

Madzinga



Intercultural via experiential learning and outdoor education.
Reflected experience of a long-term training course in Belgium and Lithuania

By Howard Williamson and Mark Taylor

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What happened? Memories...

It is strange to focus on the process I've been involved in and to explain it in a few lines, but I can share some of it starting from what happened once the training course had finished.

After this course, I started university (I was 26 years old), I decided to go back to my work in the educational/training field, to continue studying intercultural learning, human rights, active citizenship. Would I have done all this if I had not participated in the course? Probably yes. But in a different way.

Sometimes I think that everything is different now, but, on the other side I could say that nothing "really" changed: I'm not another person, or do other things... I just process my experiences in a more self-conscious way.

The main difficulties when I was in Lustin, technically represented by "vertical activities" (I fear heights a lot), were to trust the others, the group. I needed the entire first part of the course, the help of the group and of the team to solve it. The more the challenges were overcome the more I felt the process was concluded, and in Samukas I did not "need" these people anymore, but I only liked to stay with them.

I don't mean that everything was perfect, of course not! I just say that I had a great time, I have been involved in an experiential learning process that gave me many opportunities for trying out things...

At a professional and personal level I learned many things about experiential learning, about team work, about processing the experience. I became much more confident in myself, my inclinations [or capability], I found a stronger balance among my feelings, my fears, challenges, and the capacity to "enter the processes" I'm involved in.

The long-term training course, with its feelings, experiences, tiredness, falling in love, difficulties, angers, happiness, represents one of the most intense moments I have lived, the effects of which are still part of my everyday life.

Lucia
(summer 2004)

Preface: Opening the Madzinga box

‘A mind that is stretched by a new experience will never go back to it’s old dimension’.

- Sir Oliver Wendell Holmes -

.....

This saying reflects very well the contents of this publication.

It’s a story about how people learn, about themselves, about others, about methods, about other cultures, about learning in a process-oriented, experiential, outdoor setting.

It’s a story about how different people from different backgrounds with different ideas can take responsibility for their own learning and development, how they learn from each other in a multicultural setting.

It’s a story about non-formal learning, a story that tries to show what people learn in these more informal learning courses, and an attempt to look at measuring those learning outcomes - a very complicated task!

It’s a personal story of participants, trainers and a (sometimes lonely) researcher, who experienced this intercultural learning process all in a different way.

It’s also the result of a process that started in 1998 with the first course on intercultural learning via experiential methods in Lithuania and a whole series of experiments since then in Lithuania, Slovakia and Iceland. One of the unforeseen outcomes of our work together has seen the formation of an informal network of training and youth organisations working in an experiential way, the Outward Bound ® European network.

I would like to thank the European Youth Foundation, the Flemish and Lithuanian National Agencies of the YOUTH Programme and the Soros Foundation for their trust and financial support. I also would like to say thank you to all participants for their energy and open minds, the trainers team for their hard work, energy , and so much more.

And special thanks to Howard Williamson and Mark Taylor for writing this publication. Thank you for your hard, sometimes frustrating work, for an ‘informal’ salary!

I’m very proud to present you ‘Madzinga’, a story about intercultural learning.

Yves Verraes
Director, Outward Bound® Belgium

Madzinga Contents

What happened? Memories...

Preface: Opening the Madzinga box, Yves Verraes, Outward Bound® Belgium

1 Introduction – how the idea came to fruition

Personal
Professional
Political
Methodological
Consolidating a vision
Funding, recruitment and selection

2 The programme – what we did

3 The planning and the process

An unpromising/inauspicious start!
And where did I fit?
Lustin, Belgium, August 2002
Samukas, Lithuania, May 2003
A reflection on planning and process

4 Participating in the programme and planning

Lustin, Belgium, August 2002
Workshops
Activities by participants
Final day
Solo and evaluation
Critical incidents/key moments
...And some questions A-Z

Samukas, Lithuania, May 2003
Multi-task day

5 Perspectives on the course

Participants
 evaluations of Lustin
 evaluations of Samukas and the course overall

Trainers
 evaluations of Lustin
 evaluations of Samukas and the course overall

6 The Day Course

Participants' perspectives

- group 4
- group 5
- group 2
- group 3
- group 6
- group 1

Visiting groups' perspectives

- group 4
- group 5

The trainers' views

- group 4
- group 5
- group 2
- group 3
- group 6
- group 1

And an observer's perspective

7 Looking to the future – personally and professionally

Personal learning and development plans

Project development

- Mission impossible
- Conflict management
- Back to nature – leaving no traces
- Creativity via experience – youth exchange

8 Promoting change – some theoretical reflections

9 Five Threads and some evaluative commentary

10 Conclusion

Appendices

- 1 Postscript: my own story
- 2 Information sources
- 3 References
- 4 Going further: Suggested reading and internet sites
- 5 The Madzinga team
- 6 Final acknowledgements

1 Introduction

“The research problem is compounded by the fact that people in organizations say one thing when they are doing another, ... and they often do not know why they are doing what they are and often not even what they are doing. ... Simple questionnaires, surveys, and interviews will then not reveal what is really going on. In these circumstances the clinical methods of the psychoanalyst or the consultancy stance are more appropriate. *The sensitive participant observer can use his or her feelings in the situation to hypothesize what is actually happening.* This means that we have to give up the notion that we can understand the system by formulating falsifiable hypotheses and then seeking to disconfirm them. Instead, we may have to reformulate what we are doing as trying to make more sense of our own and others’ experience of organizational life.”

(Stacey, R. (1996), Complexity and creativity in organisations, San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler, quoted in J. Nold (2000) A process-experiential approach to Outward Bound, paper presented at Outward Bound International Conference, Malaysia; my emphasis)

The story of Madzinga is a living and rather special story, not just theoretical and practical but about real people who represent the new Europe and who carry with them the potential and responsibility to take the ‘European project’ of intercultural tolerance and understanding, and youth development with them. A living story. Real names of trainers; pseudonyms of participants.

“Madzinga” means absolutely nothing (outside of Japanese robot cartoons), in reality and to those outside of the course. But it is a powerful symbol for those within the course. The name was introduced as an energiser by Bela (in a circle, each participant in turn thrusts both hands forward and shouts 'Mad'; once all are shouting and the sound reaches a crescendo, all simultaneously pull in their hands to the cry of 'Zinga'. For the course, Madzinga was not only a popular energiser but it came to be the 'land' we inhabited during our journey together. We were the people of Madzinga!

The certificate presented to participants at the end reported that they had participated in a Long Term Training Course which comprised three phases:

Phase I - experiencing the method, deepening concepts, practical training

Phase II - practice, coaching, networking

Phase III - professional skills, training external clients, international project development

The certificate was given "in recognition for long-term commitment to the course and the development of experiential learning in intercultural settings". This is a slight variation on other expressions of what the course was about, which tended to emphasise the intercultural learning dimension through outdoor experiential learning. Some may wish to unpick such semantics - but the general gist of the course should already be apparent: experiential learning through outdoor activities was the *conduit* through which, at another level, intercultural learning also took place. Participants from all over Europe broadened and deepened their intercultural understanding through engaging with a variety of activities and experiences. Or at least that was the plan! The following account should illuminate whether or not the plan succeeded.

How the idea came to fruition.

Personal

In September 2001, the Council of Europe and European Commission convened a seminar on *Bridges for Training*, bringing together administrators and European level trainers in non-formal learning. It was a few days after '9/11', which alerted all - in professional, personal and often very emotional ways - to the continuing challenges of seeking to promote intercultural tolerance and understanding and to combat racism and xenophobia.

I attended a workshop presented by Dirk de Vilder and Arturas Deltuva - both individuals whom I already knew and for whom I had enormous respect - on experiential learning and outdoor education, based on a 'training the trainers' course they had run with others in Lithuania the previous year. The presentation was, unsurprisingly, superb. It re-fuelled my interest in their work. After the session, I mentioned to Dirk that, should an opportunity arise in the future, I would be enthusiastic to play some part in such a programme, perhaps as a 'participant observer' and 'evaluator'. I did not simply want to be a 'rapporteur'. Beyond a personal desire to spend time in the company of those two individuals (who are dear friends as well as professional colleagues), I wanted to produce a detailed account of their 'kind' of training programme - to learn and watch, to question and record. Some time later, Dirk contacted me to say that he was developing another training course, and he invited me to be involved.

It was also in Bruges that I first met Mark Taylor. We had both been involved with the work of the Council of Europe for many years (he in training, me in research and policy) but, incredibly, our paths had never crossed. Subsequently, Mark and I ran a training course in Belgrade, shared a room and got to know each other, but that is another story. By the time we got to Lustin, however, we had established a mutual respect and affection for each other.

Professional

Dirk, Arturas and Mark had already worked together on a range of training courses, including the previous year's programme in Lithuania and in 1998. Like all networks at a European level, they had interacted together and with other colleagues over a number of years. Within Belgium (and occasionally elsewhere), Dirk had worked closely with Bart Vertongen, and through his work with Outward Bound Belgium had established links with Stanka Hederova from Outward Bound Slovakia. The final piece in this professional jig-saw was Björn Vilhjálmsson, a trainer and youth work practitioner from Iceland, with whom some of the team had worked before.

This was something of a 'dream team' (as it was described by Stanka) and few would dispute - despite a general reluctance to identify 'hierarchies' in the reputations and competencies of trainers - that the team included some of the most experienced European level youth work trainers. Notwithstanding the creative professional tensions and development potential within such a team, they were still very different individuals both professionally in terms of focus, priorities, strategies and beliefs and personally in terms of character, emotions, feelings and background.

The gender balance was uneven, with five men (plus me) and just one woman. The team came to be known, internally, as 'Stanka's Boys', a diminution of the professional strength of the team but a way of handling the imbalance. Indeed, when the inevitable tensions and frictions arose concerning the trajectory and/or content of the planned course, the final court of appeal was from Stanka to 'her' Boys. And we should not conceal the tensions that sometimes prevailed. They produced, generally, a powerful *professional* dynamic, with ideas being batted (and occasionally battled!) around the team until a resolution was reached, but now and again they also produced a slightly corrosive personal alienation - as fatigue and frustration got the better of us. It is important to recognise, from the start, that running

such training courses is an exhausting process. Attention is needed for every level of detail - from the big professional objectives of the course to practical and logistical considerations, from the social integration of the participants' group to the personal circumstances of individual participants. Beyond this, the trainers' team itself was a group in development and evolution (confused and challenged further perhaps by my own presence as someone who was both 'inside' and 'outside'). These challenges are endemic to the training process. They produced emotional highs and lows, but at no time did they threaten the coherence and commitment of the training team, for whom engagement with the training course was - for them - a rich and rewarding experience.

Political

When Dirk and Arturas made their presentation in Bruges, they communicated a powerful advocacy for experiential learning and its contribution to intercultural understanding. But their workshop took place amongst a group of people who did not need persuading of the value of non-formal learning as a tool for personal development, the engendering of 'transversal skills' and respect for cultural diversity.

What was significant about the *Bridges for Training* seminar was that it also took place at a time when some level of attention was being paid in wider 'political' constituencies to non-formal learning, albeit often with a tinge of doubt and scepticism about its value. Nonetheless, the European Commission had produced its Memorandum on Lifelong Learning and was about to launch its White Paper on Youth Policy. The training covenant between the European Commission and the Council of Europe was working up its ideas for the ATTE (Advanced Training for Trainers in Europe) course. A year later, the European Council of Youth Ministers, meeting in Thessalonica, would make its statement on the principles that should underpin youth policy development. All of these documents and proclamations, and others, pointed to the importance of 'non-formal learning'.

Such emergent support for non-formal learning is not, however, unconditional. In a broad political climate concerned with measurable *outcomes* as the benchmark for dispensing public resources, non-formal learning is still likely to struggle to make its case. Dirk and Arturas asserted in Bruges the importance of *process*, and the fact that much of their programme could not be determined in advance, precisely because it depended on the unfolding issues generated by participants *during* their participation. This would have provided little reassurance to those accountable for the wise spending of public money. Short presentations and videos of people caving and canoeing may be informative and even entertaining, but the concrete results of such work often appear elusive.

There is, of course, a wide literature on non-formal and experiential learning, and on its rationale and purpose (see, for example, Richardson and Wolfe 2003, Luckner and Nadler 1997 - the bible of experiential trainers!). Kolb's experiential learning cycle - essentially 'do, review, learn, apply' (though see below) - is legendary. But, during the Bruges seminar, it occurred to me that those who debate the principles and practice of non-formal learning divide quite clearly into two: the converted and the unpersuaded. The former are invariably the apostles of the method; the latter often have the money! I quickly arrived at the view that what was needed was neither a short promotional document nor a detailed theoretical guide to such practice but a detailed practical account of a concrete example of non-formal learning.

The purpose of *this* account is to depict those processes and interventions which took place, interrogating the explanations given and the critical incidents which triggered specific learning 'moments'. What follows is therefore simultaneously a narrative of the programme which developed *and* an analysis of the learning which materialised during its course.

Methodological

The 'unpersuaded' may, of course, remain so. They may be sceptical about both the methodology and the authorship of the text, for I am unashamedly a proponent of the (increasing) value of non-formal learning in relation to the changing nature of youth transitions and the demands of the (post)modern world. I am, however, also a researcher, trained and experienced in exercising a critical edge through participant observation and supplementary interviews with the key stakeholders in the exercise. This account is not intended (and never was intended) to provide a summary assertion of the value of non-formal learning, but to *illuminate* what takes place, and why. Through recording and reporting the elements of the programme, the objectives set by the trainers' team, the reactions of participants both individually and collectively, and also conveying a more personal critical reflection, more light may perhaps be shed on *how* such learning programmes contribute to participants' knowledge, skills and attitudes - both generally and (in this case) specifically around the question of intercultural learning.

The programme did not materialise in a vacuum. It was built on the previous experience of three earlier courses (see below) and therefore the trainers' team already had a strong sense of the concept that they were seeking to deliver. The cornerstones of the programme were that it was an *international* project concerned with personal development. Such personal development was grounded in experiential learning, a primary focus of which was intercultural understanding. And while I had a general sense of the concept and objectives of the programme, I had no detailed knowledge nor any previous experience of involvement in such a programme. As a result, I was able to engage with the development and execution of the programme with a 'stranger's eye' - recurrently asking questions which certainly conveyed a critical curiosity and probably sometimes appeared to be almost irritating and naïve. But this in itself forced the trainers to articulate the rationale for each step of the programme, which otherwise would at times have been taken for granted.

Such a programme of learning does not lend itself to the 'scientific' testing of hypotheses or to 'before and after' assessments. This is, of course, one of the reasons why the 'unpersuaded' often remain so. They want 'hard' facts, summative conclusions, and valid statistics. Qualitative research does not provide this, nor can it. Instead, it has to achieve some level of authority through adopting 'multi-method' approaches, the combining of which (hopefully) produce a credible analysis. This account is based upon a data collection strategy which drew both on material which would routinely emerge from such courses and that which was specifically requested. Where possible, a 'triangulation' approach was adopted: drawing perspectives from three 'corners' (such as participants' views, trainers' views and the researcher's views) in order to explore the level of congruence or dissent. Little was 'objective' and much was 'subjective', but the compilation of data drawn from a range of sources and in a variety of ways has generated a solid foundation of source material from which a 'reading' or synthesis can be developed. A full list of that material is available at the end of the text. It is sufficient here to point up the fact that the 'story' of the programme is based upon the researcher's field notes (from participation and observation), participants' evaluations, diaries and reflections, trainers' notes, questionnaire responses from both trainers and participants, and wider literature.

Consolidating a vision

Towards the end of 1997, or perhaps early in 1998, four people sat in a sauna discussing different ideas about training. Two (Dirk and Arturas) were trainers, two (Evija and Jacqueline) were participants in a Long-Term Training Course at the European Youth Centre. The conversation focused in on planning a training course in Lithuania, a course where youth workers could "get a taste of experiential learning and then think about how to use it with the young people they work with".

From an idea in a sauna to the implementation of such a course is a long road and involves a great deal of hard work. As the Roofonfire website recalls,

Support from Outward Bound Belgium and the Lithuanian State Council for Youth Affairs had to be found; an application to Action D of the EU's 'Youth for Europe' programme had to be made; participants had to be recruited; the Bebrusai camp had to be booked; Bart and Kristina were added to the team; a preparation meeting in Lithuania was arranged in July [1998]; someone called Mark was asked to be the 'Third Eye' or reporter; and ropes, tarpaulins, helmets, spades, computers, pens, paper - all had to be transported to the camp
<http://www.angelfire.com/mt/Roofonfire/>)

The idea of such a course was born. The first course, involving youth workers and trainers from Belgium, Greece, France, Latvia and Lithuania, was concerned with youth workers using experiential learning methods in their work with socially disadvantaged young people. It was described as a 'success'; it has been held to have provided a major catalyst for informal youth work in Lithuania. The eight participants from Lithuania went back to their local realities and used the principles and methodologies they had learnt to sow the seeds of experiential learning practice throughout the country – an influence which is felt strongly in the youth field to this day. [This was, indeed, a point made during the 'YO-YO Lithuania' intercultural learning slot in the programme during Phase 3 of Madzinga in Samukas.]

A second 10-day course was held in Lithuania, involving 25 youth workers, this time from four different countries. The focus was on using experiential learning for intercultural projects. An outline philosophy for the course was formulated:

Experiential learning methods for intercultural learning are appropriate in working with disadvantaged young people for many reasons:

- By doing adventurous activities in nature and/or in the city, young people can learn about themselves and about the other members of the group. Through activities that are specially designed to work on communication, co-operation and individual and group challenges, young people reach a better understanding of themselves, develop a stronger self-image and establish a more positive sense of their own potential
- The focus is not only on the activity itself but on the discussion after the activities. During the debrief of the activity, participants discuss their role, the co-operation of the group, etc.
- It is the role of the trainer to link these experiences and the insights they develop from the debrief to their daily life
- This method is appropriate to work on intercultural learning (with socially excluded young people) and to get a better understanding of cultural differences. By experiencing these different adventurous activities, intercultural differences and similarities become more transparent and can be discussed
- Socially disadvantaged young people often have problems working with abstract concepts and to express themselves verbally. By engaging them in activities where they do things first and then discuss them afterwards, young people can learn about themselves, about their culture, and the culture of others, in a practical way

After this second course, three international projects developed by participants took place.

A year later, a third course was held in Slovakia, this time involving participants from five countries (Iceland, Belgium, Slovakia, Lithuania and Finland). The course was further adapted and developed. A host of both local and youth exchange projects were then 'infected' with the experiential virus across Europe and participants from each of the training courses met in Iceland to compare results and learn from each other.

Following the *Bridges for Training* seminar in 2001, where considerable interest had been shown in Dirk and Arturas' presentation, Dirk observed that "we were ready, to once again challenge ourselves

and to rethink the concept. The course would be open for youth workers and trainers from all European countries and we would work on this as a Long Term Training Concept".

During subsequent discussion and communication between Dirk and Arturas, and with Mark Taylor, there was clearly a view that earlier courses had helped them to implement a vision and develop its philosophy. Now was the time to consolidate the learning process enshrined within that vision and to disseminate its rationale and practice.

This programme was not to be just a replication of previous courses but a 'step-change' beyond them. Previous courses had been limited to distinct national groups but this course was to be designed to attract an 'open' group from many different countries. It was aimed at people - who might broadly be depicted as 'youth workers' - who wanted to organise international youth exchanges and projects directly, or who wanted to encourage and support others in doing so. It was not simply about personal development but, from the very start the preparatory team maintained that while training was sometimes *not* about personal development, experiential learning was *always* about personal development - but, hopefully, about a lot more besides. The team was insistent that its intended programme was not just about providing another 'tool in the toolkit' (i.e. how to 'do' Outward Bound), although this was what toolbox trainers and agencies often wanted. Diverse expectations therefore had to be accommodated: there needed to be a focus both on process (personal development) and output (knowledge and skills for professional application). It was not, as one of the team put it, a question of "either/or...it is a case of and/and". Or at least that was what it was hoped to be.

That sufficient funding was eventually secured from diverse sources (see below) is a testament to the credibility of the trainers' team. By 2002, the members of the team had been involved for some years in developing training concepts and organising a sequence of what had been perceived by supporting institutions. The fact that 'Madzinga' obtained funding from the European Union 'Youth' Programme, the Council of Europe Youth and Sports Directorate and from the Soros Foundation underlines the confidence that had been built up over the years. If anyone could undertake a 'demonstration project' of the rhyme and reason of experiential and intercultural learning, it was this team.

Funding, recruitment and selection

Funding

Dirk de Vilder, in close collaboration with Arturas Deltuva, took responsibility for attempting to secure sufficient funding for 'Part I' of the course, to be held in Belgium in August 2002. In relation to 'Part III', planned to be held in Lithuania in May 2003, those roles were reversed.

Funding for Part I was secured through the European Youth Foundation (category A) and the Youth Programme of the European Union (action 5, via JINT Flanders). Funding for Part III came from the European Youth Foundation (category A), the Youth Programme of the European Union (action 5, via the national agency of Lithuania), and the Soros Foundation (supporting the travel of those from central and eastern Europe).

Needless to say, the resourcing of such a long-term training course is not cheap. The 'direct' costs (what it actually takes to pay for everything: travel, venue, trainers' fees, food, and so on) appear, at first sight, to be very considerable. But the 'real' costs are in fact even higher - the unpaid time invested by the trainers' team in preparation, communication and planning, the time invested by participants in similar activity, the time given by others to help the course to happen. What is important to recognise is that, while the course could not have taken place without the financial support of the key 'sponsors', it would equally not have taken place without other resource contributions in kind and time. In other words,

there were different types of 'cost' involved, especially an 'opportunity cost' arising from the platform made possible by the financial donors. It was an understanding of this *framework* of 'investment' that placed a mutual and moral obligation on the trainers' team, and participants, to take the whole thing seriously. It was *not* a leisurely holiday in the woods, developing expertise in knots!

Even if some kind of 'ball park' overall cost could be calculated, any attempt to work out 'cost per participant' would also be a false trail. A core objective of such a training course is to establish a *multiplier effect*, to encourage a cascade model whereby participants take their learning elsewhere and apply it with other individuals and groups. Hence the emphasis within the programme on professional and project development *beyond* personal development. Two dozen people are not the sole beneficiaries of such a programme: they are the conduit through which such ideas and practice can be fanned out across Europe. Thus, while it is recognised that simple arithmetic will be tempted to consider the equation between the direct financial costs of the course and the number of participants, any proper consideration of the economic cost of such a venture must take account both of indirect costs and multiplier effects. And, of course, judgements about the 'value' of the course should never be restricted to such calculations - either way; their professional and social value must also be taken fully into account.

Recruitment and selection criteria

Some core selection criteria were applied when considering applications:

- Working directly with young people
- Interest in outdoor activities or already have some experience
- Willing to implement experiential learning in their work with young people
- Open mind for intercultural learning
- Have the possibility and commitment to developing an international project with other organisations
- Ensuring a gender and geographical balance

Applications and selection

There were 58 applications from 20 different countries. Well over half of the applications were from central and eastern European countries, the remainder from current EU countries. A first selection of participants was made according to the criteria (above), although a woman from Greece and a man from Georgia cancelled their participation at the last moment.

The final profile of participants selected for the course, 24 individuals from 13 different countries, was therefore as follows:

Latvia 2M
Lithuania 2F 1M
Belgium 1F 1M
Slovakia 1F
Hungary 2F*

Estonia 2F
Romania 1F
Italy 1F 1M
France 1M*
Finland 1F 2M*

Iceland 1F 1M
Belarus 1F 1M
UK (NI) 1M

NB: One 'Hungarian' woman was born in the USA; a man from 'France' German by birth; one man from 'Finland' Russian by birth.

Most of the selected participants were working directly with young people or as trainers with those working with young people. Just under half of them were in paid

employment; the remainder were volunteers or freelance. They ranged in age from late teens to mid-thirties, and came from different kinds of organisations:

- National youth organisations
- Local youth work
- Training organisations
- National agencies of the European Union 'Youth' Programme
- International youth work organisations
- Peace work
- Outdoor education
- Local projects for socially disadvantaged young people
- School-based work
- European Voluntary Service
- Workcamp organisations

Around two-thirds already had had some involvement in experiential learning, and a similar number had some experience in intercultural learning.

Replacements

The participants committed themselves to the whole course: all three stages. Inevitably, though, some - through no fault of their own - were unable to honour this commitment. By the time that Part III was being planned, it was clear that there would be some level of 'drop-out' and contingency plans were put in place were this to happen.

In the event, six of the 24 original participants (two women, and four men) did not return for Part III. The reasons for their non-participation were, amongst other things, changes to their jobs and having examinations. Four individuals (one woman, three men) took their place. All had been involved in one of the previous training courses (mentioned above) and so had some familiarity with the process. Nonetheless, they still presented a challenge in terms of integrating with *this* group, which had been together in Lustin and - to some extent at least - had kept in touch both through their 'coaching groups' and at a more personal level. Participation in Part III therefore comprised 22 participants from 13 countries, with the replacements identified below:

Latvia 2M
Lithuania 2F 1M (1F out/1F 1M in)
Belgium 1F 1F
Slovakia 1F
Hungary 2F
Estonia 2F (1F out)
Romania 1F

Italy 1F 1M (1M out)
France 1M
Finland 1F 2M (1M out)
Iceland 1F 1M (1M out/2M in)
Belarus 1F 1M (1M out)
UK (NI) 1M

There were small additional issues to do with sustaining the group dynamic. Two participants arrived late because of competing commitments. Another had to leave in the middle to take an exam. But, overall, the momentum of the group's work was sustained.

2 The programme - what we did

There follows a skeleton outline of the training course overall:

Part I in Lustin, Belgium;

Part II back home but remaining in contact through 'coaching groups', and

Part III in Samukas, Lithuania.

Part I, Lustin Belgium, August 2002

19th	20th	21st	22nd	23rd	24th	25th	26th	27th	28th	29th
Arrival	Introductions	Hike	Hike	Reflection of experience	Free day	Deepening concepts of learning	Workshops	Open space technology	Activities run by participants	Networking plan
Welcome activities	Experiential + Intercultural	Activities en route	Activities en route	Meta-reflection on intercultural Processes	Climbing Caving Etc	Workshops	Looking to Phase II	Preparation of activities run by participants		Preparation for Phase II
	Preparation for hike in 2 groups	Sleep outdoors	Sharing experience between groups	International evening	Dinner out	Coaching groups	Coaching groups	Coaching groups	Coaching groups	Evaluation

Part II - back home September 2002 - April 2003

- Development of projects
- Coaching groups for mutual contact and support
- Personal journals

Part III, Samukas, Lithuania, May 2003

3rd	4th	5th	6th	7th	8th	9th	10th
Arrival	Introductions	Personal development through multi-task activities: “Save Lithuania – Rescue and Retrieval”	Review of personal development	Day Course with participants from all over Lithuania	Reflection on the Day Course	Open Space Technology	Project presentations
“Coming back”	Looking back – analysing, sharing		Preparation for the Day Course		Free afternoon	Project management and funding	Personal learning and development plans
	Coaching groups		Project market	Project groups	Dinner on a boat with Elvis	Project groups	Evaluations and Closing
	Whole group						

This outline of the programme almost certainly conceals more than it reveals to the reader. Some elements of the programme will be self-evident, others perhaps rather more obscure. Furthermore, there is little indication of the time allocated to particular elements. This does not matter too much here, and was anyway flexible according to the demands and needs of the group. This is one of three points that are important to raise here:

- 1) If experience is to be 'processed' effectively, then there has to be *flexibility* in order to deal with unpredictability (see Nold 2000). There were clearly 'fixed points' in the programme which could not be shortened, extended or abandoned (the Day Course is the best example, involving as it did a visit by 'outsiders', to be trained by participants) but, wherever possible, there was scope for adaptation and change.
- 2) The course made use of a diversity of 'teaching and learning' *methods*. Prominent amongst these were, fairly obviously, groupwork and activities, but the course also incorporated short theoretical presentations on concepts and ideas, workshops on different aspects of experiential practice, and time for individual solitude and reflection. The course was both *framed* ('top down') by the trainer's team (for example, the hike and the Day Course were clearly planned features of the programme) and *shaped* ('bottom up') by participants (for example, running activities in Lustin and Open Space Technology in both Belgium and Lithuania).
- 3) A number of *threads* informed the structure of the programme and were given different emphases at different stages within the programme. Sometimes they were quite explicit, sometimes less so. Sometimes they stood alone, sometimes a number of threads melded together. These threads included knowledge and understanding of experiential and intercultural learning (theory and ideas), personal development and self-awareness, professional skills (activities), project development, and intercultural learning in practice. These are the threads and strands which provide a framework for the story of the course and inform the overall evaluation of the programme.

The threads/elements of the course

Theory/Concepts
 Personal development
 Professional skills (methods and activities)
 Project development
 Intercultural learning

There is also a Part IV of the programme, when participants develop international training projects drawing on the knowledge and skills from their earlier experience. We cannot address this here, except perhaps by way of a Postscript, but it is an essential part of the 'multiplier effect' to which such courses attach a great deal of promise

Such a programme does not emerge in a vacuum or result from some one-off planning meeting. It is the product not only of robust dialogue concerning the overall framework and direction but also of increasingly detailed attention to content and method for every small step of the journey. It is upon the diligence of the trainer's team in giving such attention that the quality and depth of the participants' experience will stand or fall.

3 The planning and the process

An unpromising/inauspicious start!

The course had no pre-determined blueprint and was to be constructed through drawing on the extensive experience of the trainer's team, incorporating the three key building blocks:

- Intercultural learning
- Experiential learning
- Outdoor education/outward bound

The trainer's team (and me) had its first preparatory meeting in Belgium in April 2002. For different reasons, three of the intended team were unable to make it (and one of these subsequently withdrew completely as a result of pressure of work). Five (including me) did make it to Belgium, but two immediately went down with illness and were largely unable to participate in the planning process. Thus a range of circumstances conspired to strip the planning weekend of more than half of the team, and the initial framework thinking was left primarily to Dirk and Arturas. We sat around exchanging ideas, visited sites and the forest near Lustin, considered my own role ('half in, half out!'), and slowly a plan for the training course unfolded.

The aim of the programme was crystallised as follows:

Aim: to equip participants with the knowledge, attitudes, values and skills of experiential learning for application in intercultural and international settings

This was, it should be noted, further revised later, but it was a 'first stab'. Around this aim, more specific *objectives* were established:

- To expose participants to an intercultural process
- To ensure that the process is based on an experiential learning cycle
- To familiarise participants with the theory and methods of experiential learning and intercultural learning
- To encourage participants to develop this practice
- To inform participants of sources of support for international projects
- To establish a culture of exchange of experience
- To encourage networks of exchange to create joint projects and support each other
- To provide a process of development through three stages
- To disseminate the principles and practice of experiential learning through a variety of mechanisms

As reported above, the programme drew incrementally on many ideas which had been pursued in the earlier training courses in Lithuania, Slovakia and Iceland, but this course was an extended one divided, crucially, into three stages. The first - ten days in Belgium - would start with a rigorous 'outward bound' two days, in order to establish teamwork and group dynamics, before proceeding on to more focused learning activities (drawing on the experience of those first two days) and workshops dedicated to information and practice transfer and exchange. The second stage - between September

2002 and May 2003 - would be a time when participants would develop their own projects, monitoring and recording their development. The third stage - scheduled to be in Lithuania in May 2003 - would provide the opportunity for participants to reflect on the lessons learned both from the initial course and from their own endeavours to establish their own projects or incorporate their learning from the first course into work that they were already doing.

And where did I fit?

To place the thinking for the course in a wider context, it is important to emphasise that there is nothing inherently sacrosanct about either using experiential learning or electing to focus on intercultural learning (although it was clearly an active and preferred choice on the part of the trainer's team). The training course was essentially an exercise in non-formal education. Non-formal education takes many forms, which is both its great strength (in its flexibility to address diverse issues through many different approaches) and its great weakness (precisely because of this apparent vagueness, eclecticism and lack of pedagogical specificity). For *this particular training course*, the *peg* on which the anticipated learning was to hang was outdoor activities, and the *subject* of the programme was intercultural learning. Both could have been different, but all non-formal education needs some kind of peg on which to hang its focus and subject matter. However, although pegs and subjects may be different, methodologies and desirable outcomes are essentially similar - and it is these with which this account is primarily concerned.

This point created some disquiet and discomfort amongst some members of the preparatory team who, beyond their competences as non-formal educators are also skilled in outdoor pursuits. I maintained that I was not there to be writing an experiential learning handbook nor any kind of definitive document on non-formal education. What I wanted to do was to engage with the programme in order to extract and illustrate the learning that took place. My own interest derived from a number of sources: the increasing interest of the European Union in non-formal learning, the development of international youth work, Kurt Hahn's morality in a Europe which was witnessing once more a resurgence in racism and intolerance. It seemed to me to be important to strengthen the *profile* of experiential learning and to convey its intercultural effect. As one member of the preparatory team asserted, there were strong connections between experiential learning and intercultural understanding: "the two fertilise each other".

There was some consensus that such a publication might help to put experiential learning - as a tool for intercultural learning - (back) on the map, an apposite analogy given the intention to use outdoor education as the peg for the development of the course. The publication would be an exercise in 'grounded theory', building theory and analysis from the practical experiences of both the trainer's team and the participants. My role was to be about making things muddy and messy, seeking clarification concerning the what, the how and the why within the programme. I would be asking some awkward questions. The trainer's team concurred that I should provide a 'third eye'. Therefore I was not to be an integral member of the preparatory and trainer's team (which would be too close) but an associate member of it - contributing as a participant, but also standing back as an observer. It would not necessarily be an easy or comfortable role to play, for myself or for others. Inevitably, it might affect some of the dynamics of the process, but close engagement with the programme and active participation was considered to be preferable to always watching and recording from the sidelines. As a war photographer once said, 'if you want a good picture, you have to get close'. And, in any case, no-one can any longer pretend that even so-called 'scientific' observation is a neutral activity! [My own feelings about playing such a role are reported in an appendix.]

That participation commenced sooner than expected. I joined the two fit members of the preparatory team in checking out the terrain in which the course participants (split into two groups) would spend their second and third days on the course, undertaking activities and exercises and getting to know each and to work together. In a forest close to the French border, the area lent itself to a 48-hour team building programme which would involve *inter alia* tasks set in a small cave complex, a river crossing, rock climbing and abseiling, finding the (current) 'heart of Europe', venturing into France and, possibly, some 'town activities'. The day was spent thinking up these various activities and considering their feasibility, as well as establishing a number of orienteering points, considering various technical and logistical issues, and addressing supplies and safety questions. This was very much an 'exploration' day; the detail was to be developed in the forthcoming weeks once a general framework had been agreed.

Yet, as noted, the preparatory team was not 'building from scratch'. Beyond the wealth of possible options for activities, workshops and rituals held in the minds and personal notes of members of the team, Dirk de Vilder had already 'composed' a developmental framework for an experiential learning process during the training course in Slovakia. This incorporated four dimensions: Direction; Group Dynamics and Processing, Activities, and Reflection. It outlined five stages on each of these dimensions (see *One way to look at a model to build up an experiential learning process*, devised by Dirk de Vilder, Camp Bebrusai, September 1998, specially adapted edition for Efil seminar, December 2000, further adapted for LTTC South east Europe, May 2001). We shall see that a yet further adapted version of this framework was implicitly applied during *this* training course, incorporating five elements of Theory and Concepts, Personal Development, Professional Skills, Project Development and Intercultural Learning.

The trainer's team agreed to arrive in Belgium some two days before the participants. This would enable them to put more flesh on the bones of the skeleton framework.

Lustin, Belgium, August 2002

That Sunday in Lustin was the first time I had met Björn Vilhjálmsson. The rest of the trainer's team all knew each other, but there was still a need, at the very start, for the team to consolidate its personal relationships before moving on to the professional agenda of the course. Each individual passed comment about their feelings about being there. There was some apprehension and anxiety, not least because of my presence: previous courses had been 'closed', this one was subject to 'external' scrutiny. But there was also a sense of excitement and challenge - of having the opportunity to 'push some boundaries' and to work intensively with others who were not only respected professional colleagues but also personal friends. There was a sense of 'community' amongst the trainers, who clearly provided each other with an important personal and professional reference group. They were ready to rise to the challenge of working with a 'strong calibre' of participants, some of whom were also relatively informed and experienced about this kind of work. They were enthused about adopting a 'Mandela' approach - to celebrate powerfully and publicly what they had to offer the world.

Further discussion took place about my own role. My presence was clearly met both with appreciation and with some caution. Exactly how I 'fitted' needed to be clarified. I was there to record events, not to deliver the programme. But the team wanted me to be an *active* participant, not just a passive observer. I wanted the same. Potential difficulties were identified. The two most prominent were if participants made specific comment or criticism to me about members of the training team, and the extent to which I should contribute to the shaping of the course, rather than just raise questions for clarification. In the first case, the team wanted me to remain *inside* a 'feedback loop', generalising any specific critical remarks made by participants for consideration by the trainer's team. In the second,

the team felt that I should be 'permitted' to engage with course development but in a circumspect way. I was not a European trainer, although I had some experience of youth work training, and it was therefore appropriate for me, on occasions, to contribute to the debate about course development. In other words, I should not be prevented from doing so, but I should ration my interventions! Finally, it was felt that there might be a need for me to have a 'confidante' or sounding-board and it was agreed that Mark could be positioned to fulfil this role, as he was not only a full member of the trainer's team but had also had experience as a 'third eye' on other courses including the first one in Lithuania.

This discussion of my role threw into relief the fact that there needed to be a more generalised division of labour within the trainer's team - team members should not feel that they needed to be and do everything. There needed to be - within an agreed framework - an organic approach to intra-team relationships, with different sub-groupings taking the lead responsibility for different aspects of the course. For although Dirk had done the bulk of the preparation, he did not want it assumed that he should take the lead role all the time: he was *not* the organiser.

There would be a different 'chair of the day' - rotating between team members, with the role of ensuring that things got done and co-ordinating different responsibilities. The baton would be handed over each day before the evening meal, when the trainer's team would meet to review the day and develop (and, if necessary, amend) the programme for the following day.

None of this was cast in stone. Indeed, it was useful to think in terms of 'permeable boundaries', with team members extending mutual support while simultaneously recognising that specific skills, interests and responsibilities were vested primarily in one individual or another.

Yet however carefully planned and agreed, there would inevitably be frustrations and tensions within the team. Each day would require space for 'cleaning the table' and clearing the air - sharing negative feelings as well as positive ones within the security and confidentiality of the team.

For the times when participants were to be split into two groups (for the hike, and for group dynamics, for example), the course team would divide as follows:

Arturas	Bart
Dirk	Björn
Mark	Stanka & Howard

The trainer's team - for the first time all together - confirmed the intention that the course would consist of three phases:

- Information, practice, and networking
- Practice and reflection/coaching groups
- Reflection and deepening/learning points and application

This model drew heavily upon team members' experience of the Council of Europe's Long-Term Training Courses and the recently developed ATTE course, organised within the youthworker training Partnership between the Commission and Council of Europe.

The overall aim of the course was also confirmed, though with a significant revision which expressed the intention of using the experiences of participants as actors, not as subjects: *to develop with participants, through a three stage learning process, the knowledge, skills...*

Lengthy discussion took place about the framework for the 2nd phase, for which preparation needed to be embedded during the 1st phase. There needed to be a communication strategy for participants - through the sharing of some kind of personal journal or diary - and mentoring/coaching of groups of participants by individual trainers. Concern was expressed that Phase 2 was 'too overcrowded' if these ideas were put in place. But it was also emphasised that there was a need to 'keep the learning community alive'. Sub-groups of participants needed to have a reason to exist and they themselves, with the support of a trainer, should be expected to develop agreed ways to communicate (what, how and when). This was *not* to be an email group of all participants - which are usually good for a couple of weeks and then tail off. The trainer's team asserted that there was a need for smaller groups with a trainer/coach who would assist groups in debating an agreed basis of communication and a sense of purpose and momentum. The ATTE course was cited as an illustration, in which participants are allocated to mentors (they cannot choose), who support the development of their personal learning plans and serve as a mirror or sounding board. There are, however, also self-developed peer groups addressing shared themes of common interest or concern, such as parenting, Russian language and responsibility.

