



Is There Anybody Out There? Young People from a Bucharest Deprived Neighbourhood in Search of Lost Echo.

A photovoice exercise¹

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Abstract

This article explores in what way and to what extent the life of some teenagers from a disadvantaged urban community is affected by the relationship with formal institutions (school, town hall, police, social assistance, employers / labour market) and relationships with other members of the community (neighbours, friends, acquaintances).

The first part of this title obviously refers to the famous song by Pink Floyd "Is there anybody out there?" (The Wall, 1979), but also to the song by Machine Head (2016) "Is Anybody Out There?", the soloist of the band Rob Flynn saying that "*The song is about love, loneliness, racism, and not getting what is going on in the world/America...It's very much about current events, but applies to a bigger picture.*"² The second part paraphrases Marcel Proust's famous novel „In Search of Lost Time”, because the echo of the desires and needs of the young people we are talking about is not found in social policies and everyday realities.

The participatory research took place within an illegal camp of recently evicted families, mostly Roma ethnics. Over 100 people (27 families) living in a yard of houses in Bucharest, were evicted on September 2014. The research team designed research using

¹ This article is the result of a research carried out within the FP7 project SocIEtY - Social Innovation - Empowering the Youth (SocIEtY) for a Better Life for all" and was presented within project in a raw form with the title „Disadvantaged Romanian youngsters in finding a way to be heard ... by whom? A photovoice exercise". The project was coordinated by Prof. Dr. Dr. h.c. a lot. Hans-Uwe Otto - Bielefeld Center for Education and Capability Research, Faculty of Educational Science, Bielefeld University (Grant agreement ID: 320136 - <https://cordis.europa.eu/project/id/320136>). The University of Bucharest team also included Oana Banu and Marian Ursan who contributed to the coordination and data collection in the field for this photovoice. A great support in data collection was granted by *Carousel Association* via Marian Ursan. Special thanks to all participants within photo-voice, for accepting to share with us their expectations, thoughts, fears and hopes ...

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² Machine Head // To Release Single 'Is Anybody Out There?' <https://www.hysteriamag.com/machine-head-will-release-single-is-anybody-out-there/>

photovoice as a method, involving 10 youngsters from this community, focusing on topics like important things in their life; social relationships - group of friends / family; education; employment - future aspirations, the importance of education in finding a job; involvement / participation in community life. The main conclusion drove toward the fact that for (these) young people, *the family is the cornerstone*. All their values, dreams, aspirations and needs are gravitating around family and mostly in the absence of almost any effective institutional support. Although at the level of public and political discourse there is a declared interest in improving the situation of adolescents and young people (especially from disadvantaged social segments), included in various strategies, programs and projects and in the speeches of decision-makers and politicians, in reality "real life beats the written strategy", the discord between the two practically leading to innovative adaptation and survival strategies ... but marginal!

Keywords: *Disadvantaged youngsters; deprived neighborhood; photovoice; capability approach; social innovation.*

1. Introduction

Photovoice is a participatory research method that combines photography and storytelling to give individuals or communities a platform to share their experiences, perspectives, and concerns. It is often used in social and public health research to amplify the voices of marginalized or underrepresented groups. In photovoice projects, participants are provided with cameras and are encouraged to take photographs that represent their daily lives, experiences, or issues they want to address. They are then guided through a process where they select and discuss their photographs in group settings. Participants are also encouraged to share the stories behind their photographs, which may involve personal narratives, reflections, or critical analyses of the captured images. The key objectives of photovoice are to empower participants, foster critical dialogue, raise awareness about specific issues, and promote social change. It allows individuals to communicate their perspectives visually, transcending language barriers and engaging with a wider audience. Researchers or facilitators typically guide the process, assisting participants in analyzing and interpreting the photographs and facilitating group discussions. The insights and narratives gathered through photovoice can then be used to inform policy-making, advocate for social justice, or contribute to community development initiatives. Photovoice has been applied in various contexts, including healthcare, community development, education, environmental issues, and social activism. Its participatory nature enables individuals to have agency in shaping their narratives and contributes to a more inclusive research process [Wang, C., & Burris, M. A. (1997); Catalani, C., & Minkler, M. (2010); Wang, C., & Redwood-Jones, Y. A. (2001); Palibroda, B., & al. (2009); O'Mahony, J. M., & al. (2015)].

There are relevant studies that have employed the photovoice method to engage young refugees or immigrant youth in sharing their perspectives, experiences, and challenges related to integration processes. They shed light on the participants' sense of belonging, identity formation, cultural adaptation, and their engagement with the host society. The use of photovoice allows these youngsters to visually express their experiences and promote a deeper understanding of their integration journeys [Valibhoy, M. C., & Kaplan, I. (2013); Anic, G. M., & Lee, H. (2016); Levin, L. L., & Markides, E. (2018); Mathews, S., & Stevenson, K. T. (2019)].

The participatory research took place in the district 3 of Bucharest, near to city centre, within an illegal camp of recently evicted families, mostly Roma ethnics. Over 100 people (27 families) living in a yard of houses on 50 Vulturilor Street, Bucharest, were evicted on September 15, 2014. Among those targeted were children & youngsters, elderly persons, people with disabilities. The evictees had at the eviction moment no real alternatives for relocation, according with the Common Front for Housing Rights. The evicted people consider the treatment of local authorities a blunt breakage of their rights and a racist act given that most of the evictees identify as Roma. Most of the tenants have been living in the 50 Vulturilor Street for 20 years, having been accommodated in that nationalized dwelling in the beginning of the 1990s by the state companies for which they worked. Since the 2009 their tenancy contract expired and the new owner did not renew it and up to now the tenants have been living in those homes without a legal contract. Not having the possibility of renting or buying apartments on the market solely by their own resources, the majority continued to live (2009-2014) in the houses from which they had been told they were going to be evicted. Among the 100 people evicted were many young people, many of them enrolled in the school (some of them in the “*Second chance*” programme) and some others looking for a job while only few have a low-paid job.

