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## SOCIAL INNOVATIONS IN PAMPLONA, NAVARRA, SPAIN

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## CONTENTS

<b>INTRODUCTION - local background .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>2. Welfare innovations .....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>2.1. Social integration enterprises &amp; social clauses .....</b>	<b>2</b>
2.1.1. Description .....	2
2.1.2. Conceptions and ways of addressing users .....	3
2.1.3. Internal organisation & modes of working .....	4
2.1.4. Interaction with the local welfare system .....	4
<b>2.2. Social integration housing .....</b>	<b>5</b>
2.2.1. Description .....	5
2.2.2. Conceptions and ways of addressing users .....	6
2.2.3. Internal organisation & modes of working .....	6
2.2.4. Interaction with the local welfare system .....	7
<b>2.3. Casas Amigas .....</b>	<b>7</b>
2.3.1. Description .....	7
2.3.2. Conceptions and ways of addressing users .....	8
2.3.3. Internal organisation & modes of working .....	8
2.3.4. Interaction with the local welfare system .....	9
<b>2.4. Neighbourhood children's services .....</b>	<b>9</b>
2.4.1. Description .....	9
2.4.2. Conceptions and ways of addressing users .....	10
2.4.3. Internal organisation & modes of working .....	11
2.4.4. Interaction with the local welfare system .....	11
<b>Conclusions.....</b>	<b>11</b>

## INTRODUCTION - LOCAL BACKGROUND

The history of social policies in Navarra during the last 30 years shows a certain degree of ambivalence. The regional and local governments has frequently boasted of having a level of social service provision clearly above the Spanish average, and of being a pioneer in the development of social services. A financially and politically strong regional and local government in a small, comparatively wealthy and less unequal region has allowed a stronger development of services. In some cases, especially during the 1980s and early 1990s, this meant the introduction of services previously unknown in the region.

Civil society organizations have a long tradition in Navarra. This is a result of a strong conservative tradition of local self-government, going back to the «Carlist» traditionalism of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, of the strength of the Catholic Church and its organizations, and of the complex political development of these traditions since the 1960s. The radical changes Navarra underwent beginning in the 1960s transformed a rural agrarian region into an industrial and service based one, concentrated much of its population in the capital, Pamplona, and opened up dramatic political cleavages between left and right, and between Basque nationalism and Navarrese regionalism.

TSOs emerging of these processes are generally very much respected by most of the political and social spectrum, as they represent the spirit of solidarity of Navarra and its concern for the weakest. Although social innovation doesn't seem to be an explicit political priority, new initiatives coming from TSOs tend to be seen with sympathy, even when they challenge the dominant views in the political sphere.

There are several ways in which they may be integrated. In some cases, they may be seen as limited actions for some special cases that fall out of the mainstream programs, and require a careful personalized treatment, for which TSOs seem to be the perfect solution. This may be widely accepted by the «left» (as a way of expanding social action when it's not possible to do it directly by means of public programs) and the «right», that feels quite comfortable when expanding the role of TSOs and containing direct public provision. In many cases a widespread political consensus on an initiative may not translate into the idea becoming an actual priority. The possibility of integrating the initiatives into two different (and some times opposed) narratives helps to establish consensus in many cases.

Aside from TSO initiative and government predisposition towards allowing TSOs to develop their initiatives, pressure from the EU and the central government have played a role. The pressure to establish action plans for social inclusion (Navarra set up its own plan long before it became compulsory) has eased the development of some initiatives (something *has* to be done in a specific field). On the other hand, the widespread discourse on «best practices» has encouraged the development of innovative initiatives, although they don't always make their way into the mainstream.

## 2. WELFARE INNOVATIONS

### 2.1. Social integration enterprises & social clauses

#### 2.1.1. Description

Employment policies in Spain have long included temporary employment schemes for the unemployed, usually run by local authorities. The idea that offering a chance of working for some time is better than just claiming benefits has a long tradition, based on the idea that it is better for the dignity of those involved, and that being active should help people to keep both their work habits and work ethic. While most temporary employment programs are aimed at the registered unemployed, some of them have been targeted at people with high risk of social exclusion and claimants of minimum income (social assistance) benefits. Such is the case of the so-called *Empleo social protegido* (protected social employment) in Navarra since the 1980s. The usefulness for participants in the scheme has been questioned for some time now<sup>1</sup>, for while it offers the chance of receiving a higher income and of being active, the content of the work itself (usually menial tasks in local public works) does not seem to offer much in the field of personal and professional development for people with serious social problems.

