



SCATE



PROVINCIA
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Circles and Networks: People Choosing One Another to Grow Together

Guidelines for the Creation of Study Circles and Closing Remarks Emerging
from the SCATE Project

September 2006

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These guidelines are the result of the Partners' joint work and aim at assisting those intending to organise a Study Circles funding programme, as well as those wishing to participate in a Circle, or otherwise interested in lifelong learning in formal and non-formal contexts¹.

These are recommendations, obviously open to free interpretation, emerging from the experience of each Country involved in the SCATE project and from the discussions and exchange generated by the project itself.

The closing remarks on the paths to empowerment highlight a wider framework for the project's results and analyses, with partners reflecting upon future avenues possibly originating from the hybridisation of the tools studied within the SCATE Project.

¹ The Commission services working document "A Memorandum on Lifelong Learning" - Brussels, 30.10.2000, identifies three basic categories of purposeful learning activity: formal learning, that takes place in education and training institutions, leading to recognised diplomas and qualifications; non-formal learning, that takes place alongside the mainstream systems of education and training and does not typically lead to formalised certificates; informal learning, that, unlike the other two, is not necessarily intentional learning, and so may not well be recognised, sometimes even by those directly involved, as contributing to their knowledge and skills.

Introduction

These guidelines aim to promote the spread of study circles and other forms of non-formal learning. Our purpose was to create a user-friendly tool targeted at associations, local authorities and individuals interested in these experiences.

Three tools were identified by Partners at the start of the SCATE Project: Study Circles, Time Banks and Trees of Knowledge.

Other tools were then discovered as a result of the exchange of experiences at international level, such as the Chitalishtes, Bulgarian cultural centres (for further information in English - <http://www.chitalishte.bg/>) and the French Réseaux d'Échanges Réciproques de Savoirs (RERS) (<http://www.mirers.org/>).

It was indeed RERS that particularly attracted the attention of the SCATE Project Partners, as this is a solution incorporating some of the aspects of the tools analysed by SCATE, thus getting closer to the initial hypothesis of integration.

RERS rely on a simple principle: the exchange of knowledge occurs on the model of open reciprocity, every offer presupposes a request and each request is accompanied by a short- or long-term offer, similarly to Study Circles. Within RERS, similarly to Time Banks, only knowledge is exchanged and there is no money-based or labour-based relationship. This is why this tool is often mentioned as a reference throughout this document.

In our multi-faceted world, the wealth of offers and variety of proposals can only be seen as an enrichment.

No matter what tool is used and what type of hybridisation is chosen, it is important that the desire for knowledge remains strong and may find solutions that keep feeding it.

Empowerment as a Means of Co-Development for Popular Education in Europe

Olivier Las Vergnas, General Secretary of the International Network of Cités des Métiers.

Education and Training - between Transmission of Rules and Emancipation

For many centuries in Europe, governments, the clergy and popular social forces have worked towards the creation of partially regulatory and partially emancipatory educational systems, with the former allowing the transmission of traditions, rituals and frameworks of reference, and the latter being in response to more progressive purposes relating to individual or collective development of critical awareness and creativity. A wide variety of systems for the development of skills were thus shaped, depending on place and time, by feudal autocrats, popular revolutions and emancipatory or scholastic religions acting in Nation-States or in archipelagos of independent potentates.

The last two centuries have been marked by the creation first, and then by a strong standardisation of compulsory education, without affecting, limiting or binding, at the same time, the different forms of popular education.

On the contrary, very different social needs have consolidated them, such as keeping workers' lifelong productivity and claiming the free exercise of citizens' rights in democratic societies, with the movements of popular education in France or the Folkbildning in Sweden serving as examples and evidence of this.

Inventing a School of Chosen Knowledge

In actual fact, compulsory public education is often perceived by young people in our Countries as a painful obligation, which is neither motivational nor rewarding; nobody ever chooses what to learn in it. Today's school – conceived in an ambiguous context, between children's training based merely on memorisation, on the one hand, and social empowerment on the other – appears to some as a social refinery, where individuals only have the right to follow curricula which will pigeonhole them in their corresponding roles and social castes.

On the contrary, nowadays the definition of a popular education project may allow everyone to empower themselves and gain power to act individually and collectively through the building and sharing of one's own knowledge.

From this perspective, the issue of motivation and free choice of what one will learn is crucial: providing a vision, seeing a possibility of choosing what will become one's possession makes it possible to go from a pattern of passive acquisition of knowledge to one of chosen knowledge. As learning through active pedagogies is not seen as enough, the free will to directly build one's curricula is also claimed, by openly managing one's needs and motivation to learning.

The same may be said for the issue of recognition of the value of one's knowledge and of the possibility of exchanging it, which allows, at the same time, the building of new pedagogies and new outlooks on the relationship between knowledge and power.

Although non-school forms of education exist in all our Countries, all focusing on these aspects, in the last few decades, only few initiatives have paradoxically developed to favour their joint development.

And yet, compulsory public education in our Countries underwent a variable structuring process, depending on political and religious influences. Indeed, popular education systems, somewhat acting as a negative imprint of formal education, are today deeply affected by these specific traits, especially considering that they have only been partially standardised and normalised by the policies of the individual Countries and of the European Union.

A seminar on the theme of diversity of models of popular education was recently held in France (Paris, 28 -30 June 2006, Study group on the history of adult education²).

Following is the introductory speech by Francoise Laot (GEHFA) : “Economic, political, social and cultural changes associated with modernisation processes throughout Europe all impacted upon thinking and action with regard to the organisation of adult education for the ‘popular’ or ‘working’ classes.

A key factor in the European-wide debate about the education of citizens was the increasingly conflicting relationships between the initiatives by middle-class religious and philanthropic organisations to organise adult education for the popular classes, and the increasing insistence by working-class and women’s organisations upon the right of workers to organise independent adult education for themselves.