The outcome of this debate was agreement that a *framework* needed to be established for both 'coaching groups' and 'interest groups'. The former would be a top-down requirement, framed around the development of effective practice and governed by themes such as reflection, communication and support. Participants could decide on the most appropriate mechanisms to achieve this within their sub-group, share them across the coaching groups and then refine them accordingly. The latter would be optional and bottom-up, emerging from presenting issues for participants. They would cross-over the coaching groups and might involve any number of participants. During the first Phase, Open Space Technology (see below) would permit the identification of anticipated issues, concerns, and priorities which participants might wish to share with others and from which 'interest groups' might be established. [NB. Despite the quality of this discussion, no real interest groups were in fact established – but small informal groupings did emerge who kept in touch with each other.] The trainers maintained that it was important not to confuse the two groups; they can be represented as follows:

Coaching groups - framed themes

Interest groups - emergent issues

Coaching groups established during Phase 1 were not to be about just reflecting on the first Phase, but about connecting with the realities facing participants back home. It was acknowledged that these kinds of training courses can sometimes be something of a 'bubble', quite detached from life's tough realities.

In effect, then, there would be three mechanisms for professional and peer support which would underpin learning and development around the five dimensions of the course:

Coaching groups
Interest groups
Whole group dialogue

Little discussion took place about Phase 3, largely because it would have to build on the lessons of the first two Phases and emergent priorities conveyed by the trainers *and* participants. But dates were set, and it was agreed that it was imperative, from the outset, to introduce participants to the *whole concept* - Phases 1-3 and international projects thereafter.

During the preparatory meeting in Lustin, the team (or some of its members - see above) had produced a skeletal framework for the course: very much the barest of bones. This had been shared via e-mail with the whole team and, to some extent, reacted to and commented upon in terms of ideas for development. Now it was time to move to a more detailed level, yet still essentially skeletal: more bones, but still no flesh. The team brainstormed through each day, identifying both professional possibilities and practical questions. They produced what might be seen as an overall shopping list, giving shape and direction to the programme, discussing its overall balance and the suitability of embryonic time allocations. This took the rest of the day. Field notes written at the time capture the flavour of that protracted discussion:

Monday 19th, evening: participants' arrival [floods in Budapest mean Karola will be one day late]

Barbecue
Welcome and housekeeping (Dirk)
Name game
Something experiential
Something intercultural (Mark)
Someone else for next day's introductions
Social Committee

Practical issues: Barbecue, Bar, Rubbish, Bedrooms & sleeping, Noise.

Role allocation and more detail to be determined tomorrow morning.

Tuesday, 20th

Getting to know each other - presentations (Björn and Stanka)
Aims and objectives [WHAT AND HOW] (Arturas and Bart)
* including a kind of route map: experiential and intercultural [WHY] (Mark)
* The programme, how we will work
Practical information (travel reimbursement) (Dirk)

Split groups (for the hike as well) – reflections and questions (Bart)
Group dynamics - activities

Introduction to the hike

Two departure points – B-A and A-B: rendezvous at quarry (should groups mix together; will they want to; will they have time to?)

Activities en route:

Compass
Cave
Village
River

Quarry
Orienteering
EU Centre

Some issues around this:

Cave and quarry activities need to be focused on a group-based approach, not individualistic.
Safety rules and considerations. One registered instructor with each group (Dirk and Bart), to ensure compliance with Belgium's legal requirements and professional procedures.

Village activities (ideas)

Free food/coffee
Oldest inhabitant
Photo with 30 people
Photographic record
5 historical facts
Sing song
The soul of the village
Discover the village
Special facts
Special persons

Eventually it was decided to run with a more general concept of giving something and taking something through contact with the local people – and then reporting on it on return.
But each group will have to do a different 'village' – otherwise the second group to show up might be disadvantaged!

Stone quarry

Multitask – at discretion according to weather, timing, equipment, etc.
Abseiling
Artificial climbs, and another
Making a shelter
Croix Sauvage – picture with the group

Open cave

Cordon, with two members 'handicapped'
Map with natural materials
Finding things
'Physical tests and more subtle emotional things'

River crossing

Ropes etc. Safety debate. Life vest/safety system.

Logistical issues for the two day hike, especially water for drinking and for cooking.

Evening of Thursday 22nd – people will be tired. Report back on village experience and one other thing.

Friday 23^d

Reflection and meta-reflection... enough time allocated?

Meta-reflection can/should take place in different sub-groups (3?)

Logistical issue of co-ordinating both reflection groups to secure synchronicity for meta-reflection groups (which will be drawn from both groups).

Preparation of meta-reflection – Bart, Mark, Stanka

International/intercultural evening?

Social Committee responsible for practical things. Opening and closing the day, with energiser, etc.

[We were going to stop here, having ‘cracked’ the first week, but then the majority decided that we should plough through into the second week, especially with the workshop options and allocation of responsibilities]

Saturday 24th

Free day

10.00 Team meeting

Options in afternoon

Sunday 25th

Experiential Learning and Intercultural Learning [the WHY]

Ping pong between Mark and Dirk in context of international youth work.

A wiring diagram/route map, emphasising that our road is international youth work and not, explicitly or specifically, e.g. business development, peace and conflict resolution, etc., but it could equally be:

Experiential learning					Intercultural learning
ACTIVITY					
?	?	?	?	?	International Youth Work

Need to ensure that this is covered effectively and accorded enough time. For once, some flexibility in time-tabling should be made available – as this is a key piece of the jigsaw. Four hours max.

Workshops

Long discussion. Some could obviously be done in third phase. Here, what were the priorities and should they be based on the preferences of the training team or the perceived needs/priorities for participants.

Long list of possibilities:

- Intercultural learning
- Reflection (more than method)
- Symbols/rituals
- Group dynamics
- Ethics
- Methods/activities
- Trainers' role
- Processing the programme
- Awareness
- Communication

Discussion around what constituted an 'elementary toolkit' and what kinds of issues were a basis for more sophisticated development. Finally agreed:

25/8	Trainer's role (Bart, Arturas, Mark)	Methods/activities (Björn, Stanka)
26/8	Group dynamics (Stanka)	Intercultural learning (Dirk, Mark)
	Processing the programme (Arturas, Bart)	Reflection (Dirk, Björn, Stanka)

Coaching groups

Two of the training team (Mark, Stanka) should decide on their composition and then groups should meet briefly just before the international evening, for half an hour (on 23rd) in preparation for more 'formal' meeting on 26th

Each coaching group should include:

- A challenging individual
- Geographical spread
- Gender balance
- Language diversity

Activities run by participants

Depends on participants, but three groups.

Still various practicalities to be resolved.

Feedback on first planning day

A great deal of hard talking and debate had taken place. My own role had immediately taken some knocks, with Arturas being irritated by some of my interventions. Björn acknowledged the difficulties inherent in my (agreed) role; sometimes my interventions produced frustration, sometimes they were considered to be helpful. Dirk felt that the team had not always been sufficiently focused and argued for more structure. Arturas, who had at first chaired the meeting, was annoyed that no-one appeared to have taken him seriously when, through fatigue, he had wanted to hand over the chair. None of this should be surprising. The trainers were a group of strong individuals with strong perspectives; dissent and some tensions were going to be inevitable. But they did not, ultimately, jeopardise the momentum which the planning of the course demanded.

Arrival day was upon us. Like all subsequent days, the trainer's team now set out to prepare the following day in detail (and, on this occasion, the arrival evening as well) - finally to put some flesh on the by now well-boned skeleton! This demanded attention to time frames, and *precisely* what would fill those time frames: who would lead, the support they required, the materials and space they needed, the clarity of instruction that was necessary if participants were to engage in tasks effectively.

Much later that same day, after most of the participants had arrived and icebreaking activities had been completed, the trainer's team met once again to recap, reinforce and refined the programme for the following day as well as to reflect on the first evening. Not a stone was left unturned, and the team had the added burden of needing to take note of the 'data requirements' for the publication. I would be joining one group, but I needed feedback on what the other group had done and how it was proceeding, although 'my' group would be the pivotal case study for the report.

On every subsequent evening, around 19.30 (except for the night of the hike), the trainer's team gathered in its meeting room. First, each member in turn considered the day's events, expressed how they were feeling and made observations about the participants' group as a whole, sub-groups that they had been involved with, and individual participants. The trainers also made both positive and critical remarks to each other - about interventions made, support given or withheld. There followed a general discussion about various 'levels' of the course. Were things moving in the desired direction? Were additional interventions required? Who was obstructing development? How could this be 'managed'? And thirdly, the programme for the following day was prepared, usually building upon the structure which had already been agreed but occasionally adapting it to address issues which had only recently surfaced.

In March 2003, the trainer's team met in Lithuania to prepare for Phase 3. There had been frequent e-mail contact between members of the team since Lustin, and consultation with participants. Phase 3 was to be a slightly shorter course, but it still needed to 'grow' from the experiences of Phases 1 and 2. Proposals for appropriate content were batted back and forth and the trainer's team built particularly upon two suggestions from within the team.

First was the idea of a 'multi-task' day, during which participants would cover a range of different kinds of activities and, through both cross-fertilisation of information and their experiences in different groups *and* through some 'whole group' activity as the culmination to the day, would have a repertoire of methods and activities in their grasp.

Secondly, Mark had suggested the idea of a 'Day Course', based on experience of working in a training course with youth workers from the different communities from Kosovo. Mixed groups had worked to great effect to run play days with local children in Budapest. The trainers felt that Phase 3 needed something which would really help participants get the courage and motivation to apply their learning by working with outsiders as part of the course itself. The idea grew to become the Day Course. It was supported by the team and subsequently arranged and implemented by Arturas who, as one of the trainers remarked, 'put it into action splendidly'. Six groups of trainers and youth workers from Lithuania would be invited to be trained by the course participants.

The two ideas gradually 'melded' together. In preparation for the Day Course, participants - divided into groups - would have a day of 'multi-task' activities. This would provide the foundation for their preparation of a programme for an allocated group in the Day Course. Around this approach to the development and application of professional skills would be a strong focus on personal development and project development. Lustin had addressed theories and concepts of experiential learning, and put them into practice; now there would be a stronger emphasis on intercultural learning. The building blocks for the course would, therefore, be much the same as before, but their weight and size would be different. There would clearly need to be connections looking back but the course needed to culminate in looking forward to the development of international projects. And, lurking in the corner, was the need to ensure that 'data' for the publication - from both participants and trainers - were provided in as complete a form as possible prior to departure.

The planning process during the preparatory meeting followed a very similar pattern to that which prevailed for Lustin. Following a social evening to celebrate the reuniting of old friends, the rest of the weekend was spent shaping a professional programme and considering practical arrangements.

Samukas, Lithuania, May 2003

As before, the trainer's team arrived a couple of days prior to the start of the course. The first consideration was the 'substitute' participants and the final numbers of the group, which was still not completely confirmed. A second was to have contingency plans for the Day Course, should some of the intended visitors not turn up. This was an 'external' factor which was outside of our control, although Arturas was very confident that there would be no problems (as he had even had to turn groups down who wanted to participate). And a third issue was to ensure that material for the publication would be provided and how this could best be guaranteed. There needed to be elements within the programme which would *simultaneously* furnish me with relevant information.

The team raced through its provisional programme before embarking on more detailed attention. Preparation tasks were allocated to different members of the team, and trust was placed in them to develop that element of the programme and deliver. Each day was to be 'topped and tailed' with an *explicit* intercultural learning dimension: a Lithuanian language course first thing in the morning and a regular afternoon session of what became known as 'Yo Yo Lithuania', considering wider questions of Lithuanian history and culture. [This of course immediately begged the question of why this had not

also been done in Belgium. The trainers acknowledged a missed opportunity. It was, however, through reflecting about Lustin that they realised the need to be more explicit about the intercultural side of things in Samukas. One approach was to have a designated slot in the programme to consider specific aspects of Lithuanian culture for participants to compare and contrast with their own experiences.]

Field notes convey the way the programme unfolded:

A 'first level' race through

Saturday – welcome

Sunday – introductions, mantra, solo, old coaching groups (closure), new groups, intercultural evening (surprise evening)

Monday – personal development day. Three groups of seven with two trainers each (Arturas/Björn; Mark/Bart; Dirk/Stanka). Activities 10-3. Multi-task with different groups preparing activities for dovetailing with those of whole group – which will have to engage in an activity at 'Devil's Hole'.

Tuesday – reflection on multi-task. Preparation of/for day course. Two groups of three; four groups of four. How to divide them into groups? (task for Bart) Who to coach each group. Evening: project market – reminder of course objectives and funding expectations, but avoiding any sense of expecting a 'forced marriage'. But preparing for tomorrow's project plans/simulations.

Wednesday – Day Course 10-5. Debrief 6-7. Project groups in the evening.

Thursday – Reflections on day course (Stanka) 3 hours. Free afternoon.

Friday – Open Space Technology. Project management and funding (maybe when visit from National Agency takes place). Project groups.

Saturday – project presentations; personal learning plans. Evaluations of this course and the course overall. Party/farewell evening (keep closed).

Sunday – departure.

More detailed planning:

Publication: need a poster to name and shame those who have not yet done the highlights and lowlights... [but still the question of how to secure compliance?]

Saturday

Posters in Lithuanian and English

Arrivals

Dinner Welcome speech from Arturas

Candles representing comfort, stretch and panic zone positions. Participants explain where they are now as part of their self-introductions

Poem in Lithuanian

Any necessary 'housekeeping' until tomorrow

Drinks

Sunday

Energiser from Björn
Welcome from Stanka
Language course from Mark – getting Lithuania into our soul first and last thing each day
Groups of four: objectives and expectations (how and what)
Housekeeping
Practical stuff – reimbursement, fee, leaving times

1100-1130 Coaching groups closure over coffee

1130 slide show of Lustin – bringing back the memories

1200 Solo for 3.5 hours. Bart's briefing paper: find a spot then open the paper.
[some discussion of length and task, particularly in relation to the new participants]

1530 Find two others (named in each paper); share information, translate your poem

1630 Plenary sharing

1800 Folk sayings from Lithuania and elsewhere.

After dinner: surprise evening

And a reminder of aim of the LTTC:

Through an exchange between trainers and participants, to develop the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values of experiential learning for application in international and intercultural settings

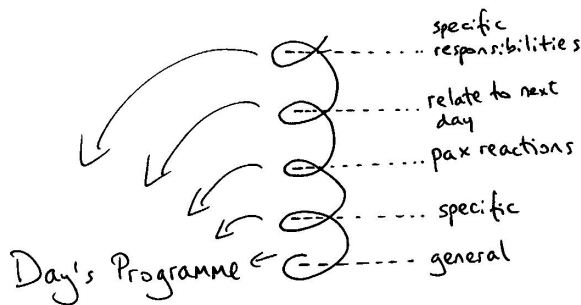
Once more, the trainer's team convened each evening to reflect on the day's events and plan for tomorrow. There was the customary mutual support as well as the inevitable tensions and frustrations (not least on my part, when publication issues appeared to be recurrently relegated to a low priority - see my personal reflection in the Appendix). But on the final evening, the team convened for its final meeting. There was no more preparation to be done. It was the culmination of an intensive and exhausting process, and time for a glass of wine, extended silence and gentle comment. Seven individuals had engaged in some tough teamwork over a year; they themselves had come a long way professionally since that year before, and learning a lot in the process as well as cementing their personal friendship.

[A reflection on planning and process](#)

The planning of such a training course involves a painstaking and sometimes painful process. Effective courses are not knocked up overnight, despite the perception sometimes that that is the case. Preparation is an arduous exercise demanding meticulous attention to detail. It calls for a high level of self-discipline but also some level of flexibility: trainers have to be ready to deal with the unexpected or to make more of presenting opportunities.

There were two overarching elements to the planning process. One was processual, the *circles within circles* as the trainer's team moved from an outline framework (the bare skeleton), through a second level (the well-boned skeleton), to a full-bodied, fleshed-out programme. To the outsider, there was

some impression of repetition and 'unnecessarily' treading the same ground; only by the end (when all professional and practical questions had been given a full airing) does one recognise that all this is absolutely *necessary*.



The second element in the planning process was the challenging of weaving together the five key threads which reflected the aims and objectives of the course: theories/concepts/models; personal development, professional skills, project development and intercultural learning. Some elements of the course naturally addressed more than one of these. Nevertheless, there was still a need to consider the 'ebb and flow' of these elements in terms of the priority they were accorded at different stages within the process. Attention had to be given to how to 'build them up' and how to 'close them down' (or at least put them on hold) as the challenges of the course shifted direction. [Here we find a crucial intercultural element in the process – the team members have to confront each other with their understandings. This is particularly tough when they are not working in their own language or with people who speak their own language in a non-native fashion). It is all the more acute when individuals are trying to give voice to their value judgements in a context where they are relying a *lot* on their instincts about what is going on and what can be a 'correct' course to take. This makes for some of those "a-ha" moments where after hours of seemingly futile argument one person or another suddenly says "oh, so *that* is what you mean!" It is more than people clearly stating their needs (which is good practice in any team); they also need the competence to explain where these come from.]

These two elements of the planning process are, of course, integrally connected. The overall shape and trajectory of the training course was built upon a consideration both of 'horizontal' connections (across the course as a whole) of individual threads (where each should fit and how much time should be allocated to it) *and* 'vertical' connections (in terms of the relationship between threads within the programme for each day). In turn, on account of this, each 'segment' of the overall programme has to be given intensive scrutiny to ensure both its *internal coherence* and its *external relationship* to the sequence of demands and opportunities placed on participants as the course unfolds. Participants had to be able to engage with specific time-framed tasks but also internalise the relationships between them if an appropriate 'spiders web' of professional competence and personal understanding was to be developed. The spider's web might have been the aspiration, but it was described by one of the trainers as sometimes 'dancing on razorblades' - there had to be intense personal reflection (otherwise people ended up 'swimming in shit') but things had to move from there to an outcome of professional competence and practice. Hence the recurrent giving of space to 'processing the experience' - connecting participants' immediate experience to underpinning ideas and implications for the future.

With these guiding ideas always in mind, the trainer's team mapped out a programme for each day. Built around the core learning elements of that programme were 'routines' of energisers and icebreakers, and practical issues of materials, instructions, equipment, lunch packs and transportation.

There were times for solitude and solo reflection but, by and large, participants worked in groups. These varied, both in size and composition, according to the purpose of the task. Some were selected, on different criteria, by the trainer's team, others were self-allocated. The number of participants (24/21) and the number of trainers (6) was conducive to considerable choice in the permutations available, providing significant flexibility in the ways in which different tasks and activities might be approached:

- Lustin: 24 participants (6 trainers): 2x12 (3); 3x8 (2), 6x4 (1) (plus all the non-balanced groupings)
- Samukas: 21 participants (6 trainers): 10/11 (3); 3x7 (2)

Finally, preparation had always to take account of 'opening' and 'closing' issues - startings and endings. Groups have to be formed, or take form and they also have to be 'dismantled' if participants are to move on with confidence and in comfort to the next step. There are many ways to do both, but what is not an issue is whether or not they have to be done. A repertoire of metaphors and rituals is available for such purposes, as well as to sustain groups when they are at risk of breaking up. The planning had to be vigilant to such eventualities.

5 Participating in the programme and in the planning

Lustin, Belgium, August 2002

Participants started to arrive during the afternoon of Monday 19th August. All but five were there by the evening. A time-honoured icebreaker - getting into line on a narrow plank according to stated criteria, such as in alphabetical order according to first name initial - literally broke the ice. This was followed by a tea-light (candles) representation of Europe, signifying all the places from which participants had come. [This was a clear indication of the intercultural potential of the training course.]. Participants were then asked to find someone else whom they would introduce tomorrow. Two more participants arrived, leaving just three missing (two would arrive tomorrow, another would fail to come at all).

The trainer's team met to recap on tomorrow's programme, to determine how to split the participants into two groups, to confirm practical arrangements, to decide on suitable exercises and activities for tomorrow, and to prepare a briefing for 'The Hike'. The team was relatively content about the first evening; as one put it, he was in a state of 'flexible preparedness'!

Following an icebreaker, Dirk outlined the day's programme. Stanka then co-ordinated participants - and trainers - introducing each other in pairs (it did not quite work like that, but it was effective nonetheless). A 'circle of names' consolidated this 'getting to know each other' session, after which Arturas outlined the purposes and expectations of the course. Throughout, it would be concerned with Experience, Reflection and Deepening, through both philosophy and practice. The three Phases of the course would place slightly different emphasis on these issues:

- Phase 1 - Learning
- Phase 2 - Practice and Networking
- Phase 3 - Reflection and Deepening

The ultimate goal of the training course would be the development of International Projects which included learning from the course (Phase 4).

Each participant chose a card with an image on it and, briefed by Bart, asked to relate the image to themselves and to the aims and objectives of the course. Then, in groups of four and five (randomly allocated by numbers 1-5 [A]), they prepared a more 'connected' flipchart presentation of where they were from, why they were there and where they felt the course might take them [1].

Dirk communicated technical information (travel reimbursement, social committee, vegetarians, medical forms) before I outlined the needs of a publication and my three-pronged 'data gathering' approach, which would need to be accepted and agreed by participants (observation, participants' written highlights and lowlights from the course, and interviews/discussions with individuals).

After lunch, Dirk and Mark engaged in a 'short game of ping pong', providing a 'framing introduction' on Experiential and Intercultural Learning (see box below).

Having made the 'theoretical' case for seeking to develop intercultural learning through experiential learning, the case was made for the value of outdoor activities in assisting this process. Although the focus remained on intercultural aspects of experience (not the tying of ropes!), being 'in the nature' and facing challenges within that environment compelled people to move away from and beyond 'normal' routines. The outdoor context provided the opportunity to *stretch* people through unfamiliar activities and experience. This was the rationale for The Hike, for which participants would be divided into two groups (on criteria such as gender and geography) and move in opposite directions through the forest, but camp together overnight at a point in the middle (in the quarry).

Mark – Looking back:

- Got increasingly frustrated with lack of links between training approaches/exercises and 'real life'
- Around 1998, saw the great potential of experiential learning through adventure education
- Involvement in experiential learning for international groups (in Lithuania)
- Drew some 'big' conclusions. Wanted to push out the envelope. To develop ideas that others could use.

Dirk – Why experiential learning?

- Referred to Bart's metaphor of the head and the body. Many different ways of learning. From childlike 'one thing' (head and body together) to – through information, behaviour, culture, etc. – gradually developing a way by which 'learning' is filtered through the head. Have lost touch with feelings.
- Experiential learning is about connecting learning between the feelings of the body and thinking of the head.
- Key word is 'awareness': giving meaning to feelings.
- Whole body: getting in touch, connecting.
- Getting feelings, giving meaning

Zones of Comfort, Stretch and Panic

Equilibrium v. Adventure – playing with this interaction and through the process, making the Comfort Zone bigger – through learning.

Invite, not compel participation.

Mark – multi-cultural settings mean that these zones are likely to be different for different people. Intercultural learning is a means of accelerating some common vocabulary:

- Culture – comfort zone is the culture you come from
- Stretch Zone – through interaction with other cultures

Always the issue of avoiding going into the Panic Zone.

Participants are asked to turn three circles each way with hand above your head – why did people follow Mark's instruction? Who am I? (we all follow 'authority'....)

Folded arms in reverse: beyond comfort/awkwardness...

Culture is a way of solving problems. If we want to develop ways of living together peacefully, then intercultural learning can be seen as one contribution to this.

Dirk - In an experiential way, we can explore relations with each other and how these are dealt with.

Kolb:

Experience

Activities

Applying

Reflection/awareness

Generalise

You will find a more extended explanation of the theoretical bases for the course in Chapter 8.

Group A and Group 1 were formed. I was part of the latter. Three tasks had been decided upon by the trainers - Acid Lake, Blind Object, and Jacob's Ladder. These were chosen because they presented challenges for the group in terms of teamwork, communication and problem-solving.

The Swing

All 12 participants had to move from the 'shore', through the use of a rope swing, across the acid lake (without touching the 'water'), on to a small 'island' the size of a large doormat.

The group tried various approaches [2] and eventually succeeded, and then reflected on the task. Many in the group were amazed that it had actually been possible. All acknowledged the need for, and value of efficient organisation. Many noted the sense of belief that was necessary if the group was going to succeed. The group evaluated both individual effort and group effort, commenting on the discrete roles played by different members of the group - sometimes in harmony, sometimes not!

Blind Object

A lego construction made of four different coloured pieces and different sizes lies in the middle of a circle. Half of the group will be blindfolded but can speak; the others will be able to see but not speak and have to remember the formation of the pieces. The object is then dismantled and distributed across the space within the circle. The sighted have to work out a communication strategy with the blind. The blind go into the circle to find the pieces and re-assemble the object. The sighted have to give instructions from outside the circle, without speaking. 35 minutes to complete the task. 15 minutes for planning.

The group was still not fully agreed on its communication system when the 15 minutes planning time had elapsed, but managed to complete the task within time. Reflection focused once again on roles, contribution and strategy [3].

Jacob's Ladder

Teams of three to climb to the top of the 'ladder' (swaying beams at increasing distances from each other).

Bart explained safety and belaying (i.e., using a security rope). The group divided into four sub-groups of three. The first started to climb and eventually got to the top. Then the exercise was stopped because of time and bad weather.

The trainers felt that the day had gone well and had produced 'tolerable levels of anxiety'. There was some extended discussion about the balance between individuals focusing on themselves and reflecting on their group ('at this stage, everyone wants teamwork', one of the trainers noted). Observations were also made about emergent 'Leaders and Left outs'. And then the team discussed preparation for The Hike, for which each group would be briefed at 10pm, to allow for 'hatching time' and their own preparation.

Bart, Stanka and Björn briefed the group about the hike. They would be carrying *everything* with them, including helmets, ladders, tarpaulins, ropes and spades, as well as food, water and cooking utensils. The trainers had decided to give participants all relevant factual information but, beyond that, to let them take responsibility for everything. They had noted that 'there will be frustrations, but not tensions or dangers - and moments for reflection will arise'. The trainers conveyed one single powerful message to the participants: THERE WILL BE NO INTERVENTION OR DECISION, UNLESS IT SEEMS TO BE A NECESSARY TIME TO STOP FOR REFLECTION. The group was not, yet, properly focused on The Hike, however; it was still dealing with some of the frustration of today, notably the lack of opportunity for three of the sub-groups to attempt the climb of Jacob's Ladder [4].

Late that same night, approaching midnight, the trainers for Group 1 met once again. Was the group ready for The Hike? What further needed to be done? Individuals were discussed and a strategy for early tomorrow morning considered. There were two key questions which participants needed to answer: 'what do I need from this group to start on The Hike?', and 'what can I give to the group for The Hike?' The trainers explored the idea of using a metaphor or symbol - a weather symbol, an animal (style and feeling), a fragment from the garden, a drawing?

It would have been impossible to climb Jacob's Ladder that morning. The weather was appalling. The trainers asked each participant in turn to place a stone inside (or perhaps outside) a circle, positioned so as to indicate how comfortable they were feeling in the group. And if they were not so comfortable, to articulate what more was needed for them to feel more secure. Most felt that the tensions of yesterday had subsided and all positioned themselves within the circle. It was therefore time to capitalise on this development by asking participants to produce an object which *symbolically* conveyed the contribution that each individual felt they could make to the group. The following were the items produced:

- Branch of a tree - for personal support and to support others
- Bag of sweets - for sharing
- A book of humour - to look on the bright side of life!
- Mobile phone - for connecting people
- A garden apple that you cannot buy in a shop - for strong energy
- A sweet - for support; and a flower - for caring and subtlety
- A ring - for peacemaking, not personal attacks
- A Leatherman - skills for The Hike
- A peace pipe
- Paper dove - symbol of peace (not for flying away!)
- A phone charger - for energy
- A set of keys - for trying to open doors

The group prepared for The Hike. By minibus, we travelled to the village which was its starting point and the site for its first challenge.

Soul of the village

The group had simply been asked to find the 'soul of the village' and record it in whatever way they felt appropriate [5]

Baraque

This was an orienteering position, simply to confirm location [6]

The Quarry

Ten abseils and five artificial climbs

We arrived at The Quarry at around 1700, and participants immediately engaged in the task, although some took time out to make coffee and tea. Then some soup was prepared and the group sat around and reflected on the day. It had been a tough and challenging day, but most in the group had got to know each other better and developed a sense of mutual trust. Many (though not all) had a sense of personal achievement from the tasks they had completed. A fire had been lit and the tarpaulin was prepared for sleeping. The other group arrived around 10pm and everyone gradually settled down to sleep.

We struck camp and headed for the river.

River crossing

One and a half hours to get everyone and their backpacks over the river. Only one person allowed to cross the river through the water.

After considerable discussion and disagreement [7], a contraption was rigged and three participants made it across. But the allotted time was up and Bart called out 'You have failed' [8]. The remainder of the participants waded across the river. We walked on to The Cave where lunch was eaten and a reflection took place.

Each participant commented on the events so far. The broad view was that they had become a group but were not yet a team. Different moods were clearly apparent, as were different levels of commitment to and engagement with the group. There was some tension, and varying degrees of disagreement with the views reflected by participants, as well as with the process of reflection itself [9].

The Cave

The participants would work in two groups of six, with any two in each group blindfolded at any one time. They would follow each other, negotiating the rocks through the cave, assisting each other physically and verbally

The participants had been asked by the trainers what they wanted to get out of this final activity. Their response was (a) some fun, (b) to do something that required no specific expertise and (c) something that moved from task description to action more quickly [B]. When the 'blind chain' activity was concluded, a weary group returned to base.

The trainer's team convened to share their own experience and to communicate some 'flash descriptions' of their group to those who had been with the other one. The trainers generally felt 'comfortable' with the ways in which things had developed and, in relation to both groups, there was a feeling that while neither was fully a 'team' and still just 'a group of individuals with walls around them', there was 'stuff to work on'.

There would need to be some 'meta-reflection' in small groups drawn from both of the hiking groups. Then, once the hiking groups had 'died', around lunchtime or shortly afterwards, it might be possible to move into 'coaching groups' prior to the international evening - which was the responsibility of participants.

The trainers for each group then met separately to consider how best to ensure effective reviewing of The Hike. The Group 1 trainers felt that the issues that needed to be addressed were as follows:

- *What did I notice about myself*
- *How did I feel?*
- *Were there any changes in how I felt?*
- *What caused those changes (people, conditions, thoughts)?*

The challenge was how to pull these out. Some cultures are more reflective and emotional than others. Some people engage with certain approaches more than others. There needed to be a 'frame' for participants to hang on. But what? The trainers debated the idea of a 'spot drop' in the garden, where each participant, alone, would reflect and record their experience. They also discussed a 'time line' with juxtaposed feelings and behaviours as The Hike had progressed (as follows):

Village Baraque Quarry River Cave

Happy/sad
Relaxed/anxious
Unco-operative/co-operative
Success/failure
Engaged/Withdrawn
Agitated/Calm
Energised/Tired
Etc.

It was 2am and it seemed sensible to sleep on it.

In the morning, the trainers rejected their thinking of the previous night in favour of having the group in a circle, making individual presentations and seeking feedback from a maximum of three people in the group. Participants should reflect on the highlights and lowlights of the first three days, and the reasons for them. It would be their choice how to present them. Juxtaposed words (though not within a grid) would map the territory for reflection. Participants would have half an hour in the garden to gather their thoughts and prepare their presentation. Stanka would lead on this, permitting questions after each presentation. Bart would then facilitate feedback, where the golden rule that those providing feedback were offering a 'gift'. Their remarks should start with 'I...', and the presenter had a choice whether or not to accept or reject the gift, but they would not be permitted to defend, argue or explain. In the afternoon, participants would be asked to consider what part of their culture had they brought to the group (for some cultural stereotypes were already very apparent - such as technical Finns and funny Irishmen). Then Björn, through a ritual, would kill the group. There would probably not be any time for 'coaching groups' today.

This is what ensued. Participants expressed their feelings, received questions and sought feedback. It took all day. Björn killed the group: as we all stood in a circle and thought about the experience for a while, he pronounced it dead.

The training team met in the evening. The 'report' from Group 1 noted the significant 'power struggles' that had been going on, but also the persisting 'individualism' of some participants. The trainers wondered if they should have intervened more, acknowledging that perhaps they had stood too much to the side. But 'we did what we did', they concluded: the dilemma for all training interventions during such experiences is 'when to use the accelerator and when to use the brake'.

The 'report' from Group A was that things had gone well and a safe atmosphere had been established. One participant had spoken bravely and 'opened things up' when a number of participants had said very little and appeared to be 'victims of their own boredom'. The challenging comments of that participant had 'broken the floodgates' and prepared the ground for the rest of the session [C]. The group had been killed off by means of a final sentence from each participant about how they felt, and 'there had been some strong stuff'.

Saturday, 24th August was a free day for participants. The trainer's team met at midday. No-one felt any need to 'clear the air'. The team briefly discussed the Workshops, wondering whether or not 'Trainer's Role' should be done by all participants. Then time was spent on the Coaching Groups which were about to be established. Like any reflection group, these were for both personal and professional needs, and their place here was to prepare for the second Phase - for communication, support and recording. Coaching Groups were constructed, with due regard to geography and language and, where it was felt necessary, to individual characteristics and personality.

[In the restaurant that evening, a number of participants conveyed to me that their most powerful intercultural lesson so far had been *language* and the *character* of other participants.]

During the afternoon of the 'free day', the trainers had offered the participants the opportunity to spend more time on the high ropes and the pamper pole. A number of participants 'stretched' themselves to their limits during this time. Charlie, blindfolded on a high bridge of differently sized 'steps' which were not equi-distant from each other, following instructions from others in order to get from one side to the other. Despite his transparent nerves, he made it. And Lucia made it to the top of the pamper pole and jumped - which for her was a dramatic, transforming moment and possibly the most memorable moment for the observing participants as well.

The following day commenced with a stronger theoretical grounding on Intercultural and Experiential Learning in International Youth Activities. Mark and Dirk collaborated on this presentation once again. Participants were divided into four groups (cross-fertilising the hiking groups) and asked to discuss and feed back on what their learning from The Hike had told them about:

- What is 'experiential'?
- What is 'intercultural'?
- What is the trainer's role?

Mark provided input on ways of learning and a brief history of 'intercultural learning'. Buzz groups intermittently enabled participants to share their immediate reactions and observations with a neighbour. Dirk elaborated on the principles and practice of experiential learning. It was about creating openings for growth and putting the learner at the centre of their learning. The trainer facilitates a process to support this taking place. The activity *per se* is not so important, though some activities (such as those already executed) do provide greater opportunities for 'stretch' and development. But learners had to be open and receptive to such challenges; Dirk had observed that some participants had 'covered themselves' in their trainer's role. He spoke of the need to connect 'the belly and the head' and noted that one of the major catalysts for doing so is *frustration* - there is first explosion and then feelings. And the management of frustration to these ends is an important element of the trainer's role [D, E, F].

Mark took over to explore the meaning of 'culture' using an iceberg analogy. Some parts are visible (music, language, dress, food) but other parts are hidden (thoughts, feelings, traditions and habits, family arrangements, time). Like real icebergs, the invisible part is greater and it is that part which tends to clash and collide. Culture is communicated at different speeds, both fast and slow. More visible elements are communicated fast; less visible elements more slowly.

International projects, Dirk contended, bring people together from different countries and cultures and when they first meet, they are in 'disequilibrium'. Experiential learning is a means of uncovering more of the iceberg, at both personal and cultural levels. Gradually, there is a possibility of understanding and respecting difference; prior to that, it is often the case that "you don't see things as they are, you see things as you are". Activities are a way of getting these 'strange' people pushed together; at first, as participants will have noticed, there is a very clear wall of defence in order to maintain their safety. The challenge is to create an environment in which *breakthrough* can occur - to take people into new territory and realms of possibility [G]. People display many defences, patterns and feelings; we have all learned ways of dealing with situations we encounter. But we need new ways to deal with new, unfamiliar, situations. Otherwise we hold on to old patterns, unadapted to new situations.

Experiential learning is about enabling people to become aware of processes of adaptation to new situations -through exploring feelings through discussion and reflection. Feelings are an ally, not an enemy [H].

And if you create situations which bring people to the edge, their feelings intensify. This is one reason for using outdoor activities; people cannot hide in the nature. Things often start as a test of physical capacity. But, working in a group, they bring out beliefs and assumptions about, for example, risk and danger. Prejudices, stereotypes, perceptions and self-perceptions become very prominent - around gender, culture, age, experience and knowledge. It is these that are under challenge. All people have a wall around their comfort zones, but it is easier for some to break through than others, for both personal and cultural reasons. Moments of breakthrough can take place prior to, during and after such activities. And people *meet* each other by opening the wall [I], rather than relating to each other at a superficial level - at the tip of the iceberg. Dirk concluded by observing that all this was so easy to *tell*, but so much harder to *do*.

Breakthrough, Dirk noted, is not just about going through, but also about exploring why people may *not* go through the boundaries. Breakthrough is about finding meaning in a challenging moment, not about achieving the physical challenge. Mark persisted with the iceberg metaphor, observing that when two icebergs meet each other, they turn upside down and expose their much bigger part. He added that we also learn more about other cultures when we learn more about our own (and ourselves). *And this is the point at which Intercultural and Experiential Learning come together.*

But in order for that self-awareness and intercultural understanding to emerge and develop, experience has to be processed through 'turning the circle' on issues such as feelings, responsibility, awareness, choice, experimentation, giving and taking, and feedback. The focus is always both on the individual and the group - working consciously with the experiences that emerge.

Mark commended participants for staying awake, indicating that often there is also a defensive wall against theory - 'I have my experience and that is enough'. This course, and others like it, was about opening windows - the choice for participants is whether to step through, look out, or close the window. Experiential learning provides the possibility of direct physical contact with other people. There are always questions about intercultural sensitivities in activities which are based on physical proximity, but there is always the choice of opting out.

After a long lunch with Russian food (participants had signed up in small groups for cooking and cleaning duties), Arturas provided a preliminary introduction to the Trainer's Role. Is the aim, he asked, to try to discover some 'ultimate truth' or, alternatively, to explore what has happened here, to generate some conclusions for the time being, and to consider the difference between the role of trainers (*what* they do) and their style (*how* they do it). To address the latter question, participants could look back at the way the trainers here had 'performed' during the experiences and activities so far, consider any theoretical knowledge that they possessed, and look at their own approaches. To reflect on the former, small groups of four and five participants (divided by gender and across 'hiking groups') should examine the following:

- What had been their expectations of the trainers?
- To what extent had trainers worked according to those expectations ('correspondence')?
- To what extent had trainers worked against those expectations ('dissonance')?
- What trainers did not do?
- What the trainers should do (or should have done)

Thinking on the last point would be written on a flipchart, for contrast and comparison with the ideas emerging from other groups.

I joined one of these groups. Their discussion and observations were instructive (and diverse!). What had been their expectations?

More teaching/leadership/instruction
 Didn't really know - but thought it would have been somewhat different
 Was not surprised but maybe expected more intervention
 Expected more presentation of *how* things should be done
 Expected more intervention in order to move things forward faster

The actuality in each of the hiking groups had apparently been quite different. Participants who had been in Group A indicated that there had been considerable intervention by trainers, very different approaches to reflection, and few disagreements. The group environment was considered to have been 'safe'. In contrast, participants from Group 1 (the group I was with) observed that there had been a lack of intervention by their trainers, reflections that had been 'all the same', and frequent disagreements within what they felt to have been an 'unsafe' group environment [10, 11].

There was an equal amount of contrast in ideas about what trainers *should* do. Those who had been in Group A were reasonably satisfied. Those in Group 1 were not, notably on account of the unwillingness of trainers to provide feedback. One of the participants suggested that it was important to distinguish between three distinct components of the trainer's role:

1. Reflection process

Should trainers be facilitative or neutral? Should they stop personal attacks? Should they invite comments from all? Should they not make personal statements about particular individuals?

