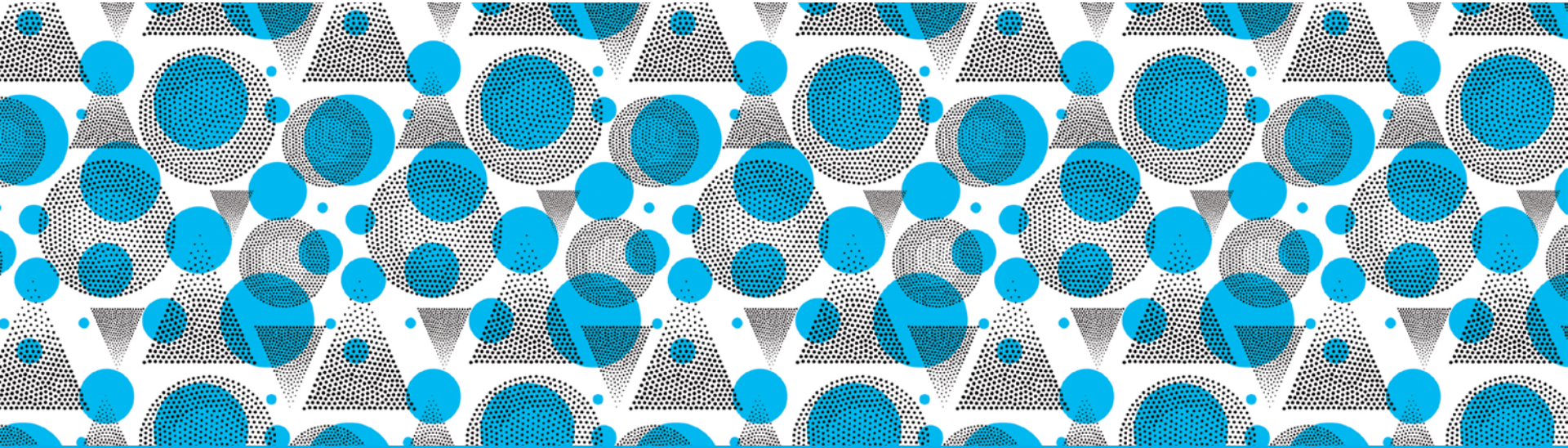




**LAUREA**  
UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED SCIENCES  
*Together we are stronger*



John Simon, the Chairman of MarjaVerkko NGO, answers to the critical questions as follows

# Views on theoretical groundings

How might thinking about internal and external assets help with your professional practice?

Our problem is, that we do not systematically think, what kind of tools we could use. We have our own approaches and we keep on using those without questioning or thinking of alternatives. The method could work well, but it is on very general level. It is difficult to see how the young could empower conceptions of themselves only by bringing general themes to surface. This could be the first step toward more concretical applications.

# Views on theoretical groundings

How might thinking about your assets based approaches, appreciative inquiry and shared expertise help to inform your professional practice?

This method could be used with young asylum seekers, but it should be applied to fit their experiences. You have to understand where they come from. We should create a process which promotes their participation and where they could tell themselves, what are the important issues we are not noticing. Use of images helps with asylum seekers. When we used images the initiative came from them and not on what we had researched earlier. Tools should always be tailored to fit the target group. .

# Views on application possibilities

What opportunities does this open, or indeed close off, for you as a practitioner?

It does not close anything off. We don't have any clear target group anymore. Earlier our clients lived in assisted housing facilities. Now they have carried on with their lives and go to schools, work places etc. It is important for us to direct our attention to these critical issues which are important to them. Young people have valuable assets which we need to pay attention to, it is important. These young people often turn to us with their problems. What do we do, if one has no residence permit, money, or work? They have a lot of very practical and difficult challenges. It would be good to see things in a wider perspective and talk of their personal resources. It is difficult to estimate would they have patience or motivation to do so or would they see this tool as playing. If you don't have food, how can you talk of literature?

# Views on application possibilities

How can practitioners who draw on experience rather than knowledge promote equality?

It is important to see both theory and experience. The young emphasise their concretical experiences. Practioner must have theoretical know how as well. Daily activities lead to smaller and smaller contexts and you loose the big picture. You do a lot of work and solve one small problem and two bigger ones fall upon you at the same time. I have noticed that nothing exists "on its own". Everybody has their relationship to authorities, own history and own background.

# Views on application possibilities

How might it be applied in different contexts, to what degree is it generalisable?

In MarjaVerkko we our activities promote community. We respect and utilize experience of citizens. Our resources and time are often limited and primarily we can only react. Assets are on citizens and professional partners. Activities should be fitted to each context.

# Views on application possibilities

How would you apply it in your practice and context?

By utilizing citizen experiences in the Community.

# Think of a context you are operating in:

What kind of community are you operating in according to five commonly acknowledged community types?  
(Healy, 2012)

MarjaVerkko is mostly about mapping community development, planning and organizing. It is not primarily meant for development. Trainings we provide are not targeted to activity but they are tool to promote communality. I define community as an open system which promotes and accelerates sense of community in fast growing area. Without our proactive behavior, it would be likely that community development would be much slower and problems (dissatisfaction, disparity between groups, etc.) would occur more.



# Think of a context you are operating in:

How is power distributed in this community from the viewpoint of the young?

They don't have enough power, but they don't necessarily have prerequisites to use power either. One big problem are huge cultural differences. I have earlier worked with young people in gangs, and they understood what community expects from them and what the silent rules of society are. Based on them, they made certain choices. Now young asylum seekers have dropped to this from completely different culture, and it shows. What is their background and culture and how it relates to Finnish culture? This cultural shift does not happen in a class room. Interaction with the people in the mainstream culture is needed. We can tell examples of our own backgrounds and development. These young people find it difficult to share this experience. They do not have the understanding on how to act responsibly. They are still practicing it. Success comes in time.