Why is client’s participation in social work so important? And which role can the university play to get the involvement of social service’s users? Examples from Zaragoza in Spain

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1) Introduction

With my presentation I would like encourage you about the importance of clients' participation in social work and to present an experience of community work done using participatory action research methodology in Zaragoza (Spain).

In the first place, I will present some reasons for clients’ participation in social work, both practical and philosophical reasons, to continue analysing the current situation on this topic in Spain and how we can improve client’s participation in social work and which role the university can play in this process. And I will finish my presentation with an example of clients’ participation, a participatory action research project which has been carrying out in Zaragoza since 18 years ago, with the partnership of practitioners' social workers and lecturers of social work.

2) Why is client’s participation in social work so important?

Clients’ participation in social work has traditionally been very important because of practical and philosophical or ideological reasons (instrumental and intrinsic reasons). Examining some classical authors in social work we can find both reasons for clients' participation: practical and philosophical.

Mary Richmond in her book Case Work underlined the importance of the clients’ participation for the two reasons expressed in the previous paragraph. In the first place, most of the success of the social treatment is because the participation of the clients depending on their personal skills. But listening to the clients and understanding them is an essential part of a democratic method (Richmond, M., 1982: 114-115).

Gordon Hamilton from a more pragmatic than ideological point of view also recognised the importance of the clients' participation in social work for the effectiveness of the professional intervention (Hamilton, G., 1982: 16).

Murray G. Ross talking about community organization as a process, underlying the importance of the participation of the community because the democratic values of freedom, human dignity and consensus (Ross, M. G., 1967: 123).

1) In an instrumental sense, participation is a means for working in an efficient way. So, it is not possible to achieve educative or therapeutic objectives with our clients if they do not share the diagnosis of their situation. Then, we must listening to them and encourage their active participation in order to improve their situation. Talking about community work, and from an instrumental standpoint, participation is necessary to improve planning efforts because it is sensitive to and informed by detailed local knowledge.

2) Because philosophical or ideological reasons, participation is a right of our clients. Talking again about community work, the instrumental benefits of participation are rooted in more intrinsic values associated with democracy, self-determination, human dignity, empowerment and social justice, in which greater
decision-making control is placed into the hands of participants who might otherwise be excluded from the planning process.

Currently it seems that philosophical reasons for clients’ participation have become more important than the practical ones. Both, in the political context and in the profession. For example, current social policy in Spain gives a lot importance to the clients’ participation in the management of social services.

Clients’ participation is also important from the professional point of view. According to the last definition of the profession (International Federation of Social Workers and International Association of Schools of Social Work) in 2004, social work values are an important part of the profession, together with theoretical and methodological knowledge. So it seems to me that currently philosophical reasons for clients’ participation are more important than they use to be.


Defending human rights and human dignity as part of social work means among other things:

1. “Respecting the right to self-determination. Social workers should respect and promote people’s right to make their own choices and decisions, irrespective of their values and life choices, provided this does not threaten the rights and legitimate interests of others.

2. Promoting the right to participation. Social workers should promote the full involvement and participation of people using their services in ways that enable them to be empowered in all aspects of decisions and actions affecting their lives.

3. Treating each person as a whole. Social workers should be concerned with the whole person, within the family, community, societal and natural environments, and should seek to recognise all aspects of a person’s life.

4. Identifying and developing strengths. Social workers should focus on the strengths of all individuals, groups and communities and thus promote their empowerment” (IFSW, 2004: 2).

However, how important participation of clients and listening to them is in social work depends on the conception (ideological o philosophical and theoretical) of social work. A social work concept influenced by humanistic, existential and radical ideas and based on self-knowledge and self-control values will emphasise users’ perspectives (Croft, S. and Beresford, P., 1997: 386).

According to this perspective, social work professional practice must help clients to meet their basic needs, but also improve their autonomy, participation and social inclusion. And to solve or deal with the contradiction between the
therapeutic and educative function of social work profession and the narrow bureaucratic and regulatory role of social-control of social work. The main aim of clients' oriented social work must be to promote the well-being of clients by promoting their autonomy; it means to choose their personal aims and the ways to get them.

Croft, S. and Beresford, P., (1997) criticise the traditional role of users’ services, as a data source, providing the basis for research and evaluation through the vehicles of case notes, case material and as survey respondents. In the past, it was service users' experience and knowledge as judged, interpreted and understood by social work and social care and its associated researchers, rather than by service users themselves that saw the light of day. The social work profession and its associated academics and researchers tended to be the interpreters of users’ knowledge, at theoretical as well as practice levels.