Since the 1980s the idea developed that it would be possible to set up adapted enterprises that could combine being competitive in the market and being able to employ people with lower productivity due to different causes (disabilities, social or health problems). One strand of such development was aimed at people with disabilities, and it got legal recognition in the mid 1980s, under the concept of *Centros especiales de empleo* (special employment centres), market oriented enterprises that obtain public subsidies (on wages, social security contributions and some other costs) to compensate the lower productivity of workers with disabilities. The development of the other strand was much slower, as it tried to extend a similar model to people with social (exclusion) problems.

In Navarra there were two pioneers in this field. *Traperos de Emaús*, a group linked to the *Emmaüs* International movement that has become a foundation, and *Gaztelan*, a youth employment project that evolved into a foundation that develops programs to help labour market integration.

The legal status and public support of these initiatives has gone through three main phases:

a) Prior to 1999, these projects have no specific legal status (other than being private associations or foundations) and receive limited public support, basically to help with investments or to compensate for losses. In the two main cases, but especially in the case of *Traperos de Emaús*, public contracts to provide services (selective waste collection and home help services) did have a significant role. Since there were no social clauses in the tendering process, niche specialization and harsh cost containment were key to access to such contracts.

b) In 1999/2000 the regional government creates a register of *Centros de incorporación sociolaboral* (social and labour market integration centres) and establishes a system of subsidies for such centres, generally based on the model of the CEEs for people with disabilities. This allowed the consolidation of the existing projects and the birth of several others (some 11 by 2010 with 400-600 employees).

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<sup>1</sup> See Laparra, Miguel, Concepción Corera, Mario Gaviria, and Manuel Aguilar Hendrickson. *El salario social sudado*. Madrid: Popular, 1989, and Pérez Eransus, Begoña. *Políticas de activación y rentas mínimas*. Madrid, Fundación FOESSA-Cáritas, 2005.

c) The third phase should see these centres increase their chances of obtaining public service contracts and, possibly as a result, decrease their need for direct subsidizing. The 2006 Navarra Public Contracts Act established the possibility of reserving up to a maximum of 20% of public contracts to CEEs, CISs and other enterprises «participating in labour market integration programs». In 2009 the act was amended twice at the request of social enterprise associations and the unanimous vote of the regional parliament. It turned the possibility into an obligation of reserving a minimum of 6% of public contracts for these enterprises, and includes the possibility of including social criteria to decide in tenders. Although the effect has been limited so far, there are indications of a stronger commitment of the regional government, under strong cost containment pressures.

### 2.1.2. Conceptions and ways of addressing users

The main difference in the ways of addressing users in the CISs lies in the fact that «users» are actually «workers». People get paid not for what they lack (a job, income) but for what they do, whatever the limits they may have to do it efficiently. This addresses directly an explicit demand of most users («we want to work») in a way that they are able to comply with and that is intended to help them develop their capabilities. This also has effects on the self-esteem and dignity of users.

This position of users helps to develop, at least in some of the CISs, a less formalized approach to work with users.

*I believe that today everything [in social work] has become very technical and practitioners talk about «integrations», «roadmaps» and so on and so forth... We don't speak that way and we don't have «roadmaps». Of course we take in people and we have information about them, because a morning working together on the truck gives you more information than any interview. It's a bit difficult when we have to report on our work, because the data they ask for have little to do with what we actually do. I see there's a clear difference in the flexibility of language and the ways of understanding.*

*Then come the ways of doing social work, the work of «accompaniment». We've always defined a «side-by-side» method of working. First, when we take somebody in, confidence and trust play a key role; the person has to feel comfortable, that is, we don't start by asking "who was your father", and so on. Of course we ask "what's your name", but we don't ask where do you come from, so there's a space that opens itself up we prefer people to express themselves the way they wish, to have them feel comfortable, because when you feel comfortable you express yourself freely and then the troubles and hardships of people show up and we can start to work, not in a hierarchic way but horizontally... (PNA02)*

At least in one of the cases (*Traperos de Emaús*) the idea of participants being «helpers» rather than «helped» users seems to be important. The social enterprise has always thought in terms of living on what others discard and helping others, be it by giving a hand to other projects, by providing a public service (rather than depending on subsidies) or by contributing to projects in developing countries. «Breaking the trend of simply responding to problems has given us a strong root, that may be one of our innovative elements, that of acting as an organization for helping others rather than helping our participants» (PNA02).