The proposed and tackled themes were focused on:

1. Important things in my life
2. Social relationships - group of friends / family
3. Lifestyle and leisure - hobbies etc.
4. Education - education in the family, education system, teachers, peers, non-formal education
5. Employment - future aspirations, intention to immigrate, the importance of education in finding a job
6. Importance of health and access to health care services
7. Risk behaviour (alcohol, drugs, unprotected sex etc.)
8. Involvement / participation in community life

2. Research design / methods and research questions

The research team approached the people in the area, having extensive discussions with adult and young people, as well as mediating the conflict and facilitating negotiations with local authorities. The lack of cooperation between the two conflicting parties made many victims among evictees who refused the accommodation solution proposed by the Local Authorities and continued to live in the street, also during the harsh winter. In this context we decided to try to hear the voice of the young people, not only about the current situation, but mainly about their perception and perspectives in making their voice hearable by decision makers mostly regarding their chances to access quality education and job market.

The photovoice approach was a good option because it is participatory in its essence. Being disadvantaged / socially excluded does not necessary suppose lack of access to various resources but sometimes the access to such resources is driving the beneficiary to a deep dependency, lack of self-support and self-exclusion. Photovoice is a community-based participatory research (CBPR) approach that makes the people to express their voices and concerns related with the life, setting and aspirations, from the perspective of the inhabitants (Wang, 2003). In our particularly research, Photovoice have been use to create a proper environment in order to assess and reflect the youth's life,

promote critical dialog and raise awareness about community concerns, inform and promote innovative changes. Photovoice facilitates the improvements at personal and community levels, empowers individuals and communities, in order to enable them to point solutions and participate in all the stages of community change initiative. (Wilson & Wang, 2007).

The participants of photovoice consisted in a total number of 10 Roma ethnics youngsters, aged 16 – 20 years old, most of them part of the group evicted from Vulturilor Street and nearby, district 3rd of Bucharest. The recruitment plan was conducted in collaboration with Carusel Association, an organization active in the area by providing social services. In order to select the participants, the interviews took place nearby the places of residence, in the neighbourhood, so the participants could have the full control to express their interest and concerns related with this process. In order to select the participants, several criteria (Powers, Freedman, & Pitner, 2014) have been established: (1) Residents of the camp recently evicted from 50 Vulturilor Street of nearby area. (2) Age appropriate for the focus group, 15 – 29 years of age. (3) Ready to share ideas about how to improve the situation of young people. (4) Drew in learning how to use a camera and/or want to improve their photography skills, (5) Enjoy working in groups, (6) Willingness to share their time to participate in the project.

Several policy areas have been taken into account - education, employment, work and social assistance supporting self-determination, participation/ involvement etc. Thematic analyses have been conducted in collaboration with the participants in several steps over the course of the project. Through both inductive and deductive thematic analysis, we identified the emergent themes aligned nicely with and supported existing theories in the literature. After each photo shooting process was done, the research team conducted sessions of discussions with all participants; each photo was analysed and accompanied by stories / messages. The aim of the session was to realize a ‘macro-picture that underlines there are also others in their situation and appropriate to intervene at this level. All the pictures have been printed on special boards displayed during the confrontation phase. The confrontation was organized in the premises of the University of Bucharest, Faculty of Sociology and Social Work, with the participation of the young people involved in the Photovoice process and other key stakeholders.

In order to achieve these objectives, prior to photovoice we undertook: documentary review / analysis of European / national policy / legislative documents, scientific reports / research, secondary data analysis and national statistics, local electronic press - to provide a contextual overview.

We realised some group discussions with different types of youth (highly / poor educated; employed / unemployed; Roma / Romanians etc.) from Vulturilor street as well as stakeholder (public / NGO) and professionals. After each photo-session (corresponding to a main topic, discussed with young people before photo session reprise) the research team had extensive discussions with youngsters in order to catch the main ideas as well as to clarify the problems.

The driving research questions were linked mainly to work & education and relation between them:

- What is your opinion on the youth labour market access?
- What do you think is the role of education in finding a job?
- How do you think the result of professional training courses can help young people in finding a job?

- Do you think that non-formal education (explanations about non-formal education) may have a role in helping young people to have access to the labor market? (Explain)
- What about (re) introducing apprenticeship programs for young people?
- How do you think you can succeed in acquiring a first professional experience?
- Do you think backgrounds affect access to the labor market?
- What do you think about consulting young people in policy development (education, labor market etc.) topics which directly concern them?
- What measures do you think can be taken to avoid unemployment among young people?
- Do you think young people from disadvantaged backgrounds measures should be taken different / special in terms of reducing unemployment / access to the labor market?

All the youngsters from the target group have been provided with digital cameras and they were stimulated to make photos on different themes, accompanied by stories / explanations. The stories / explanations have been exposed to the whole participants during the weekly meetings. Part of the pictures and stories has been selected by the participants, part of them by the research team. The selected pictures have been used to be exposed during the final confrontation with the key stakeholders.