2. Technical stuff and tools

Should basic skill instruction be provided (fit for purpose according to the exercise)? What conditions would that depend on (participants' knowledge, participants' expectations, experience of the group)?

3. Task intervention

Should trainers intervene to support a group in completing its tasks and/or to make sure that planned challenges took place?

The group remained divided on all of these matters, although they felt that the conceptual distinction in the 'components' of the trainer's role was useful. [Again, this is a massively intercultural debate. Judgements rest on what is perceived to be 'normal' or just 'plain common sense' and participants are often relying on their own educational backgrounds and perceptions of what, for want of a better word, 'teachers' should be and do.]

The six discussion groups then reported back on what they believed effective trainers *should* do (see Table below). Following these perspectives from participants, drawn from both their immediate experience on the course and their wider knowledge and experience, Arturas and Bart offered a more theoretical framework concerning the Trainer's Role. Key words that appeared to have emerged from the group discussions were co-ordination, participation, confrontation and observation. But trainers

could not do everything, nor could they be all things to all people all the time. The position of the trainer would change, according to many factors, the most significant of which were:

- The participants
- The situation
- The trainer her/himself

Bart asked participants to *not* communicate for one minute and, when the time had elapsed and participants had sat in silence, most with their eyes shut, he asked who had 'succeeded'. The point was that it is not possible *not* to communicate (Paul Watzlawick). Only 10% of communication is verbal; 90% is non-verbal - and there are important questions about the congruence between them. A 'holy truth' simply does not exist: communication involves both the message and the relationship.

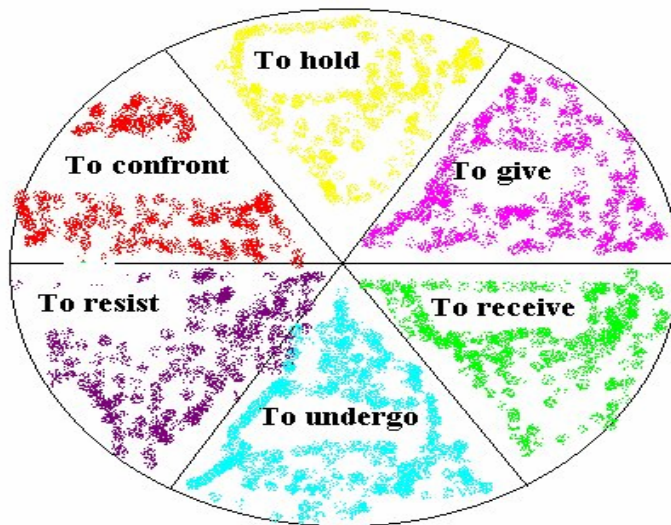
What effective trainers *should* do:

"If you speak your words need to be better than silence"

- Pose questions
- Provide feedback
- Step in
- Integrate the group
- Have 'tasted' the experience
- Care
- Share
- Provoke
- Convey expectations, knowledge and conditions
- Facilitate reflection
- Frame technical, task and safety questions
- Push participants into new mental territory
- Share experience and methods
- Provide deep feedback
- Serve as role models
- Engage in personal, informal talks
- Ensure a two-directional exchange
- Be clear that 'it is not a game'

- Provide appropriate intervention
- Be well-organised and self-disciplined
- Share opinions and feelings
- Keep the group motivated
- Operate in a working language
- Offer structure, but be flexible
- Consult group for decisions
- Surprise
- Provide clear(er) information prior to arrival
- Have a sense of humour
- Display self-confidence
- Be sensitive to needs
- Provide feedback
- 'Push' from the outside in order to involve all in discussions
- Both 'inside' and 'outside' observation and facilitation of the communication process

Bart outlined the 'Rose of Leary' (see below and, for more detail the Roofonfire website).



One communication *action* produces a different *reaction*. There are two roses - one relating to content, the other to do with the relationship. The relationship role for a trainer should always be to give, but the content role can change. Trainers need to be aware that there are different approaches available to 'finding the door'. Thus the trainer's role is never static; their role depends on where the group is, in its dynamics and development.

There followed an open forum of debate around the trainer's role [12], and then it was time to introduce the concept and intentions of the 'coaching groups'. Stanka introduced the theme. Coaching groups would comprise four individuals, facilitated by a member of the trainer's team. Their purpose would be:

- for further reflection [13]
- to meet personal and professional needs
- to prepare for Phase 2 (on communication, support and recording)

[NB: All but one of the coaching groups comprised two women and two men and, whether or not intentionally, all but one comprised two members from each of the hiking groups]

The trainer's team met in the evening. Just as with the participants, there was some sense of confusion and frustration, and emotions were sometimes ragged - if not jagged. By this stage in the course, personal as well as professional relationships had been established; some participants were clearly well integrated, while others remained somewhat at the edge. Trainers found themselves expressing irritation with particular individuals amongst the participants: their own personal feelings were surfacing, and sometimes clouding the professional agenda. The debate which framed the open forum [see 12] had also brought participants' frustrations and concerns about the trainers' roles to the surface. It was recognised that things always get 'messy' on such courses: the critical question was always how they are addressed. The trainers agreed that they needed to give a clear message to the participants that their views had been heard and that they would be dealt with in a serious and professional way. Discussion then took place about the composition of their coaching groups and most of the trainers felt that their first engagement with their coaching group had gone reasonably well. And finally, taking on board the criticism by participants in hiking Group 1 that trainers had not provided any feedback, the trainers for that Group decided that they would provide feedback the following day.

Workshops

Workshops took place the next day. In the morning Mark and Stanka ran workshops on Intercultural Learning and Group Dynamics respectively. I joined the latter group, which involved fourteen of the participants (and, coincidentally, seven from each of the hiking Groups). There would be three components to the workshop (some theory; its relationship and application to group experiences; an interactive role play), followed by some conclusions and a discussion. Theoretically, Stanka built up a picture incorporating the triangle of Product, People and Procedures and the sequence of Inclusion, Influence, and Intimacy. She presented Schutz' model of group development, indicating how these and other factors in the dynamics of a group hang together. And she considered the relationship of a group to a trainer or facilitator: a relationship which progressed from dependency, through counter-dependency to inter-dependency.

Participants broke into two sub-groups, according to which hiking Group they had been in. I sat with the seven from Group 1. They felt that they had not developed very far as a group, especially in terms of the tasks and activities they had been asked to undertake. This was the essential message that they relayed back to the whole group. Group A had been rather different, moving back and forth according to the model. They felt that they had achieved intellectual, but not emotional, intimacy. This was perhaps because they were not 'just' participants, but also adults and trainers. They also identified different roles within their group, notably a split between the 'action men' and those who were more process-oriented. And they expressed concern that the physical proximity required for some of the tasks on the first day was premature.

Stanka raised the question of how much intervention should be exercised by trainers. There was a delicate balance to be struck between promoting Inclusion and fomenting Dependency. Two sub-groups was then asked to perform a sketch illustrating their 'stage' of development (prescribed by Stanka, using the activity 'Blind Square' as a baseline for thinking). The other group had to try to pinpoint where the group was 'at' and to give reasons for its conclusion. This threw into relief the different positions of group development: one group was clearly at the stage of very early Inclusion, while the other was on the cusp of transition to Intimacy.

Lunchtime was given over to a protracted feedback session by the trainers from hiking Group 1. Some participants, by this stage in the course, felt this was unnecessary, while others remained thirsty for it: as one of them put it, 'some of us feel unfinished and unfulfilled, and we want to close this'. There was further discussion as to whether participation in the feedback session should be compulsory (i.e. everyone should remain) or optional. The group's position, eventually, was that it was 'all or nothing', and 'now or never'. Each of the trainers, in turn (and including me), then commented on their feelings, impressions and observations over the first three days of the course [14]. Some two hours later, the group stood close together in a circle, each expressing one final word. These ranged from 'pressure', through 'over' and 'satisfied', to 'disappointed'. Two further Workshops took place during the late afternoon and early evening. Arturas led on Processing the Experience, while Dirk covered Methods and Activities.

Coaching Groups re-convened for an hour in the evening.

The team meeting that evening was much more positive. The broad view was that the day had engendered much more trust, motivation and engagement. One of the trainers observed that 'the happiest thing for me is that we have come out of this chaos', and another noted that they were 'back on my feet'. Coaching groups were variously described as 'very satisfying', 'having connected' and 'a struggle'. The team suggested that I made a contribution to the programme of the last day, by reflection on what it had been like for me as the 'third eye'. The trainers then discussed the following day's programme, which would start to shift the focus on to participants and their practice.

The next day started, as usual, with an energiser – Madzinga (a classic case of something growing in importance from a very small beginning!). It was followed by Open Space Technology - the opportunity for participants to identify and address any issues that they still wanted to cover in the course. There would be two 'slots' during the morning: participants wishing to offer something would post their name, the location and the theme in one or other of the slots. Other participants would sign up to those in which they were interested. Open Space Technology has six fundamental rules:

<p>Be open for surprises Whoever comes, they are the right people Whatever happens is the only thing that can happen When it is over, it is over Whenever it starts, it is the right time The rule of two feet - can leave anytime</p>

Some of the 'themes' were activities (for example, 15 participants immediately engaged with the rope course), others were exercises (for example, 9 got involved with a 'simple' injured person in a fire), and yet others were issues. I joined one discussion on Love, Sex and Relationships. This considered 'inside-outside' questions that inevitably arose in the 'hothouse' of this kind of training course, relationships between trainers and participants, the composition of participants (some of whom were 'connected' prior to the course), and the many forms of 'closeness' and 'distance' which prevailed.

Open Space Technology suggestions

Core qualities of trainers
 Football outside
 Rope course/methods and activities outdoors/high ropes (how and why)
 High ropes – reasons, goals and philosophy
 Transfer of Group Dynamics learning to others who had not been in that group
 A vertical activity with ropes
 More exchange on use of outdoor activities to build a team
 Ethics and difficulties of trainers

Outdoor activities – games and exercises
 Rope course
 Money – for participations, fees and salary
 Do some work for back home
 Love and sex issues in training courses
 Love and feelings
 Woman's place in a man's team

All participants reconvened to report on how the Open Space Technology had gone - which had taken place, and which had not.

The afternoon, led by Dirk, was the start of the last part of Phase 1: Learning and Deepening. Participants were to split into three groups of eight, each composed of two Coaching Groups. Each of these three groups was then to sub-divide into three smaller groups (of two or three participants). Each small group in turn was to arrange an activity for the other seven or eight individuals, including the two trainers (from the respective Coaching Groups). Once the activity was concluded, the trainers would facilitate first *reflection*, then a *meta-reflection* (on 'structural' questions about why and how the exercise had been run), and finally, some *feedback* on what might have been done differently.

The exercise/activity decided upon by the small groups should:

- draw on personal development and group dynamics
- make use of the resources available here
- have appropriate rules concerning safety and equipment/materials
- produce a list (for Dirk) of what is required, so that he could make a suitable timetable for the activities
- *not* go for 'classical' activities which were likely to be familiar to other participants, but to 'play with creativity and innovation'
- fit within a 1.5 hour time slot, for the activity, reflection and feedback

The 'double' coaching groups met to start their preparation for tomorrow's activities.

Meanwhile, the trainers met to plan the final day (the day after tomorrow). There should be the opportunity to look back on the activities day, with small group reflection on its value, weaknesses and the issues it generated, and there should be an opportunity for participants to consider what they would be taking home with them from

the course [all this was subsequently abandoned!]. There would need to be some planning for Phase 2. In terms of evaluation of the course, the trainers felt that my own account of engagement with the course could serve as a useful platform for participants' own reflection on the course overall. The aims and objectives of the course should be restated, and the evaluation session would conclude with some 'half sentences' (to be completed by participants) and a wish for self and for the group (much of this was subsequently amended and re-ordered). The farewell party was the responsibility of the 'social committee', but it would have to be briefed by one of the trainers (not least concerning the payment of bar bills!). Arturas had prepared a draft outline for the production of 'personal journals' by members of coaching groups:

<p>Name Date To be filled in at least every two months</p>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What did I do? 2. What went well? 3. Difficulties/doubts I have/had about my work 4. Inspirations and learning points 5. My action plan for the next two months 6. Something else important 7. When do I intend to write my journal again?

The coaching groups had been addressing different issues, but some common areas of attention had been the resources they possessed (in terms of skills, experience and knowledge), the support they required and expectations of their trainers.

Activities by participants

Late in the evening, many of the participants went caving, returning in the early hours of the morning energetic and ebullient - even those who had hitherto been somewhat marginal to the activities of the group.

The day was dedicated to the three activities within each of the 'double' coaching groups. I observed four of these, across the coaching groups:

1

A getting to know activity - drawing a picture or image of oneself and then moving around the table adding to the pictures of others. Return to your original place at the table, and consider and comment on 'your' picture.

Participants were very tentative about debating this in any depth, restricting their comments generally to 'liking' or 'disliking' their image and not much more.

2

A teamwork exercise - getting over a rope without touching and then negotiating a 'swamp' on some (very) small stones, with one blindfolded member of the group each time.

Reflection on feelings and decision-making was quite extensive, as were the comments of the nominated 'observer'. Meta-reflection produced some confusion about why this particular activity had been chosen. Feedback from the trainers raised issues of quality (ensuring adherence to the rules), safety, the clarity of the rules, the 'equality' of the 'training

team', and whether or not there should have been more intervention by the trainers. And while it was considered to be a good exercise at the start of a group's life, there needed to be too much touching for it to be a *first* exercise.

3

A problem-solving exercise - Plutonium retrieval and disposal. Helmets on ('this is serious!'). With string and elastic (though a long rope *might* be required at some point), get plastic pot of plutonium from middle of acid lake and carry up the field, across the 'boat' and deposit in a larger container also in an acid lake. Otherwise the world explodes. Two participants are blind. Once blindfolded, no speaking. At the boat, one person may speak again. Errors and breach of boundaries may lead to further incapacitation. 40 minutes to complete the task.

Following some fast discussion, two participants were blindfolded. Another breached the boundary of the 'acid lake' and lost the use of an arm. Retrieved the pot, but spilt it on the boat. One participant was allowed to speak, but three more were incapacitated by the trainer. The speaker was also struck dumb. Nonetheless, with all participants holding the string [the rope was never needed], they *nearly* succeeded, but ran out of time.

Reflection addressed issues of planning and co-ordination, and the fact that they had rushed into the exercise. Meta-reflection indicated that it was a challenging but fun activity both for individuals and the group, and could best be used towards the intimacy stage in a group process. Feedback suggested that the imposition of additional rules (unexpected further incapacitation) was valid, although to do so, trainers had to have the 'right kind' of relationship with the group (i.e. enough trust). Further, the exercise could have been made more risky by having some part of it at height.

4

A communication challenge - a version of 'Find the Tree'. The group had to learn the terrain before *all* being blindfolded with the instruction to traverse a certain route towards a defined destination and accomplish a task on the way (find the 'local man', and make him laugh). The group eventually made it, but only after going round in circles and only with an assist from the 'local man'.

Reflection pointed to the fact that there was so much confusion and lack of planning, leadership and communication that endurance and patience was put firmly to the test. Meta-reflection conveyed puzzlement over the idea of the task, although it was acknowledged that *listening* was the essential criterion for success. Feedback noted that it had been a simple but powerful exercise [15], and very good for relationships, in that it demanded neither sporting nor physical competence. There was also a question as to whether or not it was the *right exercise for this group at this time?*

Following my observation of these four activities and exercises, I made the following remark in my field notes:

Today it was very apparent how the time line had shifted responsibilities from Trainers to Participants and how the nature of the work had moved from big physical personal challenge within a group, to some very 'grounded' interpersonal working

This note conveys the interrelationship between some of the constant, though implicit, themes within the training course: concepts and theories, personal development and professional skills.

The working day finished with some parachute games orchestrated by Dirk - great fun!

The trainer's team looked back on the day with a mixture of satisfaction and sadness. Some of the exercises devised by participants had been extremely successful, both in their execution and review. They had been appropriate to the group concerned and apposite for learning. One, however, was described as 'disastrous', leaving participants in tears and causing one of the trainers to withdraw from it, so much had he been 'angry and horrified' about it. Other trainers noted, nonetheless, that such moments can provide a 'great learning experience', but it is certainly learning the hard way.

There was a feeling that the whole concept of the training course had, by and large, worked very well: 'we have reached a good conclusion'. Bringing pairs of coaching groups together for these final exercises had worked extremely well, and the parachute games to close the day were viewed as a moment of last-minute inspiration. And although sometimes it was felt that there had not been sufficient time for reflection (especially in relation to the high ropes activities), participants had self-organised their own reflection (after the caving) and this was a sign that participants (and three or four participants in particular) were now gaining and giving, after a protracted period of avoidance.

It was at this point that the trainers decided against further reflection on today's exercises, on the grounds that it might constitute too much repetition: participants' heads were full and they needed to digest and find their own learning moment. Instead (after lengthy discussion), it seemed more appropriate to give participants some solo time to think about the course overall and to consider Phase 2. 'Dropping' participants at short intervals in the forest became the agreed proposal, with half an hour to think and then half an hour to record their highlights and lowlights of Lustin [16]. And if I start tomorrow with my own story, this will provide the door to participants starting to think and write their stories. This could be followed by some brief discussion in coaching groups, followed by practical issues and evaluation in the afternoon.

Final day

The final day started with my own presentation on the 'loneliness of the training course observer'. It had been a strange experience and I endeavoured to connect it to the diverse elements of the course, starting with a spoof version of a triangle of experiential learning concerned with comfort, stretch and panic zones. I had also done the energiser - the Hokey Cokey - as a metaphor for sometimes having one foot in, sometimes one foot out, sometimes whole self in, and sometimes whole self out.

A summary of the notes that informed my observations and presentation to the group follows:

Procedure – Process (People) - Product

Political and Professional rationale

But also some, and sometimes quite strong, personal feelings and interests.

Product – professional priority

Procedure – worked out broadly in April

A research agenda:

Why and Why?

- Making the familiar strange – a critical position (internal)
- Making the strange familiar – a constructive position (external)

Need for material and evidence – starting point is the record of the course, a story. Many more steps – such as injection of theory, wider illustration, further examples – but it is this course that is the foundation stone. The strength of that foundation will be the completeness of the ‘evidence’ we can gather and compile. This depends still on YOU and on the TRAINERS: how much you give me (us: Mark and me) and what you are prepared for us to do with it. Obviously there are research **ethics** which come into play here: it will be *confidential*, but it will necessarily require some individual ‘case studies’ – and the more material we have to select from, the better.

It is similar to the production of a **photograph** (as I said to someone during The Hike – the negative is a science, the print is an art, for creation and interpretation. And, as I was discussing with others at the restaurant, if you want a photo in the dark, you have to use a grainy film which produces a very grainy picture, with little detail. We want to give more light in order to illuminate this process and thereby get a better, fuller and clearer picture)

Process/People: But first, some personal feelings of my own (in no particular order):

Comfortable – Uncomfortable

Relaxed – Anxious

Confident - Unsure

‘At home’ – In a strange land

Engaged – Withdrawn

Happy – Pissed Off

Calm - Angry

Attached - Distant

We have come a long way in a short time (10 days) and one almost forgets what we have been through *together*.

- Meeting on the first evening
- Introductions and Exercises
- The Hike and the Tasks and the Reflections
- Reflection and Meta-Reflection
- International Evening and a Party
- Free Day and the Restaurant
- Theory and different Groups
- Practice and Different Groups
- Coaching Groups

For *me*, many things:

- before the course (fitness, injury, other personal and professional pressures)
- at the start of the course (role and engagement)
- during the course (respect and admiration for the participants’ endeavours, frustrations in me, keeping up with note-taking and getting increasingly anxious about interpretation, how much to engage with participants about points of substance about the course and about deeper personal issues – cf. chat with one of the participants on the ‘boat’)
- now (will the gaps be filled, what sense am I going to make of it all, will that make sense to others, when will I have time to do it)

Throughout, there has been a question and lack of clarity about my role. I have struggled with it, the training team has struggled with it, and no doubt the participants have wondered about it. It has been a role which has been filled with tensions:

- Privileged and independent v. isolated and lonely
- It is not easy being 'alone' for ten days. I often felt like the participant when he was blindfolded on the rope course and jumping along without any idea of the distance or the direction

In relation to the training team and the participants and the course group overall, I was positioned, often, in an opposite relationship:

Staying out – not moving in

Passive – Active

Silent – Talk

Neutral – Perceptions and Perspectives

Individual - Group

Of course, this position was not always maintained or sustained. I did join in, I did intervene – which was sometimes welcomed, and sometimes criticised, both with some justification. This was something which was continuously discussed and re-negotiated and explained – but sometimes my need and impetuosity took over.

Processing the data/Dealing with the Iceberg

I am dealing with an iceberg. What I have seen, witnessed and discussed is just the tip – and there is much more underneath. I am sure that many participants are curious about how I am going to deal with the deeper personal and interpersonal dimensions to this experience. The answer is, at the moment, I don't know. I will need the help of both participants and the training team to offer me their views, their explanations, their feelings, and I will have to work with what I am given. Of course the iceberg will never be fully exposed, for reasons of (lack of) disclosure, (lack of) awareness and the simple fact of time – because many of the learning points will take time to surface and be acted on (if ever). But, to use two further analogies with the course:

- (1) **You** have got me over a barrel – we are dependent on you to give us your experience and perceptions, as honestly and deeply as you feel able to
- (2) **I** am still walking the plank, blindfolded, not quite sure where I am going with all this, but at least feel that I am getting somewhere

Conclusion

I came here for people I feel close to, and I will leave with many more people close to my heart – for their experience, their commitment, their skills, their curiosity, their willingness to share, support and 'work' with each other

"There is no such thing as a lost cause, only a cause as yet unwon" (John Steinbeck)

We have a political and professional cause to advocate but for now I thank you for the personal experience.

<i>Highlights (many)</i>	<i>Lowlights (few)</i>
Being helped to carry my rucksack properly!	Anger at patronising attitude of one participant towards another at the river crossing
Talking at length, and personally, to one participant	Trainer's intervention without checking why I had advanced a comment (in fact it was a question)
Clearing the air with another	Not doing the Fondri (The Cave)

Solo and Evaluation

After my presentation we went by minibuses to the forest. Out of sight of each other, we found a spot for thinking. This 'solo', for many participants, was 'exactly what I needed'.

Evaluation of the course took place in the afternoon. Mark reminded everyone of the aims of the course, and drew attention to the fact that it was still 'in process'. Now was not the time for any quantitative analysis, it was more a time for more qualitative illumination. Following some general discussion, participants were asked to complete a short evaluation 'questionnaire':

Name
Now I feel...
My colour today is...
For me, cooking here was...
Now I need....
My symbol for the course is...
Anything else....
Thanks

Björn 'closed' the course by forming a circle and asking each person, participants and trainers, to step into the middle and make a last wish for themselves and for the group:

- Thanks and safe trip
- Happiness
- Not to forget and to meet in May
- Big calm
- A good explanation that it was not vacation but hard work
- Not a traumatic return home
- Good experience in second phase
- Good work in second phase and see you in Lithuania
- Thank you – let things grow and hope Belgium gets two weeks of sunshine
- To change something
- A happy reunion
- Effort and motivation to keep contact
- Wind at your back and the road rise up to meet you
- To survive and be careful
- Inner sunshine
- That what I feel doesn't change and A BIG HUG
- Madzinga
- Remember the feelings and the technical stuff
- Continuing understanding, willingness to learn and tolerance in a world that has too little of it
- Us, friends and families
- When we will meet again – thanks for helping me find a place
- Not to lose motivation
- Don't forget things worth remembering
- Hope good memory [took his hat off!]
- A lot of silence
- When you speak, that it is better than silence
- Find more gardens of learning
- Harmony with self/selves
- More opportunities to work in a team like this and with groups like you... you have made this house more special

There was a final moment of contemplative silence... and then it was time for the farewell party, packing and cleaning, and leaving.

Critical incidents/key moments....

At times in the above narrative, I have recorded both numbers and letters in bold in square brackets. These were moments and questions, beyond the general 'growth' and development of the course reported above, which seemed to me, from my observations, to represent 'critical incidents'. Sometimes they surfaced as a result of the comments or behaviour of participants or trainers; sometimes they are my own interpretations and questions; and sometimes they involved me - for my presence was the 'wild card' in the training course. All courses will have such moments; these just happened to be ones which emerged in Lustin.

[1] The course called for an honesty amongst participants if they were to develop their self-awareness, but in the very first plenary session (the opening morning), one participant questioned whether people were still more likely to take their lead from, and follow, those who have gone before them. As he put it, 'they stay in channel'. This might, of course, be either an active or a passive decision, but was there a fear of being 'different'. The parameters might be different in this kind of training course, but they were still parameters and people would be inclined to stay within them. And anyway, who set the parameters: trainers or participants? And who sometimes breaks them? With what consequences? The questions were not answered and the point was not debated, but it was a legitimate observation.

[2] The first 'team-building' exercise (The Swing) undertaken by Group 1 - getting to the island in the middle of the Acid Lake - was illuminating. Initially there was no strategy whatsoever; it was simply a case of 'who wants to go next'? Gradually some strategic options were debated by only by a few participants, who were clearly jockeying for leadership positions. Others focused solely on practical considerations. And others were clearly struggling to swing on the rope - was this because they were scared, or because they were not competent? Encouragement and support was offered, and the task was achieved. Assessing their individual and group performance, through marks out of five on a fist, some participants noted that they could have taken more of a lead, but they had given way because others clearly wished to have the lead. Nobody seemed to mind. If anybody minded, they did not speak it.

[3] Following the very next exercise - Blind Object - there was intense discussion on whether or not the group needed a 'leader' or a 'chair'. The same three individuals who had jockeyed for the leadership position in the first exercise vigorously debated this - with strong disagreements. Others in the group either passively agreed with one position or another, or simply did not engage at all.

[4] The fact that only one group of three had had the chance to climb Jacob's Ladder (the third exercise) was a major dividing point within the group. The others wanted to have a go. But when? This was the subject of some quite heated discussion during the late evening when participants were meant to be preparing for The Hike. Some wanted to delay The Hike and complete Jacob's Ladder before departure. Others asked whether Jacob's Ladder could be done another time, but its purpose had been a part of *preparing* the group for The Hike. This had clearly misfired and there was an acute sense of 'unfinished business'. Some in the group wanted to 'forget it', but there was definitely a need for some form of *closure*.

The discussion continued, less on the specificities of whether or not to 'complete' Jacob's Ladder (which was virtually an impossibility *prior* to The Hike) and more on how participants were feeling. There was a strong sense of conflict, tension and insecurity within the group: there was little feeling that The Hike would be purposeful *for the group* without some resolution. One participant commented, 'If we don't do the climbing, we can't do the hike'. Others conveyed agitation, frustration, irritation. Another participant asked whether the programme could be changed: could The Hike be delayed. This was not possible, according to the trainers. Energy levels were sinking as midnight approached and people were feeling tired and exhausted. It was agreed to meet at 0800 the following morning when, as the narrative above conveys, these issues were sufficiently resolved. In the morning, participants said that they were feeling quieter, 'fine', more comfortable and more relaxed. They got ready for The Hike.

[5] But The Hike itself did not reflect any real 'integration' of the group. In the first exercise - to find the 'soul of the village', participants drifted around, searching for clues from the trainers, without any collective discussion of what they might do. Even when most came together in a circle, some stood outside of it.

When they set off on The Hike, they did so in small, fragmented groups, some distance from each other, with no-one checking on the well-being of others. It was described by one of the trainers as 'the snake'.

[6] As the group reached the Baraque (an old hut), the heavens opened and some participants decided to put up the tarpaulin and have their lunch. Others, however, decided to press on. The trainers were walking in the middle of the 'snake'. The front runners had moved out of sight, while others lagged behind, also out of sight. There was little cohesion or communication within the group.

[7] Following more 'togetherness' during the evening and the sleepover at The Quarry, the group had to undertake the River Crossing. Four of the (male) participants dominated the discussion as to how this might be (*was to be*) done. One was particularly dismissive of the views of a younger participant [*one of the moments that angered me*], who later turned out to have some sophisticated technical skills. There were transparent divisions within the group, with some apparently having already decided on what should be done, yet others being encouraged to present and consider alternative methods. One by one, a number of participants simply withdrew from the debate, holding conversations amongst themselves. No-one endeavoured to re-engage them, and the trainers sat at some distance observing the interaction with interest.

[8] Three participants had made it across the River Crossing when time ran out. The group had constructed an effective system, but it had taken time. The trainers debated whether or not to stop things on time, or to let the group continue. One of the participants was acutely aware of the time deadline, providing a countdown for the rest. When one of the trainers called out 'You have failed', there was a look of massive indignation on the part of one who had already gone across. After all, she had *not* failed.

[9] The group had decided, anyway, to let others continue across the rope construction but this was interrupted by the intervention of a uniformed forestry ranger who pointed out that we should not be engaging in this activity on this stretch of the river. Looking back on this, participants noted that, as soon as he appeared, they passed complete responsibility to one of the trainers: 'like children leaving things to their mothers'. To some participants, this

confirmed that while they might be a 'group', they were certainly not yet a *team*. Others felt that it was exclusively the responsibility of the trainers, for they had made the decision about the location of the crossing.

[10] During the small group reflection on the trainer's role, it was noted that, conceptually, the ideas of 'correspondence' (what trainers did matched what participants expected) and 'dissonance' (what trainers did not match what participants expected) depended on the *relationship* between expectations and interventions. The *same* interventions might be viewed as either 'correspondence' or 'dissonance', as might *different* interventions, depending upon the *different* expectations of participants. Some participants had expected trainers to be much less (or more) interventionist than other participants.

[11] While this reflection was going on, the trainer's team was resting on the grass nearby. At one point I spoke in the reflection group I was observing and one of the trainers admonished me loudly and publicly for doing so. This threw the tensions about my role into some relief. I had simply asked some questions for clarification. I had not been offering my own reflections on The Hike. The trainer did not first check with me as to what I had said. I felt humiliated and very tempted to give up, having already walked this tightrope for some days. We dealt with the matter in the trainer's meeting that evening. It was but one small negative moment in an otherwise long-standing and mutually respectful relationship. But at the time, for me, it was a *big* moment. It was a moment when I 'exploded' inside.

[12] The Open Forum on the Trainer's Role was the moment when many participants 'exploded'. It was an opportunity for them to unload a variety of criticisms of the training team (and some members of it more than others). At the core of the exchange was a view from participants that trainers were responsible '24/7'. Thus they were critical of trainers having a drink, especially in certain circumstances. One trainer had observed earlier that a person who was a trainer '24/7' would be a 'monster': they also had to have their personal space and display their personal side. This comment was now viewed by some participants as some kind of 'ante post' justification for some of the trainers' behaviour, rather than an explanation of the trainer's role. The trainers did not attempt to defend their position; they listened to the arguments. But there were two latent messages within the discussion. One was that, here, the trainers were dealing with adults who should take some responsibility for themselves; in their work with young people, their behaviour would be different. The other was that there were clearly some *intercultural* aspects to the critique: in some countries, the expected behaviour of trainers, whether 'on' or 'off' duty was heavily prescribed and regulated; in other countries, it was more discretionary.

[13] By the time of the half-way stage of the course, some participants were clearly quite fed up with the inordinate amount of time allocated for 'reflection' - and more 'reflection'. As one participant put it, 'do we really need to dwell on these things, or can we just live the experience'. They continued:

Isn't some of this stuff rather superficial and doesn't need blowing up out of proportion? Shit happens; que sera, sera. I don't want to ignore issues, but I also don't want to create issues. There is a risk of things becoming a bigger issue than they actually are.

There is perhaps an issue here about how one persuades participants that this time allocated to protracted and intensive reflection is a necessary part of the process. But there is also an

issue of acknowledging the perspective of this participant, which was without doubt held - at that point in the process - by some others in the group.

[14] The personal and professional feedback on the first day and The Hike that was finally provided by the trainers from Group 1 (and myself) demonstrated their own dilemmas during that experience. They were unsure whether Jacob's Ladder should have been one of the three exercises, given the time and the weather conditions. They recognised that they could have 'stepped in' on various occasions, but had not done so. They did not want to sustain any dependency, and instead to build up frustration. They were surprised at the fragmentation of the group during The Hike. They felt that the disengagement of some participants because of their lack of technical expertise could have been handled in a different way. Those participants could have learned some technical skills. The trainers would have taught them knots, if anyone had asked. They noted the power-brokers who had been fighting, and described the other participants as 'turtles'. And they were concerned at times about the (lack of) quality and depth of reflections. But, despite all of this, they had forged personal relationships with many members of the group and developed some sense of reciprocity. Being an experiential trainer, they concluded, is both different and difficult.

[15] In the day of participants' own activities it was noticeable that, after all the exhilaration and challenge of the high ropes course, here were exercises requiring a minimum of equipment, but providing similar, and arguably, more group-oriented challenges. This must have been reassuring for the majority of participants, who have no access whatsoever to things like rope courses or other expensive resources and equipment.

[16] One participant had offered me his brief 'highlights and lowlights' after just a couple of days. I said that things might change and suggested he waited until later in the course. On the penultimate day, he asked to see me after the trainer's meeting. The meeting went on very late but, when I came out, he was there waiting for me. I had thought he might want a personal conversation of some kind but instead he just handed me some sheets of paper. Rather casually, I commented 'Is that all?', having expected something more profound. I then suggested, once again, that he kept the papers as he might want to revise them after the programme of the following day (the 'solo' and the evaluation). The next day, he seemed subdued. It transpired that he had worked hard on his 'feelings' (something that clearly did not come naturally to him) and had incorporated them into his highlights and lowlights. When I had said 'Is that all?' he had thought that I was demeaning the effort he had put in. In the English language, it is a question of intonation. If the tone drops at the end, it *is* demeaning (sort of 'why waste my time'), if the tone raises, it conveys surprise [that that was 'all' he wanted to see me about - because he could just have handed it through the trainer's room door much earlier in the evening]. Such nuances are easily lost on non-native English speakers: three small words can be enough to represent the fundamental challenges of intercultural communication.

....And some questions - A-Z

[A] Was it wise to so randomly allocate participants into groups of five (simply by numbers 1-5) so early in the course? What's the basis of the question? It worked, but the question still stands. [One participant had raised this question, feeling that it might have been 'better' to have had some preceding activities in order to 'work' people into groups.]

[B] By the time of the activity in The Cave, when participants wanted something that was 'fun' and did not demand any technical skill, a key question had arisen: to what extent does the level of technical expertise required affect participation and motivation? In other words, if a task needs such competence, what are the implications for the inclusion/exclusion of members of a group, according to their individual levels of competence?

[C] In the trainers' accounts of their reflection with the two hiking groups, those from Group A noted that one participant had (perhaps inadvertently) facilitated a breakthrough moment by speaking up openly and honestly. Until that moment, the reflection had been sluggish. I asked whether or not, rather than just waiting for any participant to speak, there was a case for 'sequencing' reflections, by asking those who were likely to be more forthright to speak first - and thereby to orchestrate the kind of dynamic that that participant had unintentionally produced. The trainers said that they could not have anticipated this effect, so it would be difficult to plan. The intervention of that participant had just happened to 'come in at the perfect time'.

[D] During the 'theoretical' input on intercultural and experiential learning, one participant asked, only partially rhetorically, whether there was any evidence, over time (say, the last 20 years), of the impact on society of this kind of work?

[E] Another participant asked whether you had to produce frustration in order to touch feelings: feelings may not surface initially, but perhaps they would emerge through the broader dynamics of the group? The trainer's response was that it did not always have to be about frustration. It could be about happiness. But it did have to be about the real feelings that people were experiencing.

[F] Do 'conflicts' always have to be resolved? The trainer's response was that much depended upon timing and the evolution of the group. So much is unpredictable. The training challenge is to enable a group to move to a position of dealing with *feelings*, rather than just talking. Early conflicts are likely to need resolution; later ones will resolve themselves.

[G] A similar question arose in relation to 'pushing' people into 'stretch' zones so that breakthrough could be achieved. One participant queried: what if things go the other way and there is a negative effect, pushing people *back*, 'never again'. The trainer's response was that there were multiple methods of dealing with situations where there is a risk of this, in order to pull people forward, rather than push them back. These methods include the use of:

- Metaphors
- Support
- Physiology
- Beliefs
- Conversations

People display many defences, patterns and feelings: 'we have learned ways of dealing with the variety of situations that emerge'. And of course the trainers would deny that anyone was ever 'pushed' into such situations: there was always the choice whether or not to accept or reject the circumstances that might *lead* people into stretched positions.

[H] Is there a difference between emotions and feelings? Many felt not, but one of the trainers commented that 'feelings can block you, but they can also assist you' and one of the participants suggested that a 'feeling' can contain a variety of emotions (such as fear, excitement, confidence, nervousness).

[I] What about the size of the 'wall' put up by participants? Presumably it must vary: big and small, thick and thin? 'Because 90% of communication is non-verbal, the wall cannot be verbally defended'.

Samukas, Lithuania, May 2003

Like the other trainers, I arrived in Lithuania two days before most participants were going to be there. After our personal and social reunion, the serious planning started, taking account of ideas already formulated during the preparatory weekend and the email exchanges which had taken place since then. There were also matters such as 'drop outs' and 'replacements' and practical issues concerning equipment and relationships with the house in which we were to be living (this time participants would not be preparing food and responsible for all 'domestic' requirements).

A key element of Phase 3 would be the Day Course, during which participants themselves would train groups from Lithuania:

- Two groups from an arts project:
 - (i) a youth work group interested in team building
 - (ii) a volunteers group concerned with 'atmosphere' building
- A group of Scouts (six young men, six young women)
- A group from a local town: 6-8 volunteers/members of the governing board
- A group from a youth psychological aid centre
- A group from the Bespoke Training network (who will already have done 'versions' of this course)

I emphasised the need to *ensure* that appropriate material for the publication was gathered as completely as possible. Even the modest expectation of getting highlights and lowlights from Lustin had been poorly achieved, *even* despite participants being told that it was to be their 'entry ticket' to Samukas. Many had still not submitted theirs. [My frustrations about data collection increased during the week - see Appendix.]

There was a check on equipment: computers, paper, printer, photocopier; ropes, helmets, blindfolds, First Aid, maps, compasses; blank CDs, tarpaulins, balls, clay, paint and brushes, and crayons. If need be, Arturas would arrange for other material to be brought from Vilnius.

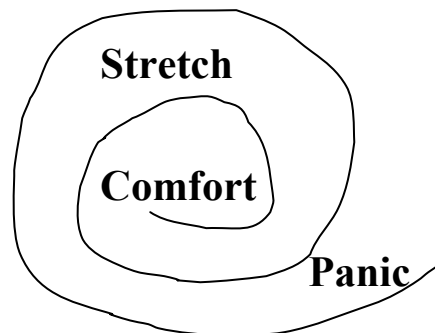
The programme was to be about establishing a 'sense of place' - about being in Lithuania, about Deepening the learning from Lustin and Phase 2, and about the development of International Projects.

The Day Course preoccupied the trainers. Beyond concerns that groups might not turn up (Arturas was confident that they all would), the trainer's team was acutely aware that this was no longer a simulated exercise, but real engagement with groups that were coming for personal and practical development. The trainers wanted participants to take full responsibility for 'their' group and decided not to play any active part. They defined their role in terms of:

- *Providing back up*
- *Responding to questions*
- *Observing and taking notes*
- *Ensuring safety*
- *Providing feedback*
- *[and taking over if things were going badly wrong]*

There were also concerns about how to form the six groups of participants who would constitute the training teams. Bart had some creative proposals which he would develop. The other trainers identified some possible problems: the time it might take to 'produce' the groups, the numbers balance, the emergence of 'weak' training teams. An 'escape route' would be necessary, but they would trust a 'self-forming' process to work (it did!).