Although this discourse might be specific to *Traperos de Emaús*, the process of moving from a discretionary subsidy model towards one based on opening up a market for the products of their work and obtaining contracts to provide public services or public works is consistent with the idea of «depending on our own effort».

### 2.1.3. Internal organisation & modes of working

Modes of organization differ amongst these enterprises. Some stick to a rather conventional form of organization (adapted in some respects). But on the other end, *Traperos de Emaús* has tried to innovate its internal organization, to be able to manage a medium size enterprise (over 200 employees) in a way that is both efficient and democratic and enabling for its members.

*In 2005-06 we open a debate to rethink our organization: what organization do we want and is possible. Out of that debate we designed the «mandala trapero». All work areas have a coordinator who belongs to what we call the central coordination group, that elects the trustees of the foundation (for two years) and the director (every year). So we have a group of about fourteen people who coordinate the process, and a second group we call the creation and evaluation group. This group is made up of about fifteen people with a certain degree of homogeneity in their understanding and their ways of expression who evaluate the main decisions we make and how our work is consistent with our principles, such as solidarity, for instance. There are some transversal elements, such as the right to information and to participation for everybody, and the quest for consensus in a hierarchical structure.*

This organizational innovation effort is connected to the idea of building a sort of working community that helps the development of its members and is efficient (gets the job done) at the same time. *Gaztelan* has set up different kinds of structures in its projects, some of which have become cooperatives, some associations, and some ordinary enterprises.

### 2.1.4. Interaction with the local welfare system

Both the development of the CISs as such and the establishment of the social clauses for public contracts set up a kind of relationship between TSOs and government that differs from the usual one. The usual relationship is based on applying for specific subsidizing for activities from different government bodies (local, regional, etc.). There is neither organized system nor clear rules of assignment of public subsidies, so they rely heavily in the interest that a specific activity may arise in a certain government body.

The setting up of the CIS system meant that at least there are clear rules as to which projects get an accreditation as CISs, and what kind and amount of subsidies may be expected (directly related to wage costs, social security contributions, investments). They are still discretionary (there's no entitlement to get those subsidies just because you develop the activity) but rules are much clearer and the yearly agreement process allows for reasonable expectations (at least to keep activity levels).

The new model of relying more on public contracts (which *Traperos de Emaús* has had for three decades now) moves the relationship one step further, since funding is obtained for providing a service or a product, giving the enterprise more independence and making it more accountable as well.

*The government of Navarra wants to reduce the role of subsidies to the CISs and enhancing reliance on their own activity, and I think that's great for us. (...) We get paid for what we do, for our work...*

*We've always told the government (at least I can speak for us): we don't want property, we don't want to accumulate assets, we want a right of usage. We want things to be owned by the government, because they have the duty to control social organizations. Over the years, we've actually built up assets for about four million euros, and it comes mostly from public money. What if we go crazy? We've told them that. So we want to have a correct relationship with the government, but not more intense than necessary. We want to be free to say our word, but without unnecessary aggressiveness. That's another key element of our style (PNA02).*

## 2.2. Social integration housing

### 2.2.1. Description

The *Viviendas de integración social* (social integration housing) program allows a number of TSOs to buy second-hand homes that may be resold or rented to low income people with whom they are engaged in a social work process. It allows a more flexible approach to access to housing for specific persons or families than the ordinary publicly subsidized housing programs.

The origins of the VISs may be found in a program that Caritas (the main Catholic social assistance organization) developed in the 1980s. Caritas got hold occasionally of apartments, often bequeathed by their owners. Caritas started offering the apartments to their service users, either to rent them or to buy them under terms adapted to their situation and under a strong supervision of the workings of the family, as part of a process of social integration.

In the late 1990s, during the debate on the regional plan to combat social exclusion, TSOs and experts proposed that the government supported the program and opened it up to other TSOs. The regional department of housing was very attracted to the idea. Their social housing targets were hard to meet due to the lack of private developers willing to build low cost subsidized apartments, and the program seemed to allow for a spread of the most complex social cases in different areas, instead of packing them all together in social housing blocks.

A dozen TSOs have participated in the program, working with immigrants, gypsies or with other people at risk of social exclusion. Some have done so permanently, some have only participated occasionally, to solve housing problems of some specific cases amongst their users. The program was well accepted and quite successful initially, but rapidly increasing housing prices all but blocked the chances of finding homes to buy in Pamplona. In smaller towns and villages it was still possible.

