



HOMELESS IN PRAGUE

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7.A & 7.B
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Introduction

We chose this theme because we live in a society which is changing everything is changing and also the attitude towards homeless people. We wanted to show people that work for homeless people want to help them and we also wanted to show the homeless people's attitudes towards their lives. We were very surprised about what we found out. During our project we met a lot of people from many organizations and we met some homeless people. Every time we met this people we realized that they wanted to change something about their lives. They work very hard, harder than we think they do. They want to change their life and they want to help each other. They have different values than people who have money and they show great innovation and creativity in their daily lives which we wanted to point out.

Plan

We made our plan after visiting Mrs Cerna who worked for an organisation called Vybor dobre vule - Nadace Olgy Havlove. Which is the organization of good will. She knew about all of the charity organizations in Prague and we decided to visit the main ones in Prague.

22.10. the meeting with Mrs. Cerna

12.11. the visit in NP

28.11. the meeting with Kamil

12.12. the visit in Armada Spasy

28.1. the visit to the boat Hermes



On the 12th November we visited a day center for underprivileged people in Prague - Reznicka street.

We entered in, there was a big hall with the reception and the offices for the employers. The center looks like very comfortably and you feel there like in a home.

On the reception, a man sells the magazine Novy Prostor -for 20 Kc- to the homeless people and then they sell these magazines in the metro stations for 40 Kc.

The Novy Prostor helps to people integrate to the society since 1999.

The editors think out new interesting themes and the magazine comes out every 14 days. Many people buy this magazine because they want to be helpful and they sympathize with the poor people. A good seller can earn ca. 6000 Kc for a month and he can pay some hostel and food. His life can be changed when he incorporates and becomes creative.

We made an interview with Mr. Pick - an employer - and we asked some questions.

- Who can sell the magazine NP?

The NP can sell everybody, who is in the social pressure.

- How much they can earn by selling?

A good seller can earn ca. 6,000 Kc for a month.

- Do only the homeless people sell this magazine?

Definitely not, the magazine is sold also by the poor people that do

not have any job and they would like to be like the others.

- Who does do the content of the magazine?

We have many of editors that think out the themes that are interesting.

- When, who and why was NP established?

NP was established in 1999 by our directress because she wanted to be useful and wanted to help the poor people.

- Why does NP help to the poor people?

Today there are many people that do not have money and have to live on the street. They become homeless because of many reasons, f.e. they do not have enough money for pay for the mortgage or they lost a flat...

- What kind of people buy NP?

Many people buy NP because they want to help the other and they sympathize with the poor people.

Interview with Kamil

We met a man who sells NP and interviewed him. His name is Kamil, he is in his 50's and sleeps rough outside, he seemed intelligent and spoke to us as equal he is dressed warmly he studied an apprenticeship in sales and he knew a lot about the psychology of people who buy his NP

he spoke without us prompting for answers, how he wins his clients, when someone has a wedding that he congratulates them

the place where he works the people are like a big family, there are the shops selling flowers or sweets and books, he trusts these people.

he works from 8 to 9 or 10 each day.

He has friends that he trusts to lend money to.

outside of the ticket barriers there are 2 sellers, one at each exit.

He is afraid of unofficial NP workers that come to him and want to buy some magazines, but he won't sell them to them, he is afraid that they might be illegal sellers.

Has been selling NP since it started 9 years ago and before this was selling newspapers for 20 years prior to this.

He was kicked out of his home when he was 9 and worked in a pub cleaning and

He buys 100 magazines every month and has usually sold them after 2 months. He prefers to sleep rough rather than live in support accomodtion.

Dejvicka

He doesn't visit the NP centre much, once every two weeks. but doesn't visit very often

He had problems with he works when he is sick, he never takes a day off. He doesn'r pay health insurance, he broke his leg and had had it fixed at hospital in plaster. they let him go back to the street staight away as he didnt pay health insurance.



It was the 12th of December when we visited the Armada spasy.
The building of Armada spasy is close to our school, near Maniny.

In front of the Armada spasy was a lot of people waiting for going in.
When we saw them, we were a little bit afraid of going there.