Participants started to arrive early on Saturday, 3rd May. All but a few had been given directions to the youth training centre (a rebuilt house in the countryside) and been told to make their own way there: an exercise in intercultural communication and understanding in and of itself! By the evening, most were there. We had our first meal together. There was a strange atmosphere, partly a feeling of never having been 'away', partly a nervousness about how to 're-connect'. In the evening, we sat in a circle. A rope was arranged in the middle in a spiral, representing a 'seamless' comfort, stretch and panic zone:



In turn, each participant (and the trainers) were asked to identify where they felt they were *right now* (by positioning themselves within the spiral), and to explain the original meaning of their names. This was followed by the learning of a Lithuanian poem, in groups. The poem was available outside of the room and each group member had to memorise a line and record it 'back at base'. Each group then had to produce their 'version' and recite it to all. After this the poem was explained by Arturas (it was a children's poem) and then 'performed', with an accompanying game, by the group as a whole.

The following day started with a time-honoured energiser and a rudimentary Lithuanian language course. Then Arturas introduced the course, outlining its objectives both in terms

of the formal intentions of the trainers and in terms expressed by some of the participants in earlier email responses. The participants broke into groups of three or four to discuss these proposals. The groups then fed back on the objectives and the proposed structure of the course. There was a commitment to developing projects and putting together proposals. There was a request (unsurprisingly, given the dreadful weather outside!) for some 'indoor activities'. There were questions about what precisely was meant in the programme by 'personal development' and 'intercultural learning'. And participants wanted to know whether the session on 'project management' was going to be a presentation or a discussion. Some concern was expressed about the course extending too widely and therefore becoming shallow; there was general agreement that Phase 3 needed to 'secure depth'.

Dirk then talked through the programme, indicating that it offered a framework which was 'much closer to reality'. He outlined the daily timetable and then he and Arturas communicated some housekeeping and other practical issues.

With the rain beating down outside, we all sat down in the meeting room to watch a slide show of the Lustin course, which Stanka had painstakingly prepared. The background atmospheric music that she had decided to play created exactly the right effect - an atmospheric reminiscence of the ten days we had all shared in Belgium just over eight months before. This was the foundation stone for 'looking back', before the course started to look forward once again. Participants split into coaching groups for the last time, to reflect on Phase 2 and to finish the group. At mid-day, there was a briefing for the 'solo' or, as it came to be known from Björn, the 'SOUL-O'.

The SOUL-O provided a further immediate connection with Lustin, for a 'solo' had been the last exercise participants had done in Belgium. This was to establish some continuity with Lustin and to re-connect with the training course. Participants and team were sent outside to get 'inside'. The weather was atrocious, so participants were not expected to sit still in the same place (as in Lustin) but were permitted to 'travel', but while they were doing so they were expected to think and reflect. This was an opportunity to 'land' in Lithuania. Bart had prepared an envelope for each person. Inside was a set of issues for each individual to consider, to be opened and dealt with once they were alone. One expectation was that each individual was to write a short poem about their sense of identity and place. Each set of instructions also contained the names of two other participants, whom they had to find at the end of the solo, and together these groups of three were to talk through and 'translate' their poems.

It should be noted that there had not been a complete lack of contact between participants during Phase 2. There had, of course, been the coaching groups, but these had not been particularly successful; one trainer subsequently suggested that they had been the weakest link in the course. But beyond that professional aspiration, quite a number of participants had made personal visits to each other, crossing Europe from west to east and from north to south.

In the late afternoon, Björn climbed up into a tree, needing help to do so. He proclaimed that this was a metaphor of life: people may need help to climb up but once there they are alone and on their own, although they are also likely to need help from others to get back down. The following session thereby became known as POMEALONE, for the idea was that each participant in turn would ascend the tree, recite their poem, and then be helped back down. The poems had recurring themes (wind and rivers, paths and direction; alone and with others); their titles were also potentially symbolic:

Fishing
Who am I?
River

Seagull
I wish
About me

Throwing a ball
My 'way'
The wind

Some poems were short, some long. Some were deeply personal, some more clichéd. A sample of these poems is provided below.

To search, search, search
Sometimes running or stopping
Sometimes playing or sleeping

To create to create
My life, aware

Aware that everything I do is right
In that moment
And it does not matter, if later
Maybe
I'll look back
Maybe laughing, maybe crying
But AWARE

I sit by a lake
In a foreign country
Country which has a story
I wish I knew better
Still I know my story
Still asking
Who am I?
Why am I?
Questions often asked
Questions with different answers
Each time

Who am I?

Sister, daughter, colleague,
Friend, employee
Some of the many faces
To define me

Travel, language, culture,
People, why?
Some of many things
To intrigue me

Impatient, stubborn, giving,
Sensitive, responsible
Some of many qualities
Composing me

It's all about perspectives
This vision of me
Who am I?

I am anxious, unrestful
And the mind is so hidden
Thoughts are dancing in a circle
Time passes by me slowly
That it even gets cold (ly)
The question is if I am there
Where I am to be (worth)

The working day ended with a mantra and what came to be known as YO-YO Lithuania (the trainers' corruption of 'Jo Jo Hopla', a phrase they had used a lot in 1998). Its intention was to provide a 'taste' of local reality, to learn from and compare with our different experiences. Fittingly, the first involved the house cook, who explained the history and recipe of the food we had had in our packed lunch - a special Lithuanian meat pastry called Kibinai.

The trainers felt that the first day had gone well. There was a 'good feeling'. The slide show and its background music had set things off well, and the solo had not been too long (despite prior concerns about this). The use of the tree for the poetry reading had been spontaneous, but had worked impressively. Participants seemed to have become engaged and the trainers were connected.

In preparation for the following day, there would first be a 'multi-task' in the morning, involving participants in three groups undertaking some four or five tasks. A delegate from each group would then be briefed about the challenge for the afternoon, which was to 'Save Lithuania'. An explosion had taken place at a nearby secret laboratory (a real crater known as Devil's Hole). There were wounded people there who needed to be rescued and a chemical spill that needed to be retrieved and disposed of. The future of Lithuania lay in participants' hands!

Multi-task day

After the language course the next day, participants were divided into three groups, on criteria such as technical skills, being a newcomer ('replacement'), gender and trainers' preferences for having some participants in (or not in) the same group. After each activity each group received a new set of materials to enable to go on to the next one. By the end of the day, there would be at least fifteen activities on paper, of which each participant would have tackled around five. Each 'cluster' of five activities prioritised five types of group challenge:

- technical
- problem solving/strategic
- communication
- trust
- working with information/analysis

In the early afternoon, three of the participants were told of the challenge for the afternoon and briefed the rest of the participants on Save Lithuania: Rescue and Retrieval. There were two injured people somewhere in the Devil's Hole. In an acid lake which blinded anyone in contact with it, there was a glass of 'water' and a tub of plutonium with a tennis ball on top. Two groups of volunteers were needed, making use of the skills and ideas developed this morning: to rescue and retrieve.

Save Lithuania: Rescue and Retrieval

Rescue

TASK

The task is for you to search and retrieve 2 victims in the area and bring them to the safe place where the ambulance can come to pick them up or they will die. Two victims are the results of the toxic experiment and we assume that they are somewhere close to the Devils Hole.

For more specific information on how to treat and rescue the victims we would strongly advise you to consult Bart who is an expert on these matters.

Information about the victims

Victim one:

Suffers from injuries from the explosion. He is blind and he hurt his arm, there is no spinal injury. This person needs to be Evacuated with special care.

Victim two:

The only information on the second person we have is that this person is unconscious and he needs to be carried on a stretcher.

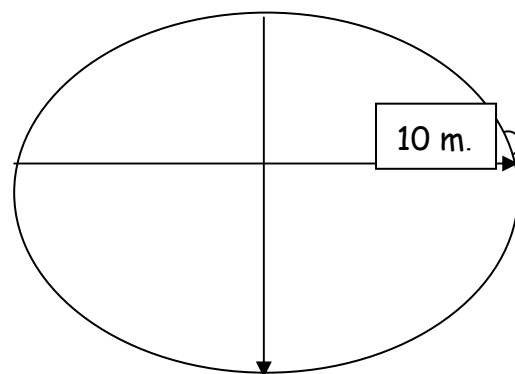
Safety

1. Each search group needs to consist of a minimum of three people.
2. Difficult places/passages need to be secured by "spotting".
3. There is 1 first aid kit available.
4. Nobody climbs the rocks or trees without the permission of a trainer.
5. Trainers can intervene when safety is in doubt.

Safety

Every person hanging on any kind of construction or working higher than 2 meters above the ground must wear a helmet.

Retrieval



TASK

- Remove glass of water the toxic zone without spilling water.
- Remove a barrel from the toxic zone without dropping the ball on top of the barrel
- Remove a helmet from the toxic zone

RULES

- No persons may touch the ground in the toxic zone.
- If someone does touch the ground within these zones, he or she will immediately receive a blindfold to wear for the remainder of the exercise.
- No equipment may touch the ground within the toxic zone. Any equipment, which does touch the ground within the zone, may no longer be used for the remainder of the exercise.
- If one of the objects falls on the ground, all persons involved in its removal will receive a blindfold to wear for the remainder of the exercise.
- Any person above the toxic zone must be blindfolded.
- Only the material you got from the morning activities can be used.

Timing

The objects have to be removed before 6.30pm

These tasks were completed by the early evening, though not without surprises. The first rescue was relatively unproblematic but participants simply could not find the other injured person (the owner of the house, who had volunteered for the role, had hidden himself well in the hillside!). The retrieval enterprise was made significantly more difficult because the base of the Devil's Hole was a quagmire, and all participants bar one were attempting to hold a rope taut while the other manoeuvred himself over the toxic zone - while sloshing around in mud. But there was a powerful spirit of enjoyment as well as challenge. Virtually all participants carved out a role that suited their particular aptitudes. The clay models made to represent their feelings about the day (works of the heart, not works of art!) generally reflected that it had been a positive experience, although there was a great deal of diversity in their symbols and account:

strong/weak
in/out
lost and found
balls
table
fingers
hand

bird
thin
bowl and frog
positive devil
totem pole and rabbit
A for Anger!

sea and stream, river
and lake
snake
umbrella/parachute
smiling sunshine

Participants' representations conveyed very different ways of thinking and feeling about what they had done:

- symbolic
- expressive
- metaphorical
- imagery
- concrete
- abstract
- now
- before

YO-YO Lithuania tried to make some sense of recent Lithuanian newspapers and magazines, a number of which were focused on the imminent referendum on whether or not to join the European Union and most of which revealed rather less of cultural diversity and rather more of cultural convergence. [One of the newspapers, however, was actually Turkish and it was quite amusing (at least for Mark and Arturas, who had brought it) to see how those participants who were looking at it were attempting to discern how Lithuanian the paper could be! The more serious point is how this illustrated how perception and expectations are so strongly linked.]

Participants were reminded that it was important, for the course publication, to provide their *personal development accounts of Phase 2* which, along with the poem, had been one of their tasks during the SOUL-O.

The trainers also drew participants' attention to their own feeling that the day had witnessed a lot of positive dynamics and feedback. Participants now appeared to be making links with the Lustin experience and with their experience to date here; they seem now to be comfortable with one another (which was not the case at the start of Phase 3, as many of them had admitted).

The trainers had liked the day, although they had felt frustrated about 'hanging around' so much - just in an observer status! A myriad of positive issues had been 'bubbling around' today.

The most striking of which was the observation by one participant that Lustin had changed her life. She had cut her hair (securing symbolic freedom from her mother) and presented herself in Samukas as a self-confident and curious young woman. The defining moment in her 'change' had been her successful ascent of the pamper pole in Lustin. Very tentatively she had climbed to the top and then, after some false starts, had leapt off: this had been her moment of self-awareness - that she could be what *she* wanted to be (and not what her mother wanted her to be). On the arrival day, this particular participant had approached me saying that, in Lustin, she had not liked me very much, largely because she did not know what I was doing there. I had explained my role, to which she had been surprisingly attentive; it transpired that she had been asked to be the rapporteur for a training course in Spain, and wondered what it entailed. We had further conversations about the 'loneliness' of the observer/recorder in these situations. In fact she provided *me* with considerable support when I was feeling particularly despondent about the apparent lack of commitment on the part of both trainers and participants to the collection of material for the publication (see My Story).

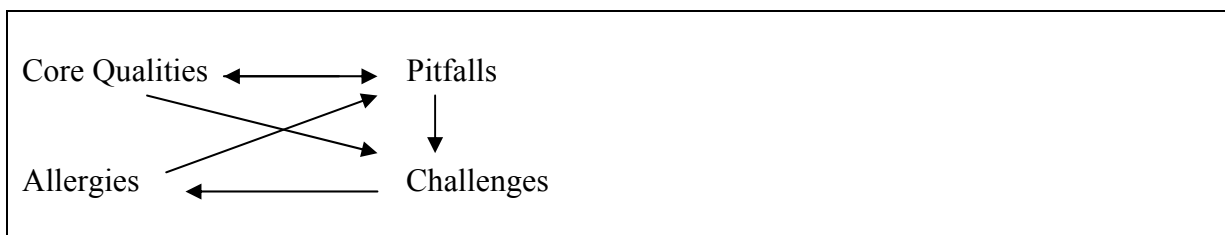
The programme and activities today had clearly responded to participants' needs: it had given them concrete activities to 'play around' with and concrete experience of participating in many of them.

The trainers considered the next day's programme. There should be some reflection on today, in their morning groups of seven, around both personal and professional development. A basis for doing so could be around some theoretical input on 'core qualities', providing the opportunity for participants to consider how this related to them. Then participants would need to split into the 'training teams' for the Day Course, be briefed on the visiting group they would be working with, be aware of the trainers' role during the Day Course, and then prepare for it. There would be logistical questions about the use of space and equipment and any problems would need resolution in the early evening.

Originally the programme had also scheduled a 'project market' [the start of developing international projects] for tomorrow evening, but this was abandoned on the grounds that it would be too much and anyway participants' heads 'will be in the Day Course'. Mark was somewhat concerned about this 'slippage', but acknowledged the rationale behind the decision.

The language course and a short personal plea about completing requests for the publication started the day. Dirk, drawing on Hoffman's Quadrant, then introduced an optional model for reflecting on the personal qualities which participants had made use of yesterday (and at other times).

Core qualities represent what people feel about themselves and perhaps how others see them – their personal ‘brand’. *Pitfalls* are when you have too much of your core qualities. *Challenges* are the opposite of pitfalls – the things you might need to consider to rectify the weaknesses inherent in overplaying your core qualities. *Allergies* are represented by those who are too much of your challenge (and by inference, in opposition to your core qualities). It is important to keep hold of your core qualities, but to add your challenges to them. When you meet people with your allergy, they will try to put you into your pitfalls (by exposing the weaknesses of your core qualities).



Participants broke briefly into pairs to talk through their understanding of this theoretical model. There was then half an hour for individual reflection on their core qualities:

- What are these qualities?
- How were they seen yesterday during the activities?
- What can I improve/what do I want to improve?
- What about the qualities of others in your team?
- What is my ideal/core quality?

Individuals rejoined the groups with which they had worked the previous morning (the groups of seven). I joined Dirk and Stanka's group. Stanka outlined the idea of a 'gift' - to be accepted or rejected, but not defended. No-one wanted to start. Some participants were clearly not comfortable at all. Eventually one of them spoke but she became very upset and started crying. She apologised for this: 'sorry for crying - I didn't expect to be able to cry'. Dirk observed that the important thing was for her to hold on to her ambition (her self-defined personal quality), but to be more open about her vulnerabilities. Gradually each of the group spoke, gently and tentatively and other members of the group responded positively (though also sometimes critically), extending supportive and constructive feedback. It seemed that some individuals were genuinely surprised about the ways others felt about them. Dirk concluded the session by observing that *knowing yourself affects your style of working and improves your approach to your work and your life*.

With everyone back together again in a large circle, each individual described their core quality:

Intuition Tolerant Sensitive Creative Communicative Creative Drive	Relaxed productivity Optimistic Energy Playful energy Flexible Laugh Respondable	Alive Structuring Centering Easy and content Risky Effective Feeler	Jelly adapter Analytical Emotional Empathy Challenges Humour Ambitious
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Bart's challenge to produce an effective way of participants self-selecting themselves into six 'training teams' was upon us. Bart asked all participants to sit inside a rope circle with their eyes closed. He encouraged them to get in touch with their breathing and to follow their breathing: life is a circle - in out, in out. Then he instructed them to stand up and walk around, with their eyes still shut, without making contact with other people. After a short moment, he told them to open their eyes, but to stay silent. Then, slowly, to meet up with other people and feel the extent of any 'boundaries' between them: how much closeness or distance was there between them. It was important to try to 'meet' everybody in the group. Remaining silent, gradually form into groups of 3x3 and 3x4. At the first attempt they formed into only five groups: 4x4 and 1x5. Bart said that the task had not yet been fulfilled. The groups broke apart and reformed, as required.

The other trainers were almost dumbstruck about how this had been achieved. It had been a source of some anxiety in earlier discussions. It was described by one as:

"one of the bravest things I have ever seen a trainer do. To hold the energy in that circle and enable people to feel safe enough to go through that process was simply staggering. The possibilities for such an exercise to go horribly wrong are multitude, especially given the multicultural dimension to the different forms of communication which were going on (and obviously we're not talking about verbal communication at all here) – it took enormous strength and depths of experience to do it. How people chose each other or were chosen was pretty hard for those I spoke with to explain. There was much more going on than we could see"

With these 'training teams' established, Arturas quickly allocated one of the visiting groups to each of them, informing them briefly as to who they were and how many participants to expect:

TT1	TT2	TT3	TT4	TT5	TT6
Focusasas	Unsi Kokemus (new experience)	Drivers	Nepato Gumas (uncomfortable)	Cumulas Nimbass	Dalnas (palm of hand)
Stanka	Björn	Arturas	Dirk	Bart	Mark
10 Youth psychological aid centre	5 Bespoke	12 Core team local town (+ local village surprise)	10 Scouts	4 Arts board	12 (11) Volunteers
F	C	D	E	A	B

[NB Training Team 3 had to accommodate 'local village surprise' - an additional group that turned up unexpectedly on the day. Numbers in bold indicated the actual number of participants who arrived, as against the numbers that had been anticipated.]

Dirk explained that the Day Course would be with groups of people whom the participants did not know. The groups who were coming were accustomed to communication through the medium of English (this had been one criterion for acceptance) but language communication - as well as other forms of communication - would demand constant attention. The Day Course was a real opportunity to experiment with qualities and challenges. It would be important to bear in mind that the five activities in the multi-task yesterday had been hard enough for *our* participants to tackle. This is going to be a real experience; the trainers here will be coaches and resource persons but it will be up to the participants in their training teams to deliver an appropriate programme. The training teams started their preparation.

YO-YO Lithuania considered the evolution of youth work in Lithuania (in order for participants to have a bit more cultural *and* structural understanding, about the milieu from which their participants would be coming). Under communism, there had been the Komsomol, which had disappeared on 11/3/90 with independence. There was subsequent resistance to organised youth activities because of its association with the Komsomol, but slowly the idea of youth work returned, and there was some training of youth workers through international links. The development and dissemination of experiential learning methods had received a boost in 1998 with the Roofonfire intercultural training course. Then one participant from Lithuania told about the 'fluffy feelings' (meaning that people tend to be very huggy and physical and emotional at the end of powerful exercises, etc) associated with youth groups with which she had been in contact. This provoked a lot of humorous comments, but it was still important cultural information and useful to create awareness of the fact that the people coming for the Day Course would be in some ways 'different' from what they might imagine.

The trainers' perspectives on the day were very mixed. Some felt the morning was 'nothing special' and had been somewhat pedestrian; others felt the morning had gone well, not just for participants but for those trainers as well. There were diverse views about the qualities and strengths - and potential - of their different 'training teams' and some apprehension about some of the characteristics of the groups that those teams will have to train. One group, for example, will consist of only four people - not enough to engender a great deal in terms of group dynamics, so instead the team will have to work on 'personal stuff'. Another group, from Bespoke, was quite expert and experienced and would provide a particular challenge. But the trainers decided to hold faith with their training teams and see how things unfolded. It could prove to be a baptism of fire!

At the end the Day Course, each group should give something to the whole group (everybody: trainers, participants and visitors). They could do whatever they decided, but they should be asked to communicate a common message that was symbolic of their day.

Having foregone the plan to have a 'project market' this evening, the process of project group forming would have to be concertina'd into tomorrow evening: formulate an idea, display them, find partners... There was some uncertainty about whether the two steps (of thinking, and forming) could be done in one go. Some additional time might need to be allocated for this on the day after the Day Course; so, if necessary, it was agreed that the Day Course reflection might be condensed from three hours to two.

The trainers went off to support their 'training teams', some until well after midnight. The decision to delay the project market was vindicated, and (most) participants' application in the planning and preparation for the Day Course reflected their personal and professional commitment to ensuring, as best they could, that it went well.

Over breakfast the trainers reported the 'fascinating dynamics' of the multicultural training teams; in terms of communication, resources and styles. Some of the teams had worked together into the early hours. After the language course, Arturas explained how the day would unfold, and I asked the training teams to provide me with a 'retrospective' on the Day Course - covering the group they had worked with, the rationale behind their programme, the activities they carried out, and the learning points for our participants. [I was also going to ask the visiting groups for a short account of their experience of the day.]

The training teams sat at different tables positioned around the garden awaiting, expectantly, the arrival of 'their' group. When all the visiting groups had turned up, there was a round of introductions for everyone and then each group went, with their training teams, to the tables for preliminary exercises and instructions. These introductions, explanations, expectations and regulations (concerning organisational and interpersonal issues and points such as confidentiality) were the springboard for a plethora of activities which took place around the house and deeper into the forest.

All the groups and teams returned at 17.00 to offer some symbolic representations (through human sculptures, natural symphonies, and songs) of how their day had been. There was a strong, warm sense of satisfaction and achievement about the day, despite some technical 'failure' by some of the visiting groups to fulfil their allotted tasks and despite the levels of panic and apprehension which had gripped some of the participants prior to embarking on the day. [One participant said that throughout the night before, she had had 'angels and devils in my head' but, on seeing the enthusiasm amongst the group of Scouts, she had settled immediately.]

The visitors left and, in an atmosphere of some relief, both participants and trainers 'steamed out'. A little later, participants were asked to what extent their awareness of Lithuanian youth work and Lithuanian youth workers squared with the discussion of the evolution of youth work in Lithuania the evening before. Few addressed this question specifically, concentrating instead on some more general issues:

- The Bespoke group had proved challenging because they had already had some training in these methods. They wanted to know the technical aspects of exercises, rather than simply engage in them. The training team had had to be inventive to produce suitable challenges.
- All the groups arrived with high expectations and a lot of energy: they wanted something to do and they wanted to learn.
- There were constant language and communication issues: and interaction was forged through the use of English, Lithuanian, Russian and, quite often, more non-verbal communication strategies.
- Some of the participants in the visiting groups were unclear about the purpose of some of the exercises they were asked to undertake: 'why do we have to do this?'
- There was generally an acceptance of the tasks required of the groups, which were not always challenging, but were sometimes experienced as uncomfortable (because of close physical activity, or having to paint with bare feet).
- The youth group clearly did not know each other too well, but were keen to forge a more 'collective culture' and so embraced the team-building activities which were provided for them.

The trainers had found the day interesting, challenging and exhausting. Overall, it had been 'surprisingly fluent'. There was still the 'project market' to do and it would be hard to round up people with some good-humoured energy in order to 'get some eggs hatched'.

Participants *did* congregate later that evening, and Mark told them that the process was, first, to think about areas and issues around which they might wish to develop an international project. They would then be asked to engage with others with at least a simulated intention to establish an international project (participants were asked to work 'for real', whether or not this was actually so). Groups should be no smaller than three and no larger than five or six. There would be more information about project funding later in the course, but participants could brainstorm for now. It was important that participants went through a *process* of developing a real project.

Mark and I met late that evening for around three hours to work out a structure for the publication and to identify outstanding information needs and strategies for getting them fulfilled. It was clear by now that we would have to badger both trainers and participants for these data, if we were to get them before the course was at an end.

By midnight, participants had posted their project market ideas on the wall in the social room. Whether for simulated project development or for real application, these were the themes they covered:

Environmental Outdoor Education/Experiential Wilderness Therapy
 Environmental Awareness/International Youth Exchange seminar
 Youth exchange for creative young artists
 Experiential Learning for kids at risk/in need; exchange arts workshop
 Youth exchange for Russian language people
 Experiential learning in Euromed; experiential learning outdoors
 International Youth Build – Habitat for Humanity
 Workcamp/Exchange for disadvantaged youth/sustainable development
 Outdoor experiential learning exchange
 Intercultural learning on gender, immigration
 Young people between migration and immigration
 Outdoor education
 Couples' intercultural and experiential learning/higher education
 International exchange re music
 Music, conflict, gender

Some connecting themes were immediately apparent: outdoors; arts/music; environment/sustainable development; gender; migration.

The next day commenced with the language course and practicalities (including Dr Deltuva's advice on the ticks in the forest which suck the blood). The training teams then convened to reflect on the Day Course yesterday, which was brought to a close in a circle of all participants who, holding and not releasing hands, had to touch the person whose first name was next to them in the (English!) alphabet. The project market continued for an hour. The afternoon was free time in Vilnius.

The afternoon for the trainers was not free time. They used the space to share, in some detail, their own views about the process and impact on participants of the Day Course (see observations on the Day Course).

The trainers went on to a general discussion on the basis of the individual accounts provided. They noted that certain individuals appeared to have become very 'lost' in the course and there was a big responsibility on the trainers to ensure that they did not leave still feeling that way. The Day Course had been the catalyst for a range of learning outcomes but 'people still have a long way to go'. Many were not yet fully ready to take a real project forward.

The trainer's team briefly addressed tomorrow's programme: the outstanding needs and issues concerning the publication, project group development, information and resources needed for successful project development, a visit by the national agency in Lithuania for the EU Youth programme, and then further work by groups on project development.

The evening was spent on a boat, with a surprise appearance by the owner of the house as Elvis Presley (resurrected, apparently, from the Devil's Hole as a result of the explosion, and now settled, reclusively, in Trakai)!

The penultimate day of the course started, following an energiser and the language course, with Open Space Technology. There was always a need in any course for 'open space' to take account of the unexpected and to provide space for participants to cover issues that were important *for them*.

While participants were engaged in Open Space Technology, the trainer's team met to deal with issues concerning the publication. Data needs were identified and the trainers were asked to 'brainstorm' (although it was mentioned that the new, more politically acceptable, term in the UK apparently is now 'squirreling') some of the dominant themes that had emerged from the course. These are reported in trainer's perspectives on the course.

There were ten topics 'tackled' in Open Space Technology:

- Gender differences in activities. What happens in activities? What to do/what should be done? Advantages of working with mixed groups? Contemporary influences on young people growing up (gendered stuff). Types of activities (needs variety). Cultural differences.
- Networks Already the e-group but perhaps smaller networks on specific topics (e.g. conflict resolution). Meeting again for follow-up/evaluation and renewal of energy and motivation. Why? Need for a final dot; good practice; supporting each other; creating models of practice; research value; in one year or more (time and place?). What could we do to make it happen? Open invitation to all. Jim to produce a working paper on this.
- Publication Evaluation, key issues, will share ideas tomorrow
- Reflection/reviewing Problem of domination/hierarchy. How to avoid. Make whole group go through something. Get both negatives and positives. Use of a SOLO. Make clear at beginning that not just a fun activity, but that there is something deeper hiding inside. Problem of how to explain *why* this is so. International/intercultural: non-verbal methods of reflection.
www.reviewing.co.uk
www.stretchzone.net- Lustin and open space.
- Ropes and knots
- Websites e.g. rafting in Latvia (copy to be made available). Places, activities and possibilities.
- Programme planning Too often it is too formal and it is about getting the place then planning the programme rather than the other way around: 'fluffy holidays'
- Relationships How to deal with crushes on the part of participants for trainers. Impact of culture on youth work practice in different countries. Age groups (over 18s and drinking beer). Health and safety. Child protection. Under 18s. Role of trainer. Values and principles on an intercultural level. Intercultural intercourse!
- Rope course Marians instructed/informed on Equipment needed, use, practice (tying knots, handling ropes), safety. [Very satisfied]
- Couples: Why? (rationale, thinking). What benefits it would bring? National pilot with a view to an international programme. Maybe have a support group from the LTTC. Experiential learning for couples both as individuals and as couples.

Two people from the Lithuanian national agency arrived in the afternoon, one (Lilija) with overall responsibility for the EU Youth programme, the other (Jurgita) with specific responsibility for the European Voluntary Service programme. They arrived as project groups were taking shape and project development was about to be planned. The afternoon was to have the following elements:

- (a) a workshop on project management
- (b) funding - see what you know
- (c) time to work on your own project

Mark explained that tomorrow morning, each project would do a presentation, designed to attract the interest and support of others. There would be ten minutes per project for the presentation. Each project group would also be expected to complete a written project description form with an appropriate timetable for development. Mark checked that all participants were in a project group. Some, initially, were not, but they aligned themselves with one group or another:

- Expedition around environmental issues (3 participants)
- Exchange, outdoors, around music and arts (4 participants)
- Networking north, south, east and west (9 participants)
- Conflict management (5 participants)

Dirk set out some of the thinking on project management, drawing from the T-Kit on that subject. Each group should do a poster with a project 'tree', outlining the sequence of steps to be taken. There was not a demand to undertake a needs analysis, but it was important for each group to consider what it needed to address in which order, and to identify the two most important elements for them.

The groups identified different priorities in the project trees:

- | | |
|-------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| • Personal motivation | Resources/needs analysis |
| • Personal motivation | Community-young people |
| • Needs analysis | Aims Resources |
| • Monitoring/Evaluation | Follow-up |

Dirk drew attention to the fact that *there is no right way*, but this is a way to look at the overall picture. It provides a basis for careful thinking, rather than just 'diving in' according to any one particular presenting issue, or pressure, such as the sudden availability of funding, an enthusiastic group of young people, or a surge of personal motivation. The range of issues which produce an effective project needs to be considered 'in the round'. [Later Mark added that the project tree offers "a commonly understood terminology for people to use in designing a project – important especially when different languages are running around".]

[Does money grow on (project) trees?]

Resources are, of course, an absolutely necessary, though never sufficient requirement if projects are to be developed successfully. In groups of three, participants were asked to think about all the sources of funding (and other resources) that they were aware of. This was shared across the whole group:

- British Council
- Bosch foundation
- Embassies in general
- Phare
- Local municipality
- Swedish institute
- SOROS
- Youth programme
- Leonardo
- private companies
- Mamacash
- EU Commission
- Regional Council
- USAID
- Ministry of
- Ford Foundation
- Nordic Council
- Baltic Partnership
- Rotary
- church
- 'in kind'
- donors
- foundations and trusts
- sponsorship
- (do) work
- use volunteer work
- fund-raising – e.g. street collection
- theft!!!
- EuroDesk information
- Red Cross
- European Youth Foundation
- Council of Europe
- Dedicated hypothecated tax
- International youth foundation
- Coca Cola
- Levi Strauss
- Grundvik
- Socrates
- World Fund for Nature
- Environment organisations
- Participation fee
- Amnesty International

This brainstorming session indicated that there was in fact no shortage of *potential* funding sources: it was a question of tapping into the right source and ensuring the submission of a properly tailored and presented application.

Mark circulated a 'Madzinga Project Description' form for each group to complete and the groups drew lots to determine the running order for project presentations the following day. The groups continued to work on their project ideas until YO-YO Lithuania at 18.30. In Lustin, Mark had run an intercultural learning Workshop which had involved four Lithuanians and five others. During that session eight months before, they had produced two flipchart sheets - one on how Lithuanians thought of themselves (which was fairly comprehensive) and one on what the others thought or knew of Lithuanians (which was pretty empty and this had shocked the Lithuanian participants).

With foresight, Mark had brought these flipchart sheets with him, and now was the time to revisit the exercise, albeit in a slight amended way. This time, the Lithuanians were asked what they thought others would now be able to fill in about Lithuania and Lithuanians. And the others were divided into two groups to consider what they could now fill in about Lithuania and Lithuanians.

This time the Lithuanians wrote:

Chaotic
Trying hard for guest hospitality
Not outgoing
being polite
takes time to get in contact
post-Soviets – nearly Russians
They say something when there is obvious need for it
Warm
Tall
Beautiful/handsome
Sad looking
Nostalgic
farmers: food, nature, don't care about manners so much
Bad educated
Shy
diligent
Efficient
physically fit
nationalists
quite disiplined [sic]
too modest

The poster written by one of the non-Lithuanian groups was the size of a real person and had a few, but significant, large words written on it:

handsome
language
West

Vilnius
Warm
Open

Reserved
Lakes
Forest

The outcome was described as 'completely opposite' to before. Non-Lithuanians felt they now knew a lot about Lithuania, indeed more than the Lithuanians suggested they would know. And, with more contact, more involvement and more experience, participants would naturally learn even more. During the course in Samukas, some 15-20 minutes each day had been dedicated to promoting thinking and engagement with Lithuania and its cultures. Mark reminded participants of the iceberg image of 'culture': what you see is very little of the whole. There is always so much more underneath and that is what YO-YO Lithuania has done - uncovered many more of those aspects which lie beneath the surface.

The mood in the trainers' meeting was both buoyant and subdued. The trainers were very satisfied with the effort invested by participants in both Open Space Technology and Project Development. But the course was coming to a close and the discussion was tinged with some sadness: it was 'like letting your baby go'. Arturas provided an analogy with the weather, which appeared to have been in harmony with the development of the course: it had started cold and wet and then had become very hot, though windy and changeable, then just sunny... and now it was raining. Some of the trainer's were disappointed to have missed out on engaging with Open Space Technology but were relieved to have dealt with the demands of the publication, around which pressure had been building up all week.

The final day would be concerned with project presentations, personal action plans and evaluation. Feedback on the presentations would be by means of 'a rain of ideas' written on posters, rather than verbal commentary, which may be construed as criticism. The personal action plans (for which Mark had devised a form) were to be personal to participants, but they had the option of submitting theirs for inclusion in the publication. And while participants worked on those plans, the trainers would work on Howard's evaluation sheet concerned with the trainers' assessments of the progress and development of participants. [The trainers were not over keen on this idea, having to make judgements about participants, but they acceded to the argument that this could provide one 'measure' of impact.] The afternoon would be given over to evaluation - by the whole group and by individual participants (completing both Mark's evaluation form and Howard's 'lines of development' form). Certificates would be presented by trainers to their Day Course teams. And then there would be a farewell party!

The trainer's team met again very briefly early the next morning, to ensure that all the necessary paperwork was ready [Stanka was having a terrible time with a half broken down printer, especially in her efforts to produce some nice looking certificates].

Project presentations were done creatively within the ten minutes allotted to them. Participants had the opportunity to ask questions for clarification, but were told to write comments, messages, and ideas on posters following the presentations. Each group would have the chance to digest this feedback and build useful suggestions into their project proposals in the afternoon.

Project development ideas:

- Delfs, Vida, Bela and Egle: 'Creating their experience' - arts, music, theatre, dance exchange (Lithuania, Latvia, Belarus plus two EU countries). Intercultural experiential learning. Jovita to write application to National Youth Agency of Lithuania
- Jennifer, Mantas, Onni, Lucia, Alfur and Jim: YO YO PEACE – language course in Lithuanian (human rights, conflict, new skills, role of the media, global context, personal development); course planned for Italy in 2004, training the trainers over 7 days.
- Karina, Leen and Marians: taking the stones ('you're dead') [NB www.myfootprint.org - if everybody lives like you, how many planets do we need] Environment international youth exchange involving 15 young people (five from each country)
- Karola, Laurynas, Charlie, Grettir, Tuuli, Saga, Hana, and Kinga: 'Mission Impossible' – bridging formal and informal education; meeting of two worlds, exchange practice.

By this time in the course, participants were now so competent in the Lithuanian language that Arturas decided it was time for a 'tongue-twister' (each previous day, the language course had been convened by the other, non-Lithuanian, trainers):

Geri Vyras
Geroj Girioj
Gera Gira
Gera gere

Translated into English, this apparently means: Good people/in good forest/good drink/drank well. It is perhaps best to consider these words not literally, but as a metaphor. A thirst for experiential and intercultural learning had (hopefully) been quenched!

Mark outlined the idea and purpose of producing some personal learning and development plans which participants were asked to complete. Participants spent the remainder of the morning undertaking this task.

In the afternoon, each of the trainers (and me) reminded participants of the journey we had travelled since arriving in Samukas. Each of us recounted one day in turn, which for me brought to mind some long, almost forgotten, words from a song by The Grateful Dead:

There is a road, no simple highway
Between the dawn and the dark of night
And if you go, no-one may follow
That path is for your steps alone

(Ripple, by The Grateful Dead, from the album American Beauty)

Mark explained that participants' evaluation needed to have three strands:

- An evaluation of this course in Lithuania
- An evaluation of the long-term course overall
- A self-evaluation for the publication (a scaled measure of self-perceived impact)

The entire group gathered in a Final Circle and each spoke a few words:

Final Circle

Grettir – true

Stanka – grateful for the experience as a trainer. Has enjoyed it here. Thankyou

Björn – Thanks for reaching my life. Now sadness wells up – footprints on the beach are permanent marks until the tide comes

Jennifer – Rich

Bela – More than had expected. Thanks. The experience will be with her for the rest of her life

Delfs – One stupid word: it's OK

Onni – Stupid people don't learn from their mistakes, normal people learn from their mistakes, smart people learn from the mistakes of others: where am I?

Jim – A big thank you for the nine months we have travelled together. It has been good to meet the new people. Enriching. Drink to absent friends and strong relationships for the future

Charlie – mentioned the human 'eco-system' in Lustin, in relation to the atmosphere created there. Thought it was unique. But here it has been created again and doubled. 'The most important things in life are the traces of love we leave behind'.

Tuuli – grateful, important just to come and that there was at least one female trainer in the training team

Karola – Doesn't always happen that she feels she's in the right place at the right time, but this was something she needed very much

Mark – Looking back on all of it, got some fantastic kicks up the arse during both courses. Finding different ways of being in the process. Gave him more courage. Delighted to see how people have seized the opportunity that was here.

Laurynas – Noticed that he was not allowing the end to come. But now it is here. Feeling a bit shaky. Thanks for the full flesh experience. But what is beyond the intimacy/closeness?

Bart – sad and happy and thankful

Howard – in and out

Mantas – bit stuck before coming. Thanks for giving a start to going forward and I accept the opportunity and I hope that I gave you something

Arturas – My head not full, a bit empty. Felt responsible for deep content... In multi-task, symphony, Charlie told him just to bounce the ball in rhythm and that was a metaphor for role in course (not much chance for improvisation or being centre stage)! Enjoyed it very much. Wanted to do the job properly. Lilija's husband had commented on so many people from so many countries and they work in such peace with each other. He didn't know how far we had to go. We allowed each other to grow. Happiness, but what next?

Marians – not what I expected, something different. Not bad or good – just quite interesting.

Karina – Whatever happens, happens

Saga – Don't feel it is the end. Expect and want to meet you again, and thanks for sharing

Dirk – Circle is closing. Started in 1998 in Lithuania. Was so stressed, did not have time to enjoy it. Learned in Slovakia that you have to 'let go' – you have to have trust – and did it this time. Finally able to do it. Grateful. Now back in my comfort zone, have to go back to stretch. The meaning of the course for people, good feeling.

Lucia – When she arrived, she was really scared about the end. Lustin changed part of her life – her awareness, about what she wanted to be. Spent eight months preparing for this. Now doesn't need it anymore. Need the people but not the course. Very happy.

Egle – Sad. Lots of fears and prejudices in her, and the course was maybe the wrong time, wrong moment. 'Thank you for accepting me as I am'.

Hana – when I was a child, used to play on swing a lot of the time. Came to Lustin and a lot of people found her sad. She didn't like it either. Now I can get off the swing and touch the ground here. Could be sad and embarrassed and angry here – couldn't be like that at home.

Leen – Very happy to have participated. Second time in life that she has learned that you have to feel your way. Thanks for enrichment.

Kinga – Happy but tired. Tired but happy. Some people are looking for happiness in the past or looking to happiness in the future – but happiness should be right now. Thank you.

Vida – Carsten said in Lustin that quality was not what you should try to be but a habit. This training course has put it in(side) us. Good luck in life, especially when you face the people who don't know what we have been through.