The purpose of these techniques is to learn how to place a day in their life and in pictures, not just verbal, which will add valuable information to our research including the CA approach. The format for reflecting on the photographs is to respond in writing (a “free write”) to the following questions (which are referred to by the acronym SHOWeD): What do you see here? What’s really happening here? How does this relate to our lives? Why does this problem or asset exist? What can we do about it? (Wang, 2003; Wang & Burris, 1997). The methods employed in our research project were approved by the University of Bucharest, Faculty of Sociology and Social Work. In order to proceed with the Photovoice community-based participatory research, have been undertaken, such as:

Recruitment

The recruitment process of young people was conducted in collaboration with the Carusel, an organization active in the area by providing social services. The idea of making a photovoice was promoted within community, among young people, who expressed their interest to participate and then all the applications have been analysed. Part of the applicants have been invited for interviews in a place nearby the residence, in the neighbourhood, so the participants could have the full control to express their interest and concerns related with this process. In order to select the participants, several criteria (Powers, Freedman, & Pitner, 2014) were followed: (1) Residents of the camp recently evicted from 50 Vulturilor. (2) Age appropriate for the focus group, 15 – 29 years of age. (3) Ready to share ideas about how to improve the situation of young people. (4) Drew in learning how to use a camera and/ or want to improve their photography skills, (5) Enjoy working in groups, (6) Willingness to share their time to participate in the project.

Procedures

As it was planned, we met with the youth starting early December for weekly sessions over 8 weeks, in the afternoon. Each session was co-facilitated by the

representatives of Carusel. All the participants have been provided with digital photo cameras and specific request have been made in order to shot certain aspects of their own life but in accordance with the pre-determined themes. Every meeting had a theme, priority discussed and established with the participation of the target group.

Participatory Data Analysis

The research team paid a careful attention to use a community-based participatory research approach in the data analysis of this project. Thematic analyses have been conducted in collaboration with the participants in several steps over the course of the project. Through both inductive and deductive thematic analysis, we were able to identify the emergent themes aligned nicely with and supported existing theories in the literature. At the end of the process, the research team organized a group meeting. The aim of the session was to realize a macro-picture that underlines if there are also others in their situation, and what is considered to be appropriate to intervene at this level. All the pictures have been printed on special boards in order to be displayed. In order to organize a debate on the situation of young people, an event was organized in the premises of the University of Bucharest, Faculty of Sociology and Social Work, with the participation of the young people involved in the Photovoice process and other key stakeholders.

3. Research findings

Inequality and disadvantage

One of the first intriguing finding was related to Inequality and disadvantage but not talking direct & only about their disadvantage but also by others. The young people argued that not only they & other peers of them are disadvantaged and marginalized but many other vulnerable groups, like elderly and disabled. Even for the moment the young people are disadvantaged in the long run they argued that have better chances to succeed as comparative with elderly which sometimes are forced to beg in the street affecting their human dignity:

„In this picture I'm giving an old beggar some food. I can't stand to see older people in the streets, sick and cold, begging, because I think of the fact that I also have older relatives at home and that we all have. And we would not like it if our older relatives would end up like them. Many are made to beg by swindlers, and they are everywhere, even abroad. Others beg to obtain money for alcohol. I don't agree with giving money to young people who'd rather keep their children in the cold instead of going to work for their sake. Why are they having children? To make them beg? I help older people in the streets because I'm outraged about the fact that no one helps them. If you would give them a chance to stay in a retirement home, a shelter; some would stay, but there are others would return to the streets and continue to beg. But I wish they would at least get the chance, they should not be left in the streets, unheeded and mocked.” (Amir)



On the other hand, Amir is blaming the behaviour of some parents that force their children to beg in the street. The same idea is expressed by David, who is catching with camera two children ...

... who are made to beg and look for iron by their parents. Their parents are like this: we have a child, we receive his pension and allowance and they live on that. Romanian authorities have to change the situation of the children, children should be at kindergarten or at school. Instead, they are on the street. I would go home to the parents with the Child Protective Services. If they don't take care of them, we take them and take care of them." David



The same idea of vulnerable and excluded people it was grasped by another participant, Andreea, which is picturing a hopeless homeless. Even Andreea doesn't know how wide / small is the dimension of homeless in Bucharest / Romania, she is catching at common sense what was documented in various studies – that the number of homeless in Romania is not as big as comparative with other countries but there is a huge deficit of services for this vulnerable group (Dan, 2009).

“This picture represents the life of a man that doesn’t get any help from anyone. He ended up sleeping in the streets, the system won’t get involved in helping him.” (Andreea)

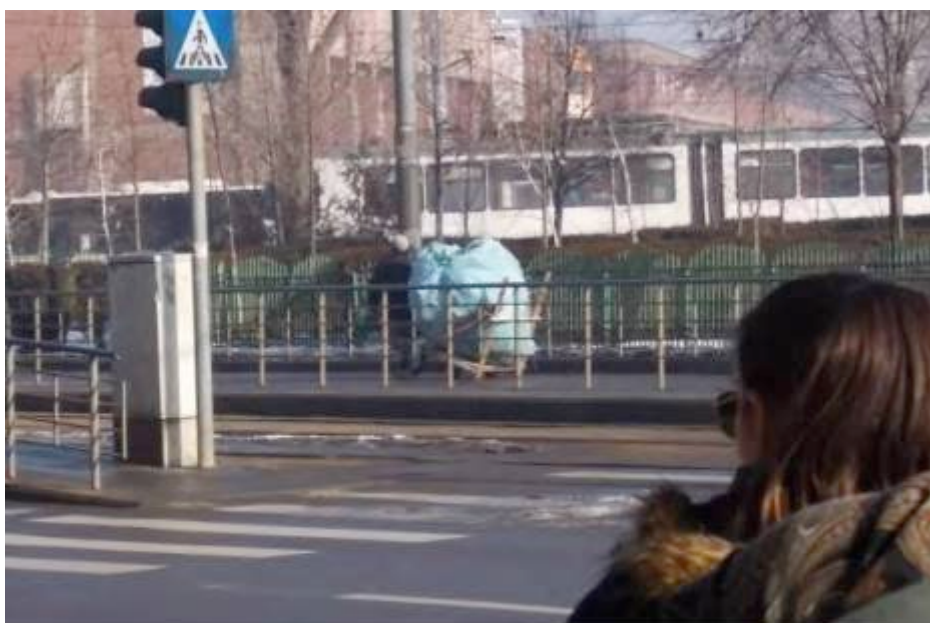


Poverty, lack of job, hopeless, dependency by minimal state aid are well spotted in two different pictures made by David and Emi, which is sending a message to policymakers to address the issue of excluded people, to develop programs for inclusion. Explaining the meaning of his picture David is tackling also the problem of enrichment by corruption:



„This is some of my neighbours who took some boards. I want to show how some people live nowadays, to me it's important how other people besides me live. This is their job, trying to look for iron so they can buy food for their children. To the people who have the power to change something in Romania I would like to say that they should forget about themselves, their wealth, and think about other people – they should think of those who ended up on the streets, the way I ended up there as well.” (David)

„I couldn't capture him that well, but he's a young guy in about his 20's that collects bottles. I captured him along with his cart and everybody honked at him, but he didn't move and was minding his own business. The thing that marked me was that he, although he's a homeless, a poor man, he minds his own business, and collects bottles so he can support himself. But if we think about it, if he had an education or if his parents were more efficient, maybe he wouldn't be in this situation. Any of us could be in his situation, I could also end up like him, just like anyone else. But we, the teenagers who have possibilities, who have our parents by our side, who are still beautiful and smart and in school, we must keep going to school.” (Emi)



Emy

Nu am reușit să îl surprind bine în poză. Dar e un băiețel dintr-o zonă de sărăcie, dintr-o zonă de sărăcie. El vrea să arate că el și ceilalți din zonă sunt săraci, dar el nu se uită la camera și nu vrea să se uite la camera. El vrea să arate că el și ceilalți din zonă sunt săraci, dar el nu se uită la camera și nu vrea să se uite la camera. El vrea să arate că el și ceilalți din zonă sunt săraci, dar el nu se uită la camera și nu vrea să se uite la camera.

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Even the young people involved in photovoice exercise were shutting the pictures individually, due to common experience of the same social problems they focused on the same topics, related to poverty, exclusion and powerless, lack of capacity to get support and negotiate with social agencies for (a better) access to services and entitled rights. Their focus covered a wide range of people, from children to young people, adults and elderly, homeless and beggars, drug addicts and other hopeless people. Sometimes they

mirrored the wealthy people, but not necessarily as a positive example, as a 'final destination wish' of every person but as huge cleavage between (the many) poor and wealthy people which do not care about their less fortunate human fellows.

In this sense, and continuing the ideas from pictures taken by David, Emi, Andreea and Amir, two other youngsters – Monalisa and Timotei – had shut similar pictures:



„This are houses that were demolished and now it's a yard full of garbage. People are not allowed to stay there anymore. There are many innocent teenagers who don't have a place to live, who were evacuated because of a decision off "the big people" and they didn't have any choice. My opinion is that they shouldn't take this good thing away from them, even if it is little. Now many young men have started to steal, to beg and also went abroad to foreign countries where they humiliated themselves to be able to earn a living.” (Monalisa)



„It is an improvised electric cooker. Many families who can't afford to heat their home are using this method. It's on non-stop and if a thread burns it can burn down your whole house. It's very risky to have an electric cooker in your house, both for children and for adults. But it is the cheapest method. (Timotei)

Family – the central value ... But also, the 'friendship' ...

Following the discourse about lack of willingness of society and in charge social institutions to help in need people and families, the main idea of youngsters focused on *family values and family support* as the main agent in helping its members in crisis situation.

The focus on family as a centered value reflects not only a more general trend among youngsters in Romania³, but particularly in our group of young people. It is not only a kind of subsidiarity (family / relatives / friends/ community/ state agencies) when young people think about/ are confronted with problems, but a desperate awareness of the

3 Within the program “Authentic Leadership” developed in 2010-2011 with youngsters 14-18 years old, they were asked to select the values that are mostly defining them. From a list of 45 values, they choose only 28. Two thirds of them choose as their first three definite values the 'family', 'friendship' and 'respect'. “If we compare the most frequently called 3 values and the rest, we notice that in fact these three represent the core of attitudes of young, as well as the desirable portrait which they attribute to others.” [“Familia” și “prietenia” principalele valori din viața adolescentului roman - <http://www.leaders.ro/familia-si-prietenia-principalele-valori-din-viata-adolescentului-roman/>]

fact that most of the times behind of (failure) family support is merely nothing but only the silly (on paper only) entitlements to rights embedded in a huge bureaucracy.



Amir

Este mama mea. Aș vrea să transmit un mesaj tuturor adolescenților: să își prețuiască, să respecte, să iubească și să aprecieze mama, indiferent de situație. Pentru că mama este doamna și trebuie prețuită când trebuie, nu când nu mai este. Multii adolescenți nu își apreciază mamele și nu știu pentru ce fac ei asta ca să îi crească. Ei știu numai să ceară, iar dacă la un moment dat nu mai au de unde să le dea, ei încep să se răzvrătescă. Trebuie să se gândesc că părinții fac eforturi mari ca să le dea tot ce îi doresc. Multii adolescenți își dăruie proprii părinți pentru stupoare, și mai multe. Într-un final vinuși să spun că orice adolescent trebuie să îi trăiască mama aproape și să o aprecieze toată viața.

This is my mother. I would like to send out a message to all teenagers. To cherish, respect, love and appreciate their mother, no matter what. Because you only have one mother and she has to be valued now, not when she won't be around. Many teenagers don't appreciate their mothers and don't know what their mothers went through raising them. They only know how to ask for things, and if sometimes the parents don't have what to give anymore, they start blaming them. They have to think about the fact that their parents make great efforts in order to offer them everything they want. Many teenagers are selling their own parents for drugs, and so on. Finally, I want to say that any teenager should keep their mom near and appreciate her all their life.



