

## Summary of the Initiating Meeting of the Special Interest Group “Power and User Involvement”

---

Held the Nordic Social Work Conference, FORSA/NAUSA, University of Helsinki 21th of November 2018. This summary was written by initiating host and coordinator: Pernille Wisti, Aalborg University, Denmark [wisti@socsci.aau.dk](mailto:wisti@socsci.aau.dk). NB: The name of the Special Interest Group is now FORSA Network on Power and Service User Involvement.

### Important information regarding the Special Interest Group:

The name of the Special Interest Group is now FORSA Network on Power and Service User Involvement. All hosts of the Special Interest Group meetings were informed about the change, that apply to all four SIG groups. This decision was made to ensure distinguishment from the ESWRA Special Interest Groups, in this case, the “*Special Interest Group on Service User Involvement*”.

Regarding the platform for information about the now FORSA Network on Power and Service User Involvement, FORSA informed that in the future they are going to set up a website for the Networks.

As for now, the forum of the SIG/FORSA Network on Power and Service User Involvement can be found on Facebook. Anybody is welcome to join and invite others to participate. Since the Facebook group was established, the number is growing with 35 members the 6<sup>th</sup> of December 2018, thanks to members inviting more people. Link to the Facebook group is found here:

[https://www.facebook.com/groups/363949417513709/?ref=group\\_header](https://www.facebook.com/groups/363949417513709/?ref=group_header)

### Themes and questions of the meeting:

The meeting was initiated by a brief presentation and suggestions of relevant questions and themes to discuss during the meeting (see the below appendix). The meeting was held in an informal manner with a presentation of the 11 participants and open discussions and contributions related to the topics.

- User Involvement:
  - When are service users involved in research, education, and practice?
  - Who gets to answer an invitation to be involved (who are included and who are excluded)?
  - How can “involvement” be interpreted, differentiated, conducted, and ensured?
  - What are the differences and consequences related to concepts as involvement, inclusion, participation, partnerships and more?
  - What are the purposes of user involvement: Qualifying research? Qualifying practices? Qualifying social work education? Mobilization of service users? Emancipation of service users?
  - For the sake of who is service user involvement important and relevant?
  
- Related to discussions of user involvement:
  - Which power aspects limit user involvement and, in particular, involvement in the Special Interest Group?
  - How can financial difficulties be managed to promote user involvement (travel costs, conference fee and more)?
  - How can we learn and benefit from Recovery conferences and other experiences with a high number of user-experienced participants? E.g., invite user organization as speakers?
  - What can we do to ensure an inclusive group that facilitates user involvement and break down conventional power structures that hinder user involvement?
  - How can we consult service users and seek advice on what is important to set up and stimulate an inclusive group?

- Awareness of differences in groups of service users. Recruitment and welcome participants with multiple abilities.
- In what manner can we gain knowledge of peer-to-peer initiatives?

### **Future work and ideas:**

Regarding the next steps, the participants emphasized that initiating an informal pre-conference workshop gathering during the next international Nordic Social Work Conference in 2020 would be a relevant step to follow up on the initiatives of the initiating meeting. Such a pre-conference workshop gathering can include presentations of research regarding power and user involvement in social work, service user experiences, and perspectives and more.

Difficulties and possibilities related such an event were also discussed:

- E.g., how does the Special Interest Group work to ensure participation of service users rather than to discuss service user involvement on behalf of the users?
- If the group wants to emphasize such participation, where should the pre-conference be held (University buildings, service user organizations, and public spaces)?
- How can service user participation take place (in person, by audio recording, letters, video recordings, Skype participation and more)?
- Which considerations are relevant to ensure participation of people with multiple abilities (wheelchair access, measurements of doorways, considerations about visual and hearing abilities, emotional and cognitive aspects and needs and more)?
- Which platforms for the group are considered inclusive (Research Gate, Mendeley, and Facebook)?