Movements of welfare service users have emerged, including those of disabled people, older people, mental health service users/survivors, people with learning difficulties, people living with HIV/AIDS, etc., can be seen to constitute a bottom-up challenge to both conventional politics, and welfare philosophy and practice. So far the most visible of these movements is that of disabled people, but they are all developing their own discussions, ideas, cultures, demands and alternatives. These movements have been developing their own arts, organisations and formal democratic structures, and their own philosophies, theories and knowledge. So while the focus of government and service led discussions about involvement has tended to be involvement in the planning and management of traditional services, these movements have ranged much further in their concerns and discussions (Croft, S. and Beresford, P., 1997: 389).

A change in approach to research and knowledge formation is needed with the full and equal inclusion of the experiences and knowledge of service users in research. For this to be possible on truly equal terms, requires the full and early involvement of service users and their organisations in the construction and process of research and evaluation, as indeed of other areas of social care. Such an approach is embodied in the slogan of the disabled people’s movement ‘Nothing about us without us’. Thus, the issue for social care research is not just of including the knowledge of service users. Instead, it becomes one of including service users themselves. This involvement must also be more than seeking their responses to social care research’s own intellectual agendas, priorities and concerns if it is to avoid tokenism and incorporation. It means including their: perspectives knowledge and analyses – including their interpretations, meanings, hypotheses and theories.

This clients’ more active role in social services would improve some deficits of the current service-led approach, where the organisation, nature and needs of services, and the service system themselves determine the response that they make, rather than the rights, demands and preferences of service users. People are fitted into services and provision, instead of support being shaped to correspond to what they want. The alternative is an extended role for service users in the social construction of social work and social care. While progress is still limited and shouldn’t be overstated, already in the United Kingdom a wide range of initiatives are underway involving service users and building on their experience to reconstruct social work and social care. Such initiatives have
developed in many areas additional to the planning and management of policy and provision. This is happening with recognition of the broader, political, and economic and policy issues. Four crucial areas in which it is being taken forward in social work are: education and training; theory building, research and evaluation; practice development; standard setting and outcome measurement (Beresford, P., 2001: 7).

3) Do Spanish social workers listening to their clients?

It is difficult for me to present my ideas about this topic using proper references, because there is a lack of research on this topic. There a few references by Bueno, J. R. and Pérez, J. V., (2000), Bueno, J. R. and Zaragoza, G., (1996) and Bueno, J. R., (2003) about the population’s and users’ knowledge of social services and their satisfaction level. So I am going to use these few references and my experience as a researcher using qualitative research techniques, as interviews and life histories (Báñez, T., 2005, 2007).

As in other countries, the current Spanish situation on this topic is contradictory. Because there is a formal and an official acknowledge of the importance of the involvement of clients, which contrasts with the lack of implications of users in social work. Their presence is limited to the formal consultive structures concerned with bureaucratic and administrative functions.

Social participation and social service users’ participation are recognized in our legislative system in Spain. For example in Aragón, where the regional government has the responsibility of provide personal social services, there are two laws on this topic: Ley 4/1987, de 25 de marzo, de Ordenación de la Acción Social en Aragón and Ley 4/1996, de 22 de mayo, de Creación del Instituto Aragonés de Servicios Sociales.

In both laws there two kinds of participation: citizens’ participation and users’ participation in two different levels: taking decision process about social policy and social services and management of different services and care facilities.

According to Croft, S. and Beresford, P., (1997) in also in The United Kingdom there is a new social policy giving importance to quality, partnership, participation, etc. in contrast with the little involvement of service users in welfare reform and in social work practice (Croft, S. and Beresford, P., 1997: 386).

In the case of Spain this situation has happened, because different reasons related to professionals and to services’ users.

Let’s go first to analyze the professional reasons.

1) In the first place there is a lack of motivation about clients’ participation among the professionals, due to the fact that there are inequalities of power in the relationship of social workers and clients (social workers have the knowledge, scientific and theoretical knowledge and also the information about how to get recourses) and it is not possible to listening to clients’ if there is a unequal relationship.

2) On the other hand, social workers in Spain do not have the proper knowledge and skills to involve clients and users in their professional intervention.

Talking about users.
1) There is also a lack of motivation to participate, because they do not have a discourse about the social factors which determine their situation and because they had had to adapt to poverty, they do no believe that they can do anything to improve their situations (Lewis, O., 1969).

