Handbook on the Action-Reflection-Action (A-R-A) methodology applied in homelessness interventions

Supporting homeless people in their transition to and settlement in stable dwellings

By Camilo Coral
Acknowledgements

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Gender neutrality

This handbook is written in gender neutral language. Where applicable, it uses the singular they and its other grammatical forms them, themselves and their to refer to indefinite pronouns and singular nouns.
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Foreword

In our opinion, the reflection process that led to the preparation of this handbook results from a calling into question of our practices with regard to the homeless, as well as the limits of traditional one-on-one approaches derived from the medical model. This questioning took place against the backdrop of dependency on support workers, integration failure, compassion fatigue, multiple returns to square one, relapses, and recurrent crises.

Pech, which has been in existence for over 25 years, initially derived its practices from the Stein and Test case-management model and Farkas' Training in Community Living model. In the early 2000s, it began to change these practices, taking them in the direction of Rapp’s strengths model¹. This model, which is compatible with ideas about mental health recovery, focuses on providing people with assistance and support in the context of life in society.

Obviously, as the strengths model proposes, people have an inherent capacity to learn, grow and change. However, our experience in providing support to individuals who are highly disaffiliated due to mental health issues, drug addiction, involvement in the justice system, or homelessness, has revealed the limits of this model, which makes the relationship between support workers and users an essential factor in the support process. This relationship, despite its power and symbolic content, can even be detrimental to homeless people in some cases.

When a disaffiliated person embarks on a return to housing, the process can be seriously jeopardized if it is based solely on the reality and experience of a support worker who has never actually been homeless. A person’s ability to reappropriate the power to act on their life necessarily involves a resignification of their experience of exclusion. As you will see in reading this handbook, this resignification process is carried out more easily in a group and with peers, because it changes the paradigm of traditional one-on-one intervention with disaffiliated individuals. Since 2014, Pech has developed Sherpa, a popular education centre focused on group-based activities aimed at improving people’s well-being and quality of life.

By offering people a dwelling and support during the return to housing process, the Housing First approach has, for more than a quarter of a century, paved the way for providing the homeless with real opportunities for support, integration and citizen participation. However, as in the case of the strengths model, the limits of Housing First have gradually emerged in the wake of crises, relapses, returns to the street, and support worker fatigue.

Pech’s experience with the Housing First approach began in 2013 in a political context that generated some distrust with regard to the Québec model. We embarked on this adventure by creating “Porte-Clés,” a team of three people supported by a clinical coordinator and seven participating community partners working in the area of homelessness.

In the current budgetary and social context, enabling homeless people to play a central role in a housing support methodology not only requires courage, but calls into question our traditional ideas about life in housing, ontological security and the accepted notion of “home.” This handbook opens up a discussion about the importance of intervening differently, the limits of traditional, reactive, one-on-one interventions, and support workers’ “idealization” of the notion of “home” in the life experience of the homeless.

As you will see in reading this handbook, the ideas, work and contribution of Camilo Coral to Pech’s Housing First team provide a daring alternative that has the merit of improving the Housing First model by incorporating a group-based approach among peers, a resignification of homeless people’s experience using the A-R-A (action-reflection-action) methodology, and the creation of meaning in the housing integration process.

Camilo Coral is a psychologist with a master’s degree in public health and training in psychosocial attention for marginalized populations and victims of armed conflicts. He has worked in the field of international humanitarian aid, where he was responsible for designing and implementing, in several countries, programs in mental health and psychological support involving a community-based participatory approach. Throughout his professional career, he has focused special attention on analyzing the relationship between people and space. Through a grant from the federal government under the Innovative Solutions to Homelessness program, we were able to benefit from Mr. Coral’s experience for an entire year for the purpose of preparing this handbook.

The handbook is intended for teams who work with the homeless, in particular “Housing First” teams who wish to apply a group-based sociocultural approach that takes into account the life experience of the homeless individuals they assist and support. The handbook will also be useful to trainers and support workers who wish to adopt a ludic and kinetic group-based approach in working with the homeless.

Daring, courage and new intervention perspectives are needed if we want to put an end to homelessness. The people we assist and support suffer needlessly, especially on cold winter nights . . .

Benoît Côté
General Manager, Pech
September 30, 2018

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2- The Projet Intervention Prostitution Québec, the Centre de Femmes aux 3 A, L’Archipel d’Entraide, Lauberivière, the Café Rencontre du Centre-ville, the YWCA, Miels–Québec.
Introduction

House, home, Self and space. These are the four elements I use to present a new way of exploring the problem of homelessness and the method employed to support people who are in transition to stable housing.

Since this handbook introduces a new vision about the homelessness problem, the level of difficulty involved in studying its content ranges from intermediate to high. As the reading progresses, the reader will encounter new concepts and logics about the homelessness issue that do not tie in with traditional explanations and intervention models. Therefore, the reading of the handbook requires flexibility and open-mindedness in order to acquire a clear and unfettered understanding of each sentence and paragraph of the text.

The Action - Reflection - Action (A-R-A) methodology was created in contexts other than homelessness. Its foundations and practices have been developed through by diverse experiences of social change, human rights actions and community development. This methodology has the enormous advantage of working directly with the experience, knowledge and desires of the communities and social groups mobilized. Essentially, A-R-A is a methodology that breaks down the normalized patterns of a society. In other words, it is a methodology that allows social and community groups to transform or create new realities based on their own needs and their awareness of being subjects of rights.

For the A-R-A methodology, there are no realities or immutable explanations. Everything must be critically and structurally analysed as the group or community work sheds light on the relationship between the individual and society. The A-R-A methodology rejects preconceived and dogmatic explanations of the problems that affect social groups and communities. This explains why describing, adapting and understanding it is an arduous task.

Therefore, when Pech presented me with the challenge of addressing the issue of supporting homeless people in their transition to stable housing using a participatory methodology, I had to reanalyze the problem of homelessness from an Action - Reflection - Action point of view. It is well known that A-R-A is a methodology; however, on account of its structural and structuring essence it is also a conceptual approach for interpreting reality. As a result, in reflecting on how to adapt this methodology to the process of transitioning to stable housing as it is experienced by homeless people, I was compelled to explore the situation as a whole
using the A-R-A approach. I thus had to review the various efforts made to date to explain the phenomenon of homelessness and to question those efforts, reveal their ideological burden, and unravel their causes, structural relations, and impacts at individual, community and social levels. This reflective exercise is summarized in sections 1 and 2 of this handbook.

Section 3 describes the conceptual foundations introduced in the A-R-A methodology with regard to support work with homeless people. The situation of homelessness requires that the Self be rebuilt before it can be launched into action for effecting social change. Therefore, I introduced conceptual elements for work at the individual (subject) level. However, these elements carry a dialectical logic between the individual and society because, in keeping with the A-R-A methodology, there is never a separation between these two entities, and the transformation of one implies the transformation of the other.

Sections 4 and 5 will guide the reader in applying the A-R-A methodology adapted to working with homeless people. In these sections, the reader will find the elements needed to design their own support model for working with the homeless, namely, the dynamics of group work and the projection and elaboration of homeless individuals’ inner ideas. Moreover, since one of the principles of the A-R-A methodology considers that each person involved in the transformation process is equal, the reader will also find elements that will enable them to question their role as a support worker or a process change facilitator.

At the end of the handbook are several important appendices that will help clarify many of the ideas presented in it. Appendix 1 is a line-by-line description of an actual A-R-A activity. The reader will probably want to start reading the handbook with this appendix. This may even be the recommended way to start since the first letter of A-R-A means Action and action is what Appendix 1 is all about. Appendix 2 presents a proposal for working on 13 thematic issues of homelessness that have been recommended by support workers in order to increase the applicability of the A-R-A methodology. Lastly, Appendix 3 presents general guidelines for an A-R-A methodology training plan that can be adapted to the needs of organizations working with homeless people.

This handbook is likely to generate many comments and criticisms coming from all sectors related to homelessness work and from purists of the A-R-A methodology. All of them will be welcome, as their absence would mean that I was not faithful enough to the principles of the A-R-A approach and methodology, since they essentially subvert pasteurized and homogenized truths.

Camilo Coral
Ottawa, September 7, 2018.
“You do not come to Euphemia only to buy and sell, but also because at night, by the fires all around the market, seated on sacks or barrels or stretched out on piles of carpets, at each word that one man says - such as “wolf,” “sister,” “hidden treasure,” “battle,” “scabies,” “lovers,” - the others tell each one his tale of wolves, sisters, treasures, scabies, lovers, battles.”

The Invisible Cities, Italo Calvino.

“The fool knows more in his house than the wise in the one of others.”

Don Quixote from la Mancha, Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra.

“When one confesses to an act, one ceases to be an actor in it and becomes its witness, becomes a man that observes and narrates it and no longer the man that performed it.”

«Guayaquil», dans Le rapport de Brodie, Jorge Luis Borges.

“841 was here”

(A tag on a wall)
The problem addressed in this handbook

One of the main contributions of the Housing First (HF) model is the change that it has introduced in the way the problem of itinerancy is approached. Apart from providing a different practical answer to the homelessness issue, HF has opened the door to updating alternative work practices by forcing us to view homelessness from other perspectives.

Undoubtedly, the HF model is a step forward in comparison to the intervention models that have been applied until now. The profuse statistics on housing integration reported in different cities that have implemented the HF model are proof that homelessness is not a vicious circle in which the homeless person is condemned to live. However, despite the countless success stories associated with the HF model around the world, intervention agencies working on homelessness face great challenges related to the housing stability of the homeless once they settle in their new domiciles.

An analysis of housing integration has shown that this process is divided into three phases:

1) A preparation phase, where the homeless person takes an active role in their regularization path through document management, which involves putting their criminal status, taxes, health care registration, and so forth in order.

2) An installation phase, in which the homeless person arrives in their new domicile and begins to arrange and organize it. This phase is like a honeymoon, where everything is new, the pleasant effects of being housed are directly perceived, and the extra organizational and management efforts, normally required by a sedentary life, are not observed yet. These efforts are related specifically to the maintenance of a physical space and the observance of rules of coexistence with neighbours.

3) A stability phase, which arises after some time. This phase is characterized by the fact that the emotional well-being felt by the homeless person and generated by the novelty of arriving in a new home begins to lose its motivational force on the person’s behaviour. They rediscover that living in their own permanent
dwelling is an arduous task that requires: a) the establishment of a routine of hygiene, b) the observance of rules of coexistence and c) compliance with financial commitments. In this phase, the homeless person realizes that they must invest a considerable amount of personal effort in order to satisfy these three requirements in accordance with the rules that society has established for enjoying the right to live in a stable home. The person quickly understands that failure to fulfil just one of these requirements is enough to justify losing their housing.

It is in the stability phase that the limits of the HF model become noticeable. There are no clear proposals to solve the persistent issues of dwelling destruction and uncleanliness or itinerancy relapse. This is often due to the fact that identity and emotional dimensions linked to the experience of the homeless person have not been sufficiently taken into account. According to support workers, these problems show up when homeless people neglect central issues of stable life in a dwelling: health and personal hygiene; meal preparation, general housing maintenance, and budget management, among others.

According to the HF and other intervention models, the problems the homeless manifest once they settle in a house are concomitant problems of the person. They are, according to the extensive literature, always linked to mental illness, drug or alcohol consumption, and emotional traumas of childhood or adolescence that originate in intrafamily violence. Thus, the homeless person is explained as a product of a complex series of circumstances that have decreased their ability to adapt and be resilient. The person arrives on the street where they encounter stimuli or are driven to develop addictions, criminal behaviour, and self-destructive and self-marginalizing tendencies. As a result, a homeless person is easily perceived as the prey of a harmful cycle built by risk factors, and homelessness is seen as a product of the dynamics of that cycle.

To solve the problems manifested during the stability phase by homeless people newly integrated in a domicile, HF proposes that the person must receive the support of case managers or social and community workers. However, as stated above, these problems have been interpreted as consequences of the person’s socio-emotional condition. Therefore, the support provided takes the form of an individual intervention centred on the person’s ability to look for alternative solutions to overcoming obstacles, related for the most part to:

- Drug and alcohol consumption
- Violence and aggression
- Episodes of psychological crisis

Thus, the support essentially focuses on keeping the homeless person motivated to stay on their recovery path. The support relies on the construction of a strong bond between the support worker and the homeless person so that the support worker’s suggestions and advice have a greater influence on the homeless person. When homelessness is viewed as a product of concomitant causes, the dialogue and recommendations of the support worker are restricted to those causes. Specifically, the dialogue focuses on issues such as the need to
continue with psychiatric or psychotherapeutic treatments, to enter or to continue attending programs for the treatment of addictions and consumption or to enrol in job search training or work skills development initiatives.

In keeping with the above view of itinerancy, housing stability is interpreted as being dependent, to a considerable extent, on the recovery of the homeless, which is tied to the powers of persuasion of the support worker and to the strength of the bond built with the homeless person. But the strength of that bond is affected by the quality of the relationship, which includes levels of empathy, identification, synergy and mutual understanding. The creation of such a bond is neither easy nor enough to support the homeless person in their recovery, since it stems from a combination of unconscious factors and specific personality traits, which are the elements that allow the development of positive qualities in the bond. In addition, the factors involved do not depend exclusively on the support worker, but on the homeless person too, which makes the final outcome more uncertain. This explains why some cases progress faster than others or stagnate when a support worker is replaced or when previously unknown personality traits of the worker or the homeless person come to light. Apart from the intervention bond, there are multiple factors that can increase the instability of a case in a very particular way: personal life history, support networks, trauma levels, health status, etc. If we also take into account socioeconomic factors that play a fundamental role in the development or well-being of the homeless, home stability seems to be permanently at risk.

It cannot be denied that interventions based on the client support approach have had some positive results. However, their sustainability is uncertain; factors affecting home stability are diverse in their nature, dynamics and level of consciousness, which makes it difficult to establish projections over time when we work on an individual level. Besides, the client-based approach centred on bond quality and individual strengths is too demanding in terms of human, technical and financial resources.

From a truly psychosocial and community perspective, the problems that the homeless present in the stability phase must be approached from a different angle. A distinction must be made between what is commonly understood by the terms “homeless” and “homelessness” and the way these terms are defined in this handbook. Homelessness is not only a consequence of concomitant causes suffered by a person. According to our understanding, homelessness is a phenomenon related to the state of the Self that the person has developed throughout their history of living on the street; it is a story of change in the person’s ontological state that begins with the act of being expelled from a house or leaving it.

In keeping with this new perspective, it has been necessary to critically analyze the approaches on which homelessness interventions have been based and to rethink them. This reflective exercise, which has been carried out in accordance with the history of interventions, has made it clear that what is important in the recovery path of a homeless person is the transformation of the homelessness entity incorporated into their Self. Determining how to access that homelessness entity and how to work with it is the fundamental aim of this handbook.
1.1 Social context of the homeless self

Disciplines that have addressed the problem of homelessness range from sociology, psychology and anthropology to economics and political science. However, these fields of knowledge have not sufficiently developed studies to evaluate the impacts of the different intervention models. Only some psychological and social work studies, supported predominantly by cognitive-behavioural theoretical assumptions, have successfully undergone validity analysis. Apart from the difficulty of finding critical analyses of homelessness intervention models, validated conceptual postulates are neglected or distorted when community organizations adapt these models to their needs.

Interventions based on cognitive-behavioural models are mainly aimed at social skills training, cognitive-emotional control and social inclusion facilitation. In such interventions, support workers shape the behaviour of people, often unconsciously replacing the volition of the person or its existential bases, thus triggering a process of therapeutic alienation. Support workers create an ideal of the person and mobilize all their efforts so that the homeless person reaches that ideal. The person, in response, creates a parallel dimension of their Self, in which they can show objective transformation of their activity without realizing that the transformation comes from an external dominating force. In that state, the homeless person reinforces their sense of legitimacy by defining themselves as the clear image of what the support worker expects. This kind of alienation is commonplace in the community context and can be summarized by the well-known phrase: "In the end, when we talk with them (homeless people), they just tell us what they know we want to hear.” But once the external force that activated the personal transformation is absent, the original dimension of being comes back and the emotional changes dissipate.