In different national contexts, the ideological construction of the social question became a complex struggle for

² See <http://www.gehfa.com/SeminaireEuropeen.htm>

access to the public sphere and the control of 'popular education'. 'Knowledge is power' became an important ideological banner which was carried by many protagonists in the fight against repression and the struggle for collective emancipation.

The nineteenth century was a highly significant period in the trans-national and cross-cultural exchange of initiatives, experiments and experiences. It was a period of significant trans-European adult learning movements. Recounts of visits to other countries, personal diaries, biographical accounts, publications, books and international conferences were all witnesses to the shared interest in 'educative resolutions' of the social question and the reality of trans-European educational movements. Common themes in such exchanges referred to specific institutional initiatives such as Popular Universities, University Extension, Folk Universities, Folk High Schools, Study Circles, the Popularisation of Scientific Knowledge, Workers' Education Associations, People's Homes, educational travel, and Co-operatives.

Of particular importance in such initiatives was the widely-shared emphasis upon solidarity and collective learning in the sphere of associational activities. This became manifest in the importance given to collective learning in the every-day lives of working men and women outside of formal educational institutions. The organisation of adult education was more often a question

of creating sociable, mutual and collective learning which comprised highly innovative forms of non-formal and informal learning related to wider issues of social participation and democracy. These diverse forms of learning shared a significantly high level of associational identity and an understanding of adult education practices as 'learning together' in terms of both sociability and solidarity."

SCATE - Reflecting a Dual European Tradition

The SCATE project thus makes a historical tradition inscribed in the logic of emancipation topical. Indeed, it has the objective of promoting the exchange of non-academic educational practices in Europe, and it combines several complementary logics implemented within small groups of learners who draw from the practices outlined in the project and from those relating to knowledge exchange.

Such initiatives are set within non-formal and informal learning contexts and have led to the implementation of other specific networks.

In reality, although these types of education rely on similar values, such networks have little working interaction with each other. That is why we have suggested promoting the mutual knowledge of these practices in Europe as well as studying the opportunity to share learning and exchange methods.

Empowerment – a Goal-Oriented Concept

As can be deduced from the title, SCATE - Study Circles, a tool for empowerment, the SCATE project is centred on empowerment. It has a well-defined scope, focussing on a final goal, and therefore has the merit of clearly expressing the expected benefits.

In fact, it is different from many other projects, seminars and networks which define themselves through methods (personalised pedagogy, mutual knowledge exchange, points of access to self-education) or tools (cyberbases, digital multimedia libraries), or even names that are not very explicit in relation to the reality they reflect (Città dei mestieri – Cités des Métiers).

Empowerment - a Tool to Fill the Gap between Passively-Accepted Time and Chosen Time

Whether we like it or not, our memories of school lead many of us to classify education as effort and struggle. On the contrary, cultural places (museums, exhibition centres, technological spaces) provide pleasant environments for the acquisition of knowledge.

As a matter of fact, we see that these places, in relation to the time we freely have available, i.e. the chosen time, do not generate, with only few exception, innovative practices of adult education, which may be linked to lifelong learning or to one's working life. This issue leads us to reflect on the difference between pleasure and usefulness. To talk about the educational purpose of a cultural place in connection with chosen time means going against the rules, as, generally speaking, the term "education"

is linked with the time which is passively accepted, and cultural practices are connected with the chosen time.

Reintroducing Emancipatory Knowledge

On the contrary, the idea of emancipatory knowledge goes beyond this split and enables to fight against the image of sufferance that tends to be associated with each educational activity linked to work, on the one hand, and the image of futility which may be associated with activities linked to the chosen time, on the other.

In light of this, the Project's founding choice to emphasise empowerment – a cross-sectional concept, which is neither linked with sufferance nor with leisure – reinforces the development of those networks that are between self-teaching and institutionalised lifelong learning.

The knowledge society that we are all looking forward to is taking its first steps.

Declarations of intent certainly abound; however, empowering practices for the sharing of knowledge are still marginal. They are exposed daily to the attacks of a three-fold desire to commoditise all activities, normalise all utopias and calculate all investments indefinitely. By voicing loud and clear the ambition to set empowerment as a priority, and by showing the strength of the Swedish experience as well as the networks' variety and complementary nature, SCATE becomes part of the toolbox used to counteract this planned decline in popular education.

Study Circles in Genoa, Italy

Study circles are a form of spontaneous aggregation of people wishing to study in depth a topic or an issue and cannot find the adequate training

course to meet this need. At times, the interest is shared by a group of people who already know each other, other times people look for individuals who may share the same interest and are willing to investigate it together.

Within the context of the SCATE Project, funded by the EU and coordinated by the Province of Genoa, the exchange with other European Countries has emphasised different experiences which have led to the definition of good practices in the creation of study circles.

Five Prerequisites for Designing a Study Circle

Participants should be willing to invest their time and become assets for one another in triggering learning paths aimed at individual and collective cultural growth.

The group should consist of a minimum of five to a maximum of fifteen people, with a circle's duration of not less than fifty hours.

Time should mainly be organised into self-learning and mutual and cooperative learning, also providing for the involvement of experts, if needed.

The programme of activities should be defined within the project, and should include not only theory, but also experiments, workshops, as well as practical and motor activities.

The results should be popularised among the local community.

How to Organise a Study Circle

A Study Circle may be promoted by a body or an association, but it may also informally originate from the idea and goodwill of one or more individuals.

In both cases, the interest underpinning the circle should be shared by at least five people, while the maximum number of participants in each circle should not be above fifteen.

There should be the possibility, for anyone wishing to do so, to sit in on a meeting. This category of people includes all those who, although they are not officially registered as participants in the circle, may feel the need and desire to participate, any time they wish to do so.

The purpose is to involve all those who, for various reasons, are left outside of mainstream education and training opportunities.

The circle's and its participants' interest may revolve around various themes which may be rooted in the most diverse fields. These may range from the study of new technologies to traditional agricultural tools, and recipes from all over the world; from folk dances to writing techniques. All ideas are welcome.