In 2009 the regional government agreed to open up the possibility of using in the program either publicly owned homes or private apartments managed by the public rental system. Private landlords who wish to rent their apartments may do so by handing them over to a public agency, from which they obtain a rent payment slightly below market levels, but with a full guarantee that they will get their money and without having to manage the apartment and its rental. This extension of the VIS system is known as VAIS (*viviendas de alquiler de integración social*, or social integration social housing) and has reopened the possibility of using homes in Pamplona. Economic conditions are also easier for users. The

TSOs participating in the program have been buying between 10 and 30 homes per year (mostly outside Pamplona) and managing the rental of nearly 50 apartments.

### 2.2.2. Conceptions and ways of addressing users

For the TSOs participating in the program the VIS offered the opportunity of helping their users access a home in a very customized way (housing market permitting, of course). This allowed, for instance, finding (outside Pamplona) old large reasonably priced village houses for gypsy families who needed a lot of space, which would have been completely out of the question in a public housing project.

*Some times social workers complain saying «that family you've brought to us...» Well excuse me, we haven't brought anything, they're people so they've come here. That's the advantage of our program, in the end, people choose where they want to live, even if the choice is limited. And the same way you will probably like to live near your relatives, they like it as well, and if they're gypsies they may want to live close to relatives that are gypsies as well (PNA03).*

At the same time, offering access to housing gave the TSOs leverage in their social work process with the families. The fact that they become the means of access to a very basic need, housing, and that that access is conditional to a social work process enables the organizations to set clearer limits and conditions in their work.

### 2.2.3. Internal organisation & modes of working

Setting up the program seems to have reorganized responsibility for the social management of very poor families as regards housing. Before the program, they might, if lucky, get access to a public rental apartment (in some cases even they might be able to buy a publicly built home). Chances were low, but if they got it, the housing department did not take any further action, unless payments ceased, and in that case it would be legal action or at most asking local social services to look into the problem. With the VIS program, not only are people be housed in a much more flexible way, but the TSOs become responsible for following up and acting to ensure an as-smooth-as-possible process in the new home, by means of a «social accompaniment» work. The regional government will pay for it, but now somebody is directly responsible and has to act if conflicts or other problems arise.

*What does the regional government get from this program? Putting it harshly, they dump their responsibility on us. Being a bit kinder, they offer (through us) an intensive social work with the families, and that's why they pay us to do it. The Housing department, I believe, they wished to give a hand in the Anti-exclusion plan, so they wanted to show they were doing something, plus that helped to promote a bit actions with used homes (PNA03).*

In fact, one of the TSOs got a specific agreement to act as the EISOVI, the *Equipo de Incorporación Social en Vivienda* [Housing social integration team]. Initially it was a sort of overarching support team for the whole of the TSOs involved, but that role didn't make much sense, so it has become in fact a sort of social work team for a large part of the public rental houses in Navarra, a social work role that the public housing company was reluctant to play by itself, but saw as increasingly necessary.

In this sense, the role of TSOs in the program has made it possible to develop (within its obvious size limits) a kind of action that both the government and the TSOs saw as



necessary. The government was unwilling to take up as a direct responsibility and TSOs accepted to take it if that allowed them to act more effectively.

#### *2.2.4. Interaction with the local welfare system*

This kind of win-win agreement may explain the positive opinion on the governance of the program. Both the government and the TSOs seem to be reasonably happy with the permanent negotiations and collaboration in the development of the program. This means that the TSOs and the regional government sit down regularly to discuss how many and what kind of homes will there be available for the next year, how to improve the program, and even if the results are not always the ones some of the stakeholders might wish, they speak positively of the process. What might have been lost is the fact that the size and scope doesn't need to meet the social demand (as it happens when entitlements are established) but can be adjusted to what the government is willing to spend and what TSOs are willing to do.

It has also helped to establish a bridge between two regional government departments, Housing and Social Welfare. Blame avoidance may have been one of the reasons not to collaborate in the past, since each partner might have felt that sticking to its own responsibilities (producing and renting homes, providing social work services for citizens who asked for them) saved them from having to deal with the much more complex issue of housing and social integration. The possibility of assuming indirectly the job by financing TSOs to do it does seem to be a less risky way of starting to work jointly on the issue (in fact of enabling somebody else to work on the joint issue).