The cognitive-behavioural approach no longer subscribes to the notion that the environment has primacy over learning. In fact, it introduces an interactionist perspective where mental schemas are transformed by the interaction between the context, previous experiences and the knowledge acquired by a person. Despite that, the cognitive-behavioural approach is still deficient when it tries to approach the subject as a social product. We are social subjects immersed in a social context and are proactive in our transformation. Our significations of the context are produced with elements that include more than our individual cognitive processes; indeed, the process itself is a social product. Even more troubling is the fact that the cognitive-behavioural approach burdens the individual with all the responsibility for their transformation. As a result, interventions based on that approach fail to consider homelessness as a matter of social construction of the subject.

1.2 Sociocultural perspective of homelessness

Instead of viewing homelessness as a consequence of a subject’s emotional states produced for behavioural-cognitive adaptation processes a view that has given rise to the idea that changes in the homeless person are made by remodeling their behaviour patterns this handbook introduces a sociocultural perspective in which the subject is an active agent of change who acquires consciousness of the signification that society has pro-
duced with regard to having a stable dwelling. Also, the subject becomes aware of how that signification has defined the itinerant Self. Consequently, homelessness is considered to be a condition in which the Self responds to the sense of the physical limits of a house, which in our society has come to be equated with a space where a person can fulfil their personal, emotional and biological needs. In this handbook, homelessness is seen as something that should be approached as the result of a social signification related to the spatial dimension of the Self. Therefore, it is only through the resignification of that dimension that the homelessness entity can be transformed. Due to its sociocultural nature, this resignification is not a process that can be carried out through an internal dialogue between the individual and themselves, since that would place all of the responsibility for the change on their shoulders. The transformation of the homeless Self is a collective issue that must be developed from inside the homelessness world, respecting its history and symbolic system of existence.

In accordance with this approach, this handbook uses the concepts of “itinerancy” and “itinerant” because they better reflect the reality of the homeless Self. The handbook thus ties in with efforts made in several other parts of the world to review the terminology used in this field and to work with concepts closer to the homelessness reality. France, for example, has opted for categories incorporating the notion of «no fixed address” ("sans domicile fixe"). What is discussed in this paragraph is not merely a question of terminology, but of the use of a concept that conveys a social perception about a problem. Talking about “itinerancy” and “itinerant” allows us to integrate in all its dimensions the reality of the Self that does not have a stable domicile. The itinerancy reality shows us that the itinerant Self makes meaning, as we all do, of the space it occupies and that it gives home and residential characteristics to that space. More importantly, the concept of itinerancy avoids stripping the itinerant of their capacity to create a new cognitive-emotional relationship with the space that is their habitat. In contrast, the concepts of homeless and homelessness carry the social perception that the person is incapable of setting up a home. This makes it impossible for that person to be valorized, as if they were unable to exist outside the home model in which most of our society lives. In this handbook, the creation of a home is not considered to depend on the permanent occupation of a dwelling. The physical expression of home could be interpreted as any configuration of space that is made by a person with the goal that the space will provide roots, identity, security, a sense of belonging and emotional well-being. The stories of itinerants show us that all of these characteristics exist in their world even though their habitat does not correspond to the traditional view of home.

Henceforth, I will use the concepts of itinerant for homeless person and itinerancy for homelessness.
2  

**Itinerancy: A View of the Problem from the Itinerant’s World**

This section develops a conceptual framework for the itinerancy issue in the context of providing a new way to support itinerants in their transition to integration and stability in a permanent dwelling. This aspect is part of a broader vision of the intervention model applied by Pech, which focuses on the strengths model and the recovery movement, as well as on awareness-raising through group activities in its popular education center.3

### 2.1 A Brief Socioeconomic History of Itinerancy.

From a geographic perspective, itinerancy can be understood as the permanent mobility of a person over a geographical space. It is a phenomenon that has been observed constantly throughout the history of humankind. Despite the predominance of sedentarism in our era, the transition from nomadism to sedentary life for some human groups did not result in the erasure of all traces of a life based on continuous movement over a geographical space (Delle Fave, Bassi, & Massimini, 2016; Khazanov, 1994; Khazanov & Wink, 2001; Randall, 2015). It is currently estimated that there are between 30 and 40 million nomadic pastoral people living in social groups characterized by continuous movement over a territory (Goyal, 2005; Swift, Toulmin, Chatting, & others, 1990). However, the number may be underestimated, since demographic census systems around the world have neglected to make the modifications needed to better represent the nomadic way of life. In fact, it is estimated that the real number of nomads is somehow invisible (Carr-Hill, 2013; Randall, 2015). Beyond all preconceptions generated by social problems, the important thing to discern from a psychosocial perspective within the itinerant phenomenon is that we, as humans, have two possible relationships with our space, either sedentary or continuously mobile (itinerant).

In the sedentary relationship, the mobility of an individual is limited by the immobility of their spatial centre,

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3- www.infopech.org
which usually corresponds to a built dwelling. The configuration of the individual’s movements is characterized by a continuous return to the nucleus, the dwelling. A person leaves their centre to unfailingly return to it and be submerged in the nucleus of their habitat. In contrast, in the itinerant relationship with space, the mobility of a person is determined by the capacity of the environment to meet their life support needs. In such cases, a habitat core is unidentifiable, but a network of nuclei can be observed. Each of these nuclei may play the role of such core, depending on the needs that the person has to satisfy. Geographically, sedentarism develops habitats with well-defined and permanent spatial limits, whereas itinerancy develops habitats that have zones as spatial limits and seasons as temporal ones.

As an expression of our geographic life, itinerancy has been adopted by several different groups in human history, including jugglers, buffoons, healers, botanists, storytellers, vagrants and pastoral peoples (Beier & Ocobock, 2008; Khazanov & Wink, 2001; Ribton-Turner, 1887). Therefore, approaching itinerancy as a form of human relationship with space opens the door to concrete work on the cognitive-emotional elements of the individual that influence their perception of space, spatial practices and appropriation of space. At this point, it is important to stress the distinction between conceptual space (Gärdenfors, 2004) and lived space (Bollnow, 1967). As Dovey (1985) stated: “. . . conceptual space is abstract, geometric, and objectively measured, a kind of context or ether within which places, people, and things exist. Lived space, in contrast, is the preconceptual and meaningful spatial experience of what phenomenologists call ‘being-in-the-world’.”

### 2.2 Seeing differently

What has been said above does not mean to suggest that we should view street itinerancy (homelessness) as a libertarian and romantic way of life. On the contrary, it is necessary to be aware that the main cause of the emergence of itinerancy as we now know it comes from the transformation of space into a commodity (Engels, 2012) governed by market law and speculation (Engels, 2012; Harvey, 2003). Today, space has been delimited millimetrically and its use is subject to the payment of the value that the market has created for that space. As the pressure for space increases, the quality of the structures that shape space (houses, apartment buildings, etc.) becomes a variable that is independent of the value of space (Harvey, 2003; Hou, 2010). This means that the quality of our dwellings correlates very poorly with their cost; specifically, high rents are charged for poor quality housing. Because of the economic mechanism of commodities production, space is no longer an element free from economic laws as other common resources are: for instance, air, forests and the sea. Space as private property becomes an abstract value that directly defines our social relations (Cloke, May, & Johnsen, 2010; Duany, Plater-Zyberk, & Speck, 2001; Forrest & Williams, 2001; Hamnett, 2001). Thus, the space (dwelling) that is owned becomes the essential place for the development of a person and a family. This shift melds the notions of home and dwelling (Altman & Werner, 1985; Blunt & Dowling, 2006; Heidegger, 1971; Lee Cuba & David M. Hummon, 1993). Nowadays, the place where a family lives, i.e., the house, is a synonym of home and, as a result, home is limited by the size of the house. (Figure 1)

Street itinerancy is first and foremost a problem caused by the value of space. With free access to space, street itinerancy would not exist; with free access to space, the possibility of building a dwelling would be a question
Spatial correlation of home and house

Sedentary life

- House: physical unit
- Home: emotional construct

Itinerant life

- House: not a physical unit but a flexible occupation of the space
- Home: emotional construct
of preference and not something that is imposed. In the same way, with free access to space, communities would always emerge because they are an intrinsic feature of humankind. We are above all collective mammals that have evolved thanks to the existence of groups (McDougall, 1920; Mead, 1950; Morris, 2012) and not because of individuals atomized into minimal family structures (Carrier, 2012; Harris & Johnson, 2006). Therefore, it is not surprising that street itinerants create their own clans, their own tribe. They create logics to use and share space (Dordick, 1996; Hodgetts et al., 2010; T. A. Johnson, 2008; Snow & Anderson, 1987), sometimes by agreement, sometimes by force; however the human instinct to live in a collectivity is always there. Moreover, the collective dynamics and routines developed by itinerants become superimposed on the spatial limits and definitions of normal use of space conceived by urbanists (Crysler, 2014; Kotkin, 2016). The front of the mall is now not only the place to attract customers but also the place to ask for spare change or to say “I’m hungry”. The same process can be observed in train stations and parks, and in areas next to traffic lights. In other words, the ideology of society transmitted by urbanists (Castello, 2016; Ellin, 2013; Françoise, 1965; Gillette, 2010; Kotkin, 2016) has been displaced in such spaces by the meaning that street itinerants give to them when they perform music, juggle or clean windshields there.

In our society, the spatial localization of individuals is a “necessity,” a precondition that immediately creates a divide between people who share a particular model of society and those who are at the edge of, or more tragically, completely outside that model. Our model of living is based on a very strong idea of localization. In fact, the fundamental right of citizenship is applied in practice only if the identity of a person can be linked with a physical address (CHCHP, 1900; Mair, 1986; McNaughton, 2008). Otherwise, the fulfilment of that right is denied and most of the socioeconomic services that derive from localization are automatically out of reach (Cloke et al., 2010). If you do not have an address, you cannot open a bank account, obtain a passport, be registered at school or, worst of all, receive social welfare services. Citizenship and spatial localization are assumed to be intrinsically interdependent (Carr, Brown, & Herbert, 2009), which forces us to adopt a sedentary way of life.

Because of its lack of individual spatial localization, street itinerancy has been described as an anomaly in comparison with the lifestyle of the rest of society (Carr et al., 2009; Mair, 1986). This comes from the idea that successful people have a physical location in space, because our economy is based on that principle. Offices, factories, stores and banks also have a precise location in space. A person has to be linked to one of those places in order to have good opportunities for success (Cloke et al., 2010). The economy is not flexible enough to allow individuals to achieve success outside the inflexibility of spatial localization. Based on the logic of localization, street itinerancy is approached as a problem of physical localization created by an emotional dysfunction, as seen in Goering et al. (2011), Haber & Toro (2004), Lancione (2011), McNaughton (2008), Morewitz (2016), Muñoz, Vázquez, Panadero, & de Vicente (2005), rather than as the result of a different relationship between the individual and their space. As Lancione (2011) proposes: “Approaching homelessness ethically would mean hence to acknowledge its heterogeneous and in becoming dimensions, rather than read it simply as deviancy from the norm. Therefore this ethic, and even the political stances that emerge from it, cannot be detached from the contexts where the homeless’ multiplicity takes place. It is hence a politics-of-experience, which emerges from it, which cannot be dissociated from it.”
In an equivalent interpretation of street itinerancy, Snow, Anderson, & Koegel (1994) have pointed out that: 
“... homeless people are studied out of their context without taking street’s dynamics into full consideration. Moreover, in a ‘disease-model’ approach the subjectivity of homeless people would be labelled as ‘ill’ from the very beginning and would be suddenly understood in a framework that moves within the normal and pathological borders: a way-of-seeing that does not leave space for other understandings, other possibilities, other (not normative-pathological) subjectivities.”

Two approaches prevail in the explanation of street itinerancy (homelessness) (Holt, Christian, & Larkin, 2012; G. Johnson, Scutella, & Tseng, 2003; Lee, Tyler, & Wright, 2010; McNaughton, 2008; Moore, 2007; Tischler, 2008; Wood, Batterham, Cigdem, & Mallett, 2015). The first one explains it as the product of economic factors such as the housing market, labour market or salary policies, and the second, as the product of individual factors such as intrafamilial violence, drug and alcohol consumption and mental illness that bring people to lose their house.

Street itinerancy should also be analyzed from a perspective that is outside the too commonly used once-and-for-all solution. Therefore, we will explore the intrinsic elements that play a role in the configuration and functioning of an itinerant Self instead of approaching the Self from positivist categories that tend to objectify unusual realities in order to tame them (Athens, 2013; Ludovisi, 2015; Stanhope & Dunn, 2011).

2.3 The Self, space and itinerancy

The phenomenon of street itinerancy exists as a specific relationship between a person and space. The fundamental characteristic of the itinerant Self consists in sheltering either in streets, parks or abandoned houses, or wherever the institutional code of space allows a relative occupancy, such as community shelters.

Space is a fundamental component of our psychological functioning (Bachelard, 1961; Curtis, 2010; Lefebvre, 1991; Rohkrämer & Schulz, 2009; Tuan, 2011). We are temporo-spatial subjects; our personal and collective history is marked by time and space and the alteration of one of these elements has radical consequences on our Self (Heidegger, 1962). However, space, compared to time, is a less visible element when we analyze our behaviour. The evocation of an important emotional event (positive or negative) is usually done by recounting that experience in relation to the past; the spatial element, although present in the account, rarely acquires the same importance for the conscience as the time or the protagonists of the emotional event. The presence of space in our consciousness is paradoxical; despite being a structuring element of our existence, it is relegated most of the time to pre-conscious or unconscious levels (Lefebvre, 1991; Mavridou, 2003).

This semi-conscious perception of space originates in the fact that, at the level of human experience, space is a notion that is constructed (Kant, 1894; Lefebvre, 1991). Space in itself is not a reality; for it to exist, it is necessary that someone consciously act on the area where they are located. Such action on space is represented by the building of limits that will make it possible to turn the space into a concrete object. The mental notion of space then becomes an objectified reality. Consequently, the existence and value of space are a product of
the socioeconomic activity of people and the cultural relationships that occur between them (Bourdieu, 1996; Stanek, 2011).

We can identify the extent of the spatial dimension within us through our use of space, our routines and the way we order and symbolize space. Our spatial limits and spatial proportions are the product of our cognitive-emotional functioning and, therefore, they clearly reflect how our Self is structured (Bachelard, 1961; Korosec-Serfaty, 1985). In the same way, an analysis of our use and organization of space reveals the content and nature of the relations that we develop with others and among the elements that are present in that space. However, because the spatial element is relegated to lower levels of consciousness, it is not easy to identify the system of social values and ideological principles with which space is delimited, constituted and regulated (Crysler, 2014; Knox, 2011). This is particularly obvious, first in the urban ordering of cities (Elliott, 2010; Saunders, 2004; Stanek, 2011) and secondly in the relationship of itinerants with their space (habitat) (Stebbing, 2017; Veness, 1993). (Figure 2)

The idea of the human as a being whose development is linked to a centre of life called a dwelling is not a univocal model in the evolution of our species. As noted previously, the sedentary life model is the product of a socioeconomic model which became predominant following a process of industrial development that led population groups to concentrate in cities. Hence, in our logic of the occupation and use of space, the logic of itinerancy seems to exist outside the norm (Cloke et al., 2010). However, itinerancy⁴, like the sedentary lifestyle, is an intrinsic characteristic of human nature. With the shift towards a globalized economy and the development of modern technologies, geographic itinerancy has regained importance (N. C. Johnson, 2013). Nowadays, itinerancy as a basic criterion for productive development has started to attract more attention. Capitals are no longer governed by a state-territory, industries are located and relocated depending on the advantages of production, corporations are extraterritorial ghosts, and people can work, engage in recreational and romantic activities exclusively in cyberspace; it is evident that in our era, social interaction and the reproduction of social ties dependent on a physical space are not as fundamental as they were in the past.

At an individual level, itinerancy is no different from the sedentary model in regard to its essential characteristic of the meaning of space. In both the sedentary and itinerant dimensions of life, it can be observed that people create spaces for social relations, organize actions to satisfy their needs, delimit spaces of work and recreation, and make a distinction between the private and public spheres. Their behaviours are limited according to the spatial risks for health and physical security. People create groups and community identifications, and develop emotional bonds and communication codes. Numerous ethnographic and sociological studies of street itinerancy show that, in essence, personal and social relationships in the itinerant model do not differ from those of the sedentary society. These studies include: Boinot (2007), Bridgman (2006), Dambuyant-Wargny (2004), Dordick (1996), Gowan (2009), Hodgetts et al. (2010), Holt et al. (2012), Koegel (1987), Snow & Anderson (1987) and Stolte & Hodgetts (2015).