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For many families (especial poor families, traditional families) the children's care is based on older brothers / sisters who are empowered to take care of their younger

members of family, while adults are trying to make some money/ get some resources for entire family. That means in many cases that the risk to have poor performance at school or even of dropping off is higher for the young carers. The sense of sacrifice makes the family to be more united but does not help too much in improving the overall quality of life of the family. In the next two pictures David and Emy are explaining this fundamental value, and the very powerful (but useless?) significance of this kind of sacrifice: „*Family for me is power, they are [always] by your side.*” (David); „*For me family means strength, hope and courage. Family is everything [...]*” (Emy).



„*My sister is very important to me and I thought about how much she did for us. When I was little, instead of having a normal life, instead of going out with her friends, to be able to go to high school, our parents stopped her from doing these things to raise me and my younger brothers. So we could get a better education and she lost her rights. And I admire her, I am proud of her,*

although I'm not really that respectful with her. Family for me is power, they are by your side. A kind word, a bad word, they sometimes make fun of you, they make you laugh, they encourage you, they bring you down. It's family. For me family means the people next to you, you don't only think about yourself and you're not an egoist. I think that we all have this instinct to protect, to do what is right.” (David)



„This is one of my sisters, Ana Maria and Emi junior, my nephew, who is the son of my older sister, Nicoleta. I really missed her because we don't spend so much time together as when we were little and when she came by my place I took a picture. I have two more nephews, a girl and a boy, but he is my favourite. Maybe because of the fact that he's named Emi, just like me. For me family means strength, hope and courage. Family is everything,

sometimes you don't have the words to express how much you love or care about a person. They are part of my family and very important. Not just them, the whole family.” (Emy)

It is important to frame this attitude of young people within the global context of Romanian values. According with B. Voicu (2008), „86% of Romanian family considers to be "very important". [...] similar scores received work and religion which does not differ significantly (56% and 51%), leisure and friends are almost equal (35% and 29%), while the politics is considered to be very important only by 6% of Romanian respondents in the 2008 European Values Survey wave. The order preferences do not change by sex, age or education.”

... friendship values

... and models of friendship represents a solid anchor for youngsters; sometimes these relationships are guiding them for the entire life:



Alexandra

În această poză sunt colegii mei de clasă, eu și doamna dirigintă. Am făcut poza asta deoarece rămâne o amintire frumoasă pentru colegul nostru, Cătălin, care s-a mutat din liceul nostru. Am vrut și noi și el să avem amintiri unii cu alții, el este și va rămâne ca un frate. Fără el, în clasă este pustiu și prea multă liniște.

In this picture are my classmates, me and my homeroom teacher. I took this picture because it will remain a beautiful memory for our classmate, Catalin, who moved from our school. Both we and him wanted to have memories with one another, he is and will remain as a brother to me. Without him, the classroom is too quiet and deserted.



„In this picture are my classmates, me and my homeroom teacher. I took this picture because it will remain a beautiful memory for our classmate, Cătălin, who moved from our school. Both we and him wanted to have memories with one another, he is and will remain as a brother to me. Without him, the classroom is too quiet and deserted.” (Alexandra) -



Amir

Sunt eu alături de copilul, fratele, prietenul meu cel mai bun care mi-a lăsat și răsuflându-l chiar dacă nu mai este lângă mine. Poate aceasta poartă mine reprezintă durere, deoarece din cauza locului am ajuns să fi pierdut, nu am mai putut să fi în lângă mine. Am plâns deoarece mi-a dorit să fi rămas lângă el. Nu îmi plăcea niciodată. Măcar din același sandwich, dormeam împreună, mergeam până la înșurător. Dar acum, din cauza locului de apartament și a celor de sus, am ajuns să-mi pierd prietenul. Atunci când m-au evacuat pe mine și familia mea, am fost nevoit să-l dau.

It's me with my child, my brother, my best friend who loved me and still loves me even if he's not by my side anymore. This picture represents pain for me. I lost him because of greed, I could not keep him by my side. I cried because it hurts that I lost him. I would never replace him. We ate from the same sandwich, we slept together, we went everywhere together. But now, due to lack of space and those above, I ended up losing my friend. When they evacuated me and my family I had to give him away.



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Participation

We consider that the next pictures will explain by themselves the attitude of youngsters to participation, as well as theirs real chances for participation.



David

Aici sunt eu încercând să dau un exemplu bun la niște copii de la un liceu unde am făcut niște ore de voluntariat. Dacă stați acasă și tot nu aveți ce să faceți, puteți să faceți voluntariat ca să ajutați pe cineva.

This is me, trying to give a good example to some children at a school where I did some volunteer hours. If you stay at home and don't have anything to do, you can volunteer and help someone.



„This is me, trying to give a good example to some children at a school where I did some volunteer hours. If you stay at home and don't have anything to do, you can volunteer and help someone.” (David)



Timotei

Această poză este cu sora mea. Facea gogoși pentru copiii de la biserică. O iubesc, m-a crescut. Așa cum hrănește alți copii, așa m-a hrănit și pe mine. Familia este darul cel mai prețios, nu toți au o familie iubitoare.

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„This picture is of my sister. She was making donuts for the children from the church. I love her, she raised me. The way she feeds other children, she fed me. The family is the most precious gift, not everyone has a loving family.”
(Timotei)



Timotei

Aici este profesorul meu, un coleg și o colegă. Cu ei petrec mult timp la școală și în afara școlii. Profesorul mă învață lucruri bune, cum ar fi să nu mă droghez și alte chestii. De asta am ales să fac poza asta cu ei. Dacă nu ai 12 clase nu te primește nimeni la nici un loc de muncă. Tinerii ar trebui să nu lipsească de la școală, ca să își facă clasele.