### **Who does what...?**

As the participants of the meeting suggested a flat structure, it was agreed on, that future work and meetings are to be organized cooperatively. This means that all participants of the meeting are included in the steering group. Initiators of organising the next meeting, mentioned above, are Arne Kristiansen, Cecilia Heule and Jenny Wetterling. Contact info: Cecilia Heule [cecilia.heule@soch.lu.se](mailto:cecilia.heule@soch.lu.se), Jenny Wetterling [jennywetterling@gmail.com](mailto:jennywetterling@gmail.com) and Arne Kristiansen [arne.kristiansen@soch.lu.se](mailto:arne.kristiansen@soch.lu.se)

The initiators are not solely responsible for organising the next meeting, but introduce discussions of the planning so that the steering group are able to suggest, co-plan and arrange the meeting in 2020.

Due to discussion related to GDPR, this summary does not include the names of the participants of the meeting (except for the initiators mentioned above), nor email addresses. This is because this summary can freely be shared with anybody who would like to be a part of the Special Interest Group.

### **Code of conduct:**

As the group would like to promote all kinds of user involvement and participation and ensure a welcoming environment for any participant, we discussed and agreed that no service user group (or anyone else with interest in power and user involvement) can be excluded from participation. The group works in an anti-discriminatory manner, both in practice and in a non-offensive language with respect for individual needs.

In addition, working in an anti-discriminatory approach encourages awareness of diversity and acknowledging a wide range of degrees of interests, backgrounds, experiences, leanings, personal background and academic/professional backgrounds. Included is also the respect of experiences related to all (or none) abilities, ethnicities, races, ages, genders, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, exceptionalities, language, religion, geographical area, political leanings and philosophies. The respect is related to tolerance of thought, ideas, people with differing viewpoints and life experiences.

## Appendix

---

### The announcement of SIG group meetings:

(<https://www.helsinki.fi/en/conferences/nordic-social-work-conference/special-interest-groups#section-52056>)

Nordic Social Work Conference 2018 supports a host of Special Interest Groups (SIGs) which have been set up by FORSA Denmark members to allow the collaboration and development of specific topics within the social work research and practice field. These groups give the opportunity to make valuable contacts and gain insight and additional knowledge.

The overall aim for the SIGs is to promote the development, adaptation or translation of scientific approaches for the specific topics within the field of social work research and practice.

SIGs run independently but receive support from the Nordic Social Work Conference 2018 via its website and other communication channels, as newsletters and social media. The SIGs will meet at the conference on Wednesday, November 21st, at 14:00-16:00. You can find the information on each group below.

### The announcement of the meeting

(<https://www.helsinki.fi/en/conferences/nordic-social-work-conference/special-interest-groups#section-60578>)

#### Power and user involvement

Coordinator: Pernille Wisti (Aalborg University, Denmark)

The introducing coordinator of the SIG "Power and user involvement" in the University Of Helsinki Main Building, Auditorium I (old side, 2nd floor) is PhD student Pernille Wisti (Aalborg University, Denmark).

All participants with interests in power and user involvement in social work practices, education and research are welcome. The SIG relates to perspectives and challenges in 1) development, comprehensions and discussions of power, 2) user involvement; approaches in practices and research, moving and empowering involvement, and critical voices and questions of ethics and 3) combinations of the topics; how, when and why power and user involvement is influential, significant and neglected.

However, the starting point of the SIG is the participant's ideas and suggestions since the SIG emphasises initiating a multidimensional and inspiring network.

Time and place: Wednesday, November 21st, at 14:00-16:00, University of Helsinki Main Building (Street address: Fabianinkatu 33, Gatuadress: Fabiansgatan 33), Auditorium I (old side, 2nd floor)

### Presentation of the meeting:

All participants with interests in power and user involvement in social work practices, education, and research are welcome to participate in the meeting.

The SIG relates to perspectives and challenges in

- 1) Development, comprehensions and discussions of power,
- 2) User involvement; approaches in practices and research, moving and empowering involvement, and critical voices and questions of ethics and
- 3) Combinations of the topics; how, when and why power and user involvement is influential, significant and neglected.

The focus is on establishing the SIG: ideas and suggestions for a multidimensional and inspiring network.

### The suggestion of relevant questions and themes:

- Is the SIG name Power and user involvement suitable?
- What is the overall purpose of the group?
- How is the SIG going to establish a network?  
Sharing articles? Group meeting? Pre-conference (national) 2019 and/or (international) in 2020? Conveners and coordination group/committee? Database or forum for the network?