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⁴- Understood as permanent mobility in space.
The spatial practice of home

The fundamental difference between the sedentary and itinerant models lies in how the Self is perceived with respect to the space that it inhabits and how the Self builds a sense of home. In order to understand this difference, it is necessary to delve deeper into the concept of home.

2.4 DwellIng, home and ItInerancy

Home is the imaginary representation of a space that a person considers to be the centre where their identity and imprint of belonging are located (Cooper, 2014; Heller, 1995; Mallett, 2004; Somerville, P. 1997; Rykwert, 1991). Bachelard (1961) describes home not as a physical entity but as an orientation to the fundamental values with which people develop a sense of themselves through a spatial imaginary. The imaginary space thus created finds a correlation in a material form of dwelling, but it extends far beyond that materiality. As an emotional place and a spatial imaginary that is a person’s primary point of reference, home becomes the centre of lived experiences alongside a wider sense of being and belonging in society (Blunt & Dowling, 2006; Dovey, 1985; Hamilton, 2017). As such, home is the centre where our system of meanings at individual and social levels is located. Thus, home is imbedded with emotions, experiences, practices and relationships that
lie at the heart of our lives. The abstract nature of home marks metaphorically a person’s dwelling experiences and allows people to withdraw to an intimate space regardless of the habitat’s indoor/outdoor characteristics.

Even if home is an abstraction, at some point in our lives, mostly at an early stage, we shift from home (as an abstract/imaginary space) to dwelling (as a physical/geographic space). The material expression of home is linked with a geographic space thanks to the notion of place (Baldursson, 1995; Hamilton, 2017; Lee Cuba & David M. Hummon, 1993; Mallett, 2004). Home then loses its abstract essence and becomes a geographic referent, a point in an area that can be identified and recognized by the rest of society. From that perspective, we usually understand home as our own place that nurtures us and offers security and refuge from the outside world. As our usual interpretation states: home is the place where I am rooted and can develop; home is where I live.

In the sedentary model, the place where home becomes materialized is a dwelling internally composed of bedrooms, bathrooms, a kitchen, a living room, a backyard, etc. After years of development of the sedentary mononuclear family, the relationship between home and house is so closely linked that in common language, especially in English, these two terms have become synonymous. Home is thus restricted to the physical limits of a dwelling and the living area encompassed by it (Mallett, 2004). However, street itinerancy reveals that, although a dwelling is a component of home, it does not capture by itself the complexity of the socio-spatial relations and emotions that compose home (Blunt & Dowling, 2006; Heidegger, 1971). Because of this, a dwelling is not automatically a home (Rivlin & Moore, 2001; Rykwert, 1991); it does not always have the intrinsic attributes of home. Home becomes associated with a dwelling in a complex process of home-making that people apply to the dwelling structure (Blunt & Dowling, 2006; Cooper, 2014; Veness, 1993).

The street itinerancy phenomenon sheds light on the essentials of home, showing us that home is the product of human activity (home-making). This fact is contrary to the prevalent social belief that a dwelling is the creator of home. Street itinerancy demonstrates that home is not delimited by the walls of a dwelling; it is distributed over a large space that itinerants appropriate as their own and where they can develop an attachment to geographic references, feelings and ideas. What is challenging in the home-making process of street itinerancy is that spaces and feelings influence each other, and the lack of control over the dwelled-in space destabilizes the sense of identity and belonging.

In both sedentary living and itinerancy, home is continually created and re-created through everyday home-making practices expressed as acts of deciding on and maintaining the domestic architecture, interior design and materials. The home-making process is determined by spatial imaginaries of home (Blunt & Dowling, 2006); however, in itinerancy, the materiality of home is shaped by a range of ideas about home that include not only the private household dimension, as in the sedentary life, but also the coercion, repression and violence practiced against itinerants. The materiality of an itinerant’s home thus manifests itself as being disaggregated and distributed over long extensions of the urban space. Rather than viewing their home as a fixed entity linked to a place, itinerants unlink their sense of belonging and identity geographically in order to reflect the mobility of their home.
As such, itinerancy is not a question of lacking a home but of lacking a stable dwelling. In both itinerant and sedentary individuals, the process of home-making is present. Both embody their values and meanings in a dwelling, both select, arrange, and preserve their space, both value and set rules that prescribe what can and cannot be done within the space where they live, both develop roots and have a coordinate system for their space, both set a threshold of intimacy and openness, and both have criteria for delimiting the inside and outside of a territory. (Figure 3)
2.5 Concluding to start

The social ideal has established that home can only be materialized through a stable dwelling. Support for street itinerants has been conceived from this perspective because it is carelessly understood that obtaining a dwelling is the most rational and normal recovery circumstance. It is like saying: “who would say no to a roof over their head?” However, the experiences recounted by itinerants show that for a person to be itinerant, they have had to completely deconstruct the above-mentioned social ideal, even before leaving a stable dwelling. In fact, the person has had to break the physical limits of a home and unchain it from its location. From then on, they have had to guide the process of home-making based on principles of mobility and to re-signify their meanings of place, privacy and intimacy. Itinerancy can thus be seen as a state of Self that is developed from the deconstruction of the location of home. In the open geography of the city, the Self now needs to deeply transform its notion and sense of the use and occupation of space in order to be able to settle and survive. Itinerancy is not a collateral symptom of circumstances experienced by a person. Itinerancy does not disappear magically thanks to the mere fact of inhabiting a stable dwelling. The process of support for dwelling integration and stability needs to be addressed in a way that reflects the manner in which a person’s itinerant lifestyle has developed. It is necessary to support itinerant individuals in a process of reflection that will bring them to deconstruct their itinerancy. This support process must enable them to recognize their meanings of home, place and house, and to create new ones. The support must guide the process of home-making while recognizing and respecting the meaning of home that itinerants have developed and consolidated throughout their life in the streets. (Figure 4)

The construction of a new relationship between home and dwelling must be made from the reality of itinerant individuals themselves and not from a social ideal. The reality of itinerancy reveals a whole new system of meanings about individual, group and collective spheres. Recognizing that system is vital to achieving the deconstruction of itinerancy and ensuring that the process of home-making is based on the generation of a new emotional schema between a person and their space.
Home-making process changes in itinerancy

Early stages of life

Life constraints

Home correlates with spatial dimension of the house

Sedentary life

Start of detachment of home from house

Sedentary life in transition to itinerancy

Home is detached from house

Life on street made possible

Itinerancy

Housing offer

A-R-A support

Start of new attachment of home to house

Itinerancy in transition to sedentary life

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House: physical unit

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Home: emotional construct
3 THEORETICAL BASIS OF ITINERANCY

3.1 THE PSYCHOSOCIAL FUNDAMENTALS

Interventions on itinerancy cannot be reviewed outside of conceptual frameworks that we believe better interpret the reality of the problem and facilitate our understanding of its causes, evolution and contingencies. A critical analysis has led us to create a synergy between conceptual approaches and methodological practices that belong to participatory action research, symbolic interactionism and social constructionism.

The intervention model proposed in this handbook transcends the individualistic view of positivist psychology about itinerancy and addresses the issue from a sociocultural perspective. From this standpoint, we interpret a subject’s behaviour in terms of the behaviour of the social group, instead of explaining the behaviour of the group in terms of the particularities of the different individuals. In other words, it is not a question of explaining the social experience of itinerancy based on the psychology of the individual, but rather of considering it within the set of meanings made for the society and the culture in which the individual experiences itinerancy.

3.1.1 SYMBOLIC INTERACTIONISM

Due to the limitations of this handbook, I will not do an exhaustive review of symbolic interactionism. However, I will present a brief introduction about the theory’s object of study and adapt the description of the main interactionist concepts to our work on itinerancy. I will thus develop in some detail the ideas related to meaning, object, social object, language, self and group. The bibliography contains references on symbolic interactionism and other theories referred in this handbook for further reading.
Compared to the macro theories that have dominated the fields of positivist psychology and sociology, symbolic interactionism appears as a radical conceptualization of the construction of reality. Rather than relying on quantitative methods, which depend on derived data collected through surveys and research, which is then analyzed using statistics, symbolic interactionism primarily uses qualitative data obtained from people’s experiences in their natural context.

According to positivist epistemology, the social sciences should emulate the biological and physical sciences by producing verifiable facts that explain and predict social behaviour. In contrast to that epistemological position, symbolic interactionism emerges as an interpretive perspective that places the inherent agency of human behaviour at the centre of its reasoning and supports a method for studying social behaviour without striving to definitively explain or predict it.

Symbolic interactionism is a social-psychological perspective whose main constructs revolve around the analysis of the meanings that people elaborate and assign to the objects and actions that make up their everyday experiences.

According to Herbert Blumer (2009), one of the most important representatives of symbolic interactionism:

Symbolic interactionism rests in the last analysis on three simple premises. The first premise is that human beings act towards things on the basis of the meanings that the things have for them. Such things include everything that the human being may note in his world—physical objects, such as trees or chairs; other human beings, such as a mother or a store clerk; categories of human beings, such as friends or enemies; institutions, as a school or a government; guiding ideals, such as individual independence or honesty; activities of others, such as their commands or requests; and such situations as an individual encounters in his daily life. The second premise is that the meaning of such things is derived from, or arises out of, the social interaction that one has with one’s fellows. The third premise is that these meanings are handled in, and modified through, an interpretative process used by the person in dealing with the things he encounters . . .

Thus, symbolic interactionism sees meanings as social products, as creations that are formed in and through the signifying activities of people as they interact. (Symbolic interactionism: perspective and method. pp. 2-5)

In order for a person to use their meanings, it is necessary that the person engage in a process of interpretation. In Blumer’s view (2009), this process has two steps:

First, the person indicates to himself the things towards which he is acting; he has to point out to himself the things that have meaning. The making of such indications is an internalized social process in that the actor is interacting with himself: This interaction with himself is something other than an interplay of psychological elements; it is an instance of the person engaging in a process of communication with himself. Second, by virtue of this process of communicating with himself, interpretation becomes a matter of handling meanings. The actor selects, checks, suspends, regroups, and transforms the meanings in the light
of the situation in which he is placed and the direction of his action. Accordingly, interpretation should not be regarded as a mere automatic application of established meanings but as a formative process in which meanings are used and revised as instruments for the guidance and formation of action (Symbolic interactionism: perspective and method. p. 5)

As such, the generation of meanings is at the centre of all human interaction. People act based on the meanings they have within a given situation; this focuses the goal of their interactions on the creation of shared meanings with their social group. For instance, a middle-class professional does not associate the same meaning with a park bench as a homeless person does. Because social groups are not exempt from the impact of dominance and power, new visions of interactionism take these factors into consideration in their reflections, stating that such social phenomena have been created collectively while being presented as acts “owned” exclusively by social institutions. So, new interactionists feel it is necessary to put forward dominance and power as essential components of the meaning-making process. Accordingly, sociologists and social psychologists would commit a serious intellectual omission (and be guilty of naivety) if they failed to closely scrutinize during their work the impact that power and dominance have on social interactions and, therefore, in shaping people’s behaviour.

3.1.2 Meaning and resignification of the social experience of itinerant people

As stated above, symbolic interactionism sees meanings as social products, as creations that are shaped in and through the meaning-making process of people as they interact. The use of meanings by a person in their actions involves an interpretative process that allows the person to give indications to themselves. This means that the person acts on their social context by interpreting it rather than simply reacting to it because of their mental and biological organization. People cope with the situations in which they are called on to act. In the process, they find out the meaning of other people’s actions and define their own course of action based upon their interpretations.

Meanings are expressed as ideas. Any physical or sociocultural phenomenon (object) that we perceive brings us to reflect about its nature, purpose, origin, limits and identity. Before elaborating a meaning, we perform several cognitive functions on the information acquired in order to analyze what happened. We compare, decompose, correlate, and balance the object against our personal story, a story that involves unconscious and conscious meanings. In the first stages of meaning-making, we create intermediate ideas that allow us to work on the interpretation of the phenomenon concerned. These ideas prevent us from getting lost and confused in our work of providing a definite meaning to what happened. We always try to analyze things in relation to others; we try to identify how they operate, what consequences follow from them, and what causes them. At some point, this process of analyzing the phenomenon ends with a feeling that we are absolutely sure of our meaning, which makes us feel that we understand the object. (Figure 5)

5- An object is anything to which attention can be paid and towards which action can be directed (Blumer, 2009).
The meaning of the relationship with others refers to the way in which the subject interprets the Other (represented by words and actions) based on the meanings constructed in their social environment. The resignification of the relationship with the Other is thus a process that allows the subject to become aware of their own symbolization of reality, and to modify it through the verbalization of ideas and opinions. This symbolization is conveyed within the group through the creation of objects and their narrative, or the staging of the subject’s internal conflicts.

Due to their sociocultural essence, meanings are only apprehensible in their entirety when they are activated in the group that has created them. This implies that the encounter of a distinct set of meanings can only occur in the active relation between people, and resignification is possible only if the person is inside the set of
meanings that they have constructed. Indeed, resignification cannot occur when the person is outside of their set of meanings or if the set involves a presumption of power. In the latter situation, resignification is blocked because what emerges in the relationship between people is an unequal dialogue of power between a set of meanings consolidated in its power of symbolization by an institutional context and another set created in the marginalization of social life for instance, between institutional behaviour patterns (considered normal) and a system of subjugated meanings (considered abnormal), like those associated with itinerancy. In such situations, the second system will always be at a disadvantage compared to the first one.

In order for resignification to be possible in the case of itinerants, it is vital that they be immersed in a system of meanings of their own making and level so that they can carry out horizontal dialogues and formulate answers that are outside of the dominant social model. This equivalent and egalitarian environment is achieved through group work where the itinerant meets their peers and can express their ideas, opinions and actions in a process that the group recognizes as being original and its own. Group work allows the itinerant to no longer be an isolated individual, but a member of a community that generates dialogue and practices which identify and consolidate the group; to no longer be an individual who has been marginalized from society, but a member of a micro-society organized through the culture of the street. The dialogue and practices developed in group work are based on participants' own experiences and sets of meanings, thereby ensuring, among other things, the equality of significations between itinerants and support workers.

In so-called normal society, the social and cultural context provides meanings about interpersonal relations. People interpret those meanings on the basis of their own experiences and do not venture outside of the institutional meaning system. This limits the ways in which they interpret reality in order to prevent their interpretations from altering the established social order. The aim of resignification is to enable people to confront their perceptions about their relationships with others and their context by exploring new ways of seeing their history. In so doing, people transform their vision of the world by giving new meanings to their social and cultural experience.

For resignification to be possible, itinerants need to be able to represent their micro-society and culture openly and without limits. In such situations, itinerants are active agents who transform their own conceptions through their interactions with other points of view coming from the itinerancy set of meanings. The production of new meanings among the itinerant group stems from the fact that the different perceptions of the itinerancy reality are derived from the same sociocultural context. In group interactions, these perceptions are permeated with new interpretations produced by the analysis of the micro-society represented in the group. The perceptions of the itinerancy reality are transformed because, thanks to group interaction, the sociocultural significance of it changes.

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6- I use this notion to represent both informal institutions associated with customs or behaviour patterns (family, religion, education) and formal institutions (government and public services).
3.1.3 Object and social object

In symbolic interactionism, as in social constructionism, an object is anything to which attention can be paid and towards which action can be directed (Blumer, 2009). We live in a world of objects that we constantly create and recreate by acting in a symbolic way towards them. We do not act erratically with those objects; our orientation to them in a given space and time is intentional and goal-oriented. This characteristic is what allows us to transform sets of things into a system of objects. As a result, in order to understand the actions of people, it is necessary to identify their world of objects, and most importantly, to recognize that objects and their meaning arise only in the process of definition and interpretation of our context that occurs in our social relations; objects are thus social creations.

In this perspective, an important place is given to the interaction between a person and tangible (physical) or intangible objects (social, emotional or cultural events). For the purpose of this handbook, it is necessary to stress the existence of such social objects, because they are the main element in our work with itinerants. A social object is an object that comes into existence as the result of a social act (Mead, 1950). In other words, it is an object born from shared experience, understanding and meaning (Athens, 2013). Itinerancy is a good example of a social object. We give importance to social objects not through innate patterns, but according to the common interest of others in those objects, which increases their importance. As a social construction, each object changes, not because the object itself changes, but because people change the meaning they associate with it. Therefore, the meaning is not intrinsic to the object, but extrinsic and socially created.

It is also important to stress that the concept of action is equal to that of social action. In fact, a social action is an act that is socially mediated. When a person acts on objects, the person simultaneously takes the perspectives of other people (the collectivity) towards those objects. Needless to say, all our actions fall into the category of social action, even if they are performed by individuals.