2) On the other hand, they only expect social services to provide their basic needs, social aid is the most important social function of theses services, according to service users' discourse.

3) And finally, there is a lack of opportunities for users to participate in social services and in social work, because often there are negative valuations of clients, shared by agencies, social workers and also clients and there are two different interests, which are difficult to meet at the same time. Service providers are interested in meeting the political, economic and managerial requirements of their services, while users are interested in improving their quality of life, seeking appropriate support to live as they want to.

According to the results of the research done by J. R. Bueno in Spain, specially in Valencia, users of social services think that their problematic situations are because personal factors, so they do not have a elaborate discourse about their own situation as a social exclusion situation.

According to the results of my qualitative research on poverty, is the same, people in poverty do not have a collective identity as poor people, and they explain their situation of need because personal and individual factor, like family crisis, unemployment, etc., so they do not request the administration to fulfil their needs as they have objective social rights.

Historically, one of the biggest barriers to users' involvement in services has been professional attitudes, based at least partly on the rigid client/staff division so typical of the old asylums (and, still, many 'modern' services) leads to assumptions whereby any criticism of services can automatically be seen as pathological, and, even more perniciously, that any service user capable of representing an alternative point of view is by definition not representative of the 'incapable majority' (the so called 'talking dog' syndrome). On the other hand the second aspect is reflected in the fact that where user involvement has been attempted, it is often at a very late stage of the process; major decisions are made and users (or front line staff) invited to rubber stamp them. For service users to make a real impact, adequate levels of representation are required. This must involve people who are actually representative of the community served (and the community potentially in need), support systems and significant human and financial resources. Significant user involvement requires genuine commitment on the part of services to a candid dialogue with its clients, including a willingness to engage in constructive debate, and, indeed, to consider and make fundamental changes in the way it approaches people, their problems and their aspirations (Bryant, M. 2001: 1).

Although there are references about some experience of involvement of service users, specially in mental health users in the U.K. Enhancing the involvement of people who use mental health services in the delivery, planning and evaluation of those services has been a priority for a number of years. Despite this, it is fair to say that progress has been patchy. There is much validity to these arguments and certainly a need for a user voice entirely outside of services, able to comment on and criticise any aspect of policy or provision without fear
or prejudice. We would argue, however, that it is possible for service users to engage constructively with services on a local and national level and make meaningful changes - changes which have a real and positive impact on people's lives now and in the future. This involves compromise, negotiation and debate. The two positions are not mutually exclusive. Indeed, the very strength of the user movement is its very diversity (Bryant, M. 2001: 1).

Experiences of giving the voice to the social service’s users in Spain:

1) *Foro por una vida independiente* (Forum for an independent life) participate of the slogan of the disabled people’s movement ‘Nothing about us without us’. They have played an important role in the process of discussion and elaboration of the new law for dependent people in Spain (http://www.minusval2000.com/relaciones/vidaIndependiente/)

2) One of the few experiences of giving the voice to the social service’s users has recently taken place in Zaragoza. It has ben the *IV Encuentro nacional de personas en situación de pobreza y exclusión social* organized by the Spanish Branch took place on 18-19April 2007 with the participation of about 100 people. The European Antipoverty Network (APN) is a representative network of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and groups involved in the fight against poverty and social exclusion in the Member States of the European Union. One of the main conclusions of the meeting was that social service users fell often professional mistreated them, especially if they have children. In those situations social workers “treat” them using their parental rights in relation with their children if they do not fulfil social workers’ speciation in relation to the way they bring up them.

The Lisbon European Council of 23 and 24 March 2000 agreed to put in place an EU strategy aimed at making a decisive impact on the eradication of poverty in the European Union countries by the year 2010. The Nice European Council (7 to 9 December 2000) agreed common objectives for this strategy. One of the agreed objectives was to mobilise all actors, including people who experience poverty to engage with the elements of the strategy.

The fifth Meeting of People experiencing poverty, titled how do we cope with everyday life?, took place in Brussels on 12-13 May 2006 and it was organised by the Austrian Presidency of the EU. The aim was to improve the mutual knowledge about the daily lived realities of people experiencing poverty and social exclusion in the different Member States. It was attended by over 200 people. The report of the meeting says that it is essential to involve people experiencing poverty in the decisions that affect their daily lives. Two major arguments were made in support of this view. First, it is because people living in poverty have a right to be heard and to have their views valued. As one delegate put it, “we want to be respected”. Secondly, it is because people who live in poverty are the experts on their lives. Thus their participation is the only way to ensure effective policies to prevent and eradicate poverty and social exclusion. The conclusion to be drawn from this is that policy makers must listen to and engage in meaningful dialogue at both European, national and local level.