This is my teacher and two of my classmates. I spend a lot of time with them, both at school and outside school. My teacher teaches me good things, such as not to use drugs and stuff. That's why I chose to take this picture of him. If you don't finish 12 grades, nobody gives you a job. Young people should not skip school, they should finish their 12 grades.



„This is my teacher and two of my classmates. I spend a lot of time with them, both at school and outside school. My teacher teaches me good things, such as not to use drugs and stuff. That's why I chose to take this picture of him. If you don't finish 12 grades, nobody gives you a job. Young people should not skip school, they should finish their 12 grades.” (Timotei)



Tony

În generală pot să scriu, pe străzile unde am rămas și unde încă locuiesc. Am făcut această poză pentru că vreau să atrag atenția oamenilor care ne-au lăsat aici și ne-au evacuat, în special primăria. Pentru că în situația în care suntem noi sunt și alți tineri care dorm, mănâncă și se spală pe stradă. Oamenii care au grijă de România ar trebui să aibă grijă și de noi, tineri, pentru că noi suntem viitorul României. VREM O SCHIMBARE!

It's me in this picture, on the street where I lived and where I still live. I took this picture because I want to draw people's attention, the ones that have hurt us and evacuated us, especially the mayors. Because in the situation that we are, there are other young people who sleep, eat and wash in the street. People who take care of Romania should take care of us, young people, because we are the future of Romania. WE WANT A CHANGE!



„It's me in this picture, on the street where I lived and where I still live. I took this picture because I want to draw people's attention, the ones that have hurt us and evacuated us, especially the mayors. Because in the situation that we are, there are other young people who sleep, eat and wash in the street. People who take care of Romania should take care of us, young people, because we are the future of Romania. WE WANT A CHANGE!” (Tony)

Social innovation

„This picture represents our street protest because we were evacuated. There, in those barracks, are three families with children, three families who withstood the cold, the rain, the snow. We wanted to send a message with this protest, that no matter who you are or what you've done, we are all people. We have rights and we are equal, whatever you do or whoever you are. For me, the protest means hope because all the people in the street are my neighbors, but it's also an important thing because all of us who live there are like a team, like a family.” (Emy)



„Funeral services are always a secure workplace. They can't stop existing; people die all the time and then people turn to the funeral services. It is a job for the future. You earn money and it's not a hard work.” (Timotei)



Aspirations

“This is a picture of a classmate of mine who likes to look nice and attract attention, but through things that don’t characterise her. For example, the contacts, I don’t understand why she uses them because they can affect her eyes. Well, they already started to affect them, they water, they began to be smaller, and the pupil started to shrink. In high school, I think that of all the girls, many of them use lenses and I don’t understand why. She almost always resorts to beauty tricks and I don’t understand why, she’s beautiful and natural.” (Alexandra)



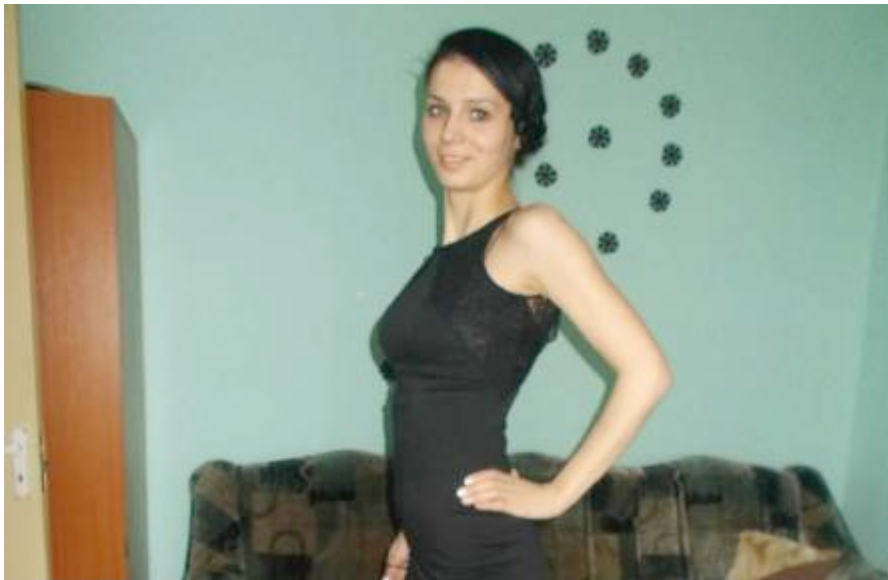
Alexandra

Eu poartă o scurte și o rochie albă și ți place să arăți bine, să arăți
atragătoare, dar ți place să arăți rău, o caracteristică. De exemplu, scribim
de nu înțelegem de ce și cum este așa și cum să arăte bine. Ema, deși
ar putea să i arăte, ți arătează, o înțeleg și cum să arăte rău, o
trăiești și nu înțelegem de ce. Eu înțeleg, cum că ei o călărează
sunt multe sunt cu înțelegere, înțeleg de ce. Cum să te înțelegi
la înțelegere și nu înțeleg de ce, o înțeleg și natural.

This is a picture of a character of mine who likes to look nice and attract
attention, but through things that don't characterize her. For example, the
character I don't understand why she uses them because they can affect her
open. Well, they already started to affect them, they want, they began to feel
better and the past character is in the past. Even that of all the girls,
many of them use them and I don't understand why. She almost always
resorts to beauty and I don't understand why, she is beautiful and natural.



„This is at my place, I was getting ready to go out with my friends to see some Romani musicians. It is a passion of mine, to go out and have fun, and last but not least I love being chic and elegant all the time.” (Alexandra)



Alexandra

Este aici la mine, mă pregăteam să merg cu prietenii la Butari. Este o pasiune de a mea de a mă duce la distracții, nu în ultimul rând îmi place să fiu cochetă și elegantă tot timpul.