Alfur – Grateful. This was not his group or his place to be. 'Thanks for receiving me'. This course was a good opportunity because has been struggling with his practice. Thank you – 'have enjoyed being with you'.

Björn closed the course: 'Thank you all for your precious words. We have shared something deep that we can cherish'.

The trainers tucked themselves away at the back of the house, for some wine, silence and comment. They arranged a follow-up meeting for October 2003. For a while, all were quiet and then some brief views were expressed. Arturas grasped his kuksa (a Finnish wooden drinking cup which Onni had brought for him) and read the words engraved around its rim: 'Between friends there is a trodden road, even though the farms may be far apart'. The course had produced a special bond between us (though, as ever, I was both in and out, especially when Björn said he felt 'lucky to have had this opportunity with 6, or 7, people'). There was still distance between us, but we were treading the same broad path together.

Later that evening, although I wasn't there (as I was checking and collating all the material for the publication), both trainers and participants made a circle of candles blowing in the wind, and then stepped outside and moved into the farewell party.

The training course was at an end: its impact and effects, both on trainers and participants, are still to be determined. That there has been an impact and that there will be effects is not in doubt for, as Kurt Hahn's memorable observation reminds us, 'when the mind is stretched by new experiences, it can never return to its former dimensions'. But what exactly those effects will be - for those who were involved and for those who are subsequently 'touched' by them - cannot yet be told.

6. Perspectives on the course

Participants

(i) evaluations of Lustin

At the end of Phase One in Lustin, participants were asked to complete an evaluation form in which a number of incomplete sentences requested their 'symbolic' completion:

- Now I feel....
- My colour today is....
- For me, cooking here was....
- Now I need....
- My symbol for the course
- Anything else

Participants had been through an intensive experience. Inevitably most were very tired, and this was reflected in their responses. Indeed, feelings of both physical and emotional exhaustion guided this brief and immediate evaluation of the experience: there was now a need to rest, for solitude and for a more considered digestion of what they had been through.

In terms of feelings, there were many contradictions expressed. People were sad and relaxed, fulfilled and overwhelmed. Some felt it was now time to go home; some did not want to, feeling that they needed even more time with the group. Some individuals were excited, others subdued.

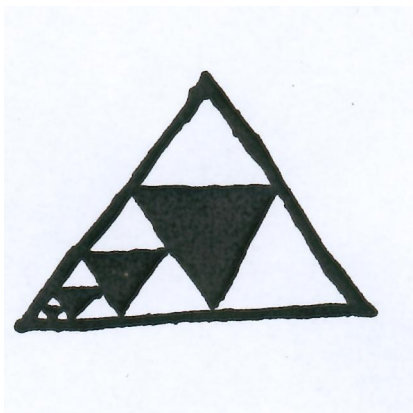
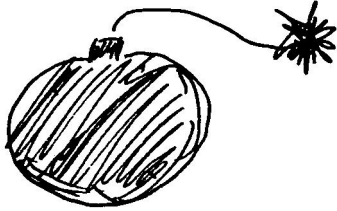
The predominant colour of the day was green, with just under half of participants identifying it as their colour, though sometimes in conjunction with further specification ('oak leaf green', 'forest green'). A few individuals created a broader image around their colour, notably to do with the sun shining through or a rainbow behind some clouds.

Cooking had often taken an inordinate time and consumed time both in the middle of the day and during the evenings. [For this reason, and because a fair number of participants had requested it, it was decided in Samukas that food would be prepared by others for the group.] But the wider effect of members of the group having to prepare the food in small teams had been to provide an chance for 'experimentation' and 'adventure', and an additional opportunity for conversation and contact with other participants. It had proved to be both an exercise in co-operation and 'time-out' for some more personal reflection about the course. Many participants felt that it had anchored the intercultural learning aspects of the course.

Although participants often said that they now needed some peace and rest, they had also been inspired by the course and said that they also now needed 'action' to tell others of their experiences and to *apply* their learning from Lustin back home.

Their symbols for the course were very diverse, and open to a myriad of interpretation (how does one 'read' an image of a half smiley, half sad face, a bomb, a question mark or a candle?). My own interpretation of the symbols was that they conveyed, in clusters, the following dominant messages:

- Growth
- (inter) relationships
- pathways
- confusion/awareness



In terms of 'anything' else, some participants wrote nothing and others wrote very little. A majority said 'thanks' in one way or another. Of the more substantial comments here, the following provide some impression:

I'm confused with myself (my role here) now, but I thank you for making me reflect again about myself - do not know yet whether I think I chose the wrong role, whether I feel I missed the train or what I was... was good and right this time. We will see. Thank you a lot for this absolutely unique experience.

Thanks a lot for the experiences. I learned a lot on professional level and personal level. I'm amazed about the strong connections I see between the peoples and I'm

glad to be here in this safe place where feelings can be placed without ignoring them. Thanks a lot for the care and support on difficult moments. I hope I'll be able to give them also for others. I look forward to apply all these things in my world and broaden my view with new experiences and share this with you.

Let's do it again... stronger than other trainings I have been part of - Hope I'll be able to give something like this sometime to others

For the specific purposes of the publication, participants were also asked to write down, with some detail, three highlights and three lowlights about the course. Some did so, as they were asked, within two weeks of going home. Many others did not, and were only successfully cajoled into doing so at the beginning of the course in Samukas, after a number of earlier abortive efforts to persuade them to do so. To some extent, this defeated the object of the exercise, which was to secure a distanced - but not too distant - perspective on their experiences in Lustin. Nevertheless, despite the longer time-frame over which such reflection was eventually obtained (meaning, in effect, that participants' views were through a more distorted lens of time), their observations are illuminating. Like the brief evaluations on the last day of the Lustin course, they were full of contradictions: highlights were often the mirror-image of the lowlights. Moreover, some of those who took rather more time to 'finalise' their response drew attention to the fact that what had seemed to have been 'lowlights' during the course were now, with the benefit of hindsight, experiences from which they could draw some positive messages.

Writing in March 2003, one participant described her experience of Lustin as "one of the highest time in my life":

I learned much lot of things about myself and how to be part of an international group putted in to difficult conditions of coexistence in a strange environment. Strange because for it was foreign country, unknown people, and for most of us foreign language of communication....

I don't know if it is possible to write all feelings and describe all changes. Every time if I recall these days I discover new impressions, new interesting moments and I find a lot of things to think and tell about. For me this course means a big adventure that I couldn't expect in my usual life.

Highlights and lowlights incorporated commentary at many different levels. They related to practical issues within the content and structure of the course. They concerned many personal and interpersonal observations. They addressed both individual relationships and group dynamics. They were applied to both past concrete experience and aspirations for the future. In terms of the latter, writing in November 2002, one participant was clearly connecting her Lustin experience with her professional practice back home:

When I'm talking with some youngsters in an open way I feel they become more comfortable. I don't judge what they say or do, sometimes I tell them of my experience and at that point you're both learning. I never feel like I have to help, I just do what I feel I want to do and in a kind of way it helps the person and also myself. I think the basic is to believe in it and use your human resources and if you

can't handle the need of these youngsters, don't put yourself in trouble. It won't help anybody, just be honest and a solution will come.

Earlier on in her account, she had admitted her caution about getting too involved with the group, being 'like a butterfly flying from one to another, without any deep contact'. But she noted that the outdoor activities which had framed the early programme in Lustin had been a real opportunity 'to learn things about yourself and the group in an unforced way'. And, with reference to the activities which participants had had to design for themselves, she observed:

In my eyes I failed completely and this was very hard for me, me who likes to have everything under control especially in a group. That day I learned that making mistakes is part of life and that there is nothing wrong with showing your weakness in a group. I was amazed how much support there was in the group that made me feel better and safe again....

When I look now at the youngsters in the centre who keep themselves all the time so strong, I understand very well why, and now I know that it is necessary to create a safe atmosphere with a lot of human support so that they can become lighter, because keeping you strong all the time takes a lot of energy.

Also, when you break open the cocoon of someone and something comes out, the person don't know how to handle it. Be sure you can handle it and don't let him/her go home in this state of feeling. That's also what I'm very grateful for; our group took the time to heal the wounds more or less and I could continue my life not with the sadness of bad experience, but with the feeling of a strong rich experience.

Accounts such as this were repeated time and again. Many participants had had 'lowlights' to do with feeling scared, unsafe, isolated, alone, sometimes to the point of panic. They had been reluctant to express their thoughts and feelings, to convey their vulnerabilities and 'weakness'. One described what she called the 'lost days' of Lustin when the walls had been so thick between herself and the rest of the group that it was 'like hell'. Another felt particularly low when his ideas were completely ignored and unacknowledged, despite the fact that he himself knew he possessed the technical skills to achieve the task to hand. Another felt so frustrated during one of the early reflection meetings that he was ready to go home. In relation both to the group overall and to particular individuals, participants had experienced conflict, frustration and sometimes anger. Yet their 'highlights' indicate that, for the most part, these were healed, resolved and overcome - in a variety of ways. Many highlights testify to the intimacy of the group (and sub-groups within it) and the growing levels of safety, security and support that it provided. Some individuals had actively sought to 'partner up' others with whom they had initially experienced some tension. On this front, one participant said that "it was important for me to forgive and trust him".

From the participants' accounts, the group had quite clearly established a deep and strong solidarity, ingrained with trust and confidence in one another. It had provided a 'sense of belonging', a feeling of 'togetherness'. One participant, who wrote his account on the final day as if he was writing a letter home, recorded: "There is a special soul of our community here which is hardly possible to reflect on paper".

This group development was bolstered by social interaction during the late evenings and, although some participants were critical of the volume of drinking that went on, individuals commented on the happiness they derived from the laughter, singing and the music.

Within the context of the group, there were highlights which celebrated the achievement of more personal challenges (by individuals themselves and a sense of satisfaction for others) and which opened doors to greater self-awareness. The stretching of personal capability - particularly on the high ropes and the pamper pole - had often been the initial objective for some of the individuals on the course. Lucia proclaimed in Samukas that her leap from the pamper pole had changed her life, although she did not go quite this far in her written account (March 2003):

And so, what about this great experience? The highlight experience, for me, has been - of course - to stand on the pole... great... closing my eyes I can still feel the sensation to put the second feet on it, to get up, to turn and... to look! It has been my personal challenge during those days....

This TC did not 'change' my life, but it gave me a great input to follow my direction, my decisions...

Many other participants identified this specific personal achievement as one of *their* highlights from Lustin (such as learning to read a map). But being 'pushed to the limits' in other ways at other times was a commonplace highlight, and not just in terms of concrete physical challenges (which, of course, have much deeper personal dimensions). Delfs said that one of his highlights was 'seeing people starting to look at themselves differently', a generalist observation which captured many more specific remarks. A number of individuals noted 'the display of emotions by others', which gave them encouragement and self-confidence to display their own. The group 'served as a mirror' which enabled individuals to examine their own roles, attitudes and characteristics. One participant said that she had learned better to manage her 'natural aggressiveness' and another had become more aware of her individualistic 'soldier' competitiveness, recognising that all individuals can have complementary roles in groups if they develop sufficient trust and belief in others.

One participant wrote his highlights and lowlights somewhat prematurely, drawing particular attention to the success of another at the river crossing:

To see him crossing the river, walking on the meadow after that, smiling and singing 'O Sole Mio'. The feeling of joint happiness and to understand what it probably meant for him was grand! This kind of moments are those why I like to use experimental learning with my clients. I do really enjoy to see people having such good moments.

Of course that *was* a delight to observe, but it hardly plumbed the depths of individual experience. Onni was encouraged to defer submitting his account until towards the end of the course, by which time he had produced a daily diary of the course, and of the significant personal development that had taken place for him. In the space of just over a week, he had moved dramatically from someone preoccupied with technical detail to someone who had made far stronger connections between the belly and the head. Early on, he had written 'I see my self as a person who do want to be in charge and to know what is happening around'. At

the end of the course, which had proved to be more of an emotional rollercoaster than for most participants, Onni wrote:

This week has been really important for me! I (I hope I have) have learned what this whole thing is all about. I have felt the deepest of the deep and some truly high moments. When you read these pages, I think that you can see a process going on... No-one knows where it will lead, but this is one of its turning points. I have seen the damage and the glory of these activities. From now on, I will be really careful what I'll do with my future clients. I'm working with real people, not with parts of a machine which I should fix. 'Everyone is someone's child' - said some wise person. I should give each of them the respect that they deserve. Right now, I feel the responsibility of a trainer very heavily on my shoulders. Right now I'm afraid to take next steps towards my future, as a trainer. Fortunately I have to do it this Sunday (otherwise I might never take it). In this group I did not find my place - looking forward for the next. This week has been hard, giving, demanding, disappointing, rewarding... Thank you for sharing it with me...

One lowlight expressed by one participant was 'where was the 50% intercultural learning?'. It was, of course, everywhere, but nowhere in particular. As Mark had noted, so much was underneath the surface of the water, although much more of the iceberg emerged during cooking, climbing and 'routine' communication. Perhaps the issue had been that it had not been explicitly 'drawn out' by the trainer's team. Only one participant specifically documented his particular intercultural learning. In his 'letter home', he wrote:

And you know what? There is no forest in Iceland! At all! Italians don't eat pasta which was made a day before. In Belgium they speak not only French, but also Flemish. And they have very nice culture, with lots of traditions of drinking beer. The majority of people here don't know how to use normal, simple can opener!

The beer drinking during the course was, as noted, something of a lowlight for some participants, especially the amount consumed by some members of the trainer's team during what they considered to be "free time". But, with this exception, a common highlight for participants had been the professionalism of the trainer's team, their evident theoretical knowledge and technical skills, their administration of the programme, and their facilitative and personal qualities.

It was, of course, important to elicit from participants the diversity of *meanings* that they attached to their experience of the Lustin course, both positive and negative. A careful reading of their responses indicates quite forcefully that, although there were some 'negative' recollections (particularly at the beginning), these were significantly outweighed (certainly by the end) by the positive learning that had been engendered across at least some of the core threads of the training course: theories and concepts, personal development and professional skills. Intercultural learning had been less prominent in participants' accounts, though this was perhaps because it was less explicitly evident, and project development awaited Phase Three in Samukas.

Phase Two (the time in between Lustin and Samukas) had been planned as a period of activity back home, during which time participants would keep a *personal journal* and maintain contact with each other through their 'coaching groups'. This was considered by some of the trainers to have been the least successful aspect of the course. Communication within 'coaching groups' appeared to be rather hit and miss.

Stanka's coaching group did have some basic communication from time to time. Charlie sent an email to his coaching group (and to his 'coach') in January 2003 reporting a one-day course he had run with Gillon for a group of students. Tuuli duly completed her personal journal in December 2002, commenting on a camp for young people which she had planned but which had not taken place, and wishing everybody a happy Christmas. She intended to write her journal again in January 2003 but did not do so. At the end of January, Karina was still doing her EVS placement in Wales, which did not involve any direct work with young people. She pondered on what she should write in her personal journal. She had taken part in an adventure therapy seminar in December 2002, and wished everybody well.

Jennifer, who was in Mark's coaching group, told me in Samukas that she had not really engaged with the coaching group, but that she had been a trainer in a week-long 'Habitat Orientation Program' in Romania in October 2002. She gave me a report of the course, to illustrate that she had used ideas and activities that she had learned in Lustin.

Apart from that there was little sense of *professional* activity related to the course, though a number of participants maintained personal contact and some found opportunities to visit each other. Such aspects of these training courses should not be overlooked, for they are the cement that binds individuals together over time, and can culminate, often years later, in further professional collaboration.

In order to build some additional bridges between Lustin and Samukas, Phase Three commenced with a three hour solo [SOUL-O]. Some of the instructions for this are reported in the narrative of Samukas, but the full script was as follows:

When you find your place sit down, with your eyes closed and be aware of your breathing. Be aware of the life-giving air touching the hair in your nose and follow your breath inwards. Now, read on.....

"We are each given a block of marble when we begin a lifetime, and the tools to shape it into sculpture. We can drag it behind us untouched, we can pound it to gravel, and we can shape it into glory. Near the end, our sculpture is nearly finished and we can smooth and polish what we started years before... We generate our own environment. We get exactly what we deserve. How can we resent the life we've created for ourselves? Who's to blame, who's to credit, but us? Who can change it, any time we wish, but us?"

Think over your life since we met last on a personal, professional and cultural level and seek inside for your answers to the following questions:

- What did you use from the course in your reality?
- What from this experience helped you?
- What supported you?
- What blocked you?
- What changed you?
- What will you need from this course to support you to overcome things you are stuck with?
- What else happened in your life you would like to share?

Write the answers down.

Listen to your feelings. Listen to your highest thoughts. Listen to your experience. The deepest mystery is that life is not a process of exploration, but a process of CREATION... so do not try to find out who you are, but try to become who you would like to be"

Now let your mind be creative and write down a poem (in your native language) that reflects your soul-o and bring it back with you. The poem can be unstructured, with or without rhyme, or whatever suits you best, consisting of (at least) 8 lines. Enjoy the moments of creation...

When you finish the solo, go and find [*two other names*], have a cup of coffee and share the poems and translate them together into English. When you have finished, gather under the yellow pavilion outside the cottage to meet the whole group.

Unsurprisingly, participants covered an enormous amount of ground and issues in this reflection. What follows gives a flavour of their comments and observations. Predictably they had taken away very different experiences from Lustin and applied them both to their personal and professional lives. Some talked about the experience having provided a stronger sense of personal direction, a greater belief in themselves, and a better understanding of the role(s) that they played in groups. One participant, for example, said that she had taken away and used the 'energy and enthusiasm' she had derived from Lustin. She, like others, had been supported by the personal legacy of Lustin, which had been the support, encouragement and understanding given unconditionally by both other participants and trainers. This had engendered a sense of self-belief and an inner-strength in pursuing personal lives.

At a professional level, many participants had made use of the knowledge and methods they had acquired in Lustin to sharpen and broaden their approaches to working as trainers with groups:

In my professional life (mostly as trainer) I used some methods, also theoretical knowledge...

It helped me during preparations of trainings, also by conducting of activities. I started to think not only about the result, also to the way how to reach it, about the process itself. Honestly, the awareness of the training process, the role of the trainer, I've got after Lustin. Of course, it's only the beginning: like, you've got the system in general and now you can learn particular things, step by step.

I used experiential way to organise my trainings. Instead of giving feedback - getting participants to reflect on the experience. I became aware and more careful in role play: not to manipulate and provoke some special behaviour.

I started to appreciate more people's behaviour (all kinds) in my training. Not to judge right or wrong.
I showed more positive feelings and thoughts to people overall.

Not only had some participants applied their professional learning from Lustin in practice, but they felt better able to explain the rationale behind this model of training: to articulate the theories behind the activities.

Some participants recorded continuing blocks to the capacity to make use of the experiences from Lustin. Returning home to a myriad of other expectations and responsibilities, they said that they had 'lost focus' or had no opportunity to make professional use of their learning. Others were still unable or unwilling to come to terms (or get to grips) with the emotional angles within such experience, drawing attention to the fact that they were still afraid of negative reactions or still unable to ask for help. One participant deplored the fact that too many exercises demanded technical skills which she did not possess, and had no desire to learn, despite holding a strong belief in the value of experiential learning.

Participants pointed to significant changes in terms of 'vision' and 'confidence'. They maintained that they had grown in 'self-awareness', had a greater sense of 'self-trust' and 'self-belief' and were, consequently, able to manage both their personal and professional lives with greater 'power' and authority. Indeed, while many testified to having become more secure and confident in their approach to daily life, they also said that they now also displayed more curiosity about, and a desire to understand, the behaviour and attitudes of others.

For the imminent course in Samukas, there was a general desire for more grounded and concrete experience [which they were going to get!]. They wanted more information and ideas for practical projects, and more practical experience as a trainer, especially in relation to the challenges they faced in their working lives back home (one participant, for example, wanted more clues about how she could 'get through' with young people who resisted effort to deepen their experience).

These reflections forged connections between participants' past experience of Lustin and their expectations of the course in Samukas. The poems they wrote towards the end of the solo (SOUL-O) symbolised where they appeared to be *right now*.

(ii) evaluations of Samukas

[mt]

For the end of this third phase, participants were requested to complete a more detailed form than had been the case in Lustin. As has been noted elsewhere, the weather reflected the course and the time for evaluation revealed a calm, pale blue sky with a gentle breeze – ideal for sitting on your own and reflecting.

To what extent did the course here in Samukas fulfil your expectations ?

Over two thirds of the participants noted that their expectations were met by more than 80%. Their expectations were very much based on the experience in the first part of the course in Lustin. Most people thought the programme and/or emotional experience was richer than in Lustin; others felt it was less intense and challenging than it had been in the first part.

A recurring theme for several participants was the need of gaining more self-confidence about using experiential learning methodology, through learning new methods, getting feedback and support. That expectation was fulfilled to a large extent. One participant who felt her expectations were fully met, wrote:

Yes - I wanted to learn more about the potentials of experiential learning methods, experiment with their implementation, learn from my own experience and from others, discover activities where you don't need lots of equipment, explore possibilities for future cooperation and to be in close contact with nature.

Lowlights

One major source of stress for several participants was the time pressure: too much planned programme, even in the evenings; and too few, short breaks.

Several people considered their personal low point the fact that they didn't feel in control and weren't confident enough. Although this expectation toward their own contribution and participation was not met, it was seen not just as a disappointment, but also an opportunity to learn. Not daring to go on the high rope was noted as a significant, personal disappointment for several people. One participant noted that realising the real dangers of the rope exercise was a particularly low point, but also a "sharp", learning moment.

Difficulties were encountered also during the preparation and running of the day course. For some people it had clearly been tough for them to realise that they couldn't find sufficient motivation for expending the required effort in this project.

From the point of view of the authors it was interesting, (but not a total surprise!), to find that the demands of producing material for this publication was repeatedly commented upon: both as being too unstructured and being one task too much for the participants.

Regarding the "environmental factors" quite a few participants didn't like the night on the boat, commenting that it was difficult for those who didn't want to drink alcohol. Smoking during the programme and indoors bothered some people, although it was acknowledged that the smokers had mainly received the message that they should limit their smoking when indoors.

From time to time a few people hadn't felt very comfortable inside the group, and in their feedback they mention that they felt their input and ideas were not always treated respectfully, or they had felt personally offended by somebody from the group or from a member of the team.

Highlights

Nearly all participants mention that their most positive moments (as well as negative ones) came during the work on the day project. It was for many a very powerful and emotional process, which resulted in lots of learning about tailoring process to the participants, working in teams, personal attitudes and contribution to the work of the team. It was also stressed, that it was very motivating and powerful to add the element of “real” participants to the otherwise very safe training environment. Also learning from the trainers, observing their work, learning new exercises was very appreciated.

Taking the time for the “SOUL – O” moment proved to have been a crucial highlight for several people. As one participant noted:

the solo time at the beginning of the course gave me the possibility to get ‘back in context’ [...] I find it a sensitive way to help reconnection, it was sufficiently “long” time to be able to revise personal learning goals and expectations for myself.

Another positive aspect noted repeatedly by participants was the possibility of meeting again and reconnecting with the other participants and team and they benefited greatly from the networking opportunities.

Spending free time together in the group brought many positive aspects: sauna, music, fire place and closeness to nature all greatly contributed to the positive experience of many participants. Having the chance just to go and sit by a tree on your own had also been appreciated.

Please rate the following sections of the programme:

Looking back (soul-o)

This programme element was very positively evaluated by everybody. It was greatly appreciated that there was enough time allowed for it. A couple of participants noted, that it was probably too early in the process for them to be able to share and felt lots of resistance, but the reflection was useful for them as well.

a great moment for me to enter again the group, the situation, to feel what happened in these months, what changed... for the group process to give the possibility to go back to a deep situation when we finished in Lustin

Personal development (multi – task reflection)

This section of the programme was generally very well received. While some people found the exercises quite frustrating, they were seen in a larger context as an excellent opportunity to reflect on personal development and get feedback from others. Emotionally it seemed that it was a mix of satisfaction about learning, but also frustration related to some exercises... The following quotes sum up well the balance of opinions:

I had a chance to look inside me

Just wonderful!! Maybe not the exercises (in terms of how frustrated I felt during them) but on the other hand that was the resource for feedback.

Reflection was great!

Day Course (preparation, implementation, reflection)

As noted above in the highlights section, the Day Course was considered by all the participants to be one of the most important elements of the training course. It was seen as a challenging project, especially the preparation part. The only negative impressions expressed by the participants in the evaluation forms refer to their own feelings of not having lived up to their own expectations. Sessions on feedback and reflection produced a great deal of learning, with many stressing that these were vital opportunities to assess where they were professionally and to remind them to work on their weak points. Working in new teams was also seen as a good opportunity to try things out, even though sometimes it was a challenge to “trust the group”. Several people pointed out that it was very useful to have coaching and support from the team.

Project development

This programme element was mostly appreciated by those participants who managed to find project groups which were closest to their interest. Some participants got very motivated to work on project themes which were different than their original idea, but several noted that they had found themselves involved in themes which did not interest them much. Again, such frustration was also seen as a learning point for their future work: just how should one set up an exercise in order to find common interests for projects and create something interesting for people with so many different ideas, interests and backgrounds? Still, the method demonstrated for developing a common language for working on projects (the project tree) was much appreciated.

What were your learning points?

Here we find three major groups of learning points and they range from:

- personal development, to
- recognising the need for certain attitudes in training, to
- concrete skills and methods learned during the training course

These three categories seem to be quite balanced. Additionally, several people mention that they also managed to identify their future learning needs during the course..

Attitudes related to doing training:

Generally people seem to have been very concerned about how to behave in a diverse group, with people from various backgrounds, how to give correct signals in an intercultural environment, how to make situations clear, not being misunderstood, and what position they

should take as leaders / trainers. How to deal with the emotional aspects coming into play in experiential learning was also an element people were concerned to develop. Straight, short quotes illustrate this spread of learning well:

More coaching than leading
Take position
not to be afraid of emotions
let the group work it out
find a balance: group process versus personal needs
values over knowledge = respect in action
Keep a check on the humour particularly in an intercultural context
Not to be afraid to give feedback to my team
Tolerance and patience
I found out how to approach or deal with people who are shy
To be honest be aware of using anger or hate
To learn how to be a good team is a looong way

Personal development

Participants considered that they learned quite a lot about how to deal with frustrating situations and how to balance their own emotional needs with the learning needs of the group. Self-awareness was (apparently) a very important issue for them, which they reflected upon a lot.

Need to be more aware, slow down and think
Give other people time to think
Believed in myself
Survive in very frustrating situations
I am important to some people here beyond the point of nicety
Awareness on how to stay with people
Show my qualities / strengths
How to involve in mixed teams and trust others
How to be outside the group and feel well
To be more rational
No pain, no game
Shut up

Skills - Methods:

We could fill a couple of pages with a list of the methods and skills participants say they have learned! Quite a lot of them mention that they learned a lot about safety and security (also emotional) in the context of experiential learning methods (particularly outdoor methods) and this is reassuring for the future...

Reflections: remember their importance, learn to use them wisely
Poems: how they can serve the whole process
whatever happens will happen
Open space technology
Websites on methods
Improved English
Learned to do knots
New things about ropes and safety
Intercultural communication
Project development
Deeper understanding of intercultural learning
Teambuilding and trust in trainers team
Selling my project ideas to others
Expressing my thoughts more sharply for others
Challenges of outdoor activities
Working in a team, creating things together, not just put things together

And also not to forget...

Language importance – Lithuanian!
Role of Howard
Cultural similarities: admiration and friendship
Yo-yo Lietuva
A knot and how is a stork

One quote in particular is really powerful:

Excellent! I felt like: this is my real place where I should be and this is really what I know and I like to do: to work with and for young people

(iii) evaluations of the course overall

[mt]

Some time to cool down, some time to play some games, some time to reflect on the whole experience of the three phases. There was some disquiet in the team about asking participants to complete yet another form; a fear that responses would be tired and that few would have the energy to go any deeper in their reflections. Well, in the event, most people spent at least an hour, some even more time. A gift for themselves and a gift to the team.

To what extent did the whole process from 19 August 2002 to 10 May 2003 meet your expectations ?

Generally, the participants were very satisfied with the what they learned in the training course. With two exceptions they answered that their expectations were over 70% and higher. Many people confess, that they didn't know what to expect before the course, or that they had expected something different. This could be because they didn't know anything

about experiential learning (as some of them write). However, even those who say their initial expectations were not met, point out that they feel they learned a lot, that the course was a very important learning process for them, sometimes in unexpected ways...

...this LTTC changed part of my life... Of course I didn't expect it! GREAT

I expected something different. I think that what I got out of it was anyhow more than 100%.

I didn't expect of Lustin to have so many new challenges, especially outdoor activities. But during the second and third phases I understood more and more.

I didn't know about such themes before too much. It opened my eyes and it is very useful for me professionally.

I am satisfied about the process, also that it has such a personal level. The second phase was a bit strange in means of content, in the beginning it was not what I was expecting. The coaching groups missed their meaning in the second phase. The third phase gave me that push to continue in a comfortable way with experiential learning.

To what extent do you think the course met its overall aims?

Here with 2 exceptions, everybody answered that the course has met its overall aims to a degree of at least 70%, with over half saying that the aims were met 90% and more. Several participants pointed out that, the course was more successful in familiarising people with experiential learning and encouraging reflection and personal development, and, on a more negative note, didn't tap all the resources which were available in the group (getting to know people and their background organisations better).

In hindsight the miracle happened - creating a sustained ecosystem nurturing attitudes and values indispensable in this kind of work.

We had exchange between trainers and participants. I developed my knowledge, skills, attitudes and values of EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING, and it was in international and intercultural settings.

I never had the feeling that the trainers were pushing me towards their meaning, but just to find my meaning. I saw also that trainers were learning for themselves.

How far do you think you have developed in the following areas

Personally

All of the participant consider, that they have personally gained in this training course. Lots of people mention that they have become more self-confident in using experiential learning

methods, but also, in interacting with people in international settings, discovering further learning needs, discovering strengths and new interests, and new personal paths. A recurring metaphor in many evaluation is the “road”. Several people mention they are “further on the road” or “on the path”. The poem, (in Hungarian, quoted below), talks as well about searching for the right path, only to realise after lots of struggle that she is walking it.

Always on the road – stabilized a lot since Lustin, more at peace at least within this type of movement (3 culture shock coming back).

A lot further in my personal way of approaching people and issues.

More self confident; found more... how to communicate in an intercultural team.

It's good to be reminded time and again for the need to be sensitive to those from another countries. Sometimes we have become so de-sensitised in Northern Ireland that we can sometimes forget about others: so it's good to be reminded.

I learned more about being a trainer not as the one who is organising, giving tasks but also living and vulnerable. Lustin opened /de-blocked my shell of self-control

It is the biggest gift in my life, especially in this time when I'm 31.

Elindultam, egy pillanatra visszanéztem, de mentem
Fütkésztem az utat előttem, mögöttem,
Menekültem, kimerültem, csak az utat kerestem.
Közben ráeszméltem, hogy bár észrevétlen, már rég az utat élem.
Észrevétlen.

Professionally

From a professional perspective, most of the participants were of the opinion that they have learned useful things in this training course: especially concentrating on working as a trainer, designing trainings and new methods. Only when, for some participants, the newly acquired experiences can't be integrated in their professional environment, they express some dissatisfaction and uncertainty.

Always torn between my job and new ideas ⇒ CHANGE?!?

More self confident as a trainer; a lot of new methods.

Here is the problem, I changed somehow that I can't find my place! What do I do now?!?!

I've got structure of training in general: learned processing the programme, meaning of the reflection, trainers roles.

Intercultural awareness

The opinion of participants about how much the training has brought them in terms of intercultural awareness is very mixed. Many of the people acknowledge that living and working in the international environment of the training course provided them with new experience and insight. For a few, the course was more a “personal trip” and intercultural learning didn’t seem so relevant. The decision of the team to draw more attention to the host culture and people – through the “yo yo Lietuva” sessions and day course – was criticised for being superficial by some, but most appreciated the possibilities to confront intercultural learning more explicitly.

Thanks to this courses I broke through the ices of stereotypes. It is great!

Only a little, this was much more personal trip.

I was already prepared about ICL but Lietuva amazed me in the good sense. So, a lot!

Strong experience with working and living with other cultures.

Concept and theories

Most of the participants expressed that what they have learned about concepts and theories has been very useful and interesting for them. Lots of people expressed the desire to learn more, and the readiness to go on with their inquiry in the future.

Yes, I learned new and interesting approaches to human relationships, learning, interaction, coping, and confirm to be attracted to them – and looking for more – read books – incorporate them into my research.

I want more theories. Things I learned here strong inside of me. Desire to learn more. I would like that this courses would be a place I can find more information.

Some, the necessary: more would be boring, less would be difficult to learn only from the experiential part. You gave us a useful bibliography if interested.

Project development

For some of them, the project developed during the course has an important role, for others that was just a useful exercise. Several people confess that doing projects is not their main interest at the moment, and that has affected also how motivated they feel about that subject.

I haven’t done almost nothing in this field. It is hard to speak about it.

Great challenge for the future.

Good start, many ideas, doubts that it will happen...

Although I have done exercises like we did during this course never with the same people in the same context. I became more aware of processes going on in international teams, designing of projects for specific needs.

What were your main learning outcomes from the course?

Participants have identified a whole host of learning outcomes – and we go into more detail about their self-assessment in Chapter 9. Most of what they learned seems to be on a personal level: more awareness, more confidence, more self-knowledge, valuable (if yet unanswered) questions for themselves. However, there is also a recognition of the fact, that this “personal” learning is significant from a professional point of view – in improving their work as trainers.

Follow the process, let go, take off control of the group

Using outdoor experiential learning to foster personal development - concrete examples and application

Lots of ideas for project development work

Don't try to put the wind in a box, but work on your boat.

I am sensitive

Not to be afraid to give feedback

maybe I should not use only the hearing (it is a professional ill) as a way to be sensitive?? It is very important for me.

How a trainer can work on personal development, challenge, group processes, team building, in the team, etc...

To be more aware on who I am and what I want on a professional level

Confidence, new way of approaching different things.

How to organise a course like this

What I don't do

People are not strange – I am stranger

Sometimes people fly so high that they don't see the people on the ground.

Definitely personal development: I got lots to think about and not all the things about myself were pleasant.

I am able to trust my self and my ideas

If expect something from someone – say it

How much a group of people who don't know each other can work together, trust each other and help in physical activities.

Learning to plan outdoor experiential learning programme

starting to get the sense of how to collaborate in an international team

a future educational training centre in my region to prepare trainers in non formal education, and maybe, I hope outdoor experiential learning

Group development / group behaviour

Project development

Network / intercultural learning

I work with the same methods but in a different view

Got more information about other cultures

To estimate the activities for a group and process , during the day and running

Listen to my feelings, even when working in a group

Show my qualities / strengths also in a more unknown setting

Teamwork with strong leading persons

New friends

Feelings and experience

Now I know what kind of trainer I would like to become

My attitude to challenge (& to challenging participants, people) has changed (challenge, definitely not meaning pressure) – I feel more easy with it and more ready to transform it into learning.

Go my own way even though I won't be so welcomed by others ; focus more on important things, try to be less messy & chaotic; to feel the pain and let it go, but not to avoid it. NO PAIN NO GAME.

What will you use from the course?

Judging from the elements participants want to use in the future, it is clear that they paid attention to all the diverse aspects of the course – also those parts which had not worked out so well had given food for thought. Important for most people here were:

- contacts with others
- methods
- activities
- techniques.

The approaches to group, to learning, to interculture. I don't want to mention all the activities and methods we did. But all those approaches and the ways the team was developing with different issues were most important for me.

I am already using ☺ all I got here, and other people I met here will help me.

Almost everything (apart of high ropes).

I hope to be more sensitive (not in the means of fluffiness) to others

Many practical things that really broaden my perspective; reassurance; activities; reflection methods and questions.

The contacts and networks + the intercultural learning

Open Space Technology, Outdoors experiential learning and partners. I've already tried to introduce the concepts in youth work on the regional level, but I need time and support to multiply that in my area of interest.

I hope to be able to use it in the field of gender issues.

Experience, contacts exercises, ideas, attitude, music

Björn's wise words and his hug for myself

Be aware of hurting somebody while I am a trainer or a leader.

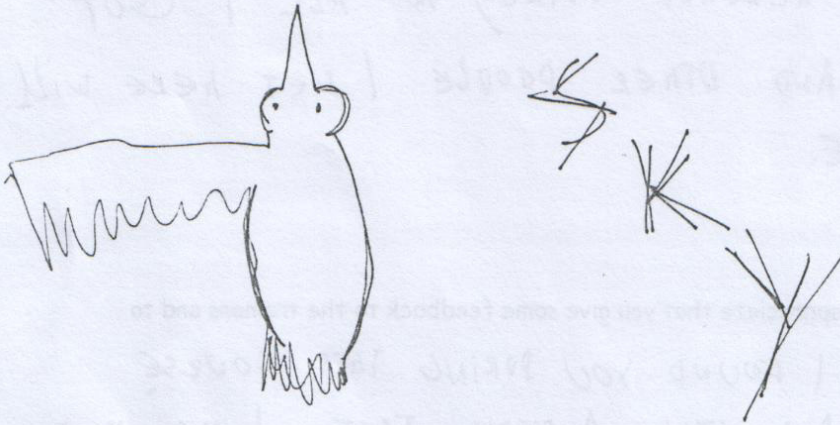
Feedback to the trainers and to Howard

In their feedback most of the participants gave direct messages to each trainer and to Howard. They expressed thanks and acknowledgement for the work done by the team and pointed out that it was a strength to have people of such different background, character and experience working together. So the team provided many points of reference and a variety of role models. Also, it was greatly appreciated that the trainers created a safe environment conducive to learning.