Achieving real involvement and participation is difficult. For real participation to happen systems and services must be open and transparent. This means that people experiencing poverty need to ‘teach’ governments how to cooperate with
them and continuously explain to people what the reality of living in poverty is like. Or, as one workshop concluded, it means “reconciling the different worlds of administration and people living in poverty”. However there are increasing numbers of examples of good practice in promoting involvement.

The sixth Meeting of People experiencing poverty Exit from Poverty and Exclusion - Strengthening Progress, drafting next steps will take place in Brussels on 4-5 May 2007. It will be organised by the German presidency of the European Union (E.U., 2006:7).

4) How can this situation be improved?

There will be other sessions in the conference on this topic: “Shut up and listen” How can we work methodologically to promote a dialogue? Experiences from Social Work in Göteborg, Pernilla Nylén och Lennart Forsberg, SDF Biskopsgården, Göteborg and When listening is not hearing; how can we stand the users expressions of their own needs? Christine Bon, l’Ecole Supérieure de Travail social, Paris, France.

Objectives of the users’ perspective: focus on abilities and not in incapacities, policies which include and not marginalize and social workers giving support and not direction. Skills of social workers to work according to this users’ perspective: focus on the whole person and not only in the problems, to see individual and no people in an anonymous way, respect, acknowledging the validity of their experience and views, listening what they say and asking them what they need and how to meet their needs. Working in this way is very challenging, because social workers must use not only theoretical or methodological knowledge, but also their personalities in the personal relationship with clients (Croft, S. and Beresford, P., 1997: 390).

Malcon Payne (1994), says that there three ways to get the involvement of social work’s clients. By dialoguing in a situation of trust, by a reflexive praxis and by validation of their own capacity and worth. It is done through trying to understand the reality of their own life history, rejecting internalised judgements that they are incompetent. In this way, clients become producer participants in their lives rather than passively consuming services.

Aims of empowerment: to help clients see themselves as causal agents in finding solutions to their problems, social workers having knowledge and skills that clients can use, as peers and partners in solving problems, the power structure as complex and partly open to influence.

Assessing motivation of clients according to the values of their culture (clues about what will motivate clients), capacity in the clients’ environment and opportunity, clients do not take up opportunities because they are not able to do it.

The social workers’ role to get the involvement of social work’s clients must be:

- Resources consultant: linking clients to resources in ways which improve their self-esteem and problem solving abilities.

- Sensitizer-assisting clients to gain self-knowledge.

- Teacher-trainer: teaching process and skills which enable the client to complete specific tasks (Payne, M.,1994: 232-233).
Working in this way is very challenging, because social workers must use not only theoretical or methodological knowledge, but also their personalities in the personal relationship with clients (Croft, S. and Beresford, P., 1997: 389).

I do not want to finish this section about why users' participation is important without refereeing to some of the critiques received to this approach. There can be the some risks in this perspective. For example, developing clients’ capacities and does not seek direct change in oppressive social structures, placing the responsibility for social change upon clients. So, social workers can act as though all clients can achieve a high degree of empowerment (Payne, M., 1994: 232-233).

5) Which role can the university play?

In order to get the involvement of social service's users in social work and social services, universities can do different things.

First, getting agreements between university and employers of social workers for mutual support for
- Hosting students during their practical placement
- Becoming assessors in different projects
- Writing about the out comings of these social work projects
- Publishing the results of these experiences in Journals
- Improving the teaching in social work using these experiences

Second, inviting users to social work lessons at the university. M. Turner presents an experience of involvement of service users in social work education at the University of Glasgow. Person centred planning and involving service users at the University of Glasgow: A case study in learning and teaching about assessment in social work education, done according to the follow principles:
- Involvement should be planned and structured.
- Involvement should be based on work with organisations that are controlled and run by service users, with the interests of service users and carers being addressed as distinct issues.
- There should be recognition of service users' contributions through the payment of fees and expenses.
- Good practice should include access to education and training courses for service users. (Turner, M.).

Some experiences on this topic will be presented in this conference: Participation from service users in the social work education, Björn Andersson, The Department of Social Work at Göteborg University.