Once the topic and circle participants are established, the bureaucratic aspects should be tackled, firstly by obtaining the necessary paperwork for presenting the project, where applicable.

How Is a Study Circle Financed?

An announcement for the financing of Study Circles should contain various deadlines by which to present the project.

The funding of circles may occur through the issuing of a voucher related to the study circle, made out to the main contact or body promoting the project, on behalf of the Circle. The voucher, which is granted as a contribution to expenses, may cover up to the amount agreed when the project was

approved, and anyhow, should not be above the maximum amount set by the organiser.

Drawing up a project and a programme of possible activities is very useful and necessary when funds are provided.

What Happens Once the Project is Presented: the Start of Activities

An evaluation committee decides how many projects are actually consistent with the essence of the circle and what each may score.

Once the projects are approved, some time is needed (approximately thirty days) to start the activities and arrange them in compliance with the agreed project, and therefore in line with the philosophy of Study Circles.

The group members listed in the project should be present in all scheduled meetings. The contribution that each participant can make to a circle should, indeed, be one of the assessment criteria used to approve the project.

Any changes to the initial make-up of the group should be allowed, for obvious reasons, but always in compliance with the essence and competences of the initial group.

Activities will be organised, managed and shared fully in the interest of each circle member, enabling everyone to freely express their needs and desires, as well as presenting themselves as a precious asset for the entire group.

As already mentioned, anyone wishing to do so, should be allowed to sit in on meetings. More generally, the circle should be a free space, open to those who think they have something to share or invest in that specific context, even if it may be a one-off visit or simply a listening experience.

How Are the Activities of a Study Circle Monitored?

During the different stages of development of the Circle's activities, monitoring is important in order to verify both organisational aspects and any critical moments, as well as the smooth running of each individual's contributions within the working group.

Some 'sample' circles may be visited directly at their premises by an operator. Compliance with the project's guidelines, as well as each individual's motivation, interest, and degree of satisfaction are checked, together with the dynamics within the group and the members' willingness to tell their experiences.

At the end of this process, it is important that each circle generates a final report, containing a detailed account of the experience that was carried out, the working methodology adopted, each one's contribution, expenses borne, outputs and outcomes.

Moreover, each participant is given an "Individual Monitoring" questionnaire to assess the individual's degree of satisfaction in relation to the activities carried out and the relationships established within the group. Finally, it is useful to assess one's interest to participate again in similar initiatives and/or learn about other circle experiences.

Periodical collective meetings should be organised for the Coordinators of Circles once they are over. These meetings can be a valuable opportunity to share and exchange different experiences.

The Importance of Dissemination

Each circle will be in charge of organising their own publicity campaign and dissemination of information about past and/or planned activities.

Each circle can, indeed, decide to hold seminars and public events involving people outside of the group indicated in the project.

Moreover, part of the funding is, sometimes, specifically directed to the dissemination campaign through the development of information posters, brochures and leaflets.

It often happens that a circle may decide to create its own web page where to explain and report on the work carried out by the circle.

Study Circles in Sweden

Hélène Armfelt- Hansell, AnnaCarin Borgebo, ABF, Sweden

The Swedish Study Circle phenomenon is the result of the development of traditions and culture during more than 100 years. It was created out of the need of the working class, and during the last century different national federations, founded about 20 study associations based on political values. The study circle was, beside the center of learning, also an important place for meetings and social gatherings. This is seen as in almost every city and village a “Public House” (Folkets Hus) was established.

Today (2006) there are nine study associations, the largest and oldest is, ABF in English WEA, Workers Educational Association, founded in 1912 by The Social Democrats, The Trade Unions Confederation, and The Consumers Cooperative.

Each study association has its own marked profile as well as target groups depending on which popular movements/organizations that are members of the association. Altogether the Study Associations have more than 270 member organizations. For example ABF is today owned by approximately 60 national member organizations, which together govern and influence the main focus and goals of ABF on local, region, and national levels. The interest and need of Liberal Adult Education have during the years fluctuated with changes in society and people’s need.

The activities within the new concept, “Study associations”, were soon partly funded by the government, as it realised the opportunity that through study circles increase the level of knowledge in the country, and defend the idea and knowledge of democracy. Beside the government grants the associations now also get subsidies from regional and local municipalities. Today the state has established the following intent and conditions to receive public funding:

- People shall be given the opportunity to influence their situation in life
 - and take part in social development
- Democracy shall be strengthened and developed
- Interest in culture shall be broadened
- and culture participation and personal creativity shall be promoted

From the very beginning the study circle was designed to be a tool for people, and to facilitate access to education. The goals were to learn about society, human rights, equality, develop skills and knowledge in democracy, meeting techniques and so forth through exchange of knowledge and discussions. The general expression for this form of adult learning is in Swedish called Folkbildning, in English often translated into Liberal and Popular Adult Education. In the following text we have chosen to use the word Folkbildning since the word cannot be translated in a good way.

Today, the work in Study Associations is subordinated to The Swedish National Council of Adult Education (a non-profit association for the Liberal Adult Education organisations), which is entrusted by the government to distribute grants to the associations. The main goals, stated by council, say that Folkbildningen shall prioritise activities that aim to

bridge educational gaps, and address those who are educationally, socially and culturally disadvantaged. Particularly important target groups are, those of foreign descent, the disabled people and the unemployed.

The study circle is the main component of the Study Associations activities, which also includes: courses, culture events, union education, organization development, projects etc. It is known to give; voice to people who otherwise would have been quiet, hope to the oppressed, as well as opportunities to those who otherwise would have appeared as failures. It also gives self-confidence to the insecure, and change passive individuals into active people. The strength of the study circle emanates from every participant's unique experience in life.