### **2.3. Casas Amigas**

#### *2.3.1. Description*

*Casas Amigas* (friendly homes) is a childcare service for children under 3 that is provided at the carers own home. Two associations (one in Pamplona, one in rural areas in Navarra) provide the service, which is regulated and subsidized by the regional government. It is officially considered as a care service, as opposed to an infant school. Regulations set a minimum of space that must be available at the home, some requirements as to the training and experience of carers and a maximum ratio of 4 children per carer.

*Casas Amigas* has its origins in a 2003 (EU) Equal project run jointly by several regional and local government agencies, several employers associations and three foundations, *Gaztelan* amongst them. It included several actions aimed at favouring the labour market integration of women. *Gaztelan* (a foundation that had been working since the 1980s in the field of labour market integration of underprivileged groups) had the idea of setting up the care service. The idea was to kill several birds with a single stone. Access to training activities for women with children usually required some kind of child minding service, some of the participant women had training and experience in child care and had a home (the needed infrastructure) and it was an opportunity to create jobs for them. The idea of a home childcare service was taken from a previous experience in rural areas in Catalonia.

The service was created inside the project and funded with EU and regional government funds. Once it showed its potential, an association was created that took over the service. It started with 6 homes, and by 2010 it had 15 homes and 50 to 60 children. The regional government subsidizes half the cost.

The project was controversial from the beginning. Inside the organizations that promoted the project, there was a debate between those who saw some clear advantages and

opportunities in the idea and those who thought it might reinforce stereotypes about the role of women as carers at home and the ways children should be cared for.

There was a public controversy as well. The *Plataforma del ciclo educativo 0-3*, a coalition of associations and practitioners who defend a public and free universal infant education service for children under 3 was very vocal against the project. They argued that all services for children under 3 should be conceived as educational services (not as care services), and be run by the government. They believe that these kind of «soft» services are unable to guarantee acceptable quality standards. On the other hand, the regional government and part of the media felt much more comfortable with the idea that parents should be able to choose whether they want to take their very young children to services or care for them at home themselves, and if they choose to use services, they should be able to decide what kind of services (care or educational, etc.) they prefer. In fact, services like *Casas Amigas* were seen as some kind of middle ground between institutional and family care.

### *2.3.2. Conceptions and ways of addressing users*

The nature of the care offered doesn't seem to be too different from other care services for children of the same age, and it combines some educational elements with basic personal care. The key difference as regards the relationship with users is the time flexibility. Since parents take their children to the carers home the availability of the service is much more flexible, and picking up the child earlier doesn't disrupt the service.

Although the service is not classified as «educational» but as a «care» service, there is an educational project and some educational training of the carers. It is thus quite similar to other care services for children, in which although the care role is the main one, it is usually accepted that there is an educational side to caring for children.

The other specific element is the fact that care can be much closer in a much smaller group of children (4, maximum 5 per home and carer). This is affordable due to much lower fixed costs. There is no need for a strong investment to build the premises, and basic utility costs are more or less the same as the private home would have had in any case.

Critics of the service insist that all children services should be educational and that for this reason «carers» should be in fact educators, and preferably college graduates in infant education. There seems to be a clear difference between a «hard» conception of child care, that insists in educational professionalism and an institutional environment and a «soft» vision that would think in a diversity of service options (more or less educational, more or less formal) and that would have a soft spot for services that would actually look little different from a private home. Whatever the merits of each position, it is clear that the *Casas Amigas* has been conceived according to the second vision.

### *2.3.3. Internal organisation & modes of working*

*Casas Amigas* has drawn much of its attractiveness from its apparent ability to build up synergies and obtaining several results from one single action. Innovation in the mode of working seems to be more in this combination than in the radical newness of any specific component of the project.

It is more flexible than traditional infants' schools and care services. The need for flexibility was especially obvious in the case of people trying to find jobs and to improve their chances of finding it through training. If you have a stable job it is possible, if often complicated, to build up a schedule that adjusts your known working times to the

availability of care. But when you are looking for a job that you still don't know, and that may be a short term job, schedules are much more difficult to foresee. The usual clients of services like *Gaztelan* may find themselves working one weekend, then without work for a few days, until they get an afternoon job for another few days. Availability for such jobs is expected, and making care arrangements with short notice for a few days is no easy task. Usually family fills in the gap, when available, which is not always the case. A much more flexible care service is thus especially adequate for jobseekers.

