
Outcomes of living in a self managed shelter

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Context



- In 2008 Your Own Place (Je Eigen Stek, JES) started: a self managed shelter for and by homeless people
- In 2013 JES and the municipality of Amsterdam wanted to do a follow up on former residents
- This project is part of larger research program focussing on self managed residential programs

Self managed homeless shelter



- JES has room for 16 residents, who can stay as long as they need. Entrance and exit is decided by the group of residents
- The residents are in charge: from deciding to expand the program to who is responsible for the groceries
- JES offers residents space, time and stability
- Social worker & peer worker facilitate individuals, group and project
- Primary goal: helping homeless towards a home

Research focus

How are former residents of JES doing and how did they experience the self management of JES?

Participatory design (co-creation)



- Former and current residents of JES were involved in:
 - the design of the research,
 - the development and finetuning of the structured qualitative questionnaires,
 - providing factual background information,
 - recruitment of respondents,
 - the interviews (together with social work students),
 - fine tuning the analysis & formulating the conclusion and recommendations.
- The questionnaire is based on literature, the 'selfsufficiency matrix' and input from (former) residents

Response

- total population ex-residents = 68
- 32 reached via phone, 22 participated
- 2 gave a short statement over the phone on their experiences and their reason for not cooperating (nothing good to say)
- 35 former residents were not reached via phone
- Mail (when possible), searching via internet and employing the snowball method did not result in more results

Gender, age & length of stay

- Mostly male residents, 27-70 years old
- Over time the average age is declining
- 25 former residents (1/3) stayed less than six months or not at all
- The other 43 former residents stayed on average for 12-14 months
- 1 resident came back for a second stay, three residents are long stayers (4-6 years)



Housing directly after JES

- 14 residents found housing on their own
- 24 residents moved on to housing via JES
- 14 residents were asked to leave because of unacceptable behavior
- 16 residents unknown



Non-responders



Description of non-responders

- 19 (of the 25) short stayers (<six months) did not participate
- Residents from the first period are overrepresented in the non-responders group, partly explained by lacking registration
- 11 (of the 14) residents who were asked to leave were not reached

Housing situation of non-responders

- Around half of the short stayers appears to have found stable housing, sometimes after another period of homelessness
- The majority of those who stayed longer have found stable housing

Outcomes



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**European
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What did they hope to achieve?

“What I got now: my own house, hopefully soon a regular income, my debt repayment finally started”

- Mostly practical expectations: shelter, working on debts, getting a house
- Only a few chose self management on purpose



How are they doing?

“.... I’ve got a partner, a house and a job. The prospect of a better life, a purpose.”

- Most respondents report an increase in their quality of life, especially in their financial and housing situation
- Some report an increase in their social, functional and clinical recovery (less substance abuse, better mental & physical health)
- Questions on personal recovery were deflected



Social recovery

“The longer I stayed at JES, the more I got involved.”

- Participation in JES (meetings, projects)
- During & after JES many started work, paid or unpaid
- Not many social contacts remain from JES (no community)
- Respondents with a shorter history of homelessness have larger social networks



Life after JES

“I think that once we leave JES, we cut through the umbilical cord to quickly”

- Issues with independent living similar to regular housing after homelessness
- Several respondents report issues with:
 - Substance abuse
 - Social contacts
 - Management of small budget



How did they experience self management

*“That I had my own place, my own key.
That I could decide what I did with my
life....the personal freedom that you have.”*



- Most of the respondents were satisfied with their experiences at JES, but.....

Did JES contribute to recovery?

“ If I would have allowed it, JES could have contributed to my development.” “I can take care of myself and I have myself to thank for that”

- Difficult to explain for respondents, except for stability, space and time and for some the practical support
- Three groups: a place to figure your stuff out, enabling niche for recovery, a place to relax



Concluding remarks

- The primary goal of JES appears to be achieved
- Preparation for independent living is under-articulated
- Aftercare needs to be developed
- No sense of community (some don't want it, others miss it)



Limitations to this research

Methodology

- Under- and overrepresented groups
- Recent former residents are over-represented, is their housing sustainable?
- No comparison group (propensity matching might be a solution)
- Participatory design had many benefits, but contributed to uncertainties in analysis:
 - Influence selfmanagement -> recovery
 - Level of issues (substance abuse, mental health) and personal recovery