3.1.4 Construction of objects and the role of language

Language, or the ability to systematically use symbols to represent objects and meanings, is the essential function of a person. Through the set of symbols that compose a set of meanings, we can transform the context in which we live, because the symbols allow us to expand the spatial and temporal scope that shapes our context. This transformation occurs because the existence of the symbol does not depend on the concrete presence of the objects it represents. This allows us to recreate the objects even when the concrete presence of them is absent from our space and time. Through imagination, speculation or hypothesizing, we can recreate new social objects represented by environments, contexts and relationships, and once those new objects have been matched with others of our collectivity, they can become a new social reality.

The symbols of language enable us to name tangible objects (physical things) and intangible objects (social, emotional or cultural events). This means that we give an identity to those objects. Since the name replaces the
object, it becomes an internalized concept and reality. With these internalizations we can perform all kinds of changes and complex operations on objects. The strength of symbols is that they make it possible to create objects and realities, because we can give them an identity. For instance, when we hear the word itinerant, a series of images and meanings come to mind: dirty, addicted, crazy, loser, etc. Therefore, the symbol represented by the letters i-t-i-n-e-r-a-n-t carries a set of concepts that compose the itinerant identity. People do not need to see an itinerant (object) to immediately identify one.

3.1.5 The Self

Our capacity to create and use symbols represents the process by which we can acquire an identity. When we name others with symbols that exist in our context, we allow others to name us, and in this reciprocal action of naming others and being named, we create an identity, a Self. To use a name for oneself is to become a Self. That Self, by its very nature, is a social object that we incorporate into the set of objects in our context; because our Self is a social object, we can act on ourselves and we are impelled to act.

The Self allows us to exert control over our conduct by coordinating our behaviours with those of others and creating complex social acts. The function of behaviour control is possible because the object Self arrives in our reflective process as two states of consciousness, the “I” and the “me,” according to Mead (1950):

The “I” is the response of the organism to the attitudes of the others; the “me” is the organized set of attitudes of others which one himself assumes. The attitudes of the others constitute the organized “me,” and then one reacts towards that as an “I.” (Mind, Self and Society from the Standpoint of a Social Behaviorist, p. 175)

Following Mead’s ideas (1950), the “I” captures the spontaneous, immediate and impulsive action of our conduct when we become aware of the social objects that are part of the context in which we evolve. The “me,” on the contrary, comes into play when we are aware of our initial response to other objects and we take ourselves into account as objects. This dialectic allows us to develop a reflexive dialogue between these two states of consciousness. To represent the reflexive dialogue inside us, Athens (1994; 1995) developed the concept of soliloquy as a way to explain the process of reflection that brings us to evolve and react to our social context. Basically, soliloquy is the dialogue that we have with ourselves to relate our ideas, perceptions and feelings in a series of unspoken reflections. Athens (1994) states thirteen principles that govern soliloquy. Nine of them are summarized below according to their relevance to the goal of this handbook and the psychosocial approach we work with; the reader is invited to explore them in more detail in the original reference:

**Principle one:** People converse with themselves as if they were conversing with someone else, except that they converse with themselves elliptically... We can speak to ourselves in a much more abbreviated and rapid fashion, and thereby far more economically, than we can speak to someone else. This, of course, is precisely the reason why it can often be so difficult to explain something to someone else that we know even as well as the directions to our home.
**Principle two:** When conversing with someone else, people must also simultaneously converse with themselves, otherwise they do not know what they are telling the other person, and may be justifiably accused of not knowing what they are talking about. People can and often do converse silently with themselves without simultaneously conversing out loud with others, so what one overhears someone else say cannot always be taken as an accurate expression of the speaker’s true thoughts and emotions.

**Principle three:** When other people are conversing with us, we must converse at the same time with ourselves about precisely what they are conversing with us. In other words, as people tell us something, we must simultaneously tell ourselves what we are being told by them. This is all, essentially speaking, that is meant by the highly ambiguous phrase “taking the perspective of the other.”

**Principle four:** Soliloquizing transforms our raw, bodily sensations into emotions. The diffuse, amorphous feelings originating from sources either inside or outside our bodies, which we regularly experience, are transformed through our soliloquizing into the full-blown emotions that we subsequently identify as pride or shame, happiness or sadness, love or hate, tranquility or rage, etc.

**Principle five:** When soliloquizing, we always converse with an interlocutor, even though it may deceivingly appear as if we are only speaking to ourselves. Everything that is said to us, including what we say to ourselves, some interlocutor tells us. We also converse with phantom others, who are not present, but whose impact upon us is no less than the people who are present during our social experiences.

**Principle six:** The phantom other is, to borrow William James’s (1942, pp. 89-107) well-known phrase, both “the one and the many.” How can the phantom other simultaneously be a single and multiple entity? It is a single entity because we can only normally talk to one phantom companion at a time during our soliloquies. It is also a multiple entity because we usually have available more than one phantom companion with whom to speak while soliloquizing.

**Principle seven:** Soliloquizing operates on both a surface and deep level. The surface and most obvious level of our soliloquies’ operation is the ongoing conversation that we carry on with ourselves which takes place in the forefront of our experiences. We converse with ourselves and are aware of our conversations. The same cannot be said as far as our awareness of our phantom companions is concerned. Most of the time we take their presence in our lives so much for granted that they lie far beneath our normal level of awareness, so that we are rarely aware of their existence in our lives. While remaining oblivious to us, our phantom companions influence the creation of our deepest thoughts and emotions.

**Principle height:** Soliloquizing makes possible self-portraiture. Conversely stated, it would be impossible for us to paint the relatively enduring pictures of ourselves with which we invest so much heartfelt emotion, if we could not soliloquize. People can neither directly view nor judge themselves. This can only be indirectly done. By people resorting to the old trick of “taking the perspective” of another person, and then, approaching themselves from that other person’s viewpoint. Our self-portraits are painted, as well as repainted during special soliloquies in which the main topic of the conversation is ourselves.
Principle nine: The phantom community always plays the premier part in our soliloquies. It takes centre stage when we soliloquize during solitary, introspective experiences, as well as during more genuine social experiences. (The self as a soliloquy, pp. 524 – 528).

3.1.6 The internalization of objects and the transformation of the Self

A process of personal change is generated by our capacity to reflectively respond to the Self, the object that represents ourselves. When we consider ourselves as an object similar to any other object integrated into our experience, this time as a Self, we are in a continuous social interaction between the “I” and the “me.” New solutions to our problems arise from this interaction as we adapt existing meanings in order to deal with the contingencies usually present in any social process.

As Selves, we live inside a set of objects symbolically designated as things, ideas, activities, and purposes. Because our Self shares this condition with other objects, we are able to internalize those objects too. During the process of internalization, objects (ideas, concepts, actions, etc.) that exist in the social context move into our symbolic sphere (mind). In order for this displacement to be possible, we compare the external object with our own set of meanings. In this process of comparison, emotional charges are generated and they ultimately allow us to develop personal identifications with the external object and bring it into our inner world. For instance, when we say “take the position of the Other,” we transform the Other into an object of reflection in order to internalize it.

The extent to which an internalized object shapes our behaviour depends on the level of identification that we have with the object. The greater the identification with the object, the greater the level of change in our behaviour. However, common sense makes us fall into the trap of thinking that we identify with an object to a greater or lesser extent depending on whether its qualities are positive or negative. The ethical or moral qualities of an object have absolutely no influence on the subject’s identification with it. The determining factor in our identification with objects is the set of meanings built by us during our early years of social interaction. A good example of how the qualities of an object have no bearing on whether or not we identify with it is provided by the case of followers of extremist leaders. Indeed, these followers view such leaders as high-value objects and aspire to be like them despite the fact that the social system identifies the leaders as negative in their ethical and moral values.

Emotional empathy is an important factor in the internalization of objects; depending on our level of empathy, we accelerate or decelerate their internalization. This is the underlying principle of role models being influential figures in our socialization who often speed up the internalization process. This is because we are more prepared to accept the meanings and new characteristics of an external person when we consider that the person represents and supports a particular set of meanings close to ours.

It might seem that the process of internalization is static and goes only one way, but that is not so. We change through social interaction (participation) and, in the process, we adjust our system of meanings and, there-
fore, our emotions. This adjustment not only prepares us to participate in later similar social relations, but also to create new ones. Specifically, when a group of people participate in an activity, they reveal, share and synthesize their meanings, and make continuous contributions. For instance, during group work, such contributions are expressed by the extension of interpretation schema for understanding the actions and ideas of others. One of the reasons for working with participatory activities is that the exchange of meanings is bidirectional. Interpretations that originally had an institutional meaning on an intrapersonal level move up to an interpersonal level in group work and become part of a new collective interpretation of reality.

3.1.7 The role of the group

The life of each person is inextricably linked to a group. The group is the key factor for an individual’s insertion in society. For instance, the family is a group, our primary group. As established in the previous sections, the individual, in order to be constituted as such, needs the Other. Hence, we participate in all spheres of our life in relation to a group or in a group. We think, talk, work and live in groups. The capacity to create, organize and manage our lives in groups has allowed the human species to evolve. We take part in groups, formally constituted or not, on a daily basis. All spheres of our life, including work, health, recreation, politics and beliefs, are intimately connected to one another and use the group as a reference frame.

The extent to which the presence of a group is felt in the individual dimension is determined by the space that the group occupies in the immediate or distal reality of the person. That is to say, the group does not cease to exist when the person is no longer in direct participation or relationship with it. The person has interiorized the group and it lives within the person. The group has different reality statuses: a) it is socially real to a person because it is included in the shared norms that allow people to reciprocate communication; b) it is objectively real when the identity of the person is reinforced by the identification that different actors have with the group in which the person lives (sense of belonging); and c) it is psychologically real because the person organizes their emotions and motivations in relation to the group or groups to which they belong. These dimensions of group reality at the interpersonal level explain why the presence of groups is intrinsically involved in a person’s behaviour.

The individual in the group acts as a component of a social construction that defines the individual in a later state. In other words, for the individual to be able to participate in the group and become part of it, they trigger a process that opens up their identity and emotional and cognitive limits. The group then fills the spaces created with social identity and emotional and knowledge content. The resulting effect of completeness can transform the person or reinforce their social action and therefore their individual behaviour.

It is the blurriness of individual limits in the group that makes the group more than just the sum of its members. The group is constituted as a whole that develops its own identity and emotional and cognitive processes. This is why the group develops behaviours that cannot be predicted based on the characteristics of the individuals that compose it. The characteristics of the group result from the personality profiles of those individuals, but these characteristics are not simply elements that can be added to or subtracted from those profiles.
It is quite common, in some contexts, for there to be no direct influence from the group. In such cases, the individual will produce an interpersonal (person-to-person) behaviour based on the characteristics of the group to which they belong; for instance, the person may express personal positions derived from the group identity, such as stereotypes, prejudices, political vision and gender roles.

To the extent that the elements of group organization, such as continuity, self-awareness, functional specialization, interaction, and group norms, are consolidated in the group, the group spirit is developed accordingly. The basis of this group spirit is «group consciousness,» which is an organized system of emotional and cognitive forces that have a life of their own. Group consciousness has the capacity to shape all members of the group, as well as the ability to perpetuate itself as a reflection of its own image. Because of its collective characteristics, it undergoes only slow and gradual changes.

The relationship between the individual and the group is vital in both the socioemotional constitution of the individual and the constitution and consolidation of the group. This relationship is interactive in nature and not interdependent. It is important to stress this difference, because when we consider the relationship as interdependent, we assume that the individual and the group are entities with separate identities that coexist for different purposes. In contrast, the notion of interaction infers that the group and the individual are inseparable. First of all, this is because insertion in the group requires that the individual possess a social identity that allows him or her to enter into social relationships and this insertion provides the individual with the ability to embrace the relationships of the group. Secondly, it is because the conditions of the group are transferred into the inner substance of the individual and transform the latter’s identity. In this way, a social unit is produced and not a mere coexistence of individuals with a group. The unit is not an individual but a social individual. (Figure 6)
Intervenant individuellement
La communauté itinérante dans la rue

Intervenant en groupe
La communauté itinérante dans la rue

Support worker
Communauté itinérante dans la rue

Niveau d’implication
Niveau de influence culturelle et sociale

Figure 6

COMMUNITY ITINERANT IN THE STREET
Support worker

COMMUNITY ITINERANT IN THE STREET
Support worker

COMMUNITY ITINERANT IN THE STREET
Support worker

COMMUNITY ITINERANT IN THE STREET
Support worker
4 The dynamics of resignification in the A-R-A participatory process

4.1 Action - Reflection – Action (A-R-A) activities

A-R-A activities constitute a participatory process that facilitates the generation of new meanings through the projection of participants’ perceptions of reality. This way of intervening on the life experiences of participants allows the development of new emotional, social and cultural meanings to become a dynamic process of personal transformation. A-R-A activities bring participants to reveal their daily representations and their personal attitude towards life. The externalization of these representations and their subsequent resignification is what allows people to create and integrate different perspectives of life, and to achieve their insertion without causing any trauma in different social spaces. In the active interaction of A-R-A activities, participants express, organize and make communicable the meanings and knowledge acquired through their individual experiences, turning them into consistent and sustained knowledge based on a critical reflection on their individual social practice.

In working with itinerants, support workers must begin their intervention by keeping in mind the principle that all people have their own representation of the world, which is loaded with beliefs, ideals and norms that influence the way each person gives meaning to their reality and determines their social behaviour. Contrary to the medical or behavioural model, the A-R-A model focuses on the Self and perceives it as the product of a meaning-making process carried out inside the social interactions of the itinerant.

The production of new meanings that will generate a change must be done in a context of group work that facilitates the expression of the itinerant’s representations of the world among people coming from the same social context. Taking the person out of their meaning context is an action that violates the Self because the latter is expelled from its historical flow of emotions, experiences and aspirations. Within a space of encounters with peers who share the same social stigmatization and the same set of meanings, with which they
interpret their social, cultural, emotional and biological experiences, the participant’s Self is fully recognized. From that space and because of what it represents to participants, the itinerant Self can produce new ways of representing reality and can thus generate a change in behaviour.

Within that group space, support workers build horizontal relationships between themselves and the participants. This allows for the clear expression and production of representations of the reality lived by itinerants. Due to the absence of hierarchies and pre-established models of behaviour or social roles, these representations constitute a true exchange of meanings. In the participatory process, each itinerant contributes to the exchange and analysis of social representations about itinerancy. Since the problem of itinerancy is shared by all members of the group, the set of meanings that support the representations belongs to the group and not to external agents of intervention or institutional paradigms of behaviour. The itinerant Self cannot be transformed simply through an intervention on the symptoms of social dysfunction. In order for personal transformation to occur, itinerants must have the freedom to identify and elaborate the problems related to their inhabited space, and to decide how they give meaning to and emotionally charge that space.

Because A-R-A activities constitute a social space, participants can freely externalize and discuss the meanings underneath their ideas, feelings and experiences around an issue related to problems with their inhabited space. The role of support workers is to encourage the production of ideas and reveal all the possible relationships between participants’ meanings and their notions of itinerancy, living space, dwelling and home. That production must be based on itinerants’ perceptions and not on those coming from social norms. In that way, support workers will be seen by the group as a reference for participation and the exchange of meanings, and as facilitators of the analysis of what is said during the exchanges.

Support workers must always keep in mind that the process of resignification of the itinerancy experience is key to the transformation of the itinerant Self. The itinerant’s experience with living space and space in general is what has led him or her to prefer itinerancy as the way to react to everyday situations. Therefore, exposing oneself to new experiences with a living space and discussing them allows for an inner mobilization of the person. In other words, by disclosing the inner meaning of their history and experiences of living on the street itinerants are brought to reorganize those experiences in a way that is different from that which led them to opt for itinerancy.

The process of experience resignification does not rely on the transmission of external knowledge or on the presentation of models of behaviour. To the extent that one of the socioemotional components of itinerancy is the permanent conflict between acceptable social models (perceived as normal by society) and the itinerant’s dynamics of life, an intervention based on guiding the itinerant towards a pre-established social model generates inner tensions and increases the risk of intervention cessation or itinerancy relapse. Itinerancy strategies reflect alternative models of social belonging, which are effective enough to achieve the goals of the itinerant. Therefore, support workers must recognize that their role is not to induce a change in the itinerant’s knowledge about behavioural risks or about the social model that the itinerant has. Support workers must focus on the meaning that the itinerant gives to the essential elements of their experience and that leads to the break with residential stability. Basically, this corresponds to the itinerant’s meaning of living space (represented in
elements such as the home, dwelling, neighbourhood, district and territory) and what underlies it, namely, space as a constitutive element of the Self.