The main large room was also full of homeless people, because it was the time for lunch.

Then we spoke to some woman in reception. She spent us to the director and the social worker of the AS in Prague. We went upstairs and they were already waiting for us.

We sat with them near the kitchen and they told us all about the history of AS, what do they do etc.

They also showed us men's and women's bedrooms and also the place where they can get free clothes.

Hermes



When I heard that we will visit the ship I was excited and glad that I can get more information because most of us have a lot of prejudices because they don't know anything about homeless people and life. So I was a little happy that my opinion could be more clearly. When I saw the ship it looked exactly like I expected homeless ship to look like but when I went in I was pleasantly surprised. I saw two men who drank coffee and smiled. There was no strange smell, no dirt and it was warm. At first we spoke with the controller of the ship. He showed us the rooms where the homeless people slept and told us some information about the ship. I found it interesting but then we had the chance to speak with three people who lived on the street. My head was full of questions but at the same time I had no breath to ask. We spoke about 45 minutes. When I took leave and went out I had a completely new opinion about this theme. I didn't see only the bad side like I see every day f.e. drunk or begging people but I saw their effort to find a job or to find permanent place to live.

A Ship For Homeless People - Hermes

We found out about Hermes from Mrs. Cerna, she had her own opinion about it, but we wanted to investigate on ourselves.

We went there on thursday the 15.11.2008 and thats what we found out.

The ship was build in 1962 and served as a tug boat, 2006 it was bought from the city and rebuilt.

The idea came from Michal Kopecky and Pavel Polak as a compensation for the old building for homeless people called Nadeje.

In 2007/2008 the ship was reconstructed.

Facts

The ship can bear 233 people.

During 2007, 6616 people visiteed Hermes.

The ship costs 8 to 10 millions every year.

The ship is 75 meters long and 9 meters bright.

It has 28 cabins each is fitted with 6 beds.

4 sectors - A(85 people), B(85 people), C (30 woman) and D(33 emergency bed)

The price for a night is 20 Kc

Boarding time is from 1930 till 2030 nad leaving time is 0730

- Its the best of all available possibilities in Prag
- divided sections and one common room
- requirements: 18 years old
 - not to be under drug influence
- Sections: Mans rooms for 8 people, 2 underdecks with total space for 230 people.
 - One underdeck for woman with rooms for 6 people
- The ship has an capability of 250 people, which hasnt been used out completely.
- No urban district wants to have a boarding house for homeless people.

The problem was solved by putting the ship on the river Vltava, which doesnt belong to anybody ,and so, doesnt concern anybody.

- The ship runs since 2007 and has been reconstructed in the summer 2008.
- The main goal is to reintegrate people. The crew offer consultant service. At daytime the homeless people have to leave the ship due to cleaning and desinification procedures. There is a strict regime, otherwise it wouldnt make any sence.

On my visit on the boat I discovered that the interior of the boat is well build and very clean, no wonder, the ship is beeing cleaned every day after the homeless people leave. The rules are very strict because the one of the main goals of the ship is to push the people to find a job and to returne to normal life again. Thats why the crew of the ship offers consultant service.



Illustration 1: notice board for finding a job



Illustration 2: The kitchen



Illustration 3: David does the interview with a homeless



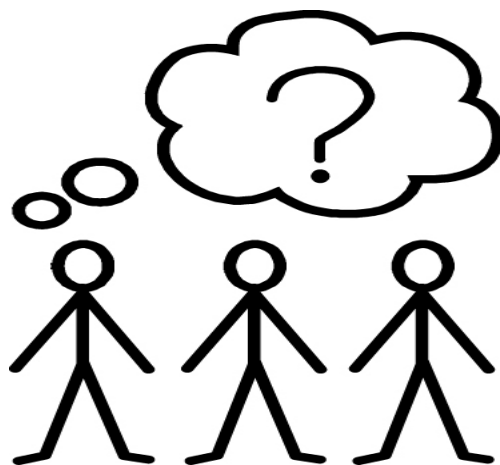
Illustration 4: The lavatory



Nadace Olgy Havlove - The meeting with Mrs. Cerna

On the 24th October our group visited a foundation Vybora dobré vůle - Nadace Olgy Havlové. We had a meeting with the directress of the foundation MUDr. Milada Černá. She was very nice and helpful to us.