This is at my place, I was getting ready to go out with my friends to some party Romanian musicians. It is a passion of mine, to go out and have fun, and last but not least I love being chic and elegant all the time.



Alexandra

Este un atelier de manichiură, îmi place foarte mult această meserie și aș dori să învăț mai multe despre acest job. Să pot câștiga bani prin ceea ce-mi face plăcere, ceea ce mă face să fiu mai răbdătoare.

If it's nail salon, I really like the job and I would like to learn more about this job. I can earn money through what pleases me, which makes me more patient.



„It's a nail salon, I really like this job and I would like to learn more about this job. I can earn money through what pleases me, which makes me more patient.” (Alexandra)



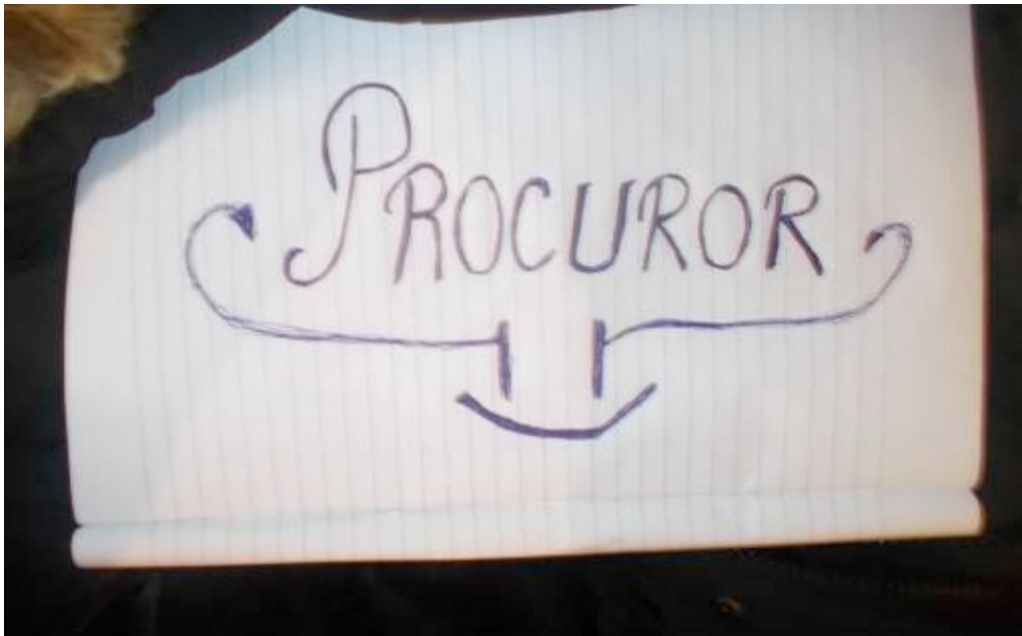
„In this picture you see me and my classmates from high school, during school break. We were bored and generally when we get bored, we do all kinds of blunders, like lock ourselves inside the cabinets. High school years are the best years of a teenager's life. You should cherish them and have fun, because when high school ends only memories remain. And that's all.” (Alexandra)



„This car caught my attention and my eyes flashed when I saw it and I said I wanted to have it, but it's hard for me to get it. I can not have it unless I turn to other things, such as drug trafficking, prostitution, theft. A car is important, it's my image. Most people need cars to go on vacations, or to work. But nowadays people have very low incomes to afford a car.” (Amir)

[illegible][illegible]

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Andreea

Procuror este un lucru care este foarte important pentru mine, mi-l pregătesc pentru asta... este foarte important pentru mine să ajung ceea ce mi-am propus. Pentru a nu fi bătăie care să dau la admitere la facultatea de drept, sunt teste la română, logică, psihologie și depinde de profilul pe care îl alegi. Eu îl fac mai mult pe cel de psihologie și română (gramatică). Și sunt prezentate pe net și cursurile pe care le faci la facultate.

With this picture I wanted to express that this thing is very important to me. I'm preparing for this... it is very important for me to obtain what I planned. There are tests on the internet that you take for the admission into law school, there are tests for Romanian, logic, psychology and it depends on which profile you choose. I mostly take the psychology and Romanian (grammar) ones. And the courses that you take in college are available on the internet.



„With this picture I wanted to express that this thing [procuror = prosecutor] is very important to me, I'm preparing for this ... it is very important for me to obtain what I planned. There are tests on the internet that you take for the admission into law school, there are tests for Romanian, logic, psychology and it depends on which profile you choose. I mostly take the psychology and Romanian (grammar) ones. And the courses that you take in college are available on the internet.” (Andreea)



David

Frații mei. Așa cum suntem noi, nebuni, ne batem, ne certăm, dar tot frați suntem. Mă mândresc cu toți frații mei chiar dacă ne înjurăm, ne batem și nu știu ce. Așa este o imagine veselă și mi place să îi văd frați veseli, plini de energie, plini de putere ca să pot să fiu și eu plin de putere și să știu că ei sunt mereu în spatele meu și eu în spatele lor.

My brothers. The way we are, crazy, we fight, we argue, but we are still brothers. I'm proud of all my brothers even if we cuss at each other, fight and whatever. This is a cheerful image and I like to see my brothers cheerful, energetic, powerful so I also can be powerful and know that they are always backing me up and I'm backing them up.



„My brothers. The way we are, crazy, we fight, we argue, but we are still brothers. I'm proud of all my brothers even if we cuss at each other, fight and whatever. This is a cheerful image and I like to see my brothers cheerful, energetic, powerful so I also can be powerful and know that they are always backing me up and I'm backing them up.” (David)



Monalisa

Am făcut această poză pentru a arăta că acesta este visul meu, în dorința foarte mare să devin o manichiuristă perfectă. Îmi place această meserie și mă liniștește atunci când sunt supărată. Din punctul meu de vedere, manichiura la o fată este foarte importantă. După asta îți dai seama ce grijă are de ea.

