Hosting A Transnational Meeting With "Old" Friends And New Partners In Your Hometown

Our 2nd transnational meeting in the **See U; Older People Explore their Neighbourhood Digitally EU project** took place in Ljubljana, my home town what made me think about the programming of transnational meetings and the advantages of organising them in your home town.

Learning on location, meeting people, gathering and structuring information

Transnational project meetings are devoted to the project development, overviewing the accomplished tasks and planning those ahead, though transnational project meetings can be more than that! Discussing financial and project management issues, dissemination, exploitation, valorisation, or evaluation of the knowledge gained has little to do with local and national cultures! On the top of it, partners often travel long hours to the destination and often to a country or town they have never been to. This alone is an obligation for the organisers and programmers of the contents/agenda of the meeting to enable the participants to meet with local and national culture. Therefore, it is not enough to carry on the meeting in lecture rooms. Participants need to move among different locations and institutions and people working there. They need to use public transport and they need to meet local people and interact with them.

> In the SPIDW project we learned a Polish method called *City Games* involving adult learners when in a new environment.
> https://www.utzo.si/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Aiusgburg-City-Games_Slovenian-U3A.pdf

Playing this game, we discovered Augsburg in Schwabenland. The organisers directed us to places they had selected for us and let us work on our own in international pairs or threes. We were talking to each other, asking questions, establishing relationships, etc. This somehow made us think of the Carl Roger's indirect learning concept.

The organisers enabled us to be collectively responsible, but also collectively creative. There is a tendency to think that some people are creative and others are not. But this is rather inaccurate. ***What makes people creative are conditions and environment in which they learn. So,*** we were learning how to be with each other, while we learning about the city. Other people and the city were our learning environment.

All we were supposed to do was to bring back to the lecture room photos and gather enough information from local people and leaflets on the stalls and create questions to be posed to the rest of participants at the end of the day; to have them answer the questions which in turn gave us a possibility to provide them with additional data. In this way we were establishing a true exchange between those who know and those who know less or little. This kind of gap triggered our learning, stimulated our interest in the local culture and made it possible for some of us to refresh our German. Moreover, the task required that we designed clear, minimalist slides.

Searching for balance between freedom and structure is at the basis of programming the agenda of a transnational meeting

Transnational Project Development Meeting has to contain well balanced activities where cognitive learning is supplemented by experiential/ adventurous learning. Achieving the right balance between structure and freedom should constantly be at the back of the programmer's mind.

We trust older people's creativity knowing that there is no such thing as creative and non-creative learners. In the *See U project* thinking of older people and new technologies we are ever more convinced that computers should not provide knowledge to be taken by older people, but knowledge to be used by them to create something. According to Seymour Papert our older learners will need to have enough time to learn something that will connect them to their real life and other people, something meaningful. As to keep older learners focused, their learning will have to be balanced between freedom and structure.

Each transnational meeting is there to meet the participants' cognitive and emotional needs and answer questions

Answering questions related to the project topics is the ultimate goal of any transnational project meeting. The See U meeting in Ljubljana covered three topics: (1) older people's learning, their social value and inclusion, their need to be seen, listened to and heard in public as a result of their active ageing; (2) enabling older people to use the new technologies and being creative, (3) enabling older people to participate in the local development. The three topics were all at the back of our mind together with the above mentioned and described needs and approaches.

Not only the three topics had to be present, but had to be built into an organic and well balanced whole. Transnational meetings usually start over a cup of coffee, accompanied by casual chatting. This is preferably followed by putting the participants into picture, by presenting the host organisation, its mission and activities, the structure of the agenda together with some technicalities. Our experience tells us that the *world caffe method* can be extremely useful as an opening activity, immediately enabling the participants' exchanging thoughts that can be later integrated in the programme on condition they are written down and discussed. After using the participants' productive skills an input lecture (reception skills) is possible followed by a much-appreciated discussion (productive skills).

Topics related to the project development are to be inserted in the program, but not randomly! They should follow a progression of their own. Anyway, there are several progressions leading to the final organic whole ensured by contents, methods and actors. Final items of a project development meeting program should be connected to culture. In the See U we opted for common lunch, in a restaurant with regional cuisine and a certificate of attendance award ceremony which was planned to take place in front of a cultural institution. We lacked time to do it properly, so once again we had to be flexible which indeed organisers have to be through the whole duration of the meeting.

Conclusion

Hosting a transnational meeting in your hometown has several advantages concerning the structuring and organising the meeting while focusing on local knowledge, local culture and local performers (local resources) besides the performance of the partners and the topics they cover.

Literature and References

Papert, Seimour (1993) *Mindstorms: Children, Computers, and powerful Ideas.*Kindle edition.
Rogers, Carl R. (1961) *On becoming a person.* Boston New York: Houghton Mifflin Company