In Sweden there are different kinds of Study circles; Circles to the public, (have employed leaders, and tuition fees) Circles among friends, within the member organization or Circles among friends for friends (have non-paid leaders and no tuition fee). The circle can take place wherever it is suitable for the subject and the group. Most study association units have their own premises to be used for Circles to the public. Circles among friends normally they prefer to find places by themselves. Some even prefer to sit at home by the computer and participate in the newest adaptation of the study circle to modern society, called Flexible learning, where the work mainly is carried out using Internet. These could be either a Circle to the public or a Circle among friends.

Every year the nine study associations together organize about 310 000 study circles all over the country, with about 2,5 million participants.

Olof Palme, the former prime minister of Sweden (murdered in 1986), has once said that: "Sweden is to a fundamental degree a study circle democracy. It is through study circles that generations have trained themselves in critical analysis so as to be able to reach reasoned decisions, working together without abandoning their ideals in the process. It is often in study circles that proposals for change in society have been first considered."* The study circle is and has always been a part of the work within political parties and the inner work of the circles guaranteed democracy.

What you will find on the following pages is a very short description of how the study associations in Sweden operate the study circles. Even if you do not have a study association or a member organization to back you up, I hope it can give you some useful ideas for your work with study circles and the life long learning process.

Starting a study circle

An example on how to start a study circle in Sweden

Gustav wants to share his knowledge in fly binding for fishing. He has heard about Study circles and the different alternatives.

a/ He can look for a study association based on the same values as his, in this case he chooses ABF.

b/ He can, within the local UN-organization (member organization of ABF) of which he is a member, find some people sharing his interest and desire to learn.

c/ He can talk to some friends he knows are impressed by his flies, and if they want to and are interested, he offers them to start a Study circle

A/ Study circles to the public

have employed leaders and a tuition fee In general the participants do not know each others at the start

Gustav calls the local ABF unit and offers his knowledge. After a first meeting with an administrator he is invited to an “Introduction meeting” where he will get information about, The values and ideas of ABF, How to work with Folkbildning, and the adult learning process. He offers to have one circle in daytime and one in the

evening. The frame of the circle is decided upon and after that the circles are enlisted in the study program pamphlet. People interested in Fly binding, contact ABF to register for the circle.

One to two weeks before start, Gustav gets a participants list of names from the ABF office. A notice to attend is sent to the people who have enrolled to the circle, with information about day, time, place, amount of hours, leader, estimated costs for materials, and maybe a list of materials to bring. An invoice will be included which has to be paid before the start of the circle. The best way, however is if the leader has the time to personally call each participant and welcome him or her to the circle.

B 1/ Study circles among friends - member organization, does not have a paid leaders, or tuition fee. In general the participants are familiar with each other

Gustav decides to talk to the local UN-organization. He is advised to talk to the study organizer and together they introduce the idea at the next member meeting. If there is an interest among the members to run the circle, Gustav is given the responsibility to decide the frame of the circle (place, day, time), and report to the study association (which can assist with rooms, material etc) and decide necessary routines like where to enroll; the study organizer, Gustav or to the study association and other. The study organizer or Gustav sends an invitation when it is time to start.

B 2/ Circle among friends – no organization

The participants know each other, no paid leaders, no fee.

Gustav talks to eight of his colleagues whom he knows admire his flies, and want to learn about fly binding. Together they decide to start a study circle, and Gustav is asked to contact ABF for more information, assistance to find a suitable workshop, and help to order copies of a fly binding book.

Planning the circle

The First meeting - the most important session

Without a good start the participants will quit and not come for the next session. Therefore is it tremendously important to make the participants feel comfortable, at ease and secure from the very first moment. As a leader you have to ask yourself a number of questions like: How can I best make the participants feel welcome and relaxed? What can I do about the room? How is it furnished and decorated? Does it create a friendly, warm and inspirational atmosphere? What about accessibility, Lights, and Welcome signs?

For a session that lasts longer than an hour and a half, a fruit/coffee break is recommended, which also needs some planning ahead. Many times the relaxed atmosphere at a coffee break opens up for deeper and more relaxed discussions.

To make the participants feel that they are a part of the circle, it is a must that each individual, at the first session, say something no matter how insecure and shy they are, so that everybody gets a chance to hear his or hers own voice speak loud in the group. It is also important to remember that nobody should leave the session without knowing the names of at least two persons in the group, and has agreed on the goal/s of this specific study circle.

Guide to the leader – step by step

Below you find an recommendation to a “Study circle frame” to be used in group with people who meets for the first time.

First session

Step 1 - welcome

Welcome each person individually, shake hands, and introduce yourself.

Step 2 - introduction

Make a short introduction of the frame of the circle, together with practical information, and a presentation of the study association.

Step 3 – get to know each other

Let the participants get to know each other. The importance of an atmosphere that makes the participants feel secure and relaxed cannot be stressed enough. There are a number of different methods to accomplish this.

Step 4 – the work in a study circle

Describe briefly the idea of and how to work in a study circle, and underline the importance that everybody has responsibility for the learning process, study circle leader as well as participants. This is a learning process in which all participants' knowledge and voices has the same value and importance.

In each group you will always find people who expect the leader to work as a teacher, and the circle to be a class. For them to be able to understand the difference of this life long learning process, the leader has to be very informative of “the study circle way”.

Step 5 – goals and expectations

Make an inventory of the individuals' goals and expectations. To let the participants understand that they are entitled to be a part of the decision-making it is very important to make time for this discussion in which everyone's new ideas must be listened to. The best way is to let the participants begin by formulating their individual set of goals/ expectations on a piece of paper. In the next step, thoughts and ideas are discussed together in the big group; "What do I want, and what can we all agree on?" Together the participants decide on main goals for this specific circle. Sometimes it is necessary to give time to reflect upon the ideas until the next session.

Step 6 - materials

Based on the goals - look at the materials, and discuss what is most suitable for the purpose of the circle. An important part in the life long learning process is to get the participants involved in looking for alternative sources of knowledge "outside"; learning visits, experts to invite, Internet, movies etc. There is actually no limitation in finding information, besides the group's economy and fantasy.