A symbol to represent the whole course

Circles expanding; trees with fruit; weather changes; BIG question marks – all of these and more came out of participants' heads and hearts. Here a few salient examples:

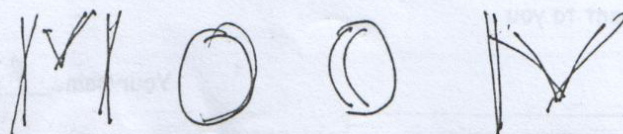
EVEN IF THIS BIRD SEEMS TO NOT BE
A GOOD FLYER. JUST TURN IT AND YOU
~~WILL~~ SEE IT FEEL PERFECTLY IN THE

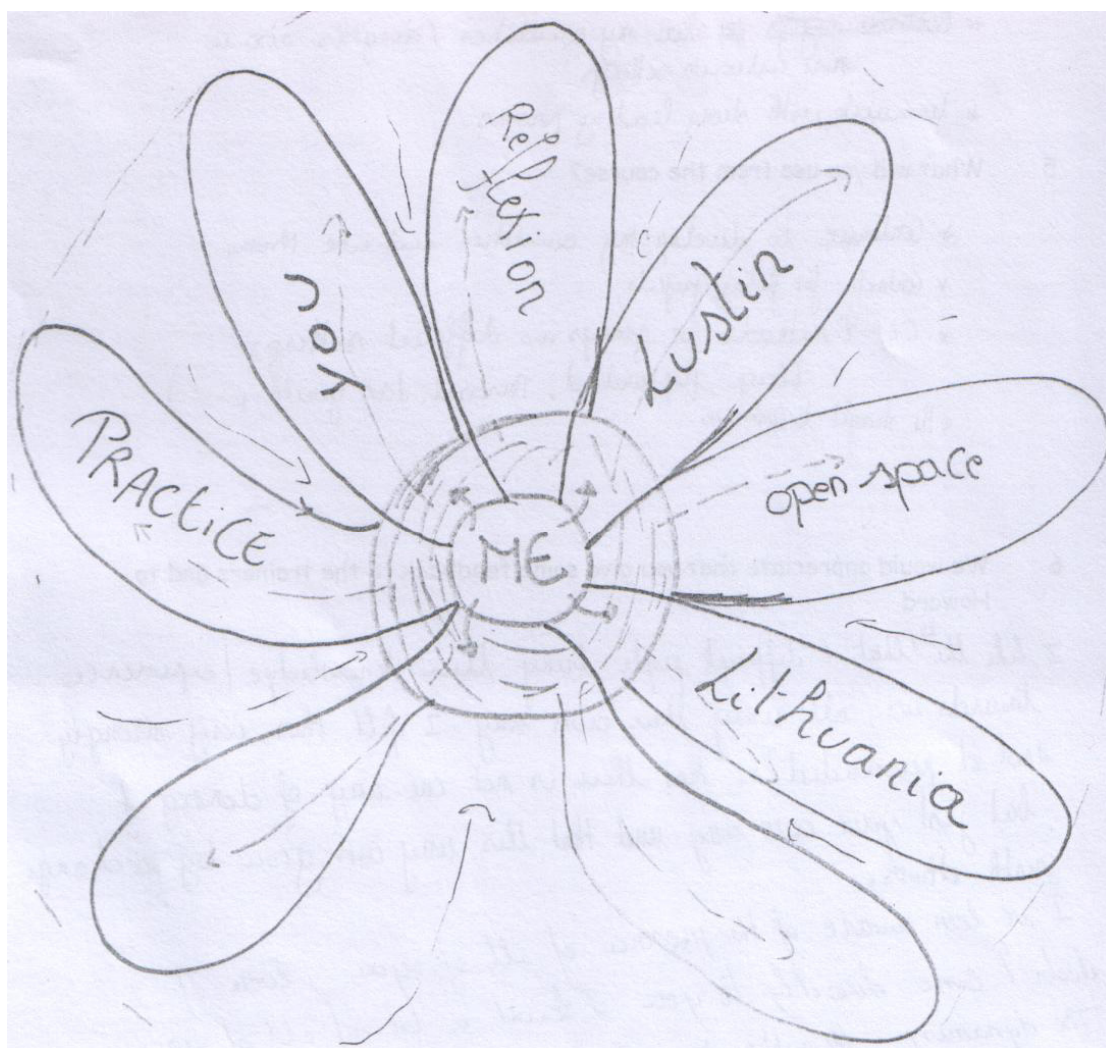


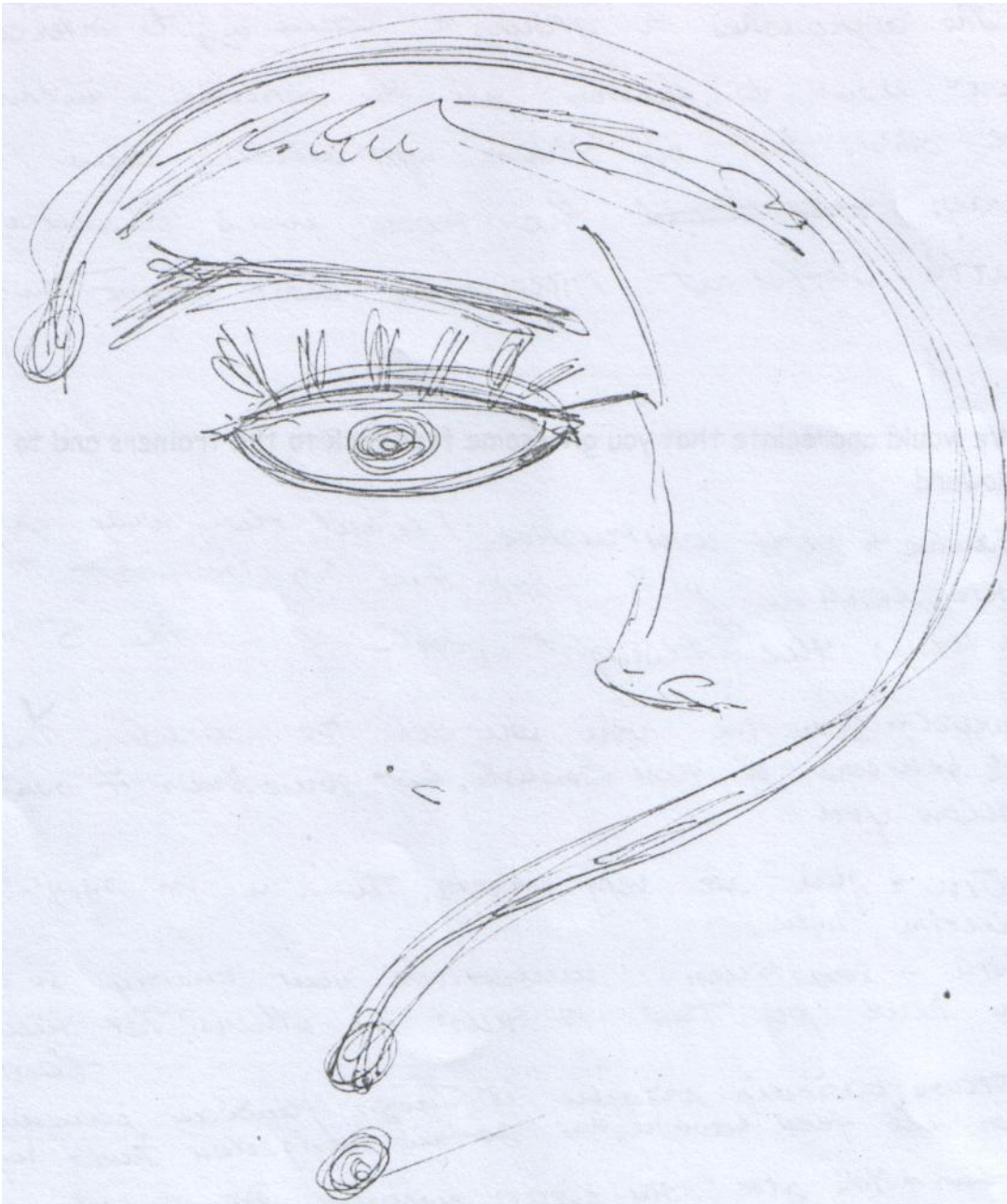
SO DON'T ~~BE~~ BE
AFRAID TO

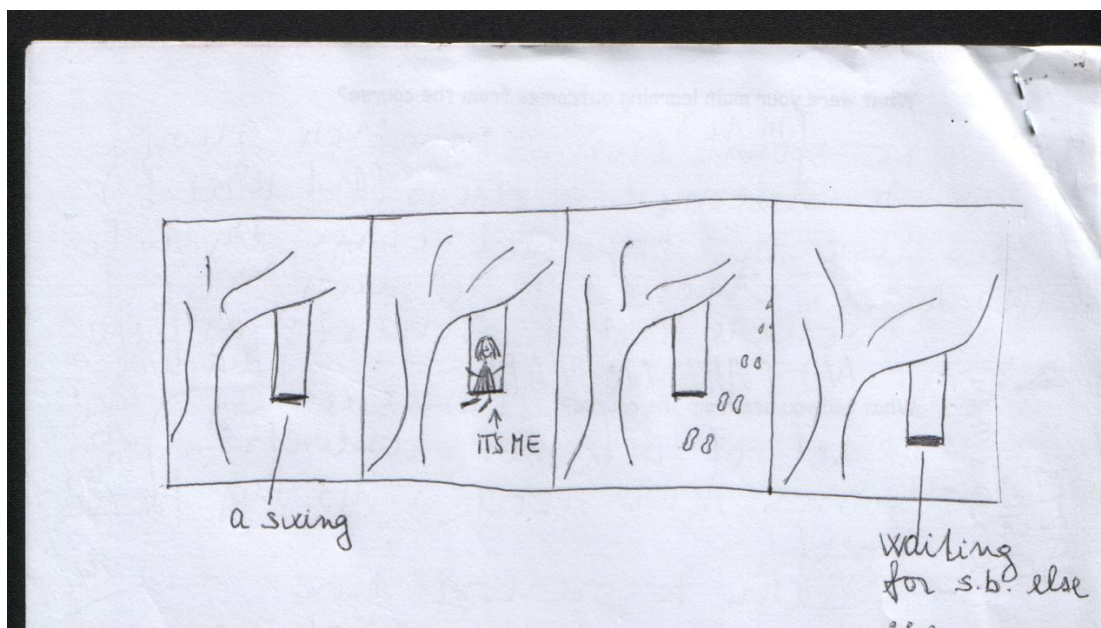
HAVE AND TO SEE

THE DARK SIDE OF THE









text: a swing

IT'S ME

waiting for somebody else...

Trainers

The trainers' team consisted of six very different individuals, but their different strengths shine through in the allocated and volunteered *divisions of labour* throughout the training course - Bart/spiritual, Björn/ritual, etc.. The five men and one woman referred from time to time to the pleasure and privilege of working closely together and learning from each other. But, like any group having to operate so intensively, the trainer's team experienced its own frictions, tensions, growth and development, always in a context of mutual regard but equally not immune from frustrations and conflict. Each step of the way - in planning the course, dividing responsibilities, and implementing what was finally agreed - the trainers, both individually and as a group, had to find the balance between:

1. Holding on, letting go
2. Defending a position, conceding to others
3. Volunteering, deciding who was 'best for the job'
4. Driving forward with the programme, debating alternative possibilities

Sometimes things were quickly agreed; at other times, discussion lasted an eternity (often well into the middle of the night). What was never in dispute or a dispute was the individual and collective commitment to making the course 'work' - in both senses: the trainers wanted the course to prove its worth and, to do this, they wanted to ensure that participants engaged in the programme in all ways and at all levels.

(i) evaluations of Lustin

The trainer's team was as bad as - almost worse than - the participants in completing their own highlights and lowlights of Lustin. Like the participants, their accounts trickled in, some not until Phase Three in Samukas. Like some participants, they had not overlooked this responsibility, but had not felt 'ready' to produce their own reflection. One wrote to me by email, in February 2003: "I had a good time writing it. I send it later than I promised to do it, but somehow now I feel that I can write it... but before I felt that I want to leave it for some time". And another, writing in April 2003, made a similar observation:

At last, my high and low lights... it is interesting to see how 'to look at' feels totally different than 'to be in'... I think that if I would have written down these moments immediately after the course, I would have written something totally different... now I am not any more involved and I can see what is the real treasure for me...

The range of perspectives were as diverse as those of the participants, although there was, understandably, a greater emphasis on the organisation and execution of the course. Nevertheless, the trainers' views also incorporated specific personal and professional 'moments' as well as more general overviews of the course and the development of the group.

Lowlights included personal frustrations such as a lack of personal energy following the summer break, and the physical bruising arising from full engagement in some of the activities. Trainers also testified to their personal irritation with the behaviour and attitude of

some participants (and with me). But out of these negative recollections there invariably emerged some positive lessons. One of the trainers had been overtly 'aggressive' with one of the participants, but they subsequently managed to talk through the incident and, through doing so, established a much deeper relationship. The trainer who had had some 'painful' moments with me (first, during the planning, when he felt I intervened too much; and second, when he intervened without checking why I had spoken in a group discussing the trainer's role) acknowledged that we had worked these things through productively. I would agree (see Appendix). And Mark described his feelings about participants attempting the pampole pole, not so much as a 'lowlight' but as a 'stretching' moment:

During the time that I was actually in training to become an Outward Bound trainer, I had managed to get to the top of the pole twice and NOT stand up on it. I watched many people at Lustin go up and fail like me and others who managed - clear pictures of Lucia and Arturas are still very alive in my head. Instead of making me sad that I still was not willing to do it, it gave me hope that one day I too will be able to go for it

Beyond these personal and interpersonal frustrations were a range of highlights which were significantly focused on the participants' group as a whole (or in part) and on the trainers' team. They noted key moments in group dynamics and development, Arturas remembering the 'peace' at the overnight camp, Dirk pointing to the debrief after the hike, Mark commenting on the increasing togetherness of his coaching group, and Bart noting the caving evening where he had talked closely with participants with whom, prior to that, he had felt some distance. The trainers were consistent in expressing their satisfaction that, despite the difficulties, obstacles and challenges, they had brought a group together and made things work. One of the trainers recalled The Hike in terms of "the struggle between trainers and participants, the different aims, goals, individuals, trying to act as a group" but highlighted the process of the whole course: "how we went from flat to deep below to high on the mountain". Another drew attention to:

The magic of bringing different people together with different ideas, backgrounds, culture, experience... and to see that it can become a very tasty cocktail if you give opportunities to mix the right ingredients... It made me believe more and more that process-oriented, experiential methods are very important for intercultural understanding. Because it's not only about rational things but about being confronted with differences and how to deal with them, being confronted by the way you deal with it, being surprised about your own reactions. The best example was the culture clash between Onni and Marians. Not only the clash but what they did with it after. It simply works!!!

The 'clash' had taken place during The Hike at the river crossing when Onni, one of the older participants, had taken the lead in establishing the technical framework for the task. Marians (a much younger participant) had made alternative suggestions, which had been ignored, overlooked or dismissed. Only later in the task did Marians' technical knowledge and skill become quite apparent, at which point Onni was contrite about his earlier attitude. After that, Marians' technical suggestions were given full and equal weight.

The 'cooking' analogy above was also adopted by one of the other trainers, who pointed to one highlight being the fact that the trainers had successfully 'fine-tuned' the course to ensure the positive inclusion and development of participants:

Over and over again I realise that working as trainer/facilitator is sometimes as cooking the fine dish. The fact that we have all the ingredients needed does not guarantee tasty dish unless we add the right amount in the right time for the right person. In some cases we need to add a bit of this and a lot of that, in other cases it's the other way round, or none. If we happen to add too much or too little of something we may spoil the whole dish.

Sometimes it is possible to add little bit of salt, however if there is too much of it the whole dish is not digestible. And all the effort is gone... Only a bad taste in our mouth remains. On the other hand, right amount of everything creates the dish people love, want to experience again, learn to prepare it themselves...

Such observations related closely to the internal dynamics of the trainers' team, within which there had often been tensions and friction but always an openness and commitment to making things work. Individual trainers reported having always felt 'safe and confident' with other trainers, working as they had in different combinations throughout the course. There had often been 'tough talking' and 'difficult emotions shared' but one trainer recalled the 'great surge of warmth for all the team' at its final meeting in Lustin.

(ii) mini evaluation of Samukas

[mt]

Safe in the knowledge that we would have a full evaluation meeting a few months later in Belgium after the course, we still took the time to look at our feelings and thoughts. Fuelled with rich multi-vitamin fruit juice, nuts and biscuits, we decided to concentrate on what we felt were the effects and emergent issues arising from the course in Samukas. Grouping the main elements, we can see:

Motivation to go further

If, as Anatole France once stated, "Nine tenths of education is encouragement", then it was certain that all of the participants were going to put their learning from this course into practice! They had a better understanding of the trainer's role; they had more resources – activities, experience, feedback, ideas (more in their backpacks); they had ideas for new projects in their own country and internationally; and, generally, a willingness to take the step into using this kind of process methodology.

Professional development depends on personal development

Participants had become less machine, more human; less method, more process (a lot turned this corner); not just looking at technicality, but also giving a personal mark to their work. They gained a deeper understanding of experiential learning and process-oriented work:

came closer to the essence. This had come about through an increase of personal awareness – connecting the mind to the heart and belly.

The environment here

Perfect place to hold the course – direct access to nature; not too far away from habitation; good local transport. And the house and the people who work in it have done a great job – they were open to negotiation about several aspects and they put their heart into their work. Being in Lithuania (and emphasising that point) had brought a lot of people into contact with, and opened their eyes to, different realities.

Our team work

At times really hard work – all those words like “challenge”, “support”, “argument”, “feedback” coming to life! Also from time to time hysterically funny! what you might call interstructural learning – discovering and describing the different systems we have to work within – had a positive effect as time went on. Demands of the publication on the one side and running the course on the other caused many ructions.

Group and team

There had been a big growth in the sense of community between us all. A bit like the Madzinga tribe was created. Participants had used each other as a resource, learned from each other, enjoyed each other's company.

(iii) overall evaluation

[mt]

Back together in Lustin a few months after the course. We had the evaluations of the participants, we had our own notes, we had the first draft of this report... It is tempting to transcribe all the discussions we had over those two days but, having looked through the rest of this report, I feel you can find so much in the descriptions of activities and team meetings that it is maybe just as well to show one drop of water through which you can find the ocean...

After general warming up brainstorming and sharing how we all were, we split into two groups to look at the whole course in a novel way. Using Hoffman's Quadrant (see the evaluation of the Multi-task day for more information on this) as our lens, the resulting discussions brought up some remarkable similarities and differences.

Group one:

QUALITY <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → engagement of the participants → skills of the training team → an attempt to “walk it like you talk it” → flexibility → mixing intercultural and experiential → infrastructure was there or could be found → richness at so many levels 	PITFALLS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → no set boundaries – things not clear to all → different reasons for engagement (and limited for some) → not enough work done on separating and clarifying concepts → what is supporting what? → team expects too much of participants → the idea of the “dreamteam” might lead to complacency
ALLERGY <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → team too distant → lack of engagement with the process / too product-oriented → Infrastructure factors take over! → GO AND DO IT! 	CHALLENGE <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → allocating proportionate time to different agendas → knowing when to let go → decreasing the “tourists” → making the topic into the issue together → infrastructure only supports the course; course respects the infrastructure → explaining the task, rationale and the process → how to make “it” accessible for others??

group b

QUALITY <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → to give and share as much as possible → long-term course → clear concept, idea → strong and powerful team → committed to the content and here and now 	PITFALLS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → too packed → too extensive/second phase! → too framed → value in itself → too expensive? → ignore other things (projects, publication..)
ALLERGY <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → losing the track and focus → overwhelming → not concept but pure flexibility → losing the feeling of the team → losing the contact → to work for the sake of outside 	CHALLENGE <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → balance between input-digesting & team-group → more concentrated → flexible concept → openness and curiosity → split in sub-projects and sub-teams → committed but not narrow-minded!

Future perspectives

Based on all the discussions and all the reflections and all the experiences of the course, we turned our attention to the future. For those who would like to run a similar course, what would be the main things they should keep in mind?

- the overall concept is basically good – but more attention needs to be paid to the set up of the second phase: duration, tasks and responsibilities of team and participants need to be clearer to enable all to exploit the possibilities of the coaching relationship to the full
- make sure to give space for professional generalising of the experience; link professional and personal development explicitly
- be disciplined with your time, knowing that you will be working 24/7!
- make the intercultural side more explicit in the first course
- introduce, explain and put into practice the concept of triangulation in assessing participants' development from the beginning
- do not under-estimate the challenge of working on the two different levels of running a course at the same time as producing a publication – it is hard work, but worth it
- be aware about “in-out” (those who are “in” and those who are “out” and the fact that this can change over time)
- don't expect too much – and you will get more!

8 The Day Course

The Day Course was a resounding success: the culmination, through practical application, of the various strands of learning which had made up the programme. It illuminated both the strengths and weaknesses of participants as individuals and in teams. It demonstrated the dramatic difference between working and learning within a 'closed' (and therefore essentially safe) environment, and having to engage with 'outsiders' on a range of interpersonal and cultural levels as well as through the delivery of an 'appropriate' sequence of experiences. Beyond my own observations, I sought to distil perspectives from the host participants (the training teams), the visiting participants and the six course trainers. This produces a form of triangulation which serves to confirm or challenge the nature of the experience: the more consistency in perspective from all three sides, the more credible that account becomes. Whether or not there was consistency, the following accounts are both illuminating and instructive.

Participants' perspectives

Each training team was asked to produce some brief notes about the following experiences of the Day Course:

- some understanding of the group they had been working with
- the activities they had offered, and their rationale
- the key learning points (as trainers!) that had come out of the day

Group 4

Group 4, facilitated by Dirk, had organised a programme for a group of 10 Scouts: two leaders aged 24 and 27 and eight others aged 16-20. The Scouts had asked for team-building, challenge and high rope activities. Because they were a new group - they had first met together in March 2003 and were planning to work together until February 2004 - the training team felt that they needed to work on trust, co-operation and team-building: 'they are Scouts so they need very challenging activities'!

The programme that was developed, following introductions and 'little rules' (such as no mobile phones, or smoking), comprised six activities. During the morning, these were The Snake (with four people blindfolded, and rotating this role three times), the Spider's Web and the Flying Carpet. These were essentially team-building and trust activities and each was followed by review and reflection. The afternoon was a 'multi-task' of three activities which were more to do with problem-solving and personal challenges: the high ropes (at least six individuals had to complete, one blindfolded). Raise the Flag (from outside of a large circle) and catch the cup of water. The afternoon would conclude with the group making a 'sculpture' of how they felt about the day. The training team established the timings of this programme and a division of labour between them as to who would instruct the activities and lead the reflections.

The three members of the training team identified very different personal learning points from the day, some of which were diametrically opposed. Mantas, who admitted to being 'too' sensitive, said that he wanted to be 'more structured' in his delivery of such a

programme; in contrast, Lucia said that she needed to be 'less structured'. She had had a terrible previous night, with bad dreams about failing disastrously, but she had quickly settled when the Scouts arrived and one of her other learning points had been to have greater self-belief: 'I can manage things'. She also felt that she needed to place more trust in other members of the team; she had wanted every detail considered and addressed. Marians, the most technically competent of the team, felt that he had learned not to take so much for granted. He acknowledged that he needed to 'explain more clearly the instructions for the activities' and that 'I have to listen more to the others of the team'. In particular, he had to become more self-disciplined in not interfering and intervening in activities for which other members of the training team had been given (or had taken) responsibility.

Group 5

Group 5, whose training team was facilitated by Bart, were the four staff members of Babylonas. The training team had a very limited idea of what the visitors expected and decided to organise an incremental programme which would provide activities which they themselves could deliver within their organisation and enable them to develop an understanding about the method and the process.

They started with an energiser and an activity concerned with making knots in a rope (without anyone letting go). This was largely for the training team to 'see how the people are'. The next activity was a Maze, addressing issues such as communication, co-operation, problem-solving and personal challenge. Reflections became steadily deeper. The third morning activity was to Raise the Flag - 'a big challenge for co-operation, and to see for us how they work and their roles in it'. In the afternoon, there was a blindfold-leading 'hike', concerned primarily with trust and playing different roles in the group, followed by a metaphorical reflection. The latter involved placing an object in one of three zones (comfort, stretch and panic), 'to see how they were feeling at that moment and express this'. Later on in the afternoon, the group did the rope exercises, estimating their own personal challenge, but also having to work together. The programme culminated with a final reflection on what the visiting participants would take home with them and some more conceptual discussion of methodology in experiential learning.

This programme had been agreed because, although the visitors already knew each other very well, it was still a challenge to work with each other in another setting.

Looking back on the day, the training team said that they had first worked hard on preparation, not so much in terms of the practical programme (which they had decided upon after some broad information from Arturas about the visitors), but in terms of what they felt it would be like working in a team together. They allocated roles and discussed their level of confidence and trust in each other. They were relaxed about the plan, but spent a lot of time talking about the way they would put it into practice.

The training team felt that it had been a great opportunity and significant challenge to have a real group, but indicated that it had not been easy working with just four people (three trainers, four people). They had had to deal with their own mistakes and failures and address some frictions within the training team. At times, they had struggled to trust each other and be comfortable in the discussions which had followed. They had had to learn to adapt the

programme to the needs of the group - to find 'a good way' for reflection on their experiences, to deal with reservedness and resistance, and to know the activities well enough to explain them and motivate the engagement of the others in the training team.

Group 2

The training team for Group 2 faced a particular challenge. Facilitated by Björn, the training team had to produce a programme for a group of five individuals (2 male, 3 female, aged 29-35 years) who worked for Bespoke training. They were relatively experienced in this kind of training but, significantly, *had not experienced this training as a group*. The visiting participants all knew each other well and wanted to have some quality time together, with a focus on team-building. The training team was only able to use the high rope in the morning (for logistical reasons) and so decided to try something different: to *start* with a physical challenge and *end* with an emotional challenge (typically it is the other way around). This would be the 'surprise element' for the visitors, who were mature enough to face something new and unexpected.

The programme therefore commenced, after some introductions and statements of expectations, with the high rope, followed by the Flying Carpet and reflection on the morning. After lunch, there was blindfold walking in the forest, the flag-raising exercise [which the training team made considerably harder by adding a retrieval exercise and shortening the time allowed] and then a card exercise which brought some personal values to the surface. The visiting participants then prepared a 'symphony' prior to a short final reflection.

The training team identified five main learning points from the day:

- Team-building (meaning the training team) is as important as programme-building
- It is important to be flexible, and so one should prepare more than you need
- Good to have 'checkpoints' for the team during the day
- Process is more important than the technical stuff or the structure
- Be ready to break up the structure if you face emotions

Group 3

Group 3 was a combined group from a local town and village. It comprised twelve participants, aged between 18 and 35. The training team was facilitated by Arturas, who had informed them that the visitors were friendly, easy to communicate with, and dedicated to the process. The group from the town had requested team-building - to learn in a personal way about each other how they can work as a group. The training team's vision was to bring them together and to increase their awareness about teamwork:

We wanted to make them fun, not much physical activities, to give them possibility to get challenges. We tried to put some original ideas in known methods. We wanted to give them pocket exercises that they could take home.

The training team embarked on a process that was underpinned by a metaphor of 'three eggs'. This was the mission and the spirit of the group. The eggs had to be carried and protected throughout the day. Activities started with a magic stick and map to find the way to the eggs and to bring them together thereby, from the beginning, creating the vision of the 'spirit of the group'. Activities continued with the Spider's Web, Islands and Blind Square. With a large group, all this took the whole day. At the end, the group had to raise the eggs up on a rope and bring them back to the ground - in order to conclude the feeling that they had all been working hard on a common project. The training team did not reflect on their own learning points, except to say that they were satisfied with the result. They did comment, however, on the role of their facilitator (Arturas), saying that he had been 'positively critical', had offered some 'good tips' and that his contribution was 'very helpful and in the right moments'.

Group 6

Babylonas also sent eleven young volunteers who were members of its youth club. They wanted to get to know each other and themselves better, to have some fun and to learn new things. The training team was facilitated by Mark. The programme it developed was as follows:

- Introduction
 - Names and expectations
 - Presentation of the programme
 - Working in groups Rules
 - Safety rules
- Ball of names game (warm-up)
- Beam - stand in line
- Lord of the Rings
- Break
- Find your tree (blindfolded)
- Sign your tree
- Reflection
- Team Beam
- Reflection
- Break
- The Chemical Laboratory
- Reflection
- Sculpture of the Day
- The End

The training team had developed this programme for a variety of reasons. The activities included trust, physical challenge, co-operation, and communication 'because we thought these issues contribute to the aim to know each other':

We also thought that it is not possible to make them know each other in 5 hours, so we wanted to open some doors for that. We also wanted variety in activities and to have an order with gradually increasing challenge. We also thought about how to

organise reflections and our idea was to not try to force it for depth because we do not have time for this.

We also thought about first exercises. We wanted them to be secure and familiar, and make it possible to have fun. We considered little time we had for preparation, so we preferred tasks that don't require too much material and time to prepare. We were choosing tasks that some of us (at least one) have already tried before.

The training team felt that there had been seven important learning points from their experience of planning and implementing this programme:

- Finding solutions that everyone in the team is happy with
- Understanding the importance of the following issue: Where is the place for the trainer in the group? Shall s/he be IN the group, or OUT, or both?
- Checking out and maybe exploring (trying) activities we are going to use in the programme
- Anticipate possible risks and uncomfortable situations for participants
- Adapting plan to real life:
 - Adding reflections when necessary
 - Incorporating birthday event in the task [it was one participant's birthday]
 - Changing the task to fit the time frame
- Different understanding of the team means how many details we as trainers need to share, and how much responsibility we have each for the task and the results
- Our experience reinforced the view that you need to consider the limitations and relations between participants and trainers to expect and to go for deep personal outcomes (results).

Group 1

Ten volunteers working in the information programme at the Youth Psychological Aid Center (YPAC) constituted Group 1. Its training team of five course participants (though one, the only Lithuanian in the team had to leave for the day to take an exam) was facilitated by Stanka. The main objective of the information programme is to provide the necessary information to everyone who calls or visits YPAC as precisely and fluently as possible. It is also about informing individuals about other organisations working in psychological and social help services.

The visiting participants had outlined their needs and expectations by e-mail. The main purpose, they said, was to be together and 'to do some fun games with serious meaning for our group':

Time to time we encounter the difficulties of feeling responsibility to each other. So, if you have some methods to strengthen this feeling between us, it would be really important. If not, we are ready to meet everything you will offer to us.

With these objectives in mind, the training team chose the following activities:

- A nightline (blindfolded walking from the house area up the hill into the forest) - to promote trust and support, and to have an innovative way to get to the group's starting place
- Three/four quick energisers - to get the group active
- Three activities stressing communication and difficulties:
 - Shapes - partners back to back: one describes to the other shapes drawn on paper
 - Dog/house - two groups told to draw a house and dog respectively with one marker on a shared sheet of paper without talking: they don't know that other team members have a different objective
 - Copy machine - participants form a line by sitting in a row. The last person is shown a drawing and, without talking, draws the image on the back of the person in front. The front person then draws this on paper.
- Blind Square and Triangle - blindfolded the group has ropes to make a triangle inside a square. This was chosen for communication and teamwork and was an attempt to frustrate the group to see how they would manage
- Calculator - numbered cards in a circle, only one participant allowed in at any time. Must touch cards in numerical order. A time trial! This was chosen to work on group process, and to work on energy levels after lunch
- Explaining work situation - three questions:
 - What is positive?
 - What are difficulties?
 - What is ideal?
- Swing - Chosen to stress teamwork and support
- Symphony - out of old cans and bits of metal. Chosen for fun and a nice way to finish: the whole group to make a product
- Closing circle with a one-word impression of the day: 'useful', 'interesting', 'fun', 'happy', 'satisfied'
-

Five learning points emerged from this experience:

- To clarify roles before starting training
- To pay more attention to time management
- To have a 'frame' for reflection
- To have greater awareness of each other's styles
- To be willing to ask, when things are not clear

Visiting groups' perspectives

Group 4

Arturas' translation of visitors' group from two towns Kretinga and Panevezys

Each time it is wonderful to participate in professionally organised event that is provided by wonderful people. I mean, trainers' team. Then it is just more than wonderful.

The feelings that we got, although it was during a short time, were unforgettable. Unusual, new and original experiential methods that we had a chance to get to know in this place are just necessary in our everyday work when we communicate with young people.

Thank you for new ideas, understanding and for accepting us!

Audrius Danilevicius & co (from Kretinga)

Group 5

Email from Babylonas (4 leaders and 12 volunteers)

- It was really fun I've got a lot of new experience and brought home a lot of good feelings.
- I wanted to have fun and didn't expected that I can get more from all this, because it was first time for me... and I got much more.
- It was cool, because we got closer to each other and became real team
- This day was very interesting and I am very happy
- For me this day was really great. I got a lot of new experience working in a group, in understanding each other, communicating with others. Our group got more closer to each other and I know much more about my friends
- This training was the first for me, so I am very impressed. I had a chance to work in a group, communicate differently and learn a lot of things. I am very happy.
- During this training I felt a lot of good senses inside of me. I saw that I can trust in every person of my group. I would like to thank trainers for being with us and sharing their experience and good mood.
- I really couldn't believe that during one day I can feel so many different emotions. Thank you very much.
- This day was very special!!! I never ever had a chance to do something like this...
- The atmosphere of attention stops you for a while and returns some energy that you are loosing in your daily work
- It was great ☺

achiu uzh galimybe shaikai sudalyvauti, visi liko labai patenkinti

The trainers' views

The trainers had reflected on the Day Course during the 'free' afternoon in Vilnius:

Dirk (with Group 4 and the 10 Scouts)

I think about what they went through and where they arrived. Very soon they realised they were completely different (Lucia, Marians, Mantas). Lucia went for Marians for his technical skills. Mantas trusted the others. Marians was confident in what he wanted. Communication challenges – speaking the same language (*i.e. what is behind the words?*) – what they meant by trust, etc. Different ideas about the flow: Marians wanted action from the start, the others wanted exercises that Marians thought were silly games. Marians said he listened but always went back to his original ideas. Mantas understood Marians' jokes; Lucia did not. Marians thought 'Scouts' would be kids, Lucia thought Scouts would be grown up, Mantas knew but did not say. Marians produced ideas, Lucia did not trust them. Every little detail had to be discussed: how will we explain, who will do what.... Dirk intervened and said they needed to show more trust in each other. But they would not. Reflective compromise (because late at night). Dirk suggested they took on things they trusted themselves in, but they did the opposite. Lucia took on exercises, Marians took on reflections.

Comfort was the programme. Lucia had explained, Marians intervened inappropriately, then felt guilty and went off. They were reluctant to change, because this would have taken them out of their comfort zone. Dirk asked Mantas if blindfolded walk was too easy. He made it harder, and Lucia went into panic.

Reflection at lunchtime. Lucia said to give feedback but expressed what she wanted! Multi-task in the afternoon – no group because they took on individual tasks.

But good reflection this morning. Started with drawing (of the line of their feelings during the process), with no talking (because Marians always wants to talk). Then discussed the process and started to recognise their learning. That these things are not so easy, and that they had done quite well. Dirk suggested their relationships should be explored more carefully. Marians acknowledged his 'faults' - he knows them but does not act upon them. Then the group didn't want to separate – went to the lake, stripped off and jumped in.

Metaphor for a new openness between the group?

Marians always insistent on doing things his way... this was discussed in relation to the theme of attitudes of trainers.

Good learning experience for all three of the team, in different ways, significantly also for Mantas because he is too sensitive and described himself as blowing in the wind and not putting anything of himself in the programme.

Bart (with Group 5 and the four members of the Arts Board)

Leen, Gillon and Saga. In the beginning, during the preparation of the programme, Gillon was trying to take the lead but without taking care of (contribution and feelings of) the others. He acted as though he was the expert. Saga countered him after a while because she didn't like him taking so much space. Leen joined her. They talked about it and came to a good platform to work on. From time to time they asked for Bart's support, but in general they worked very independently. They were aware of the fact that they should not work for 8 hours to plan a programme that would take only 5 hours, so they framed their planning time

and they became very relaxed at the end of the planning – same level and same values. Power in the team – got the ideas sorted out and the programme planned. In the morning Gillon acted very stressed because he had never run a programme on a personal level. He was full of doubts and very unclear about what the participants might want. Saga welcomed the participants smoothly in Lithuanian language, Leen and Gillon supported her. Bart was asked not to interfere, unless they would ask for it. Gillon started in a indistinct way "I think it is maybe a good idea that before we start we might tell one another something about who we are..." without any energy in the invitation. This was the only moment Bart really did an intervention by taking him to one side and telling him that he could maybe start with more buzz. Bart felt a little bit ashamed for it because he had promised not to interfere without them asking him. So, from that moment on, he withdrew. They started, very slowly, with a lot of circling around (because there were only 4 in the visiting group). Little by little they built up the programme they planned, they discussed if they should keep strict timeframes, they took considered decisions, they tried all the time to process the experience. Then with the body used for painting exercise the participants were not clear about the task and asked the trainers to provide more clear information. But even the trainers did not really know what the task was about. Bart could feel the energy sink, with the participants, with the trainers. Enthusiasm was totally gone. And the trainers didn't consider any action to do something about it. Bart really could feel two different camps. In the feedback after this exercise, the participants said that there appeared to be no interest on the part of the trainers in the exercise. Gillon did not receive the feedback, Saga did. Gillon was always defending himself, not aware of what was really going on, but trying to stay in the leader's role. Leen tried to find her spot, but wasn't really in the picture, she supported most of the time – just went with the flow. Afterwards she agreed that she needs more practice to take risks. But anyway, she tried a lot to contribute as far as she could. In the painting the two women participants refused to paint with their face. Saga picked this up and engaged in a confrontation, which she would never have done last year, Bart reflected. She displayed awareness and asked a lot of good, clear and addressed/directed questions. Gillon felt guilty about not getting the interpersonal stuff very clearly, and was uncomfortable about being told that he doesn't listen. He thought he knew this stuff, that he knew a lot of the methods, theory, activities, but now acknowledges that he still has a lot to learn according to the process and to stay in touch with his awareness and not only watch over his infallible position as a trainer. The three of them recognised that they had a lot of problems to run the programme, but it was a secure atmosphere for them – they knew that they were all learning together. They were very thankful for the opportunity and the feedback they got.

Björn (with Group 2 and the five participants from Bespoke)

Charlie, Karina, Tuuli, Alfur took about 9 hours to prepare the programme. They didn't seem to realise that most of the time, approximately 5 hours, was actually spent on welding the team together. This was very much at the forefront of their Steam Out minds and apparently more important than participants' reaction to the card game. But they felt that they had done something effective and constructive and negotiated a programme that the whole team was happy and comfortable with. Karina had never done it before, Alfur had very little prior experience. They had a lot of stumbling blocks while discussing and trying to decide on activities..... Björn's role had been to let them float and wait for their final decisions before any interventions. Then he recommended to them about how to look at it from different angles and through thinking about opposites. The team was a little nervous

because of the particular group, Bespoke, and were grateful to Arturas for tipping them off about the exercises with which the Bespoke group was most familiar. These were avoided. Karina was very subdued (young and inexperienced). Tuuli was the soft, feely corner of the group and the boys were the more active. Björn suggested making three programmes and cutting them down to one, turn things upside down, widen approach. Decided that, after a short welcome, they would go for the rope course (a high impact activity, because of participants' experience), and base the programme on teamwork and relating it to the work-place.

They had separate roles in the planning, the programme and the reflections but the reflection roles changed during the practice and everybody took part, except Karina. Everyone got their own ideas into the process and the programme. One stumbling block was moving beyond everybody's favourite exercises.

They had decided on 'two tops' - high rope in the morning, and then the card game on values (each got five cards (nationality/animal/ideal-loved one/job/life motto). The group felt that they were doing a lot of reflection. They were very positive and together, but were also having a lot of fun..... Did blind walk in the woods (with one sighted person at the back and a verbal person at the front, the rest were blind and dumb) and flagpole. But because they had seen another group do the flagpole they wondered whether to drop it, but then decided to make it more difficult. Made it into a retrieval/flag-waving, but Alfur forgot some of the equipment, 2 carabiners (and left some material in the barrel that they were not supposed to get!) they needed to retrieve. But it was a rather technical exercise rather than personal, with challenges.

The card game was 'temple raising'. Charlie threw Vilja out. Very powerful exercise and little time left for reflection. Lithuanians did their own reflection. Björn said that after this card game, you don't / can't leave it with no follow-up. You have to take time to reflect and use the opportunity to go deeper and then close it. After lunch the training team forgot completely connecting the experience to the workplace, the transfer of learning, developing the team and getting into personal sharing. In the panic, Karina didn't do the symphony because Charlie took it away from her. She was so sad, because she had ended up with nothing! Afterwards, team and Björn were not so satisfied.

Reflection this morning was good. Three words each. Discussed. Feedback from Björn. Personal feedbacks. Big experience for them and a great opportunity.

Arturas (with Group 3 and the 'double' group of 12 from the local town and nearby village)

Grettir, Bela, Egle and Kinga. He thought early on in the planning phase that nothing was going to happen and was ready to intervene (had at first been concerned about the capacity of the group to make something happen effectively). Chaotic, no happiness – asked them how they felt. Said they were OK, supportive atmosphere, creative process. Put the dissatisfaction on the group-making procedure, not on their own group (this was perhaps an 'escape mechanism' to externalise responsibility for any subsequent failings in their efforts). Difficulty in correlating them together – Egle is distant, Grettir appears distant but he is alert. Bela wants to systematise everything and put everything into frames, but none of this touches Grettir, who wants to go with the flow and see what happens. And then Kinga is like a caring mother, watching over everyone else. Went back to them after the team meeting: Egle in bed, Grettir and Kinga in sauna, and Bela at the fire place. Impossible to collect them – did individual interviews with them and discovered that they had a plan: high rope

with egg (but no negotiations about time of use for the high rope, and no-one knew how to use the high rope, agreed to practice at 08.45 and they came at 09.15, instructions from Arturas including immediate feedback if anything was wrong). Had noticed lack of resources in the team and had provided some ideas. They then decided to work on team spirit and use the egg as a metaphor, and carry it not in pockets, and finally drop it from the high rope.

They were asked to take an extra group of visiting participants. Grettir consulted with the team and they agreed to take them. Grettir was completely relaxed and the visitors felt it at once and this created a very positive spirit.