Secondly, while care is similar to that offered by other care services, it is much less capital intensive than standard services. Carers provide space at his or her apartment, and toys and other tools are relatively inexpensive. So it is actually possible to think of unemployed or low-income people who have an adequate home to provide the service. So after all, some of the potential users were potential providers as well.

Of course, they had to be fit for the job. Some of the people involved (clients and potential providers) had experience (being mothers themselves, having worked in care services) and had some training or at least, such training could be provided by the project itself. So it helped create jobs for part of the very people they were helping to train and find jobs, and training could be tailored to the very service that was being created.

#### *2.3.4. Interaction with the local welfare system*

*Casas Amigas* doesn't show much difference from the usual governance patterns for services run by private providers regulated and sometimes subsidized by the regional government. There doesn't seem to be much innovation in this field.

It may be perhaps more interesting to look at the origins of the project itself. *Gaztelan*, the TSO) had the idea, but it was made possible in the setting of an EU Equal project involving local and regional government agencies, employers associations and other stakeholders. This involvement helped the TSO to think in larger terms, to dare into more complicated fields of job creation, to get support from experts in fields quite different from social work. At the same time, the TSO offered ideas in the field of labour market integration that were much more original, creative and adapted to specific needs of certain users than those envisaged by other stakeholders. This process is not specific to *Casas Amigas*, but it certainly tells something on the factors that help social innovations.

## **2.4. Neighbourhood children's services**

### *2.4.1. Description*

The fourth case we are analysing in Pamplona is a group of neighbourhood associations that carry out social activities aimed at the prevention of social problems amongst children. It is the result of a movement of community associations that developed leisure activities for children and of its integration into the local government structure of social services, while retaining a peculiar way of working.

The first of these associations, *Umetxea*, was created in 1990. They tried to keep a balance between their traditional political role of claiming for more and better services in their neighbourhood and a new role as service providers. They tried to create social and cultural projects, mostly aimed at children, pooling the resources of several neighbourhood groups. These projects became quite successful. By 1995 some people in the local social services begin to see that these associations are being more successful in this field than their own public prevention programs, which many people in the neighbourhoods thought quite useless.

The neighbourhood associations have been suspect for possible sympathies with radical left wing parties and radical Basque nationalism, which in the context of political violence and of a serious political cleavage between Basque nationalism and Navarrese regionalism certainly didn't make relationships easy. Somewhat surprisingly it was a centre-right regionalist councillor who decided to establish a long-term agreement between the municipality and the associations. Although there was a strong and politicized debate, in the end the councillor said that «they work fine and they're much less expenses than other providers».

Since 1995 in one neighbourhood and since 1997 in the other three, these associations are responsible for the so-called Community Preventive Action Service, a part of the local Family and Children Welfare Program. The typical activities of such a program are leisure activities for different groups of children, including activity groups and playgrounds for the youngest, summer camps, neighbourhood festivals and networking amongst teenagers. In some cases it has meant not encouraging but supporting and accompanying actions like the squatting of an abandoned factory.

The future of the program is unclear. The agreements established in 1995-97 end this year. The local council has favoured since the late nineties private providers that fit better into an entrepreneurial model, with whom they agree specific outcomes and targets in a much more managerial way. The existing TSOs are much more flexible, they are able to mobilize much more local resources, but they do so by being less hierarchic and formal in their relation with the local government.

#### 2.4.2. Conceptions and ways of addressing users

The traditional boundaries between practitioners and service users are somewhat blurred in these projects. There are certainly practitioners who get paid for their job and are bound by a contract with the local council, but they are neighbours as well, and they are hired by a local neighbourhood association. Since they organize activities for the young and for children, a large part of the actual implementation of the project is done by volunteer neighbours who take part in the activities (thus they are service users and producers at the same time). And although some specific work is done to integrate children with special difficulties in the activities, there's no visible difference between them and other participants.

*In our projects volunteers are as important as professional practitioners. Volunteers are not of the kind that shows up for an hour, but people who live here. (...) We promote the rights of the kids, so the kids are our bosses. They [the local government managers] don't think in terms of rights, they told us «don't talk about rights, talk about problems and needs» (PNA08).*

The concept of neighbourhood is central to the work of these projects. Even if neighbourhoods may be relatively small, the feeling of belonging may be very strong, and it is very significant for newcomers (migrants) as well.