Step 7 - Plan of work

In some literature made specifically for Study circles, there is an approved Plan of work included. When other material is used, like in most arts and crafts circles, the group has to decide on their own Plan of work, based on the group's goals and expectations. At this first session, a draft of the plan should be written, to be discussed and established at the next session. It is the leader's responsibility that each participant has been given opportunities

to be active in making the Plan of work. To take an active part in the plan will make every one aware of his or hers responsibility for their own learning process, as well as the goals the group have chosen to work with.

This laid out plan is not permanent, it can be changed whenever the participants, together, finds new interest they want to focus the learning process on, and together agree to take another path necessary to reach this.

It is recommended that new leaders discuss the draft/ideas with the administrator before it is established in the group.

Step 8 – introduction to the subject

Now everyone is eager to get started with "The subject", and there must be enough time to try or test the activity.

Step 9 – next meeting

Together the group plans the next session; contents, structure and practical matters. Sometimes it can be a good idea to decide on an assignment to be done at home, if the participants all agree on this.

Step 10 – end of session

The session ends with some time for reflection – what have we done? Did all participate?

Was it what we had expected? Were all listened to? Is there something that ought to be changed next time? Etc.

Sessions two and the following

In the following sessions the number of “steps”, and the time spent on each one, must be adjusted to the need of the group. However, the main structure should always include: Reflections from the last session? What is the plan for this session? The work with the subject, and a brief evaluation of the session including a look at the Plan of work - Are we on the right track? Do we need to revise the plan? But, as said before time spent on each step has to be adapted to each specific circle.

Last session – end of circle

The longer circle the longer time it takes for a satisfactory “good bye”. Therefore it is essential that the leader, from the early start, plans for the last session and discuss this with the participants.

The evaluation of the circle is, as at every session, also an important part of the last session, and there must be enough of time set aside to evaluate.

In Sweden, the leader hand in the attendance list and Plan of work to the office. After that the payment is settled for hours worked, and if any expenses paid (see financing Circles among friends). If the participants have asked for a continuation (there are no limits for how long you can participate in a certain subject/circle), this is also reported to the office.

Make a point of:

Assist each other to feel secure and comfortable

Assist each other to be active and take responsibility

Assist each other to be listened to, and to be seen

Assist each other to be opened minded and flexible

Assist each other to allow talkers to finish without interruptions

Assist each other to treat each other with respect

“Step by step” for Circle among friends.

- member organization

When working with a Circle among friends the guide of planning a circle (see above) is also used. The procedure is basically the same as for the Circle to the public. However, in a member organization the participants often know each other a little, and therefore less focus needs to be put on the “get to know each other - step”. Many of these circles continue year after year, and the importance of each step vary depending on the work of the circle, and its participants.

- for friends

For these groups it is common that the “step by step” procedure already has started when the study association is contacted. Even though everybody knows each other, a study circle can give great opportunities to learn more and deepen the friendship in the circle.

The way of Advertising in Sweden

There is no right or wrong answer on how to advertise to reach the target groups.

The question on “How to attract the public?” is always being discussed within the study associations as well as member organizations. Naturally the advertisement has to be done differently depending on what kind of circle it refers to: a Circle to the public or a Circle among friends within a member organization and its target groups. Autumn and early spring are the common seasons for study circle activities in Sweden. Accordingly, most advertising is done in August/September and January.

The means for advertisements are mainly the same for all study associations, adapted to what kind of activity it refers to: circles, culture events, education

etc, and how it is organized. To be seen and heard in the media, and to be spoken off are the most effective ways. The lay out and the way of presentation is also very important, it needs to be tempting, interesting up to date in colour and shape etc.

Study circles to the public

In the mass productions of advertisement is it necessary to find new ways to attract new-interested people, who have not earlier tried the study circle.

Study circle pamphlet

Most ABF units make their own pamphlet, which presents the study circles for the coming season, with facts about subject, time, location, name of leader, fee, amount of hours etc. The number of circles differs from each unit. Jämtland offers approx 70 different Circles to the public each season. In the pamphlet you also find some general information about the study circle, ABF, its member organizations, and how to start a Circles among friends.

Make a point of – good advertisement takes time

For all sort of advertisement planning in advance is necessary. To get a pamphlet printed in time for distribution it is necessary to plan the content and lay out in time. However, this can be difficult as the majority of the leaders have a fulltime job besides being leader of a study circle (2-4 hours per week), and therefore have difficulties to plan ahead.

Distribution

All possible alternatives of distribution are used to spread the pamphlets: all letterboxes in an area/city (quite expensive), public places, like libraries, Centrum for adult education, Employment agencies, major places of work, The pamphlets are also sent by mail to all member organizations, their presidents and/or study organizers.

Make a point of:

It is more common than rare that people miss the ad in the paper or that the receiver in the member organizations forgets to pass the information on to the members at meetings and newsletters.

Web site

Using a website with has become a quite important tool for advertisement today and is still undergoing developments of different kinds. Most of the study associations have their web sites made on a national level with links to their different units where one can down load the study program and get information about other activities. .

The possibility to enroll to study circles through Internet is developing rapidly, and will in the coming years be a useful tool to the public as well as to the administration of the Study association.

Make a point of:

Today, a large group of our target groups still does not have access to Internet, or they have access but not the knowledge on how to search for information using the Webb.

There are also different forms of disabilities for whom an ordinary web site wont work, something each study organizer needs to work on.

Other alternatives

News paper ads, bulletin boards at supermarkets, hospitals, work places, culture events, meetings etc with information on where and how to find the Study circles. But over all, the best means of advertisement are the happy and satisfied participants talking about circles they have attended, and the joy and fun in learning. Some people, now in their eighties have been participating since they were twenty. Some leaders have regularly been working as a leader for 40 years They are all the best ambassadors of the study circle!