After introducing ourselves and explaining our project about homeless people and creativity we went to the large hall and sat down around the meeting table. We had prepared a paper with some questions and so we began to ask them. We learned many interesting things about a situation of the homeless people in Prague and sometimes we were really surprised how these people live. Is it possible the integration of these people into the society? This was the main question of our meeting. Mrs. Černá tries to fight for the privileges of the homeless people and also she works with their psyche. She told us that many homeless people do not have any personal document, do not have any motivation to live and they become often addicted to drugs or alcohol. The main aim of the organization is not to give them money or food, but it is to show them how they can live and learn some homeless people the sanitary habits. This work is not easy because a big percentage of these people live on the street more than 10 years.



Our opinions

Jana: This project was unusual and I could recognize many organisations which I did not know anything. But I have to admit that I did not like to visit some places where was many homeless people because I was afraid of some infection. But it is also good to see the life of the others.

Anna P: When we started to work on our project, I expected us going to some organisations helping homeless people and then making some kind of web page with the aim of showing the world how easy the help is, that everybody can lend a helping hand. But during working on the project I very soon realised how naive I was. Of course you can help them when buying their magazine or giving money, food or old clothes to the organisations, but this can help only temporarily, especially in winter. Homelessness is a problem which has ever been with us and which in my opinion cannot be fully eradicated. What we can do more is to speak about it and maybe believe that homeless doesn't mean uneducated or second-rate because everybody has a right to be respected, whether he has a home or not.

Anna F. I think this project showed us the reality and we (maybe) changed our opinion on the homeless people. Most of us perhaps think that homeless are just lazy people, who do not want to work, but thanks this project we found out that many of them try to live a new life, find a job etc.

David: Me about the Boat : From the beginning on I was sure that we could not keep the prize money, if we won, simply because it would not be right. We would have to give our money to the homeless people. The ship is a great idea I think and many other countries think of making an own boat for the homeless with a similar system.

Lucie: I am really glad that I could do this project. It was interesting to speak with the people, to hear their opinion, their experience and attitudes. It gave me a lot and it developed a new opinion in me. It was the true work made me opinion more clearly. Because it is something else to read (in the newspaper) about homeless people and to speak personally with them. So at the end I can say I am really happy and satisfied about what I found out.

Marketa: I really enjoyed this project and the work with homeless people was for me a satisfied experience. After seeing the problems homeless people have, I never want to be a homeless.

Neil: The students chose a project about homelessness in Prague as it was something that is visible every day in Prague but that people tend to ignore. Though the decision to choose this topic was not unanimous, some of the class were a little uncomfortable visiting some of the places we did and I having visited the same places as they did I can understand it completely.

The subject of homelessness is a multifaceted one and during our first meeting with Pani Cerna in the Centre of Prague in some very ornate offices discovered that the problem was huge one and beyond the scope of a school project, so we concentrated on a few key visits. The meeting at Novy Prostor was quite positive, we saw some homeless people who were given a chance to earn money and integrate better into society, we even interviewed a NP seller, Kamil to find out how it had altered his life.

The next meeting at The Salvation Army was overwhelming. There were hundreds of people all queueing for free food in filthy clothes, many seemed to be sick and the overall feeling we got from this visit was that we wanted to distance ourselves from this place as much as possible. From a teacher's point of view I would say that this visit was a little too shocking for a school group, but the reality of the situation was clear.

The final trip to the Hermes was conversely quite uplifting. The conditions were excellent and the type of homeless people that stayed there were altogether different, they were well dressed and well spoken and they detailed their struggles with homelessness to us over a cup of coffee in the common room. For me this was the most enlightening visit as the three people we met with here would not stand out as homeless people, but they nevertheless were. I felt that the project was a success as an information gathering exercise, but it was a little sad that we really didn't make a difference to these peoples lives.