The team had started out looking very anxious. Sometimes some things were too rushed. Arturas slowed them down. Room was not prepared, unclear about what they wanted from the group, and the group didn't always understand what was required. Felt that Egle could be the bridge in communication (given that many of the participants had no confidence in English language and exercises), but she was out of things. Grettir was good at giving instructions and he was also rather good at giving conclusions! Bela was good on reflection. And even Kinga was keeping concentration. Felt that all of them were at the edge of their skills. Egle was a bit out of the team, but she was still good at mirroring the group: she used other techniques, generalising instead of asking direct specific questions (i.e. 'I see you are tired', 'I see you are disappointed').

They did attack the group with questions – too much and all over the place (roles, task, feelings....) Positive thing was that they really managed to combine the best of their different skills.

This morning, covered three questions and then into feedback. Then Arturas gave feedback.

Mark (with Group 6 and the 11 participants from the Babylonas Volunteers Group)

Mark chose that group of Laurynas, Onni and Karola because had not had much contact with Onni in Lustin or here and had not worked with Karola in a group. They were a group of very different individuals. Yesterday they were asked to take some individual time for reflecting on the Day Course and chose some words to describe their opinions. Onni: I am a pain in the ass and I will be again; risks, lead, Howard, challenge plus, etc. Karola was a whole river of words ("adrenalin overdose", experiment, punctuality, language barriers, danger, improvise, intimate and fluffy). Laurynas was in the middle in terms of word production: unfinished, teary, smooth, unexpected, rewarding, etc.

In the beginning they had a big wish to try together and share their backgrounds. Onni was frustrated about delay in knowing which group they would be working with – he likes certainty and cannot handle ambiguity. Asked them how they wanted my role to be and left them to discuss it. They didn't really want me: we love you Mark but bugger off (Onni). So left and checked from time to time. They got stuck at one point about the whole issue of "the trainer's role" and decided to park the issue. They got stuck with their very long list of exercises and didn't know what to pick. Mark suggested that they should identify more clearly their specific objectives which they then used in order to guide their choices. While we were in our team meeting they started making concrete plans and again got stuck – this time spending at least an hour on discussing the introduction. Then they got organising – allocating specific exercises to one responsible person. Then Onni went to bed at 10pm (as he always does) and the others worked till 01.30. Laurynas and Karola had agreed to him going but were still somewhat upset about it and also occasionally with each other. Their need was to go more into details and especially to clarify what kind of reflections would be

required during the programme. Mark questioned the order of the opening exercises and, as they both seemed very tired and a bit "lost", suggested a method to prepare the participants for making the end sculpture/photograph.

Next morning Onni wasn't sure (certainly surprised!) why they had stayed up so late, and accepted the changes they had made.

With the group they were very nice. Used three languages. Very welcoming. Karola was obviously nervous at the start, but very warm with the participants. Took them nearly an hour before any of them consulted with each other about anything. They grew together during the day, in their team work.

One of the first exercises was a first indication that the skills existed within the team to react to what is happening and provided the information that one of the participants had her birthday today. So Karola changed one of the next exercises (sign a paper over two meters up a tree) to provide her with a birthday card.

During the team rope activity one of the participants slipped and winded herself on the rope – part of the reason being that the ropes were relatively high, causing her to be more afraid. During the planning phase Laurynas had said he had done this exercise, and Onni was confident. None of them had checked the installation beforehand. Mark knew it had been put up by colleagues and thought therefore it must be good and safe. He had not checked it out either. Things could go wrong, and they did, though fortunately not badly. Laurynas and Karola dealt with it very well, sensitively... reflection immediately, during which Laurynas transformed the situation from one of fear to one of safe challenge by reformatting the task (initially to get four couples across the ropes) to that of simply trying out the equipment within their own limits. The participants decided to continue. Bigger reflection later, where participants asked trainers how they felt as well.

Then Onni took over – "I would love you to name a quality to take to the next exercise, so please name one coming out of your team work", question not understood, so Onni told them (trust). Final evaluation of the participants was superb, with many choosing a flower when asked to provide a symbol of the day course.

For the overall reflection we followed the agenda decided the previous evening. One of the most important issues was that of the relation of trainer to participants. They drew themselves in relation to participants and then each other in relation to the participants.

Inside or outside the circle. Different views about who was where, though all were clear that Onni was outside the circle and he said he would have liked to have been closer.

Looked at communication – a key challenge for this group. Also working together as a multicultural team, which provided them with a lot of joy, also in comparing different opinions. During the reflection, they told each other the main things. They asked each other for a lot of clarifications, from which they can learn. One of the main conclusions was that they would now have knowledge of sufficient points to improve should they continue to work as a team in the future.

Stanka (with Group 1 and the 10 participants from the youth psychological aid centre)

Vida, Jennifer, Jim and Hana – but no Vida on the day [she had to leave to do an exam, although she was involved in the preparation], which was disappointing because a Lithuanian could have facilitated making a bridge between participants and the team.

Questions and answers with Stanka on her role in the team. What did they bring to the group? Why did they choose one another? They did not have much opportunities working together during the course. Then hit the thorny question of objectives. Breakdown in

understanding what they wanted to achieve during the programme. They all had in mind the goals; however they did not speak the same language and did not clarify really what they wanted. Jennifer was almost blocking. Stanka intervened and facilitated the discussion. Translated objectives into a programme and seemed to have quite a lot of experience of appropriate exercises. They decided not to create the programme that could have opened too many issues that they would not have been able to close within 5 hours. They created a programme they felt comfortable with and allowed them to stay in their comfort zone. The flow was not perfect but not bad. When Stanka returned from trainers meeting, they seemed to have completed the programme and also managed to split activities among themselves and divide what needed to be done. But it was still fragmented. Stanka felt the programme could have been more challenging, but decided not to intervene - did not want to impose her ideas on them but let them experience what they had prepared themselves. The only intervention on her side was to have more activities in their pocket in order to be able to adjust the programme according to the participants needs.

There seemed to be too much in it, but decision was to go with the flow and to be ready for adaptation and flexibility.

In the morning, they had the last group of participants to arrive. Things had to be done quite fast. Jim started, very well – welcoming and supporting. After the introduction and name game they started with first activity in which participants walked up on the ridge, with blindfolds. There were some jokes from the trainers' side that did not really fit; fortunately, participants were easy about it. Hana did a joke which didn't really fit, and Jim compounded it. A long walk, took a long time to get to the place they planned the day before. This made them behind time schedule. Jim did icebreakers (four or five – too many: that was not necessary, group had been already prepared for more difficult activity). More sequence of communication activities (serving to point out some issues in communication), again longer than planned. Reflection was to be done by Jennifer, but Hana pushed herself in and occupied the space. Jennifer stayed outside and did not intervene. Then the blind triangle in the square activity, the most important activity before lunch, and due to the time constraint, not enough time to do it. However it went on quite well. Interesting reflection on the product – process: participants were satisfied with the results but identified lots of weaknesses in the process. So rather chaotic.

Afternoon – the calculator exercise and more reflection on the process done by Jennifer - participants incorporated some learnings into the way they planned the activity, and then there was discussion on of the situation (three groups, three questions on what was positive in their organization, what were the difficulties and what would be the ideal). Hana and Jim took the reflection, Jennifer assumed that Hana was doing well therefore backed off, however during the reflection Hana got lost and was adding more and more questions. Jim tried to close, but Hana asked more... Jennifer was aware of the time but did not want to step in. Stanka also looked at watch! Towards the end of the programme participants succeeded in the last two activities that strengthened their feeling of group achievement. Participants felt they had had quite a nice programme, but they probably didn't get out of it what they could have done.

Steam out: Jim OK, Jennifer and Hana asked questions. Enjoyable moments, frustrations. Understanding of what was going on.

Today: In a way they had played safe with activities they knew. Scared of making things more challenging in case unable to close it. Hadn't really agreed about communication strategy, about how and when to intervene and also how they are, whether they need help of one another or what to do when changes to the programme are perceived. They have

difficulties in tackling things in the reflections - they felt undercurrent issues however it was difficult to grasp and tackle.. Could they have achieved more? Yeah, maybe. Stanka felt that they could have done with more challenging activities (not necessarily high ropes), things which would have opened the group more and taken the facade away. And at the same time it would have been easier to address the issues since they would have been more visible. Jennifer and Hana recognised this. Jim said he felt they achieved what they could have in 5 hours programme, otherwise it may have happened that too many issues would have opened up and he just didn't want to open things. Feedback from them about Stanka. Learning points for them: Hana - find the way how to be able to check with one another on time, on stepping in, on need to be helped; to be patient in reflection not to keep adding more and more questions but allow participants enough time to think of what they want to say; improve communication - wasn't sure about how they could help each other. Jennifer - work out her own system on what to do when she gets frustrated not to block herself but be able to function; was frustrated, but tended to just give up and let things go. Jim - humour: keep the humour but be more aware and careful about the amount and its appropriateness. But apart from that, they worked very well and they managed!

And an observer's perspective:

My own impressions may be instructive here. I had observed 'snatches' of different exercises undertaken during the Day Course. I had witnessed different 'training teams' instructing, supervising and reflecting'. I had stood with some of the trainers as they observed what was going on. But my own meta-level reflection is that the relative deficiencies of the novice training teams throw into relief the advanced competencies of the trainers:

- their capacity to plan a coherent programme
- their attention to every detail
- their capability of responding effectively to unforeseen circumstances
- their implicit and explicit divisions of labour
- and their 'natural' boundary maintenance between the different levels of reflection, meta-reflection and feedback.

Only when one has another baseline against which to pitch what had, by now, become rather 'familiar' territory (the work of the trainer's team) can one really see the high level of knowledge, skill and competence that is required to execute a training programme pitched appropriately to the needs of particular participants.

With regard to the participants' [training team's] relatively brief accounts, what emerges forcefully is the diversity of thinking and learning in and around fundamentally the same groupings of activities. The training teams did not recount their efforts in preparing the programme, which were themselves arduous and sometimes conflictual, many running well into the night before the Day Course. These are, however, noted by the trainers who facilitated each group. The training teams themselves, while broadly satisfied with the ways in which they had discharged their responsibilities, testified to a quite staggering range of individual and collective learning points which surfaced during what was 'just' one day.

7 Looking to the future – personally and professionally.

Personal learning and development plans

The personal learning and development plan completed towards the end of the course in Samukas was a personal document where submission for 'public consumption' was optional. A basic pro-forma - inspired by experience gained during the ATTE course – was introduced by Mark. As a tool for reflection, it simply requested participants to think about their learning points, how they would put them into action, with whom and by when.

Ten participants provided their plans for the purposes of the evaluation, including two of the 'replacements' who had only participated in Samukas. Reading them indicates that they capture aspirations to do with project development, professional skills and personal development. There is certainly a strong sense of wishing to 'cascade' their learning from the course both outwards and downwards: through the establishment of networks and through the application of their learning with groups that they were working with (or hoping to work with). The time-frames over which these participants anticipated starting and realising their aspirations varied: from right now, to 'in the next five years'. For example, one wrote:

I'd like to become, in the next... 5 years... a trainer on HRE [Human Rights Education] & conflict resolution, working 70% as trainer, 30% on other things I'm now involved [in] - At national level but at international, especially with Arabic countries

Indeed, this participant's plan was strongly focused on the twin interests in training in conflict resolution and Arab culture. She wanted to participate in, and be a trainer on, courses concerned with conflict resolution, and also wanted to visit Palestine for six months and learn Arabic.

Another participant was more focused on her home situation and the groups with which she was already involved. She hoped to apply methods learned on the course for more effective team building with a view to establishing an international youth exchange. She also wanted to develop a new project about experiential learning ('this method is unknown in my country'). Others also expressed the intention to 'incorporate more EL [experiential learning] into my trainings, formal and non-formal'.

There was a strong thrust around maintaining some kind of network to allow for the continuation of exchanging experiences and ideas, and simply 'to keep the contact'. At a more personal level, some participants said that they intended to be more open about their feelings, to start to do sports again, and just 'to relax and start to preparing for the summer'. Perhaps the overall flavour of the plans was well expressed by the individual who said that he wanted to improve group development skills, get better in his work, and get better as a human being.

Project Development

Following Dirk's presentation on the 'project tree' (taken from the T-Kit on Project Management), participants had been asked to form simulated or real project groups. These were to consider priorities in project development, to present project development ideas and then, following constructive feedback and criticism from other participants (on a flipchart posted on the wall), produce a written 'international project description' which required the following information:

- Title
- Members and organisations
- Target group
- Objectives
- Basic programme outline
- Ideas for fundraising
- Timetable for action
- Other relevant information

Four groups were formed, each with either a theoretical or concrete project proposal.

1 Mission Impossible: bringing together formal and informal education

At least six different countries (eight individuals in all) were engaged in preparing this proposal. Targeted at both youth workers and teachers working with disadvantaged young people, its primary aim was to compare and share practice and then to improve competences in informal and formal education by using outdoor experiential learning as a tool for personal development. This might also establish a foundation for a support network across Europe (east - west - south - north) for both formal and non-formal educators interested in the cross-fertilisation of their methodologies.

The group anticipated the course taking place in the summer of 2004, involving two formal and two non-formal educators from each of between four and six countries. The course would comprise the following elements:

- Icebreakers
- Group building
- Personal development
- Intercultural learning
- Workshops including:
 - Sharing of information on educational systems and practices
- Methods:
 - Open Space Technology
 - Outdoor experiential learning
 - Role playing
 - Hike
- Transferring the method to different learning contexts

Sources of potential funding included the Soros Foundation, the EU Youth Programme (maybe Joint Action), Ministries of Education, the British Council, Teachers' Unions, sponsors, plus contributions from national governments for travel, and from organisations initiating the project, as well as participants' contributions.

The timetable for action was laid out as follows:

1. Fundraising in each country (this summer)
2. Circulating working paper in September 2003 (programme development)
3. Contact teachers' unions and youth workers for needs analysis
4. Preparation meeting in January 2004
5. Pre-meeting
6. Action plan for the programme
7. Programme in action July/August 2004

2 Conflict management

Six countries were represented in this group. Their overarching aim of addressing conflict management incorporated the following objectives:

- To enhance the skills of participants in conflict resolution so as to use in their work setting and personal life
- Preventative methods/measures to apply in conflict situations
- Looking at conflict at personal, local, regional, national and international levels - 'glocal', as they put it!
- Human rights perspective - educational perspective - conflict arises when human rights are violated
- Media influences
- Looking at conflict: individual contribution and external influences

The target group for the course would be trainers and educators: those who work with young people and those who can influence policy. The course would last for at least seven days. It would start with a team/trust building day, followed by a conflict day. This would establish the ground for reflection and theory and then a more open debate about the personal, national and global dimensions of conflict. Open space technology would permit other issues to be addressed, and the course would culminate with project planning and evaluation.

The group did not record likely sources of financial support for such a programme, although it identified September 2003 as the application deadline (for participation, not for funding!), November 2003 as the date for a planning meeting, and March/April 2004 as the time when the course would run. And it would take place in Italy, with around 25 participants.

3 Back to nature - leaving no traces

Three countries convened to develop this project. It was to be aimed at disadvantaged young people aged 18+. It had the following objectives:

- To raise awareness for the environment
- To experience the different dimensions of sustainable development (i.e. ecological, economic, human)
- Personal development for participants/trainers
- Intercultural exchange on these issues
- Working together

The programme, which would take place for '10 days in summer time' (!), would be divided into two main components: a hike and a workcamp (eco-project/village). There would be two days for getting to know each other and to prepare for the hike. During the hike there would be a sequences of outdoor activities (*leaving no traces*), as well as contact with local people and some 'solo' time. This would be followed by a free day. In the days of the eco-camp, mornings would be spent working together and afternoons would address questions and issues such as sustainable development, relationships and exchanges with local people (using the experiences of the hike), and making a bridge to the realities of life back home.

Resources for the programme might be secured from the EU Youth programme, perhaps the project where the workcamp takes place, Coca-Cola [?? - their question marks, not mine!], and a subvention campaign.

Their timetable for action was as follows:

1. Find out resources (deadline: end of June 2003)
 - Place and support organisation (hosting country)
 - Equipment: what we need
 - financial
2. Visit the place, assess possibilities, make an agreement
3. Make an application (August/September)
4. Preparatory meeting at the hosting place [March/April 2004]
 - Programme/activities
 - Invitation for participants
5. In own country, prepare with this group (of participants)
6. The Camp - August 2004

The group undertook to keep in touch by email and to inform each other about possibilities and support.

4 Creativity - via - experience: international youth exchange

The three countries (four people) involved in developing this project were all from the Baltic region. Their idea was to involve participants from these three countries together with two EU countries. The target group would be young artists/musicians, painters, photographers,

video-makers, and actors who were interested in working with children and young people with less social opportunities. The objectives of the course would therefore be:

- To create space for young artists to get new experience and exchange ideas on working with youngsters using art and experiential learning approach
- To make participants aware about new ways of how to work with youngsters with less social opportunities
- To create common performances with local youngsters

The programme would involve outdoor activities and inputs on experiential learning. There would be exchanges of information about the reality in different participants' countries: youth subcultures, and the working experiences of the organisations they represent. Time would be spent on what this group referred to as 'basic managers skills': teambuilding, group dynamics, leadership and communication. Workshops would be run by participants for young people [the group did not say *local* young people, but presumably their idea here is modelled on the Day Course in Samukas]. These would be part of the development and conducting of a common performance between participants and those young people. Coaching, reflections and follow-up would also be elements of the course, as would be learning about the country and its people. There would necessarily be a preparatory and an evaluation meeting.

This group felt that their idea might find financial support within the EU Youth programme, the Bosch Foundation and the Nordic Ministers Council. It also produced a detailed timetable for development - starting with a refinement of the project idea through consultation with their organisations back home, a staged development of an application form, the collection of partnership agreements, and a preparation meeting in March 2004. The course would be implemented in June 2004, with an evaluation meeting in August. Each stage in this timetable had a timetable attached and a lead individual responsible for taking it forward.

Other relevant information included trying to secure resources from 'alternative foundations' for preparation and evaluation meetings and to cover travel and visa costs. The group was also keen to discover if there was a way of getting visas free of charge!

Despite the diversity of ideas which emerge in these four project descriptions, it is quite evident that they are grounded - indeed embedded - in the experiences of Lustin and Samukas. In some respects, each group has come up with a unique proposal - different target groups, somewhat different aims, different funding sources and different timetables (though most anticipate running their project in the summer of 2004). What they all have in common, however, is a programme which draws in different ways on the ideas, activities and processes experienced on *this* course. They have combined the elements in distinct ways and they are, of course, quite embryonic. But in a sense a circle has been squared. Here we see the skeleton outlines which also informed, late in 2001 and early in 2002, this particular training course. The burning question is the commitment and capacity of these groups to take their ideas forward and to use them in these or other projects.

8 Promoting change – some theoretical reflections

Dirk De Vilder and Mark Taylor

At different stages during the course in Lustin and Samukas, we attempted to give different types of input and structure exercises which would help give participants food for thought about the theoretical bases of our work. So we thought it might be interesting to explore and develop some of those ideas in this publication. We don't claim any higher truth – we are just trying to find our way and reflect on these ideas as we go.

Back in the early 1990's we (together with others) had both been experimenting with introducing more experiential, interactive approaches into our international youth work training. We were convinced that bringing people into situations where they had to really work together would bring them closer to each other and create more fertile ground for good communication and learning. Looking back at the programmes of courses we worked on then, you can see a workshop here, a few team building exercises or some rudimentary inputs on experiential theory there. It was only in 1998, with the Roofonfire course, that we were able to have a concentrated couple of weeks “out in the bushes of Lithuania” with an international group of youth workers experimenting with a whole range of experiential learning methods in the countryside. Going on long hikes, confronting participants with problem-solving exercises, introducing some theory, cooking together, getting participants to create and reflect on their own workshops in groups – all of this was really exciting and motivating. And it proved to be the basis for other courses in Slovakia, Iceland and again in Lithuania over the next few years. And, as we went through the whole process and talked and argued about it all, we realised that there seemed to be a very interesting by-product of our work: people were also learning about each other's culture, their values, how they lived, what was important for each of them... And they were finding new ways to create solutions which drew on their skills and experience. We decided to think some more, to read some more, to learn some more and then we found our way to the title of this training course: Intercultural via experiential learning and outdoor education.

Geert Hofstede says that “culture is the way people solve problems”. Of course, this does not tell the whole story, but hearing that phrase was another strong motivation to us that we were on a track which could teach us something. Perhaps, also, these attempts to work experientially can provide different ways into intercultural learning, different insights and motivation to experiment further.

What and why experiential learning?

Experiential learning is learning through doing. It is a process through which individuals construct knowledge, acquire skills and values from direct experience (Association of Experiential Education 1995). Experiential learning occurs when individuals engage in some activity, reflect upon the activity critically, derive some useful insight from the analysis and incorporate the result through a change in understanding and/or behaviour.

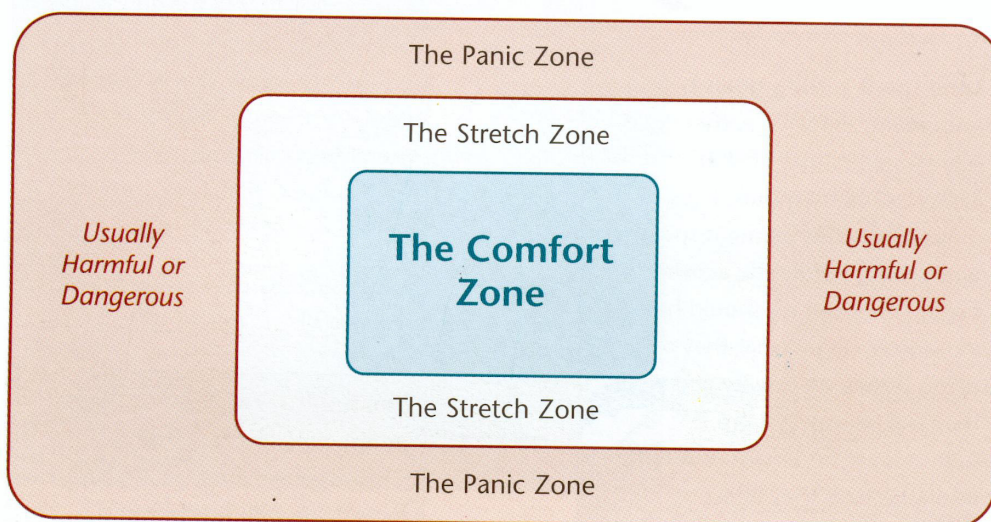
Experiential learning is based on the assumption that all knowing must begin with the individual's relationship to the topic. The effectiveness of experiential learning is derived from the idea that nothing is more relevant to us than ourselves. What experiential learning does best is to install a sense of ownership over what is learned.

It adds to the interest and involvement of the participants but, most importantly, it contributes significantly to the transfer of learning. *The ultimate result is that individuals accept responsibility for their own learning and behaviour, rather than assigning that responsibility to someone else* (Nadler and Luckner, emphasis added by us).

People develop and change over time as a result of their heredity, culture, their environment, education, experiences they have. As trainers or educators some of our greatest successes occur when we support, challenge and help (young) people to develop in a way that is personally meaningful and so help them to better make choices in life.

By experiential outdoor programmes we can further the individual's learning and development by establishing environments characterized by a state of dynamic tension. This state of dynamic tension is composed of two conditions: a sense of safety and security and a sense of disequilibrium, or imbalance. This imbalance refers to an individual's awareness that a mismatch exists between old ways of thinking and new information. In our context, an example of this would be when someone gets in contact with people from another culture and they behave in ways which are difficult to understand. It is a state of internal conflict which comes from our innate drive to act and to understand. Thus providing motivation for people to integrate new experience and knowledge or reshape existing perceptions. Piaget refers to these changes as the process of accommodation and assimilation.

One of our key theoretical starting points was the following model from Tuson (1994) - this really helped us in trying to understand some of the processes involved:



Through involvement in experiences that are beyond their comfort zone (via outdoor experiential activities), young people find themselves in an area that feels uncomfortable and unfamiliar - the stretch zone. By overcoming these anxious feelings and thoughts while simultaneously sampling success, young people can make their comfort zone bigger. Of course this does not happen automatically; it needs careful processing and attention for physical and emotional safety. When people feel too insecure, they risk to land in their panic

zone - a place where learning is not possible any more, because all they want to do is get back to their comfort zone as soon as possible.

If we look at this model from the point of view of the intercultural educator, then we can see the comfort zone as the place where you know your culture, you know how to act and think within it. The stretch zone becomes the place for interacting relatively safely with other cultures. And the panic zone becomes the place of severe intercultural conflict and the breakdown of communication.

So, to put it basically, what we are aiming to do is:

to create situations which help people increase the size of their *cultural comfort zone*, by testing themselves in their *cultural stretch zone*.

Generalization of learning

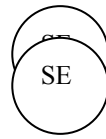
One of the main objectives of experiential programmes is to assist people in developing insight, knowledge and skills that they can transfer to their lives via a structured experience.

[In this context] generalization of learning is the application of what people learned as a result of attending an experiential course . It occurs when the learning in one situation carries over to another. (Nadler and Luckner)

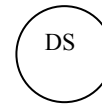
The more people digest, synthesize and assimilate what's happening to them, the more self-knowledge becomes available for learning and development. Increased awareness and understanding of feelings, thoughts and behaviours provide people with a better chance of making changes and choices in their lives and in similar situations in everyday life.

The following diagram attempts to illustrate the way in which thoughts, feelings and behaviours occur during experiential learning programmes. Processing (see below) helps young people to bring the circles closer together and optimally they become interwoven so that the awareness and growth that occurs during the experiential learning programme produces gains for use in other settings and situations.

Structured experience

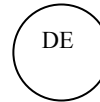
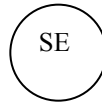


Different settings or experience



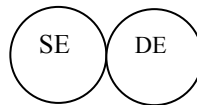
Awareness

Insight into one's
Story, strengths and
weaknesses



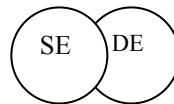
Responsibility

'This is my story'
Acceptance of one's
Strengths and weaknesses



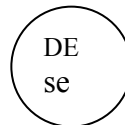
Experimentation

'I am writing a new story'
trying out recently developed
chapters



Generalization

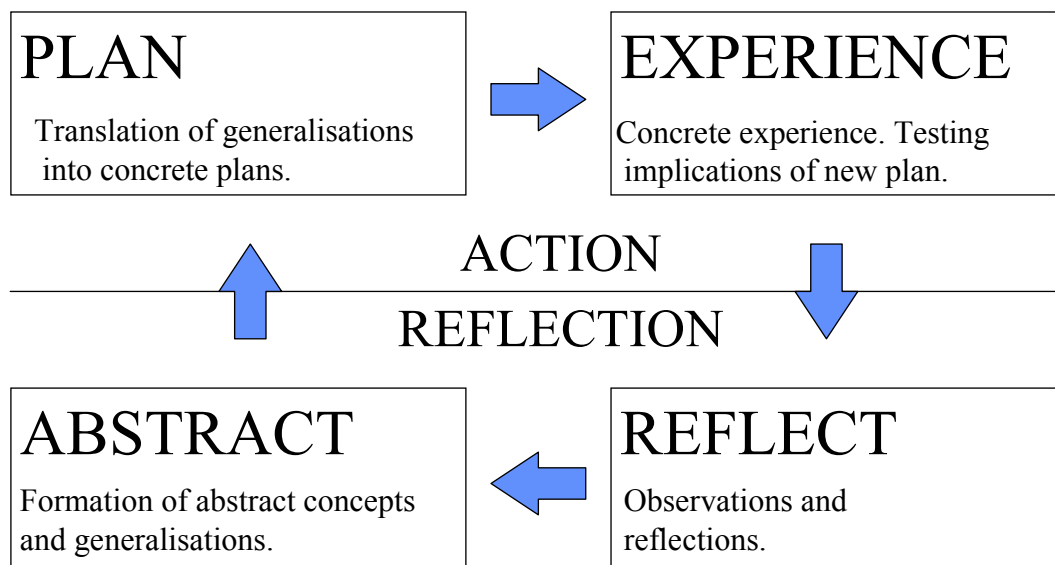
'I am living my new story
and spreading the news'



The experiential learning cycle

"Our lives are comprised of billions of experiences. What is most important though is not just the quantity and quality of these experiences but what we learn from each experience" (Cousins, 1981)

The basis of experiential learning is the idea that only doing (experiences) is not enough. It is the reflecting upon the experience and the learning from this experience that can lead to better understanding and/or change. Kolb's experiential learning cycle makes this basis clear.



Experiencing

Learning experiences are generated naturally in one's daily life, but they can also be arranged to provide opportunities for specific learning (group dynamics, intercultural learning etc.). Once specific learning objectives are identified many types of learning can be selected to facilitate their achievement. This structured experience is the stage in which participants participate in a specific activity, with a specific objective (e.g. to make people aware of the differences in a multicultural group). These activities can range from cooperation and communication activities to simulation games, role-plays etc.

If the process stops after this stage, all learning is left to chance and the trainers have not fulfilled their responsibilities for facilitating participants' learning.

Reflecting

The reflection process turns experience into experiential learning. People have experienced an activity and time needs to be allocated for participants to look back and examine what they have seen, felt and thought during the activity (e.g. how did we experience the differences in our multicultural group?).

Reflection may be an introspective act in which the learner alone integrates the new experience with the old, or it may be a group process where the experience gains a sense through discussion. Feedback of other participants can help to better see and feel these experiences and emotions.

Generalizing

If learning is to be transferred from the structured experience to other situations and settings, it is essential for individuals to be able to make links from this specific experience to everyday life. An essential aspect of experiential learning is the search for patterns. Patterns unite the previously isolated incidents. This search for patterns is undertaken to explore whether emotions, thoughts, behaviours or observations occur with some regularity. Is this something I recognize in myself? (e.g. Did I experience this before? Did I react in the same way in previous experiences in multicultural groups?) When these emotions, thoughts, behaviours or observations can be understood in one situation, this understanding can be

generalized and applied to other situations. Thus generalizations are to be made about ‘what tends to happen’, not about what specifically happened in this particular experience.

These phases of reflection and generalising are very similar to the concept of meta-communication advocated by Werner Treuheit in his recommendations for increasing the opportunities for intercultural learning. By sharing perceptions, emotions and thoughts about how we communicated in a particular situation with people from other cultures – we gain an enormous amount of new information and understanding.

Applying

For experiential learning to be effective, it is necessary for participants to use the learning that they acquired through participation in the structured experience and to make a link to the outside world. At this point, participants are encouraged to plan ways to put in action the generalizations that they identified in the previous stage. This procedure of shifting the attention from the structured experience to actual situations and settings in participants’ daily life makes experiential learning practical and meaningful. (e.g. What did I learn from this experience and ... what will I do with it?). As indicated in the diagram above, there is an arrow from applying to experiencing. This arrow indicates the belief that the application of learning becomes part of the background knowledge for the next experience. Participants can experiment with their new knowledge in the next activity, reflect on it, generalize and apply it, and the circle goes on...

Intercultural pause:

**Sit back; think about what you have just read.
What sense does it make to you?**

Processing the experience

The task of the trainer in this learning cycle is to facilitate the participants’ learning, to help the participant to go through the different steps of the process. This is called ‘processing’. Processing is best viewed as an activity that is structured to encourage participants to plan, reflect, describe, analyse and communicate about experiences and to learn from them - it can happen before and after each stage of the cycle.

Processing activities can be used :

To help participants to focus or increase their awareness on issues before the activity, or on the entire experience;

To facilitate awareness or promote change while an experience (activity) is occurring;

To reflect, analyse, describe or discuss an experience after it is completed;

To help participants to give feedback to their colleagues;

To reinforce perceptions of change and promote their integration in participants’ lives after the experience is completed. (Gass 1993)

Why process ?

In general, experiential educators and therapists agree that learning occurs through active extension and grounding of ideas and experiences in the external world and through internal reflection about the attributes of the experiences and ideas.

Processing enhances the richness of the experience so it stands out and apart, like the important lines of a page underlined with a yellow highlighter (Nadler and Luckner). The unique things people learned about themselves can be used again and generalized to other settings. When a new experience is processed, integrated and internalised (young) people are able to grow and as a result they have more choices and influence in their lives.

Change conditions

Here we adapt some of the thoughts of Nadler and Luckner.

How do people change and why is experiential learning such a powerful change agent? The answers to these questions lie in the understanding of the role of disequilibrium. The state of disequilibrium creates an unorganised effect or ego-confusion wherein a quality of disorganisation or dissonance predominates. To try to restructure or reorder this disequilibrium; to regain balance is where change in feelings, thoughts, attitudes and behaviour patterns occurs. It is in the process of getting lost, feeling anxious and uncomfortable (stretch zone) that people can learn the most about themselves and others.

Defences

From our childhood we have developed defence mechanisms to protect ourselves against feelings of anxiety. Common defences are : denial, blaming others, taking control, anger, aggression, perfectionism, intellectualising, humour... These defences protect us from feeling some of our deeper feelings such as fear, inadequacy, loneliness, hurt, rejection, or helplessness.

When people come to the edge of their comfort zone, their wall of defence gets activated, some deep feelings may be experienced and emotional arousal may be very intense at first. Without the normal defences intact, disequilibrium becomes a driving force which increases emotional intensity. At these times, new ways of reacting and feeling can be tried as a means to re-establish balance. This process of being at the edge of the comfort zone, getting into the stretch zone through a structured experience can form the basis for new approaches to thinking, feeling and acting.

But it is not such an easy process to break through this wall of defences. Some conditions can help to promote change.

Change conditions*Hope*

This condition exists when people view the experience as a way to dissolve some of their problems, as a way to learn things, to fulfil their needs or to heal their wounds. There is an expectation of a positive outcome or a possibility to attain their goals.

Effort

Encourage taking physical, emotional and behavioural risk by creating a safe environment.

Trust

This relates to an assured reliance or confident dependence on others, one's self, the trainer and /or the experience. Trust is not an automatic process. By building up the experiential process we have to develop and enhance trust.

Constructive level of anxiety

This condition exists when we bring people into the stretch zone through structured experiences. People feel in trouble, ambivalence, confusion, stress, discomfort, frustration. But the anxiety level has to be constructive and safe.

A sense of the unknown or unpredictable

This condition exists when people have a sense of mystery about what they are going to experience. There is a limited time for rationalizing and defending. Rather than giving answers to all the questions they will come up with, its better to encourage them to accept and deal with their feelings of uncertainty.

Perception of risk

This condition exists when people perceive the experience as either a physical, emotional and/or behavioural risk. It is usually a perceived risk. In most experiential programmes there is a large contrast between the perceived risk and the actual risk. One of the major components of processing is to help participants understand how they deal with these perceived risks and then transfer this learning to other perceived risks in their daily lives.

Edgework: from comfort zone to stretch zone

With care and attention, personal growth or stretching previous risky and unknown experiences can be tamed and incorporated within the comfortable and safe zone, thus enhancing one's self esteem.

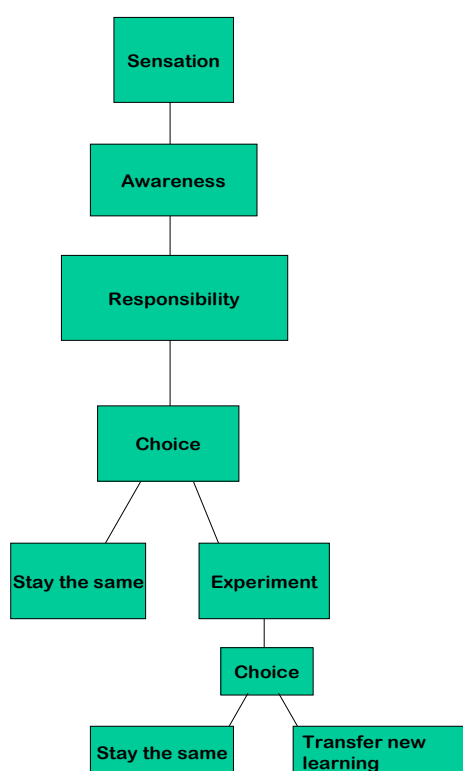
What happens at the edge of the comfort zone?

As people go closer to the stretch zone, their sense of disequilibrium increases and a sense of uncertainty exists. The wall of defences becomes prominent in an effort to control the sense of disequilibrium. People's feelings intensify at the edge, their physiological symptoms change, internal conversations with ourselves get louder... All these things happen at the edge and people break through to the stretch zone or turn back to the safety of the comfort zone. A wealth of valuable information can get lost when we don't support people to reflect on these moments.

Putting it all together - Levels of processing

Once at the edge you can help participants become aware of what they are saying, doing, thinking, feeling. In a further processing stage you can focus on whether this is a typical pattern for the person in order to make it possible to take responsibility, to own their patterns. Once people have taken responsibility you can encourage them to experiment with these new patterns and do something different at the edge. Because the edge components influence each other and are interdependent, making change in one component can influence the other components. And so participants can feel more empowered; there are more choices for them. They always have a choice: to go back; to move forward; to stay the same.

Levels of processing



Intercultural pause:

If you know Milton Bennett’s developmental model of intercultural sensitivity (if not, have a look at *T-Kit 4* for an introduction) then have a think about the similarities between his ideas and those developed above....

When people move from ethnocentrism to what he calls “ethnorelative stages” they display a lot of the same kinds of emotions as those who are engaged in “edge work”.

Interesting, isn’t it?

This is a work in progress – we are still discovering and challenging ourselves. And we would be really happy to hear your reactions to this chapter!

9 Five Threads and some overall evaluative commentary

The overall course incorporated five discrete, though overlapping threads, which had different levels of prominence at different stages during the course:

- Theories and Concepts
- Personal development
- Professional skills
- Project development
- Intercultural awareness and learning

It is probably unnecessary to go over these elements as a whole, but simply to point to some of those moments when particular threads were ascendant. Theories and Concepts were given more attention in Lustin although they were by no means absent in Samukas (consider Hoffman's Quadrant of personal qualities, for example). While this thread 'declined' as the course progressed, personal and project development assumed greater importance: the former more at the beginning in Samukas, the latter more towards the end. Likewise, intercultural awareness was intentionally made more explicit in Lithuania in recognition of the fact that it had remained rather too much 'under the water' in Belgium - although, of course, it had been working away throughout. All these threads were, inevitably, interweaving in different ways at every stage in the course but they very clearly converged during the preparation for, and execution of, the Day Course. This was when participants had to work collaboratively with their personal qualities (*who* they were in relation to who others they were working with were), display confidence in their understanding of theories and concepts (*why* they were doing what they did), develop a day-long project relevant to the needs of their particular group of participants (*what* they needed to do), and implement a programme using their professional skills (*how* they were going to do it). And all this had to be done between a 'training team' composed of individuals from different (cultural) backgrounds and with participants from a different (cultural) context: with all the attendant risks around (mis)interpretation of both verbal and non-verbal communication.

Different stages of development

The learning from the Day Course reported above demonstrates quite clearly that participants were all at different stages of development in relation to these five threads, and their development within each thread was different. Some had a strong grasp of the theoretical basis of experiential and intercultural learning; others remained unsure. Some had connected the 'belly and the head' to some degree; others were still struggling with this. Some have a refined repertoire of professional skills; others acknowledged great nervousness as soon as they moved beyond tried and tested and well-known activities. Some rose quickly to the challenge of implementing a day project (and are likely to take a more substantial project forward); others were much more tentative in their approach. Some had engaged enthusiastically in trying to spot and make sense of the 'iceberg turned upside down'; others found it difficult to see things beyond their own cultural perspective.

And of course participants had *arrived* in Lustin at different stages of knowledge, skills and attitudes on these fronts. They were not even starting at the same base. Thus it is difficult to secure any firm sense of their growth and development on these fronts during the course.

The best that one can distil is some sense of 'distance travelled' during the course, from the perspectives both of individual participants themselves and of the trainers' team. How far had participants apparently 'moved'? To this end, a very crude instrument was prepared, requesting participants to record their own progress and development on the five threads on a simple scale from 1 to 7.