Study circles among friends – member organizations

Most of the advertisement for Study circle among friends is done by, and within the member organization itself. It can be in forms of hand outs, presenting the study circles the organizations plan to carry out, ads in the local papers, personal information and invitations to their members, articles in national magazines, and web site for those who have these.

The study association encourages, gives assistance when needed, (lay out, printing of programs, invitations etc) and provides the organization with information; about materials, requirements, leader training etc. The association also assists the study organizer and/or boards with ideas for activities and advertisement.

Make a point of:

Take every opportunity to discuss ideas of study circles and what they want at member meetings. Remind organizations to keep their address list up to date and inform the study associations when there are changes concerning contact persons.

Organization of Swedish Study Circles

The organization of a Swedish Study Circle is based on the requirements drawn by The Swedish National Council of Adult Education (appointed by the government). These are the same for both Study circles to the public as well as Study circles among friends.

Requirements listed by The National Council of Adult Education are:

* a small group of people, no less than three, no more than 15. Recommended is approximately seven to nine persons, as this number is small enough to let every one get noticed, and be listened to, but large enough to stimulate, and create a dynamic learning process. In some subjects it is important to adapt the number of participants to the activity of the circle or the ability of the target group (for instance who need hearing aid).

* who meet regularly to study together, usually once a week and with time for individual reflection between sessions. Regularity gives the participants security, and a structure gives continuity, both very important aspects of the learning process.

* no more than four study hours (á 45 min) at the time, and no less than nine study hours per circle. Experiences state that if a learning session is too long, the participants are not able to concentrate.

* and no less than three sessions, fewer sessions and the learning process will hardly get started. In general most study circles are planned for 10 sessions times 3 study hours a total of 30 study hours.

* has an approved “Plan of work”. To get a good learning process it is essential to have a structure for the learning. As mentioned above, some study material have an approved Plan of work included, others do not. If not, it is necessary that the participants make their own Plan of work to be approved by the study association. This document serves both as a plan for the learning process and evaluation of quality.

* The participating is Voluntary and free, to every one interested in the subject. No one can tell you that you have to take this or that circle. However, taking a study circle can be a qualification for different employments, and the participants can ask for a diploma/certificate, which shows the content and number of hours. The requirements are to participate actively, have an interest in learning and together with others take responsibility for the learning.

* and the leader, approved by ABF. A leader is a companion on the path towards learning. He or she must be flexible, able to give inspiration and support, and be able to create a friendly and positive atmosphere for the learning. It is important to empha-size, and to always keep in mind that the study circle leader is one of the group, at the same time as he or she is the organizer and coordinator, but he or she is NOT a teacher.

More about the work as a leader

The leader's main responsibilities are to guide the participants in the life long learning process; to gather new aspects of knowledge, to grow in self-respect, to make sure that each individual is seen and heard in the group, to motivate and to encourage cooperation and discourage competition. The members of the group, including the leader, share equal responsibility for the development of the learning process and the Plan of work.

Beside the learning process with the group, the leader is responsible for the admini-stration; to contact participants when not coming, keep track of

attendance that there is a Plan of work established, the attendance list, and to report to the Study association if there are changes.

How the study association can assist the leaders

To be a study circle leader is most of the time a quite lonely work as you rarely get a chance to meet your colleagues. To find ways to give support from the study association is therefore of great importance. Flexibility and need are also guiding this work.

Organizing Inspirational leaders

It is a good idea to appoint Inspirational leaders when there are many leaders working within the same field, like in languages or art for example. Their tasks are to coordinate and organize meetings within their sphere for exchange of experiences and ideas, specific pedagogical matters, material can be exchanged, be the head of a network for information etc. These could either be employed by the office or get extra hours for their work.

Offer Training programs and Meetings

The ideas and pedagogy of the Study circle, Folkbildning and adult education, is not common knowledge. Therefore it is important to introduce these tools to new leaders. In Sweden the nine Study associations offer training programs with basically the same pedagogically content. At ABF the program consists of an introduction 3-4 hours, a basic training program approximately 24 hours, and then specialized training program in pedagogy and/or specific subjects where the numbers of hours can vary.

The best way is to offer the Basic training program as a study circle, and this way let the leaders get a feeling, and understanding of being a participant.

Training programs offered by the associations are free of charge. Most of them are organized on the local level, but some are also offered at the regional and national level as well.

To be employed

The association's demands on the leader differ slightly depending on what kind of circle he or she will lead. For Circles among friends the demands on the leader are less restricted, as this person is not employed but chosen by the group or member organization. If they want the group can easily decide to change leader or take turns in guiding the group.

When a person is employed to lead a specific Circle for the public by the association the investigation about his hers qualifications, as a Study circle leader is more thorough. There are certain rules to be followed if the Study association wants to dismiss the leader.

In either alternative a degree at the university is not always needed but more so a special knowledge in the field you want to share with the participants, knowledge on How and where to find information, Interest in people and The life long learning process.

Most of the employed leaders get paid by the hour and work in general three to four hours per week for about two to three months at the time. In areas with large populations, like Stockholm, you will also find leaders employed on half or full time basis.

The quality of a circle is not dependable if the leader is employed or not, it depends on the mutual work in the circle.

Materials

To make the learning process a responsibility of all participants in the circle, it is essential that all are involved in choosing the material to be used. This can be found in various fields as literature, videos, TV-program, Internet, news papers, archive materials, theatre etc. The outcome is a result of the combination of the participants, the leader and the material used, and therefore no study circles are alike even though the subject is the same.

Financing

Study associations are largely financed by national, county council and municipality grants. The grants differ due to the activity, but are the same for all study circles, and are calculated on the amount of hours the association has produced. In general these money shall cover the expenses for the administration of the study association.

Study circles to the public

For these circles the fundamental condition is that each circle must cover its own expenses for: salary, social taxes, and extra expenses due to specific needs of a certain circle like

a hall of computers, looms etc. This means that fees vary between municipalities, study associations, units and study circles. administration costs,

Circle among friends

These circles may have expenses for rent, materials, postage etc. costs, which are paid by the participants in the circle, including the leader (if the group does not decide otherwise). After the circle is reported to the association they, or their organization, can apply for some economical compensation. The size of this also varies between associations, the economy of the units and the size of the government grants.