6) Examples from Zaragoza in Spain

Different target groups of social workers: elderly, mental ill people, disabled people, etc. are involved in social services and in social work by creating their own associations, running services and projects by their associations, giving them a voice in the official bodies and sharing the management work in some services and projects.
Critiques to these experiences: weak democratic culture in Spain: young democracy, taking part in the official bodies is something very formal and sometimes it does not mean real power for them. Because of the financial support from the government some association do not dare to criticise. Running project and services sometimes is just a way of saving money, because staff's salaries are lower than civil servant's salaries, and if the labour conditions are worse the quality of the service can be also worse

General population: community work in Delicias (a neighbourhood of Zaragoza): Participatory action research (PAR)

6.1) Something about the area

Origin: the urban development of the area was related to the Psychiatric Hospital and then to the unique railway station. The station encouraged some factories located in this area. The neighbourhood and the population grew quickly and in a non organised way. There were only houses and lack of space for schools, health centres, etc. Population: young people with children and coming fro the rural areas in Aragon.

Population: elderly people, immigrants, etc. working class area

A very crowded area: 112,081 inhabitants in 3 square kilometres, so there are 34,123.28 inhabitants per square kilometre

With a higher presence of immigrants than in other areas: 13.83 % immigrants, higher than the Spanish average: 10% and Increase of 22.57 % immigrants in the last year

With an important presence of elderly people: 20.40% > de 65 years old, older than in other Spanish regions.

Housing: mix of houses: old houses with only one or to floors, cheap houses with four floors and new buildings with nine or ten floors.

How people see their neighbourhood: their subjective opinion about the area: deterioration process: dirt, lack of public services, bad conditions of houses, prostitution and drug dealers, etc

6.2) Something about the work of the Association of Neighbours “Manuel Viola” of Delicias (Zaragoza, Spain). The association was born 20 years ago for two different purposes: to build a more participative society with the real participation of the population in the area: to build up real democracy and to improve the living conditions in the area: housing, urban development, leisure activities, etc.: to deal with the consequences of the urbanization process and the lack of interest of the local government in fulfilling social needs.

The work encouraging people to be involved, asking the local, regional and national government and demonstrate in the streets and cooperating with the government.

6.3) Promoters of the PAR experience: All promoters work with the same population and in the same area and all believe in the direct participation of the population in their personal and collective health.

Association of Neighbours “Manuel Viola” of Delicias
Community health centre Delicias Sur has an official body for people living in the area to participate in the management of the centre.

Education centre for adults: these centres were created by non-governmental organizations to teach illiterate people how to read and to write.

6.4) Antecedents

May and September 1987: Experimental project. In 1986 a new law created, formally speaking, the Spanish National Health System giving, for the first time in Spain, health assistance to all population and not only to those who had paid to the social security system. A National system based on the World Health Organization definition of health. According to this concept health is the result of different factors related to the environment, the personal life style and the health services. All promoters tried to involved the population of the area in their own health, using health promotion strategies, starting with whose who were attending courses in adult education centre. They decided to start working with these people because the adult education centre because their approach was the critical pedagogy put forward by Paulo Freire as a response to the traditional formal models of education where the “teacher” stands at the front and “imparts” information to the “students” that are passive recipients.

1987 and 1996: the project is carried out only with adults of the Permanent education centre for adults.

1996-2006: the project is carried out only with all population of the area

Participation Action Research projects in Delicias have had different topics, from health, quality of health services, to personal life style and community identity, and more recently new social problems as bullying.


Collaboration between the university and the promoters of the project starts in 1995, after one of the social workers working for the association was student of mine in the subject of community work and since PAR is one of the main topics in my subject she decided to improve the theoretical approaches and the methodology of the experience in Delicias, using the materials of my subject and asking me for help.

6.5) Organizational structure

Promoters do the coordination work and play the role of assessors: The professionals of the Association of Neighbours “Manuel Viola” of Delicias: a social worker, the Community health centre Delicias Sur: physicians, psychologist, nurses and social worker and the Permanent education centre for adults: teachers.
Participation-action-research group: about 10 people from the area who play the role of the researchers (subject) and research a topic related to health promotion in their neighbourhood. So, they are subjects and objects of the research.

6.6) Theoretical approaches

Participatory action research is research which involves all relevant parties in actively examining together current action. It is not just research which is hoped will be followed by action.