Accordingly, support workers must strengthen their conviction that group work is the suitable space for carrying out resignification since it is in this space that the collective experience of itinerancy is manifested and reflected with all of its symbolic load. The collective experience lived by the group and framed by the A-R-A process generates an interaction of subjectivities and the development of significant links. The resignification process leads to readjustments of the social models internalized by the itinerant. The fact that these readjustments are made by the itinerant in conjunction with a group of peers makes them more stable because they are not perceived as resulting from the adoption of an external model (imposed meaning), but as having their own meaning shared by a collectivity. This last characteristic also gives social value to the readjustments and adds a cultural dimension to them.

A-R-A activities not only bring participants to interact with other itinerants, but to interact with themselves. By recognizing the Other in their interpretation and evaluation of the Other’s actions and by recognizing other people’s lifestyles, participants are doing the same reflective exercise with themselves. This self-interaction is the real content of the interaction among the group, and it is the mechanism by which a person’s actions are mobilized and reorganized.

By developing reflections about themselves, participants internalize the group perspectives and thereby adjust themselves to that new set of meanings. This internalization allows the itinerant to interact with others based on considerations that are not immediately present in that interaction. The presence of group norms and meanings becomes an opportunity to guide the itinerant’s actions and provides indicators that in turn guide their decision-making process, thus enabling the itinerant to deeply recognize their feelings, desires and meanings.

**4.2 A-R-A ACTIVITIES AND MEANING**

The psychosocial conception of A-R-A activities generates strategies to bring out itinerants’ sets of meanings. This externalization allows itinerants to recognize and confront the different interpretations of their life experience, and to identify the logic that organizes the itinerancy experience beyond individual perceptions. Thus, A-R-A activities reveal the complexity of meanings and relationships, making their conflicts, strengths and weaknesses intelligible.

Individual experiences, including the itinerancy one, do not exist as objective facts independent of the set of interpretations that people make of them. These experiences must be understood as collective constructions of meaning in which different logics coexist and compete, creating a complex and contradictory scenario that people approach with specific behaviours as responses.

In A-R-A activities, the emphasis is on extracting the meaning of the itinerancy experience. The starting point consists in projecting a reconstruction of the lived experience in the theme of each activity. This does not mean
that the activities turn into skits about itinerancy. Far from it, A-R-A activities form a scenario where participants are asked to perform, using an abstract reproduction of a constitutive element of itinerancy, a series of kinetic and reflexive tasks keeping in mind a previously defined objective. While the participants perform the tasks, they project their meanings and spontaneously mix them through their interaction and dialogues. The support worker is responsible for gathering these projections in order to return them to the participants later on, during a debriefing, and to extract and analyze their meaning together. Participants then structure the meanings into a new set of meanings. The interaction is very demanding emotionally and intellectually because it challenges the notions of reality of each participant, including those of the support workers.

The collective action prompted by A-R-A activities uncovers collective meanings about the practices and perceptions that compose the problem of itinerancy. Change is not generated spontaneously through a simple discussion about what itinerancy is; change arises from a complete recognition of the various representations of this phenomenon and from participants’ knowledge of it. The goal is to work reflexively on those representations later on and to overcome the limits they impose on the daily life of itinerants.

4.3 Putting A-R-A activities into practice

Thus far, it is possible that the reader has been aware of an ethereal taste produced by the abstract essence of concepts such as meaning, perceptions, space, interaction and Self. Generally speaking in North America, social interventions seek the efficient adaptation of people to a specific social model. Therefore, the concepts mentioned above may seem inoperable among or inapplicable to itinerant or marginalized populations. However, these concepts, when applied in psychosocial interventions, are powerful operational factors that produce important results, like the generation of new collective practices, citizen participation and inclusion, and the dignification of marginalized people.

A-R-A activities are composed of segments of tasks and reflection. During the execution of the tasks, the experience of collective work is lived through verbal exchanges aimed at revealing and discussing positions and personal ideas. In general, A-R-A activities:

- Promote participation in the discussion and analysis of different issues and problems.
- Develop mechanisms that encourage the free expression of ideas and opinions.
- Raise awareness about the reality and problem experienced.
- Arouse interest in the solution of personal and collective problems.

In carrying out A-R-A activities, support workers must perceive participants as the owners of their reality and as active autonomous actors, able to apply their critical thinking skills in order to analyze their problems and consider the points of view of others.
### Principles of A-R-A activities

**Relevance:**
This refers to the integration of the needs and interests of the members of the group into the reflective process in such a way that the members discover the link between their needs and the tasks proposed by support workers.

**Self-generation:**
This refers to self-motivation without external impositions, the need for reinforcement and punishment, or approval of the creative process. The motivation comes from the fact that participants feel useful when they realize that they are able to do a task and are aware that their contribution is a constituent part of the group's final result. Participation within the collectivity strengthens participants’ concept of Self.

**Applicability:**
This refers to the development of conditions that will enable participants to integrate knowledge from previous experiences into a task and put it into practice.

**Reflection:**
This refers to the development of participants’ ability to review their own actions and evaluate the facts. It involves rationalizing experiences from a “cause-effect” perspective and from the particular to the general.

#### 4.3.1 Resignification work

In general, A-R-A activities are performed as a workshop in which participants externalize their logic of thought and behaviour, identify the meaning of that logic and question these aspects in order to bring about their resignification. The new meanings generate a new position in relation to oneself, others and society as a whole. The result of this process is a person who faces actively and reflexively the difficulties of daily life.

Resignification is central to the A-R-A process. The following sections of this handbook provide a synthesis of the components and mechanics of the resignification process.

#### 4.3.1.1 Psychosocial processes affecting resignification

In the course of our sociocultural development and adaptation, we develop three psychosocial processes:

- Familiarization
- Reification
- Habituation
The psychosocial essence of these processes lies in their dependency on the socioeconomic and cultural circumstances in which a person lives. Their importance in shaping the person’s behaviour is due to the fact that these processes delimit with rigid patterns of perception the cognitive, emotional and motivational components of the person.

These processes are common to all of us, and we use them peripherally in defining our sense of reality. Although they have positive effects on us by helping us move towards higher states of consciousness, these effects disappear when those processes become the core of our emotional-cognitive functioning. This is what happens in situations of extreme life conditions, such as those lived by itinerants or marginalized populations. In extreme situations, familiarization, reification, and habituation are static, and they lead people to resort to inaction and block their ability to change or develop. In that state, people perceive life as a fatality or a natural condition that they must undergo and over which they have absolutely no control.

The fields of perception and knowledge of people trapped in these processes codify and organize everyday reality exclusively through the lenses (limits) that familiarization, reification and habituation impose. Thus, adverse and highly damaging circumstances are integrated into what is already known (familiarization), which impedes a person’s emotional-cognitive reactions and leads to the deactivation of reflexive processes. The person then internalizes the adverse situations as something that constitutes a «natural» way of life (reification), with the result that they end up developing adaptive behaviours expressed as habits (habituation). People stuck in that cycle see their reflective-interpretative functions blocked, and they fail to develop relationships of cause and effect over the adverse conditions of their lives.

The effects of that blockage are manifested in the fact that a person’s life-change expectations are, at best, very low, and, in most cases, nonexistent. Alternative options for life or change are perceived and felt as impossible, bizarre or outlandish. Consequently, people passively accept the negative conditions of their lives and limit or completely deny the possibilities of individual and group change.

4.3.1.1.1 Familiarization

This psychosocial process consists of transforming the strange or uncommon act, circumstance, state or thing into something already known by the person for the purpose of making it easily manageable, assimilated and accepted by them. To be able to turn something strange into something familiar, we use the mechanisms of classification, categorization, labelling and definition, in a logic of closeness and correlation with the past rather than with visions of the future.

Social representations are the basis of the familiarization process. These representations are composed of a set of ideas that give coherence to our beliefs, individual ideas and citizenship actions. Social representations allow us to classify people and objects, compare and explain behaviours, and objectify them in order that everything new, strange or uncommon can be viewed as being part of our social context. For instance, a family
of immigrants will make cognitive-emotional links based on what they already know and what they see as new: the color of buses, the layout of a playground, market uses, politeness rules, religious practices, etc.

According to Moscovici (1973):

A social representation is a system of values, ideas and practices with a twofold function: first, to establish an order which will enable individuals to orientate themselves in their material and social world and to master it; and secondly to enable communication to take place among members of a community by providing them with a code for social exchange and a code for naming and classifying unambiguously the various aspects of their world and their individual group’s history. (Foreword, pp. xiii in: Health and Illness: a social psychological analysis).

The social representations of itinerants are composed not only of ideas, metaphors and images that these people have produced themselves, but also, and to a large extent, of the stigmatized ideas that the rest of society has about the itinerancy phenomenon. From this perspective, social representations of itinerants form a set of meanings that block alternative views of the problem as well as other life projects that may be generated by each itinerant and by their collectivity.

The link between stigmatization and social representations is rooted in the notion of common sense, which constitutes a form of non-institutionalized natural thought that is sustained by conversations among the members of society and disseminated by the media. Thus, social representations about itinerancy are integrated into the collective discourse, at first as simple references and later as social practices. This shift legitimizes the representations and changes them from speculations to truths of common sense.

4.3.1.1.2 Reification

Reification is a psychological process where sociocultural situations and behaviour patterns are considered to be things created independently of all human action. So, the person assumes that things act autonomously outside of any human interaction. In other words, reification is the appropriation of the products (concrete or abstract) of human activity as if they were something more than human products, as if they were facts of physical-biological nature, results of cosmic laws or manifestations of a magic will.

In reification, we do not see ourselves as authors of the relations and things that compose our context; therefore, the dialectic between the producer and their products vanishes from the consciousness. Reification has nefarious effects on our consciousness because we experience the world as a fatality over which we have no control.

Reification of social roles is a very common feature of the problem of itinerancy. It is expressed when people disclaim responsibility for their acts because of the inevitable fate of their role. Such reification is expressed by statements like: “This is what we always do, we can’t do things differently”; “I have no choice in the matter, I have to act this way because everybody else here acts like that.”
Racism or sexism are other examples of reification; in such cases, the objects of prejudice are perceived not as human beings but as things. In every instance, the thing is taken as an isolated and natural truth.

4.3.1.1.3 Habituation

Habitus

The conditionings associated with a particular class of conditions of existence produce habitus, systems of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is, as principles which generate and organize practices and representations that can be objectively adapted to their outcomes without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends or an express mastery of the operations necessary in order to attain them. Objectively ‘regulated’ and ‘regular’ without being in any way the product of obedience to rules, they can be collectively orchestrated without being the product of the organizing action of a conductor.

(Bourdieu, 1990. The logic of practice, p. 53)

Habituation arises when a person adapts to a context or life situation through habitus. Habitus shapes the ways in which the person faces everyday situations — ways that are considered as the most natural expression of being and doing in the world, as if they were the very essence of doing. Habitus also involves an implicit coding that includes social expectations regarding the habitus itself. The code establishes that one is neither expected to act in a certain way, nor thought to be able to act otherwise. This has a very strong impact on the achievement of new life alternatives, since it keeps the extrapolation of those alternatives only within the limits of the context where the habits have been generated. In other words, because of habitus, only marginalized actions are taken from a marginalized context. This is part of the reason why itinerants show a level of incoherence between their life projects and the actions they take to realize those projects; because of that incoherence, both itinerants and support workers interpret such life projects as fantasies or daydreams. Generally speaking, habituation creates a fatality cycle (loop) where habitus subtracts the potential for change and renewal from alternatives of life, thus leading people to accept and uncritically reproduce harmful life circumstances. For instance, an itinerant may want to respond in a friendly manner to a request by an official to provide more documents for their file. However, since the official is used to dealing with difficult cases, they will take a defensive position and submit their request in a gruff way. The itinerant will therefore abandon their efforts to establish a friendly relation and will also respond defensively and aggressively. In the end, both the itinerant and the official will reinforce their perception that “they’re always like that; nothing can be done about it”.

To achieve an inner mobilization in people who see their lives as a fatality beyond their control, the mechanisms of familiarization, reification and habituation need to be redirected towards a new psychosocial dimension. Hence, A-R-A activities are tasks where participants execute specific actions on habits and familiar and reified contents so that they can, together with the other members of their collectivity in the group, produce new processes, relations and logics about those contents. To the extent that each member of the group plays a role
in the execution of a task, each member produces a subset of these three elements. Each subset is integrated into the final product through work dynamics. In this way, the person who participates in the activity can recognize the final product as the result of their interaction with themselves and others.

4.3.2 Unchaining reflection

During the execution of a group task, participants develop dialogues that together produce contents that are condensed around the central objective of the task. At this stage, the support worker gives feedback on the content of these dialogues, not from their own knowledge or experience, but from the content itself, using the enquiring mechanism.

4.3.2.1 Enquiring: a mechanism for reflection

This mechanism consists of analyzing critically the ideas or actions expressed by participants during group work. Analyzing critically is not equivalent to expressing a critical opinion, which is a purely personal act determined by the social representations of the person who expresses the opinion. Critical analysis starts by identifying the object⁷ to which an idea or action refers, in order to try to identify posteriorly the causes that produced or impacted the object and, ultimately, to recognize the effects that those causes have had on the evolution of the object. As such, enquiring involves the identification and overcoming of representations and meanings that determine an individual’s practices.

Enquiring causes the meanings that compose the object to emerge into consciousness. To achieve this identification of meanings, the support worker guides the group so that it can observe the object from another perspective. In this task, the group subtracts the object from habituation and familiarity in order to construct new ways of explaining why the object exists, how it has been produced and what has influenced its evolution. Overall, the group deconstructs the reification of the object.

Activation of the enquiring mechanism impels support workers to go beyond what is already known or established as common sense (anything that might be interpreted as “obvious”). If support workers accept common sense answers, they are only reinforcing the reification and will obtain preconceived answers and develop reflections based on circular thinking revolving around fatality logics: «Because things are like that, that’s the way they’ll always be; life is what it is, I know how it’s going to be.» As the intervention process based on A-R-A activities progresses, the interpretative reflex of participants will gradually change from repetitive patterns of thought and perception to a reflex of questioning and research.

The enquiring mechanism does not accept either a well-behaved present or a pre-established future.

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⁷- See the definition of object in section 3.1.3.
In A-R-A activities, support workers create enquiring strategies that allow participants to recognize the different interpretations of their experience and to identify the logic that keeps their experience inside of static perceptions. Thus, enquiring also involves revealing the cultural density of participants’ individual experience and the complexity of their social relations, so as to make their significations intelligible. (Figure 7)

The usefulness of enquiring is that it captures the meaning of the itinerancy experience and the logic behind the acts that this way of life imposes on people. Due to the mechanisms of familiarization and habituation, itinerants do not realize the consequences of their practices on their perception schemas; therefore, they cannot identify such schemas easily. Enquiring must account for the schemas that escape the perception of itinerants, and this can be achieved only when the work of the group makes it possible to transcend explanations based on common sense.

Enquiring breaks down the reification of personal experiences by deconstructing the inner conviction that the way things are is the natural way for them to be. Enquiring also allows participants in A-R-A activities to recognize the hegemony of public ideas that justify and normalize forms of social marginalization, by showing how these public ideas carry interpretations and meanings that are imposed and disseminated by the media and governmental practices.

Thus, enquiring involves the generation of situations in which participants review their actions and opinions about daily life that they consider not only to be normal, but also inevitable because of their attributed natural way of being. Through critical analysis, participants become aware of the loops and frames of perceptions that have negative effects on social practices. In the process, they also examine the relation between their knowledge and the other possibilities of living contextualized in a different time and space, and how to realize those possibilities.

Since enquiring is a cognitive-emotional process, conditions must be created so that actors involved in A-R-A activities (support workers and participants) can recognize each other as subjects with personal experiences of equivalent value. This acknowledgment of equivalent value makes it possible for the enquiring process to be an open dialogue between actors.

The role of the support worker as a catalyser of reflective and critical dialogue on personal experience helps participants to turn towards a deeper review of their reality and to deliberate on ways of intervening on it.

