in the same area and in a similar situation.	Being part of a community manifests in an <i>active</i> participation. Communities get stronger through various <i>contributions</i> of its members.
Thinking in a process	It is easier to address a community than generating and maintaining active participation.	Community development and planning must be a process that needs to be <i>carefully planned and monitored</i> . A tool for activity is continuous communication. The process should be consciously considered as a learning process.
The community in focus interacts with the wider community	Roma communities are often segregated/separated within the wider community. Nevertheless the majority is as much affected and involved in the situation as the minority group. Social institutions have a strong role and responsibility in improving the situation of poor communities.	We cannot work only with the primary target group. The whole community of the settlement/region must be involved in the improvement of the situation. Inclusion/acceptance must be a common goal for the whole (wider) community. Recognition of this must be supported.
Changes need self-confidence	People in poverty are in the status of learnt helplessness. They don't have self-confidence to initiate changes.	Self-confidence can be developed through successful actions. A successful action can be any activity that aims common good. This is the first step of empowerment.
Separation and the lack of understanding	There is no understanding of each other between the minority and majority groups.	Self-expression or self-introduction of the community (in whatever way) is a first step in understanding each other.
"Münchhausen effect"	Communities in deep poverty cannot improve their situation based on their own resources.	Therefore an intervention coming from outside is needed.
Community development processes are finite (have a certain time period)	Communities in poverty are socialised to be dependent. The presence of outside intervening actors could lead to another dependency.	Community development or planning seeks success, wants to reach a goal. Therefore community development is an intervention that is not infinite. Community developers must be able to define an end point to their intervention. It can be a date or success criteria.
Empowerment	Communities are unorganised and lack ability of advocacy.	The goal of community development/planning is the empowerment of the community, the improvement of the organisational capacity. Community development/planning also means advocacy of the community in

		focus. This includes sharing/learning information and community organisation.
<b><i>On community planning in details (how to do it)</i></b>		
Decision makers' approach on local people Valid questions	Decision makers think of people as laic, non-professionals, who should not be involved in any kind of decision making.	People are "experts" in their situation. They should be addressed according to this kind of "expertise".
Coping with expectations	It is hard for members of communities to understand the goals and frames of the intervention process.	Communication should last as long as ideas and expectations of the "project" are clear for everyone.
Facilitation skills	There is no culture for facilitation, no such education available (in Hungary). Inappropriate facilitation will not lead to success.	We must find those actors who have basic facilitation skills (and improve them). The facilitator must be very honest about the situation, create an accepting, encouraging environment, promote communication and understanding etc.
Use of community planning techniques	Discussions are usually losing the point and are not effective, not democratic. Dominant people dominate, hierarchies effect conversations.	The use of community planning techniques (usually based on brainstorming) makes discussions democratic and effective. Instead of complaining and commenting, we are generating ideas and solutions.
Involvement	It is usually hard to address and involve people.	Involvement takes a lot of talking and meeting with people – this is also a lot of time. Involvement should be active – giving tasks and duties makes people active participants and generates commitment. Successes (!!!) give further motivation.
Positive inquiry	Discussions can easily lead to an endless complaining about problems.	Positive questioning can result in a creative thinking environment.
Outside communication	It is hard to present the outcomes of integration projects. Decision makers often think it is a waste of time.	Successes and knowledge learnt must be well documented and presented to the wider community.

A good example: Community development of Teleki square (Budapest, 8<sup>th</sup> district). Locals formed an association and organised community actions. They put signs in the old park to signal what they would like to see and where. An architect was invited who informed the participants what could be realised from the available budget. Finally a plan was negotiated and jointly endorsed by the participants. The Project was commissioned by the municipality and financed by the EU. A minimum criteria was the organisation of five community meetings. A short [documentary](#) is available in Hungarian.