I took this picture to show that this is my dream, I really want to become a perfect manicurist. I like this job and it calms me when I'm angry. From my point of view, manicure is very important to a girl. Based on this you realize how she takes care of herself.



„I took this picture to show that this is my dream, I really want to become a perfect manicurist. I like this job and it calms me when I'm angry. From my point of view manicure is very important to a girl. Based on this you realize how she takes care of herself.” (Monalisa)



Timotei

Aici sunt eu, în biserică. Îmi petrec aproape tot timpul aici. Mă duc acolo și cânt și atunci mă simt bine. Când sunt nervos, îmi găsesc liniștea în cântăreaa acestor cântări care mă ajută să mă pot liniști. De mic copil mi-a plăcut cum a cântat mama mea și a început să îmi vorbească despre asta. Am avut prietenii care m-au ajutat să fac cântări timp de trei luni și acum am un prieten care cântă în instrumente și mă învață și pe mine să cânt pe note.

This is me, in the church. I spend almost all my time here. I go there and sing and then I feel good. When I'm angry, I find support in these songs and I want a career within this. It's a passion of mine. As a child I liked how my sister sang and I started to like it as well. I had friends who taught me how to sing for three months and now I have a friend who plays instruments and teaches me how to play.



„This is me, in the church. I spend almost all my time here. I go there and sing and then I feel good. When I'm angry, I find support in these songs and I want a career within this. It's a passion of mine. As a child I liked how my sister sang and I started to like it as well. I had friends who taught me how to sing for three months and now I have a friend who plays instruments and teaches me how to play.” (Timotei)



Tony

În viitorul apropiat aş vrea să practic această meserie pentru ca îmi place foarte mult să tund şi este o meserie bănoasă.

In the near future I would like to practice this profession because I really like to cut hair and it's a paying profession.



„In the near future I would like to practice this profession because I really like to cut hair and it's a paying profession.” (Tony)

4. Conclusions

We'll start our concluding remarks with a very shocking fact which is ... out of conclusions:

The “confrontation” of youngsters with various stakeholders was scheduled to take place in a sunny day of April 201x, at 16:00, the Council Room of Faculty of Sociology and Social Work. Where invited a lot of representatives (around 70) from Local Authorities, NGO's, journalists etc. About 30 of them confirmed their participation. At 16:30 we started the debates with 4 guests: 1 from General Direction of Social Assistance and Child Protection, Bucharest, and 3 from NGO sector. All of them old friends / collaborators of us ...

Based on our photovoice exercise (but we can extensively extrapolate our conclusions to overall young population and not only), the social policies and practices do not take the perspectives of (disadvantaged) young people seriously. Even there are

governmental strategy and programs addressing the issue of wide social integration of young people, in practice the things are slightly different.

Youngsters' experiential knowledge, even limited due to lack of information, participation and opportunities, reflects some fundamental aspirations and conceptions of justice which are very few articulated, heard and contested in social policies and practices as well as in other aspects of their daily lives.

They are considering themselves as disadvantaged / marginalized and that have to succeed mostly by their own or with family support but not the state/ institutional support. The disadvantaged youngsters are not at all informed / aware about local social programs targeting them (excepting "Second chance" school program and some AJOFM job related programs); in fact, such programs are missing. They are considering ineffective such programs / not appropriate to the real needs of them. They are aware that the only chance to succeed in life is through school attendance but the school is not attractive at all – has old fashioned courses and teachers that do not motivate them to perform. Their aspirations are modelled (lowered sometimes) by the family and are from deep pessimism to unachievable ones through legal ways.

For youngsters, the family is the **cornerstone**. All their values, dreams, aspirations, needs are gravitating around family and mostly in the absence of any agency/ institutional support. Eventually the public institutions / services are seldom seen as temporary and accidental vehicles which drive them closer to the final goal: independence in absence of the State. In terms of employment the main requests refer to job creation and non-discrimination.

In terms of *participation*, the young people are perceiving it mostly through the lens of family and school. Volunteering could be a very good example for others to share their resources, like David which was doing volunteering in a school for pupils, and telling them about "No hate speech", or Timotei's sister who does volunteer (making donuts) for the children from the church. The school is seen as the most important 'vehicle' driving one's life to success and prosperity, to be respected and integrated in society. But school is sometimes a very abstract agency and it make sense for young people through the teachers but not necessarily the knowledge that they can achieve. As Timotei mentioned, the teacher is very important in the life of young scholars, because he/ she is not only teaching mathematics / geography etc. but has a pedagogical approach helping youngsters to understand what are the real values and behave according to these: „*This is my teacher [who] teaches me good things, such as not to use drugs and other stuff [like this]. That's why I chose to take this picture of him. If you don't graduate the high school, nobody gives you a job.*” There are some studies in Romanian literature (Dan, 2011, Voicu, 2009) which underlined that the educational performance of youngsters in school is strongly linked by their positive appreciation of teacher (if they feel the teachers friendly, if they liked them, then they like also the discipline these are teaching and also the risk of drop out is decreasing).

In terms of social innovation, it was difficult to catch relevant points of view. The only innovation they tackled referred to finding a solution for accommodation/ having a home (they were evicted in September 2014). Emy underlined a very original form of protest (writings on barracks like "*houses for everybody, no matter the ethnicity*") against indifference of Local Authorities but society as well, explaining that "*no matter who you are or what you've done, we are all humans. We have rights and we are equal, whatever you do or whoever you are. For me, the protest means hope because all the people in the*

street are my neighbors, but it's also an important thing because all of us who live there are like a family."

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