Member organizations often have their own routines and specific deals with the study association.

Make a point of:

The basic idea with Folkbildning is to make knowledge and life long learning accessible to all categories of humans despite background, ethnicity, difficulties, and economical status. To reach this vision, all study circles ought to be free of charge like they were in the early start. Unfortunately, the change in approach to ideality and free time has resulted in that the generations of today want to be compensated for time put into the organization and/or study circle.

Monitoring

The study association

An, by the Swedish National Council of Adult Education, approved study association like ABF, is by itself a guarantee that its districts and local units, work accordingly to the requirements and values of Liberal Adult Education. The associations report every year their different activities to the Council, which in turn is entrusted to make follow-ups and to evaluate what have been accomplished.

The leader and training programs

As far as possible the local unit tries to implement, the values of the study association and Folkbildning to all their leaders, and make sure that they understand the ideas of the adult learning process, and the study circle. This is done through training program, written information, and tutor meetings. As for the pedagogic situation the best way forward is to listen to the participants experiences, and reactions to the leader as well as the activity.

Participants

When the leader's work in a Circle to the public is not done satisfactorily, the participants are not afraid to complain to the association, or they choose to quit. It happens that a leader is dismissed and if a new leader cannot be found with short notice, the participants will get their tuition fee back. It is "the participants' market", and when the participant is not satisfied he or she will not return to the study association for another circle. On the other hand, a good leader will get demands for a continuation of the circle. The word will spread and as a result there will be a line of interested people who want to participate in a study circle.

In the Circle among friends the member organization or the group choose the leader and if not satisfied they are free to change leader during the circle.

Plan of Work

The plan of work is a living document, and as mentioned earlier all participants share the responsibility for this plan. The plan is also a quality check of the circle. Each year the Swedish National Council of Adult Education makes follow-ups by choosing a couple units for inspections where they especially look at the Plans of work and how they are used.

Evaluating

Evaluation of the activity is an important tool to secure the quality of Folkbildning.

The intentions are that each meeting should close with "an evaluation of the session": What have we done today? Did we reach the aim for today's session? Did all participants get their chance to be seen and listened to - if not, how come? Did I participate - if not how come? Does the Plan of work need to be changed? This evaluation works as a guidance to the leader that

he or she is on the right track, but it is also a way for the participants to say their meaning and raise their voice if changes need to be done.

At the last session it is necessary to make time for a final evaluation of the whole circle. This is an important part of the circle as well as of the life long learning process.

The document Plan of work serves both as a guide for the learning process but also an evaluation of quality. Still there is an ongoing process in developing tools for comparable evaluations on quality, which is specificity difficult when it concerns Folkbildning, where no marks and tests are being used

Make a point of:

As a leader it is important to help /assist /get all participants to understand the importance and value of the evaluation for their own sake as well as for the circle itself. It should not be looked upon as something that “just takes too much time away” from their subject and learning process.

Disseminating

To compete with “private adult education” companies, the study associations of today need to be seen more in the media and to activate their associated organizations by giving support and assistance in various ways. This can be done through cultural activities, engagements in society or social projects on local, national and international levels with the aim of increasing democracy and humans rights.

Make a point of

Do we need to adjust the information, the lay out, content, and presentations to specific target groups like the younger generations, disable, elderly etc.?

Links

www.z.abf.se

www.abf.se

www.folkbildning.net

Further details

For further and more detailed information on the tools outlined in these pages, you can visit the website www.scate.info, where you can find all the project's outcomes in PDF format.

What Avenues for the Future of Lifelong Education?

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In this section we will firstly give an overview of the characteristics of the local systems of exchange of services, knowledge and/or goods. This is necessary, as two of the tools analysed within the SCATE project, i.e. time banks and the networks for the mutual exchange of knowledge, are part of this large category, and it is thus important to be able to identify their distinguishing features.

We will then provide some information on the general characteristics of the networks for the mutual exchange of knowledge, as they are part of a tool which was not initially included in the project, nor was it mentioned in the first texts produced during planning. It is thus important to be aware of the path that has led to introducing it at a later stage in the analysis. It should be especially noted that this choice is linked to specific aspects both of the project and of the partnership that produced it, and that it will not be possible, nor would it be right, to identify general logical connections or explanations based on the tools as such.

We will then try to draft a first general hypothesis of a tool capable of incorporating elements of the first four, and that may have the ideal features that allow it to be implemented by public bodies or the third sector intending to monitor the paths of knowledge exchange, and to plan and guide their overall growth.

Finally, we will present some reflections resulting from the partnership in view of further future research activities.

Local Exchange Systems

In economics, financial aspects are increasingly prevailing over real ones, and the capitalistic economy often has a negative impact on social communication.

In the exchange of services (and goods) without the use of money or using alternative currencies to national ones, the role of the individual within the community is valued above all. Non-monetary exchange systems are in contrast with the ruling economic single thought, and originate from the awareness that there are limits to development and that it is necessary to find solutions in order to have a good quality of life, also when faced with less natural and financial resources.

There are numerous forms of non-monetary exchanges in post-industrialised countries. M. Pittau³ mentions both first experiences, that can be traced back to Canada in the 1970s, and a wide range of current solutions, such as MORE (Member Organised Resource Exchange system) in the United States and Japan; LETS (Local Exchange Trading System) which is widespread both in Great Britain and in Australia; the English ROCS (Robust Complementary Community Currency System)⁴; SEL (Système d'Echange Local) and Troc de Services, which are popular in France and in the French-speaking Countries; RERS (Réseaux d'échange Réciproque des Savoirs) which are widespread in France, Switzerland, Belgium and Holland; the Time Bank, operating in Italy, Switzerland, and Spain; Tauschring and Wir, which developed in Germany and Switerland; and REL (Rete di Economia Locale - Local Economy Network) and SRI (Sistema di

³ Maurizio Pittau, *Economie senza Denaro, I Sistemi di Scambio non Monetario nell'Economia di Mercato*. Ed. EMI, 2003

⁴ <http://www.transaction.net/money/rocs/#issue>

Reciprocità Indiretta - Indirect Reciprocity System) in Italy. Pittau also mentions imaginary Ducats, Green dollars, Hureai kippu, Ithaca hours and Hero dollars, which are complementary currencies circulating in parallel with conventional currencies and meeting the needs that conventional currencies are unable to fulfil.