Health promotion strategies by the World Health Organization. Health factors: Environment, Personal lifestyle and Health services

Empowerment: Increasing capacity of individuals or groups to make choices and to transform those choices into desired actions and outcomes. WHO health promotion strategies have described community action and empowerment as prerequisites for health.

6.7) General aim

To promote the personal and collective health in Delicias, encouraging people to participate and to have a greater control over the health factors: environment, personal lifestyle and health services.

6.8) Methodological principles

- To give value to the personal experiences of people
- To work in their personal and social context
- Team and bidirectional work
- To promote personal skills and self-responsibilities in health
- To use current resources and participation process in the area

6.9) Phases of the methodology

1) Advertising the PAR
2) Making the group and getting knowledge in group work and PAR
3) Basic or preliminary phase: knowing the area
4) Choosing the topic for the research
5) Designing the research
6) Building up the tools or techniques for the research
7) Gathering information using the tools or techniques for the research
8) Analysing the information gathered and elaborating Conclusions
9) Disseminating the conclusions and elaborating action strategies

6.10) Financial support from the Regional Government: the Association has to apply each year, so it is not a permanent financial support.

6.11) Example of research on bullying

1) Advertising the research
Disseminating information about the project
Encouraging people to take part in the research

2) Making up the group and learning about how to work in group and about PAR methodology.


3) Basic or preliminary phase: knowing the area

The participants in the group learn about the area: reading previous research reports.

4) Choosing the topic for the research

Learning more about the topic: aggressiveness, violence, violence and youth, bullying, etc.

5) Designing the research

Final project goals: To make people living in Delicias more aware about bullying and to find out alternatives to improve the living together in primary schools trough a preventive approach.

Theoretical perspective: Marxism and Ecological and interactive perspective

6) Building up the tools or techniques for the research

Research techniques: Quantitative: statistical analysis and Qualitative: understanding people’s way of thinking

Building up the tools for the research: Revising other research reports, Research techniques designed by the group, Interviews, Focal groups and analysis of drawings made by children taking part in the research.

7) Gathering information by using the tools or techniques for the research

Primary pupils: 384
Teachers: 36
Parents: 250
Teacher assistants (lunch time): 8
Interviews: 16
Focal groups: 2 groups with 14 participants
People interviewed: school principals, parents associations, health service professionals, social educators, public administrators, etc.
Content and semantic analysis of items of news and documents.

8) Analysing the information gathered and elaborating the conclusions

Writing the research report.

Some conclusions: There is not an alarming situation on this topic (bullying) in the primary schools studied: 6.6% of the pupils is bullied very often and 5.9% has always been mistreated.
Bullying is not a new topic in primary schools, but has become a more serious problem due to several social changes: New family models, Problems to combine family life and job responsibilities, Media role, etc.

9) Disseminating the conclusions and elaborating action strategies

Poster and leaflets
Public presentation of the conclusions of the research
Dissemination of the research report
Contacting with similar projects
Elaborating action strategies
Preventive approach must be cross-disciplinary
Actions must be taken in a global and coordinated way
Improving teacher’s skills and knowledge on this topic must be essential
Preventive approach:
Working with the schools
Improving the social context of the schools

6.12) Some results related to the process and the results

For the professional team:
Weakness
- Diversity of academic and professional background (social workers, teachers, nurses, physician, etc.)
- Lack of knowledge of the theoretical concepts: health, empowerment, participatory action research, etc.
- Lack for experience in team work
- Lack of time to held arranged meetings, because of their direct attention work, and the lack of motivation for the project of some professionals.

Strengths
- Clarity of the aims
- Working in the same area
- Working with the same people
- The experience
- The reflexive work
- The working together experience

For those who have taken part in the groups: Improvement of the people’s life style in a healthier way and some of the group participants have become active members of the association after their involvement in the groups.

For the whole neighbourhood: urban and social diagnosis of the area made in a very participative way, creation of a effective official body for the participation of the population in running the community health services, Environmental
education, Delicias park, our park, Meeting point for women, Communicating each other, Small shops in the neighbourhood, Intercultural activities and Spanish language for immigrants.

For the University of Zaragoza
- Mutual support between university and promoters of the project
- Practical placement for social work students
- Support to the professionals involved in the project: theoretical perspectives, methodology, etc.
- Improving the teaching of community work at the university: discussing the experience, working with the documents produced by the PAR groups, etc.

Some figures related to the results: 18 years of working together, 13 researches done, 3 publications, 28 groups of participation action research and 320 people involved.

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