The most common errors support workers make in the enquiring process are:

- Jumping from superficial descriptions of participants’ personal experiences to premature conclusions about what to do next.
- Letting a very specific, individual experience become the gravitational centre of an A-R-A activity. This prevents the dialogue from ever getting beyond the description of that experience.
- Failing to acknowledge and sufficiently discuss participants’ feelings or work them into further dialogue.
- Taking the role of a lecturer and thus jeopardizing the possibility of dialogue between equals.
4.3.2.2 A-R-A ACTIVITIES AS A PROJECTIVE SPACE FOR MEANING-MAKING

In the context of our work with itinerants, A-R-A activities are designed to induce a change in participants’ patterns of meaning and modify the functioning of their meaning-making process. This is why the activities are based on psychology’s projective principles and not on principles of de-ideologization, history or context analysis as is the case of A-R-A activities aimed at fostering social awareness and mobilization.

The aim of using projective principles as they are established in psychology is to bring participants’ sets of meanings out of the homogenized cultural and social discourse in which they are stuck (familiarization). A-R-A activities look for the revelation of the particular, individual way in which the experience of each participant is organized.
One of the major problems encountered in exploring the sets of meanings of people in general, and of marginalized people in particular, is that when these people are asked to express what they believe or feel, they experience social pressure to conform to social norms. This biases what they say and prompts them to adjust their accounts so that they will fit into normalized patterns of behaviour. This phenomenon is especially strong in marginalized populations because the extreme social situation in which they live compels them to accept those patterns, even if they do not have any clear understanding of them.

Projective activities may be defined as a structured indirect way of creating a situation where the why of personal actions emerges. In psychology, they are used to uncover feelings, beliefs, attitudes and motivations that people may find difficult to articulate either because they are not aware of those elements or because the content of them is in some way incompatible with social and cultural views. Thus, projective activities allow us to work with the inner perspectives of participants, that is, the ones that are closest to the essence of the person.

Projective activities involve the use of vague, ambiguous, and unstructured artificial situations in which the subject reveals their personality, attitude, opinions and self-concept in order to give the situations some structure (Frank, 1939; Rapaport, 1942; Viglione & Rivera, 2003). In executing a projective activity, the person discovers their modes of perceiving their world and how they behave in it (Frank, 1939; Rapaport, 1942; Viglione & Rivera, 2003).

Most of the time, when one questions a person directly about what they think or feel, it is impossible to obtain accurate information. We do not always share our innermost feelings with strangers, especially when they are representatives of an institution or of community social services. Moreover, we are frequently unaware of our underlying motives, aspirations, values and attitudes that lead us to act as we do. Also, we are prevented from sharing our inner thoughts because we fear being judged as irrational or «dumb» when our thoughts do not match clearly prevailing social and cultural standards of behaviour. Therefore, we adapt parts of our responses to the expectations of the person who enquires.

The second situation described above has major repercussions in our work with itinerant or marginalized populations. Social conventions become barriers that constrain the expression of feelings and the reporting of behaviours. In general, people tend to give answers that are socially acceptable and stereotypical in an interview situation (Phillips & Clancy, 1970; Viglione & Rivera, 2003). This also brings them to avoid saying exactly what they think because they are eager to be polite and tend to behave politely towards the interviewer (DeMaio, 1984; Phillips & Clancy, 1970).

4.4 The mechanics of A-R-A activities

A-R-A activities are relatively unstructured tasks that permit an unlimited variety of responses. To elicit those responses, a scenario is presented and framed only by general instructions. The absence of specific questions, and therefore specific answers, allows open expression of participants’ inner feelings and thoughts. These inner elements are reached by mental operations that lead participants to organize the experience and to
react affectively to the situations presented in the task. This process is dynamic in the sense that the inner personality imposes its meanings and significances, as well as its organization and patterns upon the external (public) one.

Tasks are designed to allow participants to reveal their way of organizing the experience by giving them a field (objects, materials, experiences) with relatively little structure and cultural patterning. On this blank canvas, participants can externalize their meanings, significations, patterns, and especially feelings. This is possible because the openness of the task forces them to organize the experience, interpret the material and react affectively to it. Thanks to that freedom of representation, the problematic issues of housing life (see Appendix 2) can be approached easily with the A-R-A methodology, since those 13 issues are evidence of the problems resulting from the relationship between home and house among itinerants.

A-R-A activities based on projective principles are real or fictional situations rich with social stimuli. These situations are created in such a way that they will be meaningful to participants; they do not reflect what support workers have arbitrarily decided they should mean, but rather the meaning assigned by participants’ inner personality. Thus, participants face something new, something they have to organize and work on, in order to give meaning to it. The inner personality then imposes its own meaning and organizational patterns on the situation.

The self-expressive nature of the tasks that compose the activities leads to the emergence of an inner content, expressed through what participants say, write or draw and what they associate with that content. Self-expression occurs because the tasks induce the imagination, since the stimulus coming from the scenario mirrors a real one. Participants thus move beyond the limits of the task by accessing and expressing information from their own store of images, experiences, feelings, and thoughts, which, once displayed, become inputs to the meaning-making process.

### 4.4.1 Ludic and kinetic factors

A-R-A activities have two very important characteristics: they are ludic and kinetic. The ludic factor is understood as a task structure that allows activities to be carried out in a free and spontaneous way. The ludic factor produces feelings of joy, satisfaction and enthusiasm, enabling at the same time knowledge and understanding of the issue targeted by the task. When a ludic factor is added to a task, it fosters participants’ creative imagination and promotes indirect insight. It thus helps to provide participants with analytical and experiential awareness of available personal alternatives.

The planning of an A-R-A activity must put emphasis on fun, spontaneity, freedom, willingness to experiment, make-believe, and creation; in this way, participants are not focusing on their own set of meanings, but are using it for real. Participants are taken outside of their routines in order to open up the interpersonal space to curiosity and playful explorations. Taken as a constructivist element, the ludic factor leads participants to diversify the use of adaptive skills, understand social and cultural frames, and recognize and respect individual differences.
The kinetic factor refers to the configuration of an activity that impels participants to activate and move their body in order to perform the activity’s different tasks. This can be understood as physical action and sensory interactions with people and objects. Most team sports are based on a kinetic principle; however, even if A-R-A activities embody a kinetic factor, their configuration neither simulates nor reproduces the rules and goals of sports games. As an element of an activity that facilitates body action and manipulation and the production of objects, the kinetic factor helps to recreate the symbols with which each participant’s set of meanings reflects reality. This can be seen especially in drawings, paintings and sculptures. In addition to increasing the recreational feel of an activity, the kinetic factor also helps to sustain the attention of participants.

4.4.2 Enquiring into perceptions projected in an A-R-A activity

One of the main work materials in the process of critical dialogue is the perception of participants’ social experience. Perceptions are internal representations that we create based on all the information that our senses discern. It is often misunderstood that the inputs which create perceptions are limited to raw sensory elements like light, sounds or smells originating in our environment. However, these inputs come from two contexts: the outside context (environment), in which we are immersed, and our inside context (inner mind). In the first case, the information consists entirely of stimuli that reach us not only from raw sensory data, but also from elaborated clusters of information, such as social and object interactions. In the second case, there is not only the raw information sensed by our proprioception system, but also elaborated information coming from our own mental processes, such as reflections, feelings and thought conclusions. Thus, perception is a process that we use to identify, organize, and interpret raw or elaborated information in order to represent and understand that information. It is important to stress that, during this internal process, we do not get our perceptions from the things around us; we elaborate those perceptions, and they come from us. Therefore, our perceptions are largely influenced by our previous experiences, assumptions and purposes. In the end, we are the ones who, as perceivers, conclude what an object is and why it is, according to our purposes and assumptions. This characteristic of perception has an important impact on the way we reflect upon and change our perceptions. This is because we change our perceptions when they lose their capacity to accomplish something with which we used to associate them. If that frustration is not felt, we will not change our perceptions, no matter how insistently we are told that those perceptions are wrong; this is because the meaning of wrong itself is influenced by a perception.

As perceivers, we do not share a common world with others. For instance, if a group of clowns is walking erratically down the street, some people will react with joy, some may walk away to avoid the noise, and others may even perceive the clowns as a waste of time. The fact that these three groups of people produce different perceptions of the same social act is evidence that the meanings of perceptions differ. If we could initiate an enquiring dialogue about the perceptions of the three groups, we could identify past experiences, emotions and representations (causes) that have made their perceptions so different from one another. Also, if we were to explore the meanings on a lower level, we could identify a common meaning shared by the groups. In A-R-A activities, the enquiring dialogue makes communication between the participants’ worlds possible because each group is composed of people coming from the same social and cultural context. During the dia-
logue, perceivers realize that they have similar purposes and assumptions about their experiences. Seeing and realizing other people’s points of view (recognizing meanings) helps participants to be active mutual actors of change.

By exteriorizing and identifying the different meanings that underpin our perceptions, the enquiring dialogue creates divergent views of one’s perceptions. Those divergences are created because our mind needs to reactivate the meaning-making process in order to deal with the variety of meanings and thereby generate a new understanding of our experience. Once this process is reactivated, the limits of our perception become more fluent and flexible, bringing us to create new, original and elaborated reflections. We thus produce a much greater number of ideas about our perceptions (fluency); a richer variety of ideas (flexibility); more thoughts “outside the box” (originality); and finally, a greater wealth of details about the ideas produced (elaboration). These criteria must be used to evaluate the evolution of the change process based on meaning production, which is the purpose of the enquiring dialogue.

In order for support workers to be really immersed in the enquiring dialogue, they must bear in mind that the literal meaning of a statement is different from its conversational implicatures. As Lau (2011) explains:

Literal meaning is a property of linguistic expressions. The literal meaning of a sequence of words is determined by its grammatical properties and the meanings that are conventionally assigned to the individual words... The conversational implicature is the information that a speaker implicitly conveys in a particular context, distinct from the literal meaning of what might have been said (An introduction to critical thinking and creativity: think more, think better, p. 12).

For instance, in an A-R-A activity of urban rediscovery, if someone looks at the city hall building and calls it “a grey building” they could simply be referring to the colour of the building per se or they may be trying to convey, in a more figurative sense, the fact that they see the building as a place where negative or murky decisions and laws are made. The literal meaning and the message that a person wants to convey are two different things.

In the practice of enquiring dialogue, support workers must focus on the conversational implicatures more than on the literal meaning of the projections manifested as ideas; otherwise, the purpose of the projections is lost. Projections are in essence the real meaning of speech; their richness in conversational implicatures produces a real diversity in the participant’s expressions. Support workers will find anchor points in that variety of meanings from which new meanings can be articulated, and thereby keep the meaning-making process active in order to find new significations.

One way to help trigger the meaning-making process is to discuss the differences between the literal meanings expressed or to list the implicit meanings (conversational implicatures). In doing so, participants are presented with the entire range of meanings related to the subject of the A-R-A activity.

As the work on meanings moves forward, support workers will see that the ambiguity of participants’ ideas increases, reflecting the fact that what is being said has more than just one meaning of reference. Usually the
first reaction of support workers will be perplexity and confusion, since they are confronted with the anxiety created by the lack of meanings of reference that they are used to. They will try to eliminate that anxiety by providing the group with standardized meanings coming from the “normal” world. Such action stops the enquiring dialogue and makes the group fall back once again into the process of reification, familiarization and habituation.

Unfortunately, there is no technique to avoid this mistake; only awareness of our own inner limitations, preconceptions, social schemas and set of meanings can prevent us from resorting to the practice of lecturing the group.

Support workers use the sets of meaning produced during an activity to bring participants to look for the reasons behind those meanings (i.e., to look for their causes). As participants revise or replace elements of their own set of meanings, they develop more essential and complex meanings. And as they engage in mutual reflections, they realize how perceptions and opinions about a particular issue have influenced them and, later on in the process, how their initial perceptions have evolved.

At some point during the intervention, a participatory assessment of the meaning production process must be made. A simple technique is to prepare a list of divergent meanings about a topic that has been the focus of enquiring. This can serve at least three purposes: reactivate participants’ prior consciousness about an issue, provide a quick view of what they have produced in the way of new meanings, and identify key meanings that can serve as guideposts in the meaning-making process.

### 4.4.3 Support workers and the enquiring process

Support workers must adopt a position of questioning; they play the role of a mirror that reflects the meaning of what is said, but from a contrary, outside-the-box perspective. The way support workers formulate their questions is very important because questions are the tool used to create insight into how participants perceive themselves. The most useful questions are:

**Divergent questions**
- What if . . . ?
- How would it be if . . . ?

**Open questions**
- Why . . . ?
- How . . . ?

Adopting an enquiring position does not mean to produce questions, present them to the participants and wait for answers. Questions are the basic element that support workers use to a) disclose, b) break down, and c) challenge the meanings conveyed by participants’ ideas. Support workers are active agents who monitor the level of the reflexive dialogue. Through the three aforementioned steps, they encourage participants to
reformulate the ideas contributed in the dialogue. This is the mechanism that enables support workers to keep the production of new reflections going; these new reflections are the inputs that allow participants to gain new insights.

Because enquiring questions provide the basis for these reformulations, the interrogations created cannot be answered by commonly accepted explanations. Enquiring questions do not accept commonplace answers; when such answers cease and usual explanations fail, the meaning-making process is activated and lets new reasons (meanings) emerge. It is normal that support workers feel some degree of perplexity arise within participants when the latter realize that accepted explanations are not useful and that they have to seek out other ways to understand their situation. Long silences or gaps in the conversation can occur. At this point, support workers need to be creative in order to provide a new task that will allow participants to better address old ideas (meanings) and daily life images (perceptions) and thus dig deeper into their personal history (reflect) and move on (take action).

The enquiring position of support workers leads participants to find inconsistencies in their perceptions, and this impels participants to find new aspects and new ways of interpreting the issue of discussion. Realizing that inconsistencies exist helps participants to let go of their uncritical acceptance of perceptions previously interpreted as the normal way to understand the day-to-day aspects of their lives. Participants thus begin to reformulate those perceptions. In that way, A-R-A mobilizes participants’ inner personality.

Once that mobilization begins, each participant continues to ask, during the post-session period, what they understand about the issue worked on in the activity and why they understand it in that particular way. Participants then reach a state of self-awareness where they question the relevance of what they have considered, until then, to be useful, practical, and adaptive. The elements to which participants usually apply such questioning are meanings, perception schema and behaviours. In the first stages of the intervention, the search for answers to their questions unchains a continuous critical thinking process aimed at finding explanations for issues concerning each person’s inner life. In the later stages of the intervention, that process focuses on the sociocultural factors affecting their life.

It is very important to stress the characteristics of the enquiring position of support workers. Their role is not to be contentious, for assuming such a role would lead the members of the group to feel attacked or judged for what they say or think. The enquiring position is characterized by feedback based on the rejection of “natural” explanations (produced by familiarization, habituation and reification). That rejection is not presented as confrontational, but as the result of enquiring and verification. It is as though the support workers play the role of researchers who want to know more, who want to explore alternative explanations, who produce hypotheses about what has happened, and who bring participants to work on an equal footing with them in the research. For that reason, it is very important that support workers clearly define their enquiring position; it is only from that position, and not by acting as promoters of models of life, that they can lead participants to compare previous meanings and perceptions and to find new explanations for why or how those meanings were produced and why or how they operate in the personality of participants. Subjecting their previous sets of meanings to self-critique encourages participants to generate acts of transformation.
Below is a list of some of the indicators that show that participants have developed and internalized an enquiring position:

1. The frequency with which participants question themselves.

2. The coherence of the questions related to the issue targeted by the A-R-A activity.

3. The frequency with which participants challenge assertions made among them.

4. The willingness of participants to avoid making snap judgments about ideas expressed among them when they have insufficient information.

5. The willingness of participants to modify or change their opinions when new reflections arise.

6. The ability of participants to work with abstract ideas.

Support workers acting as facilitators adhere to the following principles in developing or assessing their enquiring position:

Facilitators avoid telling participants what they think participants have to know.

Facilitators are aware that the use of both open and divergent questions is the most valuable tool to mobilize participants’ sets of meanings.

Facilitators do not use enquiring as a means to persuade or convince participants of their own preconceptions.

Facilitators raise the alarm when someone offers a “right answer” because they know the right answer implies a position of power, “I know the truth; you do not.”

Facilitators do not accept a single statement as an answer to a reflection. They are convinced that there is not just one reason, but several reasons; not just one cause, but several causes; not just one meaning, but several meanings.