*In Pamplona the question of locality is very important. Whoever hasn't experienced it and doesn't know a neighbourhood has a citywide outlook. That's what happens to local councillors, (...) who don't know about it and don't understand it. If you take away the idea of neighbourhood from these kids you'll kill them. For migrants, their only identity here is that of the neighbourhood. They're neither from Pamplona nor from Spain, but they're certainly from San Jorge [the name of one of the neighbourhoods] (PNA08).*

The project works specifically with children with special needs both integrating them into activities and offering personal support and «accompaniment». This role is different from the one played by ordinary child support services, which should be seen as different and separated. “[Control and support] should be separated, not only conceptually but in practice as well. Our space should be a space to look ahead, and theirs as a space of protection if the children’s rights are being violated “(PNA08).

#### 2.4.3. Internal organisation & modes of working

The concept of working to promote the rights of children appears to be connected to the concept of autonomy of the projects, even if they belong to the local government. The projects consider themselves accountable first to the children and the neighbours.

*[In our case] either the project is based on the concept of rights or we don't do it. The question of our autonomy is basic, because without it we can't carry them out, and our autonomy has practical effects, for it allows us a margin of flexibility and of method innovation that other projects don't have. In our team sometimes each [of the three formally hired educators/social workers] takes responsibility for an area, but sometimes a few youngsters join us and its 5 or 6 of us managing the project. We can do that, but public employees can't, and private providers can only do it at the expense of their workers (PNA08).*

#### 2.4.4. Interaction with the local welfare system

The triangle made up by the local council (responsible for the service as a whole), the associations (who have a legal agreement with the local council to carry it out) and the practitioners (who are employees of the association but are, in practice, integrated in the local social services organization) allows for the aforementioned autonomy of the projects. Practitioners tend to speak the same language (with some nuances) as the local social services staff, but the leaders of the associations are local neighbours with a strong commitment to their neighbours and tend to be much more «straight to the point».

*The kind of associations we work in is special, and our bosses are our fellows in all its complexity. (...) There was one of those meetings with the local council after a cutback of 50 per cent of our activity budget. We were very angry, and we as a team wrote down a document against the cutback, and the director of social services said she had nothing to talk with us and that she'd only talk to the leaders of the association, to our bosses. OK, go ahead! Now she prefers to talk to us (PNA08).*

The relationship between the TSOs and the local council is more conflictive in this last case than in the previous three, in spite of, or maybe because of, a closer relationship as direct providers of services commissioned by the local council.

## CONCLUSIONS

All four analysed innovations were born as initiatives of third sector organizations. In all cases there has been one (or several) TSOs that wished to do something in a specific new way that have either started to do it on their own and then found the way to obtain public support (cases 1, 2 and 4), or they have convinced public partners to start the project (case 3). In all three cases, public administration (local or regional) has had a significant role in supporting and sustaining the initiative, in some cases expanding it beyond its initial scope.

All four cases show an attempt to change the ways of working and addressing users. In all cases, the idea of customizing or personalizing services to specific needs or preferences of service users is present. In two cases (1 & 4) this adaptation goes further on to redefine the boundaries between users and practitioners, be it by blurring the distinction (case 4) or by a more profound redefinition of the nature of service users (case 1).

Most cases show some degree of changes in governance and the relationship between TSOs and local/regional government. These relationships have a long tradition of particularistic, case-by-case selective discretionary support to the activities of each TSO. Cases 1 and 2 show a move towards a system of (a) clearer definition of what activities may be subsidized and with which criteria and (b) a negotiated procedure for setting goals and overall criteria for the programs. This has not eliminated completely a certain degree of discretion, but it constrains it into a more objective system.

There is a degree of political ambivalence in all cases. On the one hand, there is a clear «political» aim by the TSOs to «work differently» in ways they consider to be better and more adapted to service users' needs. In some cases these alternative ways of working are very different to the dominant views in public services (cases 1 and 4), in others they are just different from the mainstream programs. On the other hand, governments may accept such different or challenging approaches because they help to offer a limited exception for some users (with whom they are not being very successful) or they enhance the view of a more complex welfare mix in which TSOs have stronger roles. This may explain the (apparent) lack of political controversy in some cases (1 & 2) or a very limited one (case 3). Case 4 is somewhat atypical, since it has seen a stronger controversy although external political reasons (connections with radical groups and with Basque nationalism) may be crucial in this case, and some political positions have been contradictory (the project got its public support thanks to the only political party that has had a critical stand afterwards).