The scale moved seamlessly through 'limited' (1-2), 'moderate' (2-3.5), 'significant' (3.5-5.5), to 'very significant' (5.5-7). Each trainer was also requested to record their perceptions of the development of each participant on each of the five threads. [Some were very unwilling to 'judge' participants in this way, and sometimes they felt genuinely unable to; the compromise was that trainers recorded only those participants with whom they had had, in their view, sufficient contact to make such a 'judgement'.]

It was clear that some participants gave considerable thought to this request while others completed the form very quickly. Likewise, some trainers (like any assessors) erred on the side of caution and clustered their responses somewhere in the middle. Others (like other assessors) made full use of the range, projecting a fairly critical position in relation to some participants and a strongly positive evaluation for others.

The five strands to be found in the tables: Theory; Personal Development (PD); Professional Skills (PS); Project Development (PD); Intercultural Awareness and Learning (IAL). Participants are not named. Trainers are referred to by number. I am referred to as "self".

Self evaluation

	Theory	PD	Prof skills	Proj dev	IAL
P1	2.8	2.6	2.6	2.4	2.4
P2	3.8	4.8	5	3.6	2.3
P3	2.9	5	5.1	2	3.9
P4	6	4.5	4.7	5	6.2
P5	2.9	2.7	4.3	1.2	4.4
P6	4.2	2.8	4.2	1.5	4.2
P7	2.8	2.7	5.8	1.2	2.6
P8	4.3	2.8	4.3	4.2	6
P9	4.7	3.4	4	2.1	2
P10	2.9	6.2	4.2	4.3	6
P11	4.4	6.4	4.5	2.7	1.2
P12	2.8	3.3	3.2	3.2	3.9
P13	4	5.9	4.8	2.7	6
P14	2.2	5.4	2.1	2.8	3.2
P15	5.9	1.9	5	3	2.8
P16	2.9	4.2	4.2	2.9	1
P17	3	4.4	5	1.8	3.8
P18	5	4	6	1	5
P19	3	6	6.1	2.6	4.3
P20	4.2	4.2	5.8	5.6	5.8
P21	4.3	6.1	4.5	4.2	4.3
P22	2.5	6	5	3	3.5
Averages	3.7	4.3	4.56	2.86	3.85

1 Concepts/Theories

	Self	T1	T2	T3	T4	T5	T6
P1	2.8	-	2.8	3	4.5	2.8	-
P2	3.8	-	5	5	4.1	4.2	3.8
P3	2.9	3	3.2	4	3.6	-	3
P4	6	4.2	4	3	-	-	-
P5	2.9	-	-	4	-	-	-
P6	4.2	-	-	5	5.3	4.7	3.8
P7	2.8	-	1.8	4	3	-	2.2
P8	4.3	-	4.3	4	-	-	3.7
P9	4.7	2	2.8	5	-	-	3
P10	2.9	3.8	-	5	-	-	5
P11	4.4	5	5.3	5	5	-	5
P12	2.8	-	-	4	3.8	4.8	-
P13	4	4.4	5.4	5	6	4.8	4.2
P14	2.2	3.8	0.9	3	1	-	2
P15	5.9	-	2.5	5	3	-	3.7
P16	2.9	-	0.8	4	-	-	-
P17	3	4.3	3.8	5	4.6	-	2.4
P18	5	4.5	4	-	-	-	4
P19	3	-	3.7	6	5	-	-
P20	4.2	-	6	6	5	4.8	4.5
P21	4.3	2.3	2.2	3	2	3	-
P22	2.5	2.5	4.9	3	3	-	2.4

2 Personal development

	Self	T1	T2	T3	T4	T5	T6
P1	2.6	3	1.5	3	4	2.6	-
P2	4.8	3.8	3.5	-	5.3	-	-
P3	5	5	3.9	5	5.8	-	3.6
P4	4.5	3	2.4	3	-	-	-
P5	2.7	-	4.1	5	-	-	-
P6	2.8	-	-	-	5.8	2.6	2.8
P7	2.7	-	1.2	2.5	4	-	-
P8	2.8	2.8	5.2	4	2.5	-	3.8
P9	3.4	2	3.2	6	3	-	3
P10	6.2	3.4	6.5	7	4	-	7
P11	6.4	5.9	6.4	6	6.8	-	7
P12	3.3	2.3	2.4	4	4	-	3.3
P13	5.9	3.8	-	5	6.8	1.5	4.5
P14	5.4	4	Neg	1.8	1	1.5	1.7
P15	1.9	-	1.2	4	4	-	3.2
P16	4.2	-	Neg	3	-	-	-
P17	4.4	3.6	3.4	5	5.2	-	3.3
P18	4	4.2	3.8	5	4.4	4.5	3.5
P19	6	4.8	5	5	6.8	4.3	4
P20	4.2	-	6.7	7	6.8	3	-
P21	6.1	2.2	2.8	4	2	2.6	-
P22	6	-	1.8	5	3	-	2.8

3 Professional Skills

	Self	T1	T2	T3	T4	T5	T6
P1	2.6	3.3	-	3	4.2	4	-
P2	5	4.8	-	5	5.4	-	4.2
P3	5.1	3.4	3	5	4	-	4
P4	4.7	4.3	-	3	-	-	-
P5	4.3	-	-	4	-	-	-
P6	4.2	-	-	4	5.8	-	4
P7	5.8	-	1	4	3	-	-
P8	4.3	4.1	4.8	4	-	-	4.8
P9	4	2.6	2.5	6	4	-	3.5
P10	4.2	2.9	6	6	4.3	-	4.6
P11	4.5	4.8	-	5	5.8	-	5.2
P12	3.2	-	-	3	3.2	-	-
P13	4.8	4.6	-	4	6.7	-	4.5
P14	2.1	2.3	1	3	Neg	-	2
P15	5	-	2.8	4	4.6	-	3.8
P16	4.2	-	Neg	4	-	1	-
P17	5	4.1	4.3	5	5.7	-	2.5
P18	6	4	-	6	4.3	-	4.2
P19	6.1	-	4	5	6.3	-	3.7
P20	5.8	-	6.3	7	6.2	4	-
P21	4.5	2.8	2.8	4	2.8	2.8	-
P22	5	2.6	4.2	5	3.5	-	2.2

4 Project development

	Self	T1	T2	T3	T4	T5	T6
P1	2.4	5	-	-	4	2.4	-
P2	3.6	3.2	-	-	3.2	-	5.3
P3	2	2	-	4	4	-	2.8
P4	5	5	-	-	-	-	-
P5	1.2	-	-	5	-	-	-
P6	1.5	-	-	-	4	2.5	2
P7	1.2	3.8	-	1	3	-	-
P8	4.2	5	-	-	-	-	4.6
P9	2.1	3.6	-	4	-	-	3.3
P10	4.3	4	-	5	4	-	5
P11	2.7	-	-	1	4.2	-	5
P12	3.2	-	-	1	3	-	-
P13	2.7	-	-	-	4.5	5.2	4.5
P14	2.8	2	-	-	1.6	-	2
P15	3	-	-	1	-	-	5
P16	2.9	-	-	4	-	5	-
P17	1.8	3.6	-	-	4.8	-	3.6
P18	1	-	-	3	-	-	4
P19	2.6	-	-	-	3	-	6.4
P20	5.6	-	-	4	4	3.8	5
P21	4.2	2.6	-	-	-	2.5	-
P22	3	-	-	-	-	-	-

5 Intercultural Learning

	Self	T1	T2	T3	T4	T5	T6
P1	2.4	2.2	-	-	-	2.6	-
P2	2.3	4	-	3	2.6	-	-
P3	3.9	4.8	4.6	6	-	-	4.6
P4	6.2	3	-	-	-	-	-
P5	4.4	-	-	-	-	-	-
P6	4.2	-	-	-	4.2	2.5	4.2
P7	2.6	-	Neg	-	4.6	-	3
P8	6	4.2	-	3	-	-	5
P9	2	4.7	3.3	6	4	-	3.5
P10	6	4.8	-	5	-	-	4.6
P11	1.2	4.6	-	4	4.3	-	5.5
P12	3.9	-	-	4	3	-	4
P13	6	-	-	-	5	4.5	6
P14	3.2	2.1	Neg	1	4.2	-	-
P15	2.8	-	-	3	-	-	4.2
P16	1	-	Neg	1	-	4.5	-
P17	3.8	3.8	-	4	4.6	-	4
P18	5	3	3.5	3	4.1	-	4.6
P19	4.3	-	-	4	5.3	-	-
P20	5.8	-	8	5	2.9	4.2	5.8
P21	4.3	-	3.4	3	-	4.5	-
P22	3.5	3	-	5	2.6	-	-

Reading the tables

The only useful way of 'reading' the tables above is to consider questions of 'coherence' and 'divergence'. Through scrutinising the tables, it becomes apparent that sometimes there is significant 'coherence' between participants' self-evaluation and the external evaluations across the training team. In these (rare) cases, we can be reasonably confident that participants had made the kind of 'progress' that is indicated. On the other hand, there are other instances where participants clearly saw their own progress and development quite differently from the trainers' team - or at least some of the trainers' team. Sometimes the participant indicates that they felt they had made good (or poor) progress, but *all* the trainers held a different view. Sometimes the participant's perspective was corroborated by some of the trainers, but not all.

Another way to look at the table on self-evaluation is to consider the 'coherence' across the different threads for each participant. In some cases, participants felt that they had developed across all threads; in others, they had learned significantly on some threads but in a limited way on others. This may not necessarily be any reflection on the course; it may simply be because they were already familiar with some elements and dimensions (threads) of the course - some more than others. Naturally they would feel that they had learned more on issues with which they were less familiar.

Finally, it is useful to consider each of the threads *across* the perspectives of all participants. Here it becomes apparent that some threads had a greater impact on more participants than others. Conversely, some threads had a lesser effect on more participants than others

(project development is the most significant case in point). To some extent this is to be expected. Whatever weight given to particular threads, one cannot expect an equal outcome across the board. Nonetheless, for any training team, including this one, such perspectives may encourage them to give more prominence to threads which appeared to have had less of an impact on participants - that is, assuming that the training objectives in the first place desired an equal effect.

A word of warning and a possible way forward

As noted, the apparent sophistication of the tables should not delude people: they remain a blunt instrument. But they are some kind of instrument, one which does secure perspectives from the people who count: the participant and the trainers' team. Trainers themselves may be interested to note the discrepancy between their own perspectives on individual participants. This is yet another way of 'reading' the material. It offers some basis for analysing and reflecting on the course. In order to properly exploit the learning opportunities of such an exercise, then the participants would also need to share and discuss the results of a) their self-assessment and b) the external assessments.

There are too many gaps in the tables. The reason is perhaps that neither participants nor trainers were forewarned that they would be asked to do this. Had they been so, they might have made more considered notes for this purpose alone, and the trainers might have paid more attention to a larger number of participants. The production of the information which lies behind the tables was a *post hoc* measure to try to obtain some sense of what had been happening on the course. They must be 'read' with appropriate caution and placed firmly in the context of the qualitative experiences described earlier in the text. But they may also point to a methodology of 'assessment' which may become increasingly useful as part of the external 'validation' of the value and impact of experiential and intercultural learning. We shall see...

14 Conclusion

The long term training course that came to be called 'Madzinga' was developed and delivered by a rather special team with a shared commitment to a vision. The programme that unfolded in Lustin and Samukas was an experiment in taking that vision forward – a vision concerned with experiential and intercultural learning, the development of skills and values and attitudes, and their application in international and intercultural settings. The experience was powerful for both (most) participants and the trainers' team alike and much of its effect - like the intercultural iceberg - almost certainly still lies beneath the water. This story of Madzinga has been an attempt to expose more of the iceberg and to place it within a wider context. That is a context in which there is increasing interest in the place of non-formal education as a vehicle for learning and development but, at the same time, continuing scepticism because of an absence of 'concrete' evidence about its value.

The story of Madzinga is no more than that - a story of a training course. It is, however, a story that brings together a variety of personal, professional and 'political' dimensions. These are threads which, in different ways and different combinations, influenced the participation and commitment of all who took part: the participants, the trainers' team and myself. I have recounted the story often in the first person because the 'evidence' of what took place was drawn from my own design, observations and recordings. Although a researcher with some belief in a capacity for dispassionate and distant scrutiny and analysis, I was an integral part of the process and could not divorce myself from it. The trainers' team constantly reminded me of this, as did many of the participants from time to time. My own *personal* experience is elaborated in a postscript.

Nevertheless, beyond these personal aspects, it is hoped that the story of Madzinga conveys important messages at both professional and political levels. There is little doubt that Madzinga significantly enhanced the professionalism of those who took part. It strengthened their theoretical knowledge and understanding. It assisted their personal development and self-awareness. It improved their technical and interpersonal skills. It broadened their capacity and confidence to develop international projects. And it sharpened their intercultural sensitivities. There were, of course, some limitations to such professional development, as evidenced by both participants' self-evaluations and the evaluations made of participants' 'progress' during the course by different members of the trainers' team. With hindsight, the trainer's team - during its final evaluation of the course in November 2003 - engaged in a critical appraisal of the numerous 'relationships' within the course: from the recruitment and selection of participants, through the structure and balance of the course itself, to questions concerning the impact of 'infrastructure' (or logistics) on the implementation of the programme. It was important to reflect on the course in this myriad of ways but it was equally important to be attentive to what the course had achieved. It had secured the long-term commitment of all but a handful of the participants, most of whom testified forcefully to the power of the experience that they had gone through. At a *professional* level, the trainer's team had a strong case for self-congratulation. It had invested its own considerable energy and experience in a 'flagship' course and had reaped the dividends.

Politically, the debate about the merits and impact of non-formal education will continue to rage, but it is hoped that Madzinga has taken that debate one step further in its favour. Sceptics will no doubt continue to question the value of non-formal learning, dismissing

Madzinga as little more than 'games in the woods' and challenging the methodology on which the evidence has been constructed. But those who are willing to be more open-minded about methodological creativity (how else might the 'evidence' have been secured?) will see that the experiential learning processes used in Madzinga produced massive challenges for those who took part - in terms of personal development, interpersonal relationships, teamwork and problem-solving. These are the so-called 'soft' skills that are proclaimed to be increasingly essential for 'life management' in the post-industrial age, if individuals are to pursue a positive path in their own lives and make a positive contribution to both civil society and to the economy. Only time will tell how participants' learning from Madzinga will be applied by them. What is clear, however, is that what was acquired by participants through Madzinga could never have simply been taught to them; it could only be acquired by reflected experience. Madzinga shaped and framed a repertoire of incremental experiences that, through conscientious planning and reflection, provided an intensive and coherent learning context for personal and professional development. That is the essence of non-formal education. And if the story of Madzinga illuminates that process for a few more of those who are sceptical about its value, then it will have served its purpose.

Appendix 1

Postscript: my own story

A sixth, less visible thread of the course was the need to collect relevant and useful information to support the publication. There was a seventh, less visible and more marginal, (part) member of the trainers' team: me. What follows is a personal account of that involvement – with its inherent tensions and challenges (for both 'sides'). The feelings about the writing of that story were a catalogue of emotions, both positive and negative: enthusiasm, curiosity, excitement, fatalism, frustration, irritation. The apparent low priority accorded to information requirements and the arguable lack of professionalism on the part of some participants in complying with this aspect of their 'contract' of involvement was a source of anxiety and sometimes irritation. The core message is that producing such a publication is not easy. It would never be easy because of the many levels of engagement and learning that have to be conveyed; but it is made much harder when information needs 'slide' and 'slip', and have to be demanded and retrieved (producing sometimes only a partial, and limited response). The following story is written with full acknowledgement of the pressures and time commitments of the trainers' team – there is very little space in a tough and intensive programme to give attention, let alone any priority, to the needs of a publication, which is seen to be so much further down the track. But it has been done – through diligent recording and observation, and through the collection of specific material (both theoretical and living, from participants and trainers).

My own role in the course was often extremely difficult and I appreciated very much the suggestion by the trainers' team that I should have the opportunity in Lustin to tell my own story of that involvement. Here I elaborate on some of the issues and moments at both personal and professional levels. The personal dimension is especially *interesting*, although the professional responsibility to produce a publication was especially *challenging*.

I was caught 'between two worlds' and often had great soul-searching about where I fitted. In my 'normal' academic and policy world, there is little time or space for *feelings*. In fact, I

am perceived as (and believe I am) one of the more sensitive and emotional players on that turf. I have even written about the often unacknowledged importance of emotions within the research enterprise, especially when you are studying individuals and groups whose life circumstances are pretty dreadful (see Williamson 1996). Yet during this training course, I am sure that I was often considered to be the 'rational research man', always in pursuit of material for the publication, never willing to divulge how I was feeling. That was the first point where I felt 'stuck'.

The second sticking point was the precise role I should play - and an absence, perhaps, of anyone with whom to share this conundrum. This had been discussed at the first preparatory meeting and then again during the days before participants arrived in Lustin. Was I a seventh member of the 'trainers' team'? Was I 'in' or 'out'? Should I contribute to the debate, or simply observe? After all, although I was not a 'European level *trainer*', I was a youth worker and knew something about experiential learning and group work. The trainers' team felt that I should get involved and engage with the course, at both levels of planning and practice. But when I did make suggestions and comment during trainers' meetings, this was sometimes a source of irritation to the others. My inclination then was to back off and shut up. Sometimes, however, my input was welcomed and valued - and then probably I went on to say too much!

The beginning

On the first evening, I joined in the icebreaker on the planks. I enjoyed that very much, tackling my own personal challenge which is a dreadful fear of heights, even at that relatively low level. But then I had serious doubts as to whether or not I should have joined in; none of the other trainers did. The following day, I simply watched and recorded the activities that took place. Then, during The Hike, I agonised over whether to walk alone or to engage in conversation with other hikers. Before that, however, I was anxious about surviving The Hike. I was at least ten years older than (some of) the trainers and twenty years older than most participants. I had not carried a loaded backpack for more than thirty years, and had managed to select the most decrepit one from the store. Fortunately Björn noticed that I was carrying all of the weight on my shoulders and put things right (one of my own Highlights!); before he did so, I was anticipating spending the day struggling along in agony.

At the quarry, I played the harmonica while some participants prepared some food and others climbed the rocks and abseiled. Was this too intrusive? Nobody commented, but it was yet another moment where I had no idea how 'visible' I should be. And, by this time, a couple of days into the course, I was already getting more and more anxious about how I could possibly *write* an account of what was going on. Words, whether description or analysis, simply could not capture the undercurrent of communication and relationships that were bubbling under within the group.

Back at the house, I always felt cut off from the rest of the group (and sometimes from the trainers). After all, I had an additional task. Not only was I involved - in some way - with the participants and with the trainers during their team meetings, but I was also trying to document and organise my 'field notes'. It was a gruelling task, compensated late at night or in the early hours of the morning by some music and drinking. I slept outside in the garden most nights, and sometimes in the pavilion where the social activities took place - perhaps a

symbolic statement of my *distance* and distinctive role from anyone else (although I have to say that I rather enjoy sleeping under the stars).

Being just outside the circle

Despite these challenges, I was enjoying myself. I have always liked being 'just outside of the circle': observing, recording, writing. Like the participants and the trainers, I had had moments where such 'distance' was difficult to sustain. I had been very angry with Onni in his attitude towards Marians at the river crossing. I had given my honest feedback to Laurynas about his place in the group during The Hike and he had not been happy with me for it (though this subsequently strengthened our relationship). But all the time, I was struggling with myself: to speak or not to speak, to engage or not to do so. Things really came to a head when Arturas reprimanded me very openly for *speaking* during the small group discussion of the trainer's role. He had not checked what I had said, or why I had said it. I was furious with him (though I love him dearly) and wanted to shout back or, second choice, to retreat and do no more. We sorted things out that evening (we could, I think, because of a deep mutual respect between us, as well as deep personal affection), but I had seriously contemplated giving up and going home. I was investing heart and soul in the course, at all kinds of levels, and I felt he had no right to treat me as he did.

That was my only real low spot, but there was always a constant anxiety about whether or not I was going to get the 'triangulated' documentation which would form the basis of the publication (my notes, participants' accounts and trainers' perspectives). The trainers kept emphasising the importance of the publication and the need to keep my needs in mind but that was often where it stopped: kept in mind and not in practical action.

Getting the material

I was not, however, unduly concerned. There would, after all, be another Phase. I did, nevertheless, start to get more anxious when so few Highlights and Lowlights from Lustin were produced within the time-scale requested. This had been a relatively modest request, and it was built into the implicit 'contract' with participants, but little was forthcoming. The trainers were just as bad. A couple of months after I had come home from Lustin, I had a handful of Highlights and Lowlights and my field notes. How on earth was I to produce a credible publication from that?

I aired my concerns with the trainers at the preparatory meeting in Lithuania. I have to say that it was wonderful to see them all again. Notwithstanding the 'professional' frustrations, the personal opportunity to spend time with those individuals was quite 'magical'; when Stanka described them as a 'dream team', I could only agree with her. Here was a rare group of people with a serious professional commitment to the work they do and a powerful personal chemistry. I have been privileged to spend this time with them. But this meant that it was particularly hard to press my professional agenda with them. They acknowledged, however, that the needs of the publication had not been given sufficient emphasis and they would think of ways to rectify this situation. The starting point would be to insist on the Highlights and Lowlights from Lustin being an 'entry ticket' to Samukas. Some hope! On arrival in Samukas, nine participants who were coming (and a further five who were not) had still not completed their reflection on Lustin. Moreover, three of the trainers had still not done so. I emphasised that I could only work with material that was provided; it was fairly critical to have as close to 100% completion as possible. And if we did not establish this

culture of 'compliance' in relation to Highlights and Lowlights, what hope was there to secure 'compliance' with any other written expectations of participants - or trainers. The trainers concurred but, as I discovered during the rest of the week, concurrence with the evident needs of the publication did not convert into energetic attempts to cajole participants (or trainers) into compliance. Things slipped and slipped and slipped - and my frustrations increased accordingly.

My 'safety valve', which stopped me 'blowing' completely, was Lucia. She had arrived early in Samukas and we had the opportunity for some quite lengthy conversations. These tended to concentrate on the strange role of 'rapporteur'. We had hardly spoken with each other in Lustin. Apparently, Lucia had 'not liked me very much', for no particular reason except she could not work out what I was doing there (she had arrived late in Lustin and had missed my opening explanation about the publication and my role). In Samukas, she displayed considerable curiosity about my role (and my feelings about that role). It transpired that this was because she had been asked to be a rapporteur on a training course and wondered what the 'job' entailed. I told her that it was a difficult and lonely task. You did not really fit anywhere: you were neither trainer nor participant. There was not another 'rapporteur' with whom you could share your frustrations, dilemmas and mistakes. There was not another 'rapporteur' to whom you could direct questions, seek ideas, test thoughts. The closest person I had for such a role was Mark, who was formally a trainer but was also familiar and experienced in trying to gather information and produce text. Mark and I had worked together in Belgrade and got to know each other there. The longer time rolled on in Samukas, the more I needed Mark as a sounding board and as a conduit to impress upon the other trainers that *written* thoughts, observations and reflections were imperative if a publication was ever to be produced. Mark also took it upon himself to 'hassle' some of the participants into honouring their obligations on this front. I want to thank him for that. But more abstractly, I also shared my feelings and frustrations with Lucia, and I want to thank her for *that*.

Time might be running out

I was less of a participant and more of an observer in Samukas. The structure of the course there comfortably permitted that shift of emphasis in my role, which had been more negotiable and negotiated in Lustin. I spent a lot of time listening to, and watching participants as they engaged in tasks, prepared and delivered activities, considered and debated personal qualities, and worked on their project development plans. All the time, however, I was acutely conscious of time running out and of the need to gather reports and reflections. I constantly emphasised my needs to the trainers' team, and these were recurrently relegated to the bottom of the agenda - and often deferred to the following day. Having (slowly) started to embrace the culture of communication favoured by the trainers (open and honest comment on feelings and issues), I found myself retreating into my 'researcher' role. I needed *documentation* from participants and trainers. I made the trainers aware of precisely what I needed, but they still did not seem to appreciate its importance. Relegation and deferral was still the order of the day. The free afternoon was set aside to consider the demands of the publication but by the time the team had fed back their perspectives on The Day Course (as they had agreed should take priority), time had run out once again. I disappeared into Vilnius, angry and frustrated. I may not have fully expressed my feelings, but they were there for all to see as I climbed on to the bus for the evening on the boat. There had better be time to gather trainers' views about the course *tomorrow* and to identify what further might be needed from participants.

I think that by then all of the trainers also acknowledged that time was running out. I prepared some evaluation forms (for both participants and trainers). These were, at one level, very simple: just a scale looking at 'progress' on a number of fronts during the course. The trainers did not want to complete their forms: they found it difficult to make 'judgements' - especially in writing - about individual participants. We had a forthright debate about this kind of evaluation. In their world, I said, it might seem invidious to make such judgements, but in my (other) world - the world of Brussels and bureaucracy - some kind of 'systematising' of evidence was absolutely necessary. I explained the concept of 'triangulation': the 'evidence' might be crude, but if it was sourced from three different angles (myself, participants, *and* trainers) it permitted some sort of synthesis and analysis which just might be credible 'out there'. It would certainly be stronger than a perspective secured only from one source or another. Rather reluctantly, the trainers completed the forms, albeit sometimes only partially (on the grounds that their knowledge of some participants on some issues remained thin). Participants also completed their self-evaluation and other material they had been asked to complete. But it took well into the night of the farewell party to collate all this material and to ensure that it was as comprehensive as it possibly could be.

Finally..

Prior to that final gathering together of the material, the trainers' team had met for the final time. I was already partly home, thinking about how I was going to 'handle' what was becoming quite a mountain of paperwork. But I was also very subdued, knowing that my personal aspiration (to spend time on one of these courses, with Dirk and Arturas) was over. All my personal expectations had been fulfilled. I had become very close to *all* of the training team. They, in various combinations, will meet and work together again. That is very unlikely for me, and I was filled with a profound sadness that this episode of my life had come to an end. I had consolidated my personal relationship with Mark (which is a tough but rewarding one). Björn and Stanka are two very special people, with particular skills and sensitivities. And, later that night, Bart and I hugged: many times, he probably felt that I was Mr 'bureaucratic' man, just as I sometimes saw him as Mr 'feely feely' man. But I had opened a small window for him to look into my world, and he had certainly enabled me to look into his world. Neither wants to go too far into the other's world, but we made a connection, as I think and hope I did with all the trainers, and I thank them all for a very special opportunity and experience.

And so I came home with that mountain of paper - to try to organise it in a way which would not only tell the story but also capture the diversity of feelings and the 'spirit' of Madzinga. Just going through the story again was a powerful emotional experience, and now I have had to run it through in my mind for a third time. Not only do I have some knowledge of experiential learning but I am also a long-time traveller in international contexts. After twenty years, one might think that the impact of such involvement would diminish, but it still has a powerful, personal effect on me. As I write, recollections of 'Madzinga' are sharp and detailed in my mind. And I was the one *supposedly* positioned on the outside of that experience!

Howard Williamson

Appendix 2

Information sources

Howard's field notes from Lustin and Samukas

Background

Background to previous courses (Dirk) - also on computer

Applications and selection of participants (Dirk) - also on computer

Background of participants (Dirk)

Profiles of participants (Howard, notes taken prior to arrival)

Funding (Dirk)

A model for building up an experiential learning process (Dirk)

Experiential learning - what is it? [xerox]

Lustin

Notes of preparatory meeting

Programme of 1st phase 19-29 August

Activities of 'other' group before the hike (Dirk)

Activities run by participants - some notes from participants/also Activities Handbook
(prepared by Charlie and Jennifer)

Trainers' role (Arturas) - also on computer

Methods and activities (Björn, Mark, Dirk) - also on computer

Some notes on rationale for activities

Group dynamics and development (Stanka) - also on computer

Awareness (Bart/Arturas)

Additional processing questions [xerox]

Coaching groups:

Stanka's: personal journals from Tuuli, Charlie, Karina

Dirk's (Karola, Marians, Jim and Saga) - some notes from Dirk

Highlights and Lowlights from Lustin:

Training team - Dirk, Stanka, Arturas, Bart, Mark, Björn

Participants - Hana, Vaida, Jennifer (which is an eight page diary!), Leen, Karina, Charlie, Laurynas, Bela, Tuuli, Lucia, Sergei, Onni, Kinga, Marians, Gillon, Saga, Delfs, Vida, Karola, Jim [nothing from Kristi, Kirill, Kobbi and Toto]

Summary of Evaluations re Lustin (Mark)

Phase Two

Something 'vaguely' connected from Jennifer, some notes (allegedly personal journals) from some of Stanka's coaching group, some notes from Dirk about his coaching group.....

Samukas

Planning/prep meeting and consultations with participants

Stanka's CD with an awful lot on it, including stuff from Lustin

Solo Personal Development

(Bela, Marians, Gillon, Charlie, Laurynas, Lucia, Karina, Leen, Saga, Björn, Grettir, and somebody called 'Margarita', with a poem on the back!)

Solo Poems

Multi-task activities and instructions

Day course notes by participants (and some client responses)

Open Space Technology reports

Project Development Plans

Personal Learning and Development Plans [Egle, Anon, Charlie, Tuuli, Lucia, Bela, Mantas, Marians, Delfs, Onni]

Participants self-evaluation of progress and development:

Grettir, Casten, Tuuli, Mantas, Vida, Delfs, Saga, Marians, Karina, Lucia, Jim, Laurynas, Onni, Jennifer, Egle, Leen, Hana, Karola, Bela, Kinga [20]

Summaries of participants' evaluation forms (Mark)

Evaluation meeting

Flip charts from brainstorming

Flip charts from Hoffman Quadrants

Conclusions flip chart.

Appendix 3

References

Lifelong learning memo

EU White Paper

Thessalonica Youth Ministers Conference

ATTE course - quality and curriculum development group

DeVilder, D. (July 1999), "Some thoughts about experiential learning", in Coyote magazine, edition 0. see: <http://www.training-youth.net/coyote00/experiential.htm>

Greenaway, R. (1993), *Playback: A Guide to Reviewing Activities*, Windsor: Duke of Edinburgh's Award

Luckner, J. and Nadler, R. (eds) (1997), *Processing the Experience: Strategies to Enhance and Generalise Learning*, London: Kendal Hunt

Nold, J. (2000), 'A process-experiential approach to Outward Bound', workshop presented at Outward Bound International Conference, Sabah, Malaysia

Otten, Hendrik and Treuheit, Werner (eds.) (1994): *Interkulturelles Lernen in Theorie und Praxis*, Leske + Budrich, Opladen

Richardson, L. and Wolfe, M. (eds) (2003), *Principles and Practice of Informal Education: Learning through life*, London: Routledge

Taylor, M. (1998-2004), Roofonfire – the Lithuania Report on experiential learning training course.
<http://www.angelfire.com/mt/Roofonfire/>

T-Kit series (especially Project Management and Intercultural Learning) from the Council of Europe/European Commission partnership on youth worker training:
<http://www.training-youth.net/tkits.htm>

Tuson, M. (1994): *Outdoor Training for Employee Effectiveness (Developing Skills)*, Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development. ISBN: 0852925492

Williamson, H. (1996), 'Systematic or Sentimental? The place of feelings in social research', in K. Carter and S. Delamont (eds), *Qualitative Research: The Emotional Dimension*, Aldershot: Ashgate

Appendix 4

Going further - Suggested reading, references and webography

Beard, Colin & Wilson, John (2002): *The Power of Experiential Learning*, Kogan Page, London. ISBN: 0-7494-3467-8

Very good introduction which pulls together theory and practice.

Boal, Augusto (1992): *Games for Actors and Non-Actors*, Routledge, London [original en français: (1989) *Jeux pour acteurs et non-acteurs*, La Découverte, Paris] – brilliant series of exercises!

Pat Brander, Carmen Cardenas, Rui Gomes, Mark Taylor, Juan de Vicente Abad (1995/2005): *all different all equal Education Pack*, Council of Europe, Strasbourg [available from European Youth Centre, 30 rue Pierre de Coubertin, F-67000 Strasbourg] – lots of ideas and activities for anti-racist + intercultural work

Pat Brander, et al (2002): "COMPASS" - A manual on human rights education with young people, Council of Europe

ISBN: 92-871-4880-5 Current state of the art on human rights education; contains background materials, exercises and reference documents. Also available in an extended version on the internet: www.coe.int/compass

Centrum Informatieve Spelen (1998): *Intercultural Games, Jeux interculturels, Juegos interculturels*, Leuven

ISBN: 90-75835-02-7 - the title says it all (in three languages too!)

Fennes, Helmut & Hapgood, Karen (1997): *Intercultural Learning in the Classroom*, Cassell. ISBN: 0-304-32685-2 Non-formal methods and descriptions.

Greenaway, Roger (1993): *Playback – A guide to reviewing activities*, Duke of Edinburgh's Award, Windsor

ISBN: 0 905425 09 X Very useful start at looking differently at evaluating activities (see his website too)

Hall, Edward T & Hall, Mildred Reed (1990): *Understanding Cultural Differences*, Intercultural Press

ISBN: 0 933662 84 X One of the best introductory chapters on looking at culture.

Hovelinck, Johan (2000): *Recognising and exploring action-theories, a reflection in action approach to facilitating experiential learning*.

<http://www.psy.kuleuven.ac.be/copp/-hov2000jaeol.pdf>

Dan Landis & Rabi S. Bhagat (Eds) (1996): *Handbook of Intercultural Training*, Sage.

ISBN: 0-8039-5834-X Useful and interesting reflections mainly from the USA.

Luckner, John and Nadler, Reldan (1997): *Processing the experience – Strategies to enhance and generalize learning*, Kendall/Hunt Publishing

ISBN: 0 7872 1000 5 What our trainer Dirk De Vilder calls "my bible"

Owen, Harrison: Open Space Technology: A User's Guide, 2nd Edition

- very detailed introduction on what OST is, where it comes from and how to use it.

Susan Schneider and Jean-Louis Barsoux, (1997), Managing across cultures, Prentice Hall

ISBN: 0-13-272220-8 Good for reflecting on practical consequences of working with different cultures

Mark Tuson, (1994): Outdoor Training for Employee Effectiveness (Developing Skills), Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development. ISBN: 0852925492

Although currently out of print, this book does seem to be one of the first places where the comfort-stretch-panic zones model appears.

Watzlawick, Paul (1988): The Situation Is Hopeless, but Not Serious (The Pursuit of Unhappiness), W.W. Norton & Company. ISBN: 0393310213 Get into constructivism in a lively way!

Howard Williamson (1996), 'Systematic or Sentimental? The place of feelings in social research', in K. Carter and S. Delamont (eds), *Qualitative Research: The Emotional Dimension*, Aldershot: Ashgate. Argues that researchers need to get involved in their research, also emotionally; questions the concept of "research neutrality".

Internet sites – a selection:

Active reviewing guide: <http://reviewing.co.uk/>

Very useful guide by Roger Greenaway to informal education resources, with a particular emphasis on reviewing and evaluation.

European Commission against Racism and Intolerance: www.ecri.coe.int

Contains a host of anti-racist educational and policy materials, including monitoring reports on each country member of Council of Europe.

Human Rights Education Associates: <http://www.hrea.org/index.html>

The Library section contains over 1000 full-text guides, curricula, textbooks and other documents that can be used for both formal and non-formal education in human rights

Informal education home page: <http://www.infed.org/index.htm>

Undoubtedly the best English language site on the theory and practice of informal education

Roof on fire! International adventure education training course in Lithuania:

<http://www.angelfire.com/mt/Roofonfire/index.html>

The on-line report of our first go at bringing youth workers together from different countries to experiment with experiential learning; includes methods, ideas and further links

SALTO: <http://www.salto-youth.net/>

The YOUTH programme's site for training, includes full text reports & quite a lot of methods.

Training-Youth: <http://www.training-youth.net/index.htm>

Useful site for downloading educational materials, including T-Kits on intercultural learning, project management, European citizenship etc and **Coyote** magazine. Growing list of links.

United Nations Peace Education site: <http://www.un.org/cyberschoolbus/peace/frame.htm>

Part of an enormous resource called the Cyberschool bus.

UNITED for Intercultural Action: <http://www.united.non-profit.nl>

Campaigning network of over 500 intercultural and anti-racist organisations, mainly from Europe but also world wide.

Worldwide Open Space page: <http://www.tmn.com/openspace/> Descriptions and stories of Open Space Technology – a way to empower groups make their own programme, visions and decisions.

Appendix 5

The Madzinga Team

STANKA Hederova is a consultant in the consultancy firm Deloitte and Touche in the Czech Republic. A former Outward Bound Slovakia trainer and consultant, she has a strong background in pedagogy and experiential education. She specialises in communication skills, training and development, performance appraisal and evaluation, teamwork, leadership and coaching. As a national level sprinter, Stanka knows how to lead from the front.

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HOWARD Williamson works in the School of Social Sciences, Cardiff University.

Throughout his life, he has combined training, research and policy work in relation to young people. He has published and lectured widely on youth work and youth policy in national and international contexts. He is Vice-Chair of the Wales Youth Agency and a member of the Youth Justice Board for England and Wales. He has contributed significantly to youth policy thinking and development within both the Council of Europe and the European Commission. He was recently awarded the CBE for his services to youth work. Howard's latest book is *The Milltown Boys Revisited* (Berg 2004), a follow-up study of a group of men who were young offenders in the mid-1970s.

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ARTURAS Deltuva is a consultant and partner in the consultancy group "Kitokie Projektai/Bespoke Projects" in Lithuania. He is a Psychologist and holds a Ph.D. in Social Sciences. He specialises in: teamwork (intercultural teamwork), leadership, intercultural communication, coaching and training of trainers, personal development. He uses experiential, outdoor methodology, open space technology, and other interactive learning methods. Arturas works as a freelance trainer for the Council of Europe, National Agencies of EU YOUTH and EuroMed Programmes and other partners all over Europe.

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BART Vertongen is a teacher in an experiential learning school near Antwerp, Belgium. He is a qualified gestalt psychotherapist and outward bound trainer and has wide experience with youth at risk, working with hooligans and streetkids. He has accompanied two kids at risk on hikes lasting four months from Belgium to Santiago de Compostela and from Vilnius to Leuven. In addition to being a fan of Tom Waits, Nick Cave and Frank Zappa he loves nature, being aware, his indian side and understanding. He has many dreams about Iceland.
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BJÖRN Vilhjálmsson is a project manager in Hitt Húsið of the Youth & Sports Council of Reykjavík Municipality, where he designs and runs support and empowerment projects for disadvantaged and unemployed youth. He is also a partner in "The Challenge", a training and consultancy outfit in Iceland. He specializes in experiential learning and out-door education, and other participant-centred learning methods, with emphasis on communication, teamwork, leadership and personal development. He has international (European) training experience since 1995 and has facilitated several training for trainers and other training seminars in that time. He is a member of the Trainer's Pool of the Council of Europe and the European Union and has participated in several Youth, Leonardo da Vinci and Socrates projects.
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DIRK De Vilder works for Outward Bound® Belgium, where he is a a trainer/consultant and in charge of the programmes for socially disadvantaged groups. Work for the Council of Europe has included being a trainer four times on the Long-Term Training Course on project management and educational adviser on study sessions. He has been involved in a wide range of training and consultancy for YOUTH National Agencies and the European Commission (being involved in more then 10 different courses). In addition to being one of the writers on the Project Management T-kit, Dirk has trained many people in international experiential programmes (MBA students, managers, teachers, etc). He is a founder member and former president of the Youth Express Network.
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MARK Taylor is a freelance trainer and consultant currently based in Brussels. He has worked on projects throughout Europe for a wide range of organisations, institutions, agencies and businesses. In addition to training and consulting activities, he has long experience of writing publications for an international public. Major areas of work include: intercultural learning, international team work, human rights education and campaigning, training for trainers, and co-animating the you@etv virtual platform for Cedefop. A founding member of the *Coyote* magazine editorial team, he is the editor and co-author of the *Intercultural Learning T-Kit* and his most recent publication is the *Evaluation CD-ROM* published by SALTO UK.

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Appendix 6

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