We can identify two general types of local exchange systems: the first type has a more economic connotation (e.g. Local Exchange Trading Systems - Lets), while the second one is more socially-oriented (e.g. Time Banks - BdT⁵ and Troc-Temps)⁶. The systems studied by the SCATE project are part of the latter group.

⁵ Sometimes “Time Banks” and “Hour Banks” are confused: while the former operates in the context of leisure time, the latter stems from and applies to a working context. In France, in Strasburg, and in Germany, at the Volkswagen company, the first instances originated from business flexibility needs and to respond to the needs of working single mothers. In Italy the hour bank was introduced in the national industry agreements, starting from the second half of the 1990s. Art. 9 of **Law No. 53 of 8 March 2000**, entitled **Provisions for supporting maternity and paternity, for the right to care and training, and for coordinating time in the cities** (published in the Official Gazette No. 60 of 13.03.2000) mentions it as a form of working time flexibility with a view to balancing work and life needs. The law provides for the allocation of funds “in favour of companies implementing contract agreements that contain actions in support of flexibility, and in particular:

a) projects designed to allow the working mother or working father, also when one of the two is self-employed, or when they are the foster or adoptive parents of a minor, to benefit from particular forms of working time and work organisation flexibility, including reversible part-time, tele-work and work-from-home schemes, flexible work start and finish times, the bank of hours, flexible shifts, concentrated working hours, with a priority for parents with children up to eight years of age or up to twelve, in the case of foster or adopted children”

These systems all have in common the fact of originating (or especially developing) in moments of economic and social crisis.

Amorevole and Rizzo⁷ argue that at the basis of LETS is the goal consisting in “amending the twisted economic principles, thus moving from an impersonal trade to more human and personal relations, and introducing the concept of exchange trading between people as holders of skills, know-how, time and goods, which may be scarcely used”. LETS, which were started in the Anglo-Saxon world in the late 1980s, focus on the economic nature of the initiative, building an alternative economic system that does not use a legal tender currency but, rather, a local currency. In such systems, the social aspect, which prevails in Time Banks and Trocs, is only secondary.

Italian BdTs and French Trocs are associations which originated spontaneously and for practical reasons. The purpose of the people working in these associations is to create, through the exchange of activities, an opportunity to socialise and a way to give purchasing power to people who do not have it. Italian Time Banks – which are based on the enhancement of services exchanged with time, equality among subjects, as well as the emphasis on the fact of not being ‘voluntary work’ but, rather, something in

The contractual institution of the Bank of Hours enables the management of work, as it allows to set aside, in an individual account, a number of hours worked beyond those of normal working hours, whose amount is established by the contract. Both temporary and permanent employees may benefit from this. Instead of accumulating overtime which is then converted into cash, a certain number of hours can be accumulated to be used as leave time, so as to take advantage of compensatory rest periods at a time chosen by the individual.

⁶ Giuliana Galeotti. Elementi essenziali per un’analisi sociologica delle Banche del tempo (“Politiche sociali e servizi”, No. 2, 2003, pp. 173)

⁷ Rosa Amorevole and Pantaleo Rizzo. Senza denaro. Guida ai sistemi di scambio non monetario (Ed. Lavoro, 2000)

between services and volunteering – have inspired similar experiences launched in Mediterranean countries. The goal of BdTs consists in promoting local exchange, good neighbourly relations and the sense of solidarity through the exchange of services using time as currency. Time is the unit of measure of trading value, services have an equal value, independently from the type of service delivered or the person providing it. Unlike voluntary work, where the act of giving is one way, in BdTs the principle of reciprocity and exchange applies. Formalised organisation, on the other hand, distinguishes BdTs from informal groups of mutual help, which are also present in many countries.

Those participating in a BdT often have strong ideals: they value human relations; believe in the equality of subjects; believe that self-organisation and mutuality are important values.

In Italy, the development of Time Banks was also related to the ongoing debate since the second half of the 1970s on living time, working time and the time of cities.

Time Banks have been promoted, at least in Italy, by women⁸, who are culturally sensitive to time-related issues. Moreover, the type of trading which is promoted values activities that are generally provided for free within households and that, therefore, are not valued in the market. Studies carried out by a number of women researchers⁹ have started a reflection process on the fact that women very often carry the burden both of work for

⁸ Although also men are involved in Time Banks, women represent the majority within them, with a percentage of 75%.

⁹ We are referring to Balbo L., Manacorda P., Piva P. and the studies conducted by Chiesi A., Amorevole R. and others, and in particular to the survey carried out by ISTAT (Italian National Institute of Statistics), *Indagine multiscopo sull'uso del tempo*, 1989 and following updates.

the market and home care, within organised contexts and with hours that are not adequate to the changed social environment. Since the late Eighties, time has become the main focus of all those women engaged in politics, in the professions, in universities, in trade unions and in associations.

In order to give an overview of local exchange systems, it is necessary to start from Canada, where it all started, at least as far as LETS are concerned. In 1982, [Michael Linton](#) coined the expression "Local Exchange Trading System" and, together with his wife Shirley, ran for some time the "[Comox Valley LETSystems](#)" in [Courtenay, British Columbia](#). The system he conceived was meant as complementary to the traditional monetary system. Today the original LETS is no longer operating.

In Canada there is another LETS system, Victoria LETS¹⁰, which was