Facilitators are there for participant-participant interaction, and not facilitator-participant interaction.
4.4.4 The disruptive factor

Despite the negative connotation generally associated with the term “disruptive,” the expression “disruptive factor” when used in association with A-R-A activities refers to the reconfiguration of the dynamics of such activities through the introduction of a fresh variable in the production of objects and the execution of actions. There is no formula for creating disruptive factors; they are purely creative elements that must be discussed among the members of the intervention team leading the A-R-A activity. The team’s creativity will again be challenged in the disruptive factor creation process.

Generally speaking, the objective of introducing disruptive factors in an A-R-A activity is to maintain a high level of meaning projection. To create these factors, it is useful to consider that they might serve to:

• Highlight one or more meanings that have been projected during a task.
• Boost the attention of participants.
• Create alternatives in order to address new perceptions.
• Produce projections that complement or reinforce resignification.
• Change the work group dynamics.

See some examples in the appendix 1.
Before I begin this section, it is important to stress the difference between two objectives that the reader may consider as being implicit in this handbook, namely, the objective of the intervention on itinerancy and the objective of the handbook itself. Each community organization has its own intervention plan and has set objectives according to its vision. Those objectives are different from that of this handbook, which is to present the fundamentals of A-R-A activities and the methodology applied for enquiring into the meanings that underpin the problems itinerants face in their transition to stable housing.

A-R-A activities are divided into three stages, each of which is subdivided into several steps:

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A complete example of an A-R-A activity is presented in the appendix 1.

**Stage 1: Activity Planning**

Planning an A-R-A activity requires a good deal of thought. Creativity and innovation are necessary, and support workers will be challenged in that regard. As seen earlier in this handbook, in the sections on the conceptual framework and the operational fundamentals, it cannot be expected that the process of enquiring into a set of meanings is carried out by applying preconceived formulas of group animation. The issues that are going to be worked on with A-R-A activities are not generic ones, but specific problems that itinerants face every day. Therefore, support workers must distance themselves from preconceived workshop models like those of personal intercommunication, social skills, self-esteem, self-confidence, assertive skills, and so forth. A-R-A activities aim to avoid becoming another means of imposing on participants social models that, in the case of itinerants and marginalized people, have failed.

In summary, based on the dynamics of the production of new meanings explained previously, A-R-A activities are conceived as an instrument that provides a space for the projection of meanings, thanks to the construction of concrete objects or the performance of certain actions (tasks). Once the group has externalized those meanings, they can recognize, accept and elaborate new ones. The cycle repeats itself, guided by the goal set by the support workers. The cycle brings participants to reduce their individual limits and allow their individual space to be receptive to the insertion of new relations built around the dynamics, identity and cohesion of the group. Thereby, the group becomes a structure which functions with a personality that has its own set of meanings.

A-R-A activity planning is a systematic process, in that it requires thinking about and analyzing problems such as the context, the group dynamics, and the results that the intervention seeks to achieve. The following planning process must be applied to every cycle of an A-R-A activity. It must not be thought that planning is unnecessary because A-R-A activities do not aim to transmit a preconceived social model and the itinerant Self (target of the work) is abstract. On the contrary, planning is an important phase of the A-R-A process because it enables the team to frame the limits of its interactions during the activity and establishes the points of reference that can be used to assess how the each participant’s set of meanings has changed, why it has changed, what has caused it to change, what obstacles have prevented it from changing, and what has activated the change.

The planning process consists of five steps:
1. Identification of participants
2. Identification of the issue or theme to be worked on
3. Definition of work objectives
4. Activity design
5. Preparation of an activity work plan
Step 1a.

Identification of participants

Process
The intervention team discusses the individual and social characteristics of each participant. The team identifies common elements among the participants in the activity, and places them into categories that may represent strengths, weaknesses and risks; for example: attitude toward participation, openness to talking about oneself, personal history, tendency toward conflict, aggression, motivation, confidence, pragmatism, reflection, trust in others, creativity, ability to focus, egocentrism, energy, enthusiasm, leadership and aptitude for constructive criticism.

Outcome
Group profile. This is a summary of the characteristics of the participants that will guide the support team in its work on group management and the dynamics of the enquiring process.

Note:
After the first profile has been produced this step does not have to be repeated at each new activity. The profile can simply be updated according to the needs of the intervention.

Step 1b.

Identification of the issue or theme to be worked on

Process
In order to choose the issue that will be used as the theme of the activity, the support team starts from the experience and knowledge acquired through direct contact with itinerants. To define the issue more precisely, the team gathers information through direct observation or exploratory interviews. In the beginning, the team might only have a general idea about the issue, but after some discussion, it will be able to break down the issue based on what participants do or say in their daily lives.

Outcome
Brief description of the issue, the current situation and the degree to which it affects the itinerant population.

Step 1c.

Definition of work objectives

Process
The team discusses possible scenarios or paths that the reflection process may follow. These scenarios help the team to clarify the limits of the sub-issues that may arise during the enquiring dialogue. They also help the team to modulate the intensity of the enquiring dialogue. Intervention teams can jeopardize the reflection process when they push the meaning or perception analysis too hard among the participants.
The team uses all prior information on the status of the issue concerned and makes qualitative assessments of the relevance and feasibility of the expected level of reflection.

It is very important to make a distinction between the objective of the intervention and the objective of the activity. The first one is the outcome that the intervention team aims to achieve regarding the level of intervention on the problem of housing integration and settlement. The second one is the objective that will be achieved during the activity. It is the accumulation of outcomes from the series of activities that makes it possible to achieve the intervention objective. When facilitators present an activity (see phase 2, step 2b), they focus on the objective of that activity and not on the objective of the intervention.

**Outcome**
A set of scenarios.

**Step 1d.**

**Activity design**

This step is the one that requires the highest level of creativity and thinking outside the box, because A-R-A activities are not based on group work formulas. Moreover, non-processes of psychosocial intervention can be based on preconceived formulas. Every psychosocial intervention process responds to a specific issue that originates in a specific sociocultural context. Consequently, the issue is submerged in a singular history, and for that reason, the use of preconceived workshop formulas must be avoided at all costs.

Remember that the support team is leading a process of change; therefore, the preconceived activities described in group animation guides are not relevant since they focus on issues outside the itinerancy context. Furthermore, they focus on group work for a maximum of one or two sessions without any continuity.

In this step, the intervention team discusses the most relevant activity to be carried out with the group based on the assessment of the issue done in step two. The team may identify symbolic representations of the target issue and thereby obtain a clear idea of how itinerants see a certain situation or how they would like it to be.

Based on these representations, the team discusses a specific object (creation) that will allow participants to project their perceptions and meanings about the issue during the activity. The creation may take the form of a collective, subgroup or individual object. The objects produced may be represented by drawings, sculptures, paintings, maps, collages, written material (poems, stories), urban rediscovery, crafts, music, plays, and so forth.

**Note:** It is very important to stress that the objective of the activity is not the production of an object or action. A-R-A activities are a channel that allows participants to externalize their own sets of meanings in order to elaborate a new cognitive and emotional reality applicable to their situation. Therefore, they are just a tool for allowing meanings to emerge.
A-R-A activities must be precise enough with regard to the task goal that participants need to achieve, but ambiguous enough with regard to how participants need to or should achieve it. For instance, in a museum visit activity (urban rediscovery category), the instructions could be as follows:

During your visit (to the museum), you and the other members of your team (subgroup) will choose a painting that you think represents the idea of how a house influences our lives. Once you have made your choice, you and your team must reproduce and transform the painting with drawings that reflect your ideas about the question. Don’t rush in choosing a painting. Try to observe a few before you choose one.

The complementary instructions specify that each object must be accompanied by a verbal explanation of what each team did and why they did it in that particular way. At this stage, teams have to organize their work strategy, decide what to do (which involves talking about why they will do it), and discuss and agree on how and where several things should be done (select materials, define tasks among the team, manage time, etc.). A-R-A activities also provide a space of freedom for creation and decision-making; participants can thus express their inner selves beyond the constraints of preconceived models.

In the activity plan, support workers set aside time for introducing the activity and allowing participants to introduce themselves and their expectations in case they do not know each other. Then, a period is reserved for explaining what will be done and the rules for the tasks. Afterwards, additional time is reserved for answering questions, if need be. It is important that support workers take note of observations made by the participants or of opinions they express about the tasks, and make the necessary modifications.

The activity ends with a period during which the whole group can reflect on the meaning of what they did. This reflection is guided by the discussion about why they produced an object or action in a particular way. Afterwards, support workers and participants make suggestions and decide collectively what the following A-R-A activity will be.

**Outcome**

Note: Do not confuse psychosocial intervention activities with group dynamics or group animation.

**Step 1e.**

**Preparation of an activity work plan**

**Process**
Support workers choose who will act as the main facilitator of the activity, namely, the person who will be given the responsibility of preparing the activity plan. The person must detail the steps by describing how each task will be performed, and determine how much time will be allocated to the enquiring dialogues (see the Appendix 1 for an activity plan template). Based on our experience, at least two support workers are ne-
cessary, with one acting as the main facilitator and the other as an assistant. Both have very important roles to play because A-R-A activities produce a substantial amount of abstract and meaningful content that must be carefully collected and analyzed.

**Outcome**
A completed activity plan sheet.

**Stage 2: Activity Performance**

This section is brief because the detailed process making up the main steps has already been presented in the previous sections of this handbook. As needed, the reader will be referred to the section that will clarify the dynamics.

As in any activity, certain conventional steps help to frame the scope and goals of the group work. These steps are as follows:

2a. **Introduction:** facilitators welcome participants, break the ice, explain their roles, and recall the rules of respect and tolerance that must be observed during the execution of the activity.

2b. **Presentation of the activity:** the main facilitator explains the activity’s objective, what will be done, the time frame and the means used to execute the activity. Facilitators organize the work teams as needed. Important: see the note in section 1c. about the difference between intervention impact and activity objective.

2c. **Instructions:** the main facilitator provides instructions for carrying out the activity and describes the tasks in detail. Facilitators should set aside time to clarify the tasks, if needed.

After completing these steps, facilitators see to the following:

2d. **Performance of the tasks:** the whole group or subgroups carry out the tasks.

Throughout the process, facilitators must:

- Follow the exchanges among participants while they perform the tasks.
- Synthesize the main points of the discussion.
- Encourage dialogue among the participants.
- Maintain a healthy group dynamic that transforms the problematic feelings and ideas of the group into
positive ones. To that end, facilitators must provide positive evidence to counteract:

- Generalizations
- Speculations
- Fact distortion
- Judgment
- Cultural intolerance
- Fatalism
- Magnification and minimization of obstacles
- Culpability
- Labelling

2e. Presentation of the outcome: teams present the created object or action requested during the activity (follow the fundamentals described in sections 4.1 and 4.3.2).

2f. General discussion: participants and facilitators engage in conclusive feedback about the reflections produced during the activity.

• The group is invited to summarize its findings with regard to the target issue (follow the fundamentals described in sections 4.3.1.1; 4.4.2 and 4.4.3).

• Facilitators stimulate exchanges using enquiring dialogue (follow the fundamentals described in sections 4; 4.3; 4.3.2 and 4.4.2).

2g. Presentation of a linking task: as part of the reflection process, facilitators present the task to be worked on individually until the next activity takes place.

2h. Closing of the activity: facilitators ask participants to assess the experience. If needed, a period can be set aside to critically discuss the teamwork experience by covering the basic questions of what happened and why, and to work more extensively on what could be done to reinforce the positive team practices and avoid the negative ones.
**Stage 3: Activity Monitoring and Evaluation**

As in every intervention process, a phase of monitoring and evaluation is essential to identifying the achievements of the target group and the intervention team.

Objective monitoring helps with decision-making about the direction that the intervention process must take, which issues are a priority, what risks could be encountered, and what resources are needed.

This phase is divided into two steps:

3a. Identification of outcomes, summary and review

3b. Production of an evaluative conclusion

**Step 3a.**

**Identification of outcomes, summary and review**

**Process**
The team discusses the results obtained in the activity. To that end, it relies on the symbolic productions achieved, the resignifications provided, and the behaviours and attitudes observed (see section 4.3.2.1 for resignification criteria and section 4.4.3 for criteria for assessing the development of an enquiring position).

**Outcome**
An outcome report.

**Step 3b.**

**Production of an evaluative conclusion**

**Process**
The team compares the results obtained in the activity with the objectives set for the session. The team clearly establishes the progress of the meaning production expected with regard to the issue of the session. It produces a hypothesis about why the level of meaning production was or was not achieved.

Two steps are involved in producing an evaluative conclusion.

In the first step, the team’s discussion should focus on the factors that affected the expected meaning production; those factors are usually related to the blockages produced by the habituation, familiarization and reification processes (see section 4.3.1 for discussion criteria).
In the second step, the team should discuss technical aspects, such as flaws in the design of the activities, the way the latter were carried out, logistics that might be improved for subsequent sessions, etc.

**Outcome**
A qualitative summary of the outcomes and impacts of the activity on participants.


**Example of an A-R-A activity**

The following content describes the execution of an A-R-A activity. The description shows how the conceptual and methodological elements explained in the handbook can be used in the activity.

The description starts with a work plan sheet.

---

**Activity performance plan**

**Facilitators:** _______ _________; __________ __________

**Date:** 07-11-2017  
**Location:** PECH  
**Time:** 11: 00 a.m.

**Intervention goals:**
- To open up new ways of expression in relation to the notion of housing.

**Activity objective:**
- To bring participants to expose their idealizations about their identity to home.

**Material:**
- Large sheets of paper  
- Masking tape  
- Colour pencils  
- Glue stick
Process:

1. Icebreaker

2. Summary of joys

3. Summary of the “Chappie” session (Note: this was a previous A-R-A activity).
   - The facilitator asks for a volunteer to summarize the main points of discussion during the last activity. Once the summary has been completed, the group is asked to add ideas or comments.
   
   - (Alternative) The facilitator can ask whether someone has applied the insights from the last session or thought about “Chappie” during the week. If someone gives positive answers, the facilitator asks if the person is interested in sharing their reflections. If so, the facilitator acknowledges the ideas shared, but does not interpret them in order to avoid focusing the session on one person.

   - The group is divided into teams.
   - The facilitator presents the work scenario:
     A major catastrophe has occurred on our planet. At first, you thought you were alone, but after some time, you met these people (team members). The climate is extremely harsh: it is very cold at night and very warm during the day. With your team, you have decided to build the house of your dreams. You have all the materials you need for its construction, but they are 300 m away from the construction site. Water and power sources are also available, but they are 1 km away from where the house will be built.

   - Then, the facilitator asks each team to build a house according to the following criteria:
     - The house has one floor.
     - Each team must agree on the plan of the house before starting the construction work. They draw it on a sheet of paper.
     - Once the drawing is done, the construction work begins.

   - The teams then transfer the plan to the floor at a larger scale using masking tape.

   - During the construction process, the facilitator induces the exchange of opinions among the members of each team by asking reflective questions such as:
     - Is something missing in the house?
     - What will life be like in the house as it is now?
• The facilitator uses disruptive factors like water and power supply to encourage reflection or trigger new actions among the teams.

• Once the construction work is complete, each team invites the others to visit their house. The facilitator encourages the teams to not only give a detailed description of the physical elements of the house, but also to describe the subjective elements; for instance, how it feels sitting in the living room at noon or what it’s like being at home when the light of the sunset shines into the house?

• Once the houses have been visited, the facilitator initiates a reflective dialogue using the following question:
  - Do you have recommendations for improving the homes of the other teams? The facilitator asks that every recommendation be justified.

• After an exchange of opinions, the facilitator starts an enquiring dialogue to get the teams to reflect on the following questions:
  - What is your opinion of your house? Why do you have that opinion?
  - What would you change and why would you change it?

5. Task: My house

• The teams reflect on the question:
  - What does the idea of “a dream house” mean to me?

• Each team summarizes the opinions expressed by each participant.

• Together, the participants reflect on these questions:
  - What have I gained from the idea of “a dream house”?
  - What limits did I impose on myself when I reflected on the idea of “a dream house”?

• The facilitator creates clusters of common elements from the ideas expressed by the participants.

6. Linked task (“Homework”)

• The facilitator asks the participants to make a real plan of the house where they would like to live.

• The criteria are vague, but the plans must be drawn on large pieces of paper. The necessary material is provided.
Description of an actual session

After step three of the activity plan, the facilitator asked the group to divide themselves into work teams (no specific criteria were given) The participants decided to work in subgroups of two: in the end, there was one team formed by two males, and another by two females. The teams were given instructions and they asked clarifying questions, such as:

Q - How big does the house have to be?

Q - How many bedrooms can it have?

Q - Can we have three TVs?

Q - Can we have pets?

The facilitator answered these questions from an open perspective (by maintaining a certain ambiguity so that projections could emerge).

Q - How big does the house have to be?
Answer – It depends on how much space you feel you need. Discuss and decide this with your teammate.

Q - How many bedrooms can it have?
Answer – It is up to you to analyze how many rooms you want to have. Discuss and decide this with your teammate.

Q - Can we have three TVs?
Answer – The house will be the place where you and your friend live. Make a decision by discussing this with your teammate.

Q - Can we have pets?
Answer – That’s an interesting question. Make a decision with your teammate.

Facilitator:

(General comment to the group) You have absolute freedom in building your house. Just remember that there has been a catastrophe on Earth. You are survivors and you need a place where you like to live.

The teams then started to discuss the plan of their house. During the discussions, the facilitator took note of:

Exchanges among the team members: points of agreement or disagreement, concrete discussions, abstract discussions.
How each team interacted: organization of work, respect for other people’s opinions and whether or not people were allowed to take turns talking. During this step, the facilitator observed the mood of the participants, their tensions and joys.

Because no time limit had been set in advance, the facilitator followed the teams’ rhythm of production and intervened only when the exchanges on plan drawing or house building got sidetracked. The facilitator’s goal was to avoid lengthy delays in the performance of tasks that could cause certain teams to fall far behind.

Facilitator: What you are saying is very interesting, and we will have the opportunity to talk more about these ideas later on in the session. Could you keep them in mind for now, and stay focused on the task? That way, all of the teams will finish on time.

Even if the facilitator asked the person to keep their ideas in mind, the facilitator took note of the ideas so that he could bring them up again for further discussion later on.

When the teams had finished their plans and started building their house, the facilitator intervened with a disruptive factor:

Facilitator: Wait a minute! You’re about to build your houses, but with what materials? (laughing)

Teams:
- Oh yeah!
- True
- (Laughing)
- Where are they?

Facilitator: Do you remember that they’re 300 m away from the construction site? Go get them!! The participants started running towards the material (ludic and kinetic criteria).

Beforehand, the facilitator printed out images of wood, nails and tools, and hid them far away from the workroom.

This kind of activity setting serves to:
- Lighten the “serious mood” that can be created by the discussions.
- Increase the feeling that “we are actually creating something and not just talking about it”.
- Eliminate the feeling of “being observed.”
- Reinforce social bonds and communication among participants.

The building of each house was very dynamic; the teams laughed and worked in a very relaxed way. The participants were totally immersed in the scenario. They seriously discussed, among other things, the kind of furniture, flooring, lamps, colours, and backyard landscape they needed. They asked for each other’s opinions.
What is very important is that they acted as if they were going to really live in the house. The level of immersion in the scenario is very important because it facilitates a deep activation of individual sets of meanings. An important outcome of being immersed in a scenario is that the soliloquy (see section 3.1.5) is highly activated, thus ensuring the effective operation of the meaning-making process that produces perception and behaviour changes.

During the building of the houses, the facilitator introduced another disruptive factor.

Facilitator (standing on a chair, imitating the sound of a helicopter and simulating a voice speaking through a loudspeaker): We are the Red Cross and we are bringing you help. The facilitator shot a plastic bag into the air to serve as a parachute containing small images of TVs, beds, tools, phones, computers, lamps, kitchen utensils, appliances, etc. The number of articles was limited.

The purpose of this disruptive factor was to bring the teams to react to the scarcity of resources, and to engage and activate their attitudes of solidarity, possession and competition.

When the bag landed on the ground, both teams were very surprised; they were so focused on the construction of their house that when they saw the facilitator leap into action, they wondered what was going on. Once they realized what was happening, a member of one of the teams quickly jumped to catch the bag and keep all of the items for her team. When she realized how “sad” the other team was, she immediately reacted and called them over to share the items. The sharing was based on agreements reached by the teams. The agreements were based on the participants’ needs, likes and dislikes, and the items’ usefulness and purpose.

The moment when the items were shared was a very special one because, until then, both teams had been working as rivals. The item-sharing created an awareness that “we are neighbours, we face the same difficulties, we can support each other.” This example is important because it shows that reflective acts do not rely only on the enquiring interventions of the facilitator.

Once the teams had finished building their house, the facilitator introduced another disruptive factor.

Facilitator: Wow! Nice houses, but what about water and power?

Teams:
- Hmm
- Oh yeah. There’s water and power somewhere.
- Where?
- True! Now what?

Facilitator: Water and power are available at 1 km from here.

The teams ran to look for the water and power.
An image of a water tank and a power pylon were placed somewhere outside the room. At first, each team wanted their own water and power supply line (indicated with blue masking tape on the floor). However, when one of the teams took the masking tape and traced a line to their house, the other team just watched. The members then glanced at each other and, instead of tracing a new line, they decided to start their line from the first one.

After that, the facilitator asked each team to invite the other one over to visit their respective houses.

Facilitator: You’re neighbours, but you don’t know each other, so you invite your neighbours over to visit your house. Play the role of host and invite the other team to come and visit you.

The teams visited the houses in a short roleplay mode (ludic and kinetic criteria; see section 4.4.1). Before the visits, the facilitator secretly instructed each team to study the design and organization of their neighbours’ house and to express any criticisms they might have.

Here is a short excerpt to illustrate the roleplay interaction:

Visit of House 1
Male B: (pretended to knock on the door)
Female B: Who’s there?
Male A: Your neighbours.
Female B: Please come in!
Male A: Good morning. Thank you for inviting us.
Female A: You’re welcome; we’re glad you could come.
Male B: Nice house!

The visits started after everyone had introduced themselves. Below is an excerpt of the exchanges:

Visit of House 1
P1 asked: Why do you have only one room when there are two of you?
P2 answered: We know each other better now, and we need each other’s company.
P3 asked: But don’t you also need privacy? There’s no privacy in that room.
P4 answered: It’s better that way because it makes us feel safe.

Visit of House 2
P4 asked: You have a table full of tools that takes up half the house! Why?
P3 answered: We need the tools; we can use them to build other rooms.
P2 asked: If so, why don’t you build a shed for your tools?
P3 answered: If we leave the tools outside, someone could steal them.

...
P2: There are no walls in this house.
P1: No, we decided that an open space would be better.
P4: Huh... And you told us that we lacked privacy? At least we have rooms and walls to separate our living spaces.
P3: That’s because the house is a small shelter. Outside, we have the bathroom, the garden and our solar energy source.
P2: What?! The bathroom is outside? Are you crazy? I’d never go to pee outside in the middle of the night.
P1: We built this house like a bunker: nobody knows what could happen tomorrow. Maybe you’ll be asking us for help!
P2: A bunker without a bathroom, huh!

Although, the critical exchange was light-hearted and playful, it produced several reactions in the teams:
- The team that began the exchange showed some resistance and discomfort in criticizing the other team.
- In the beginning, team 2 found it a bit surprising and unsettling to be criticized.
- The first team to be criticized was able to prepare more detailed criticisms.

At the end of the visits, the teams took part in a short reflection process.

Facilitator: How did you feel about the visits?

(For easier reading, only some answers are presented. When the participants refer to “my house” they are referring to the house in the exercise.)
- It felt real
- As if we were in our own house
- They didn’t understand our house. But they were polite even though they didn’t like it.
- It reminded me of when I invited people into my home (real one). They must have had criticisms, but they kept them to themselves.
- After justifying the decisions we made in designing our house, I like it even more!
- Yeah, me too. I like my house more now!
- It made me think we could improve our house.
- I felt bad. Our house is beautiful the way it is. That’s what matters to me.
- We’re not gonna live here for ever.

Facilitator: During the exercise, you had interesting ideas about what a house means to you. You can now discuss those ideas with the other members of your team. When you think you have talked enough about your ideas, we’ll discuss your reflections together.

After 10 minutes, we started the collective reflection process with the question:

What does “my dream house” mean to me?
Here is a sample of the main reflections produced:
- I never thought of my house as something that could not exist.
- A house is empty if it’s not a home.
- A house does not necessarily have to be a single unit; the parts of a house can be distributed over several different locations.
- In my opinion, no one can ever achieve a dream house.
- I don’t need a dream house; I’m happy with what I have. It’s my dream house.
- Home is what gives life to a house; my dream house is a complete home.
- It’s hard to imagine a dream house. There are many things that hold you back, and this prevents you from thinking about something like that.
- I think we’re afraid to dream, because we’re afraid of the frustration that we’ll feel if the dreams don’t come true.
- It’s difficult to feel frustrated when you really want something.
- You don’t dare dream too much, because you always think of what others are going to say or how they’re going to react.
- Building the house also made us think about how we would decorate it, what we were going to have and what we needed. Talking about that made us feel closer to having a home.
- After visiting the neighbour’s house, I realized that, in our case, we thought a lot about practical things and less about more emotional things.
- Dreaming makes you feel good, but thinking about how you’ll realize your dreams is unsettling.
- A dream house is a place where people can feel full of life and love.

After this collective reflection, the facilitator presented the linking task:

Facilitator: Based on what we’ve experienced and talked about today, you will work on a real house plan over the next few days. Draw the plan on a large piece of paper. You’ll show the group the plan of your dream house in the next session.

The facilitator answered some questions about the linking task and thanked the participants for their participation and work.

End of session.
Appendix 2

13 conflicting issues in the transition to stable housing.

Certain issues repeatedly arise in working with itinerants on the transition to stable housing. The following 13 issues were mentioned in conversations with support workers and itinerant people:

1. Health
2. Personal hygiene
3. Preparation of meals
4. Clothing care
5. House safety and security
6. Budget management
7. Social skills
8. Social life in a house
9. General maintenance of an apartment
10. Maintenance of bedrooms and kitchens
11. Episodic maintenance of an apartment
12. Time management
13. Personal autonomy

Given that one of the principles of the A-R-A methodology is not to propose an idealised model of itinerant people and how they should behave, an important challenge emerges when it comes to addressing the issues listed above using the psychosocial approach described in this handbook. Promoting behavioural patterns is contrary to the participatory methodology. As such, A-R-A activities seek to identify and elaborate the meanings that constitute each of the issues encountered in the housing transition process. To assume that these issues are simply a reflection of the adjustments that an itinerant person must make in their new life is to deny that the itinerant Self is much more complex than a catalogue of social rules.

In order to address the above-mentioned issues with the A-R-A methodology, it is necessary to consider them as symptoms produced by the detachment of home from the house, as well as by the anchoring of the home construct to large open spaces. The following table can help support workers to address these issues without abandoning the fundamentals of the A-R-A methodology. The activities listed in the table should
be considered as examples. Support workers will be able to adapt them according to how the intervention is unfolding. It is also essential to bear in mind that an activity can generate exchanges that go beyond the issue that support workers want to explore. This situation occurs because all of the aforementioned issues are part of the home/house attachment mechanism and, therefore, they are interrelated. As a result, an activity can cover many of the issues listed above.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issues</th>
<th>Relationship with the home/house attachment mechanism and the anchoring of the home construct to large open spaces</th>
<th>Proposed activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Health</td>
<td>Identity conflicts between the itinerant and housing life</td>
<td>Scenarios that reconstruct life on the streets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Personal hygiene</td>
<td></td>
<td>Scenarios of stable housing life in relation to the issues listed in this row</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Preparation of meals</td>
<td></td>
<td>Visits to services related to the issues listed in this row: industrial cleaners,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Clothing care</td>
<td></td>
<td>food factories, building cleaners, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Scenarios of stable housing life in relation to the issues listed in this row</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Production of objects or artwork representing transparency, fluidity and durability</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Adaptation of the itinerant’s perception of home in a stable living space</td>
<td>Urban rediscovery tours: visits to different neighbourhoods, discussions on the configuration of houses and speculation about the way of life inside these houses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Scenarios for creating imaginary future lives</td>
<td>Scenarios for creating imaginary future lives</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Scenarios of travel and life in historical times</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Forum on movies about: animal emigration, animal social life (in herds or alone)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>9. General maintenance of an apartment</td>
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<td>10. Maintenance of bedrooms and kitchens</td>
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<td>Level of attachment of home to the house</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Visits to demolition and construction sites</td>
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<td>Production of objects or artwork composed of recycled materials</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Forum on movies about: geographical exploration, reconstruction and preservation of artwork representing home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Budget management</td>
<td>Consolidation of the stable home notion</td>
<td>Organization of neighborhood beautification activities</td>
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<td>---------------------------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>12. Time management</td>
<td></td>
<td>Urban agriculture projects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Personal autonomy</td>
<td></td>
<td>Projects for the construction of urban recreational sites</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 3

Training plan guidelines

Application of the A-R-A methodology to support itinerants in their transition to a stable dwelling

This plan is intended to guide the preparation of training plans for applying the A-R-A methodology to support itinerants in their transition to a stable dwelling. These guidelines can be used by trainers who have some level of experience in facilitating training activities and are already familiar with the main concepts discussed in this handbook.

Needs assessment

As with most training activities, it is advisable to conduct a needs assessment before planning training in A-R-A methodology. Ideally, participants must read the handbook and become familiar with its content prior to the training session. The assessment should be done about 4 weeks before the training so that the facilitator has enough time to analyze the results of the assessment and to prepare the materials and exercises. Depending on the needs identified, the facilitator may want to add or modify sessions or decide to allocate time differently from what is proposed here.

List of sessions

Session 1: Review of the problem of itinerancy

Session 2: Introduction to the home-house-space relationship approach in itinerancy

Session 3: The essentials of symbolic interactionism, signification/resignification and the Self
Session 4: Enquiring dialogue, resignification and group work

Session 5: Planning an A-R-A activity

Session 6: Putting an A-R-A activity into practice

**General description of the sessions**

**Session 1:** Review of the problem of itinerancy

Objective:

At the end of the session participants will be able to:

- Identify the challenges faced by interventions on itinerancy

What participants will learn:

1. How to evaluate and describe what has changed in interventions on itinerancy

Total time 3 hrs.

Activities:

- Presentation
- Team discussion
- Group panel

**Session 2:** Introduction to the home-house-space relationship approach in itinerancy

Objective:

At the end of the session participants will be able to:

- Describe the framework for guiding an approach on itinerancy from the home-house-space relationship perspective.
• Identify practical steps for making the shift to the new approach

What participants will learn:

1. Concepts of home, house, space, living space

2. Main issues and concerns of traditional approaches to itinerancy

Total time 3 hrs.

Activities:

• Presentation

• Team work on case studies

• Group panel

Session 3: The essentials of symbolic interactionism, signification/resignification and the Self.

Objective:

At the end of the session participants will be able to:

• Describe the new concepts of symbolic interactionism, signification/resignification and the Self

• Identify the social and individual dimensions of a person and the dialectic that connects them

What participants will learn:

1. The differences between approaches based on individual behaviour adaptation and those involving socially based explanations of behaviour

2. What the Self is composed of and how it works

Total time 4hrs.

Activities:
Session 4: Enquiring dialogue, resignification and group work.

Objective:

At the end of the session participants will be able to:

- Describe the process involved in resignifying the ideas produced by the participants in an A-R-A activity
- Identify the established resignifications
- Use enquiring dialogue

What participants will learn:

1. What constitutes a signification and how resignification works.
2. How to design group work exercises so as to extract significations

Total time 4 hrs.

Activities:

- Presentation
- Exercises on object creation and signification analysis
- Team discussion
- Group panel
**Session 5:** Planning an A-R-A activity

Objective:

At the end of the session participants will be able to:

- Design and plan an A-R-A activity
- Use appropriate methods to motivate group participation
- Develop tools and techniques to enhance group dynamics

What participants will learn:

1. How to implement an A-R-A activity
2. How to use creativity in planning an A-R-A activity
3. How to design tools for tracking the ideas produced in the activity
4. How to prepare for dealing with group conflicts

Total time 8 hrs.

Activities:

- Presentation
- Exercises on A-R-A activity planning
- Group panel

**Session 6:** Putting an A-R-A activity into practice

Objective:

At the end of the session participants will be able to:

- Implement an A-R-A activity
• Use appropriate methods to provide feedback on the significations expressed by the group

• Manage group dynamics

What participants will learn:

1. How to facilitate an A-R-A activity

2. How to use kinetic and disruptive factors

3. How to manage significations and the enquiring dialogue

Total time 8 hrs.

Activities:

• Simulation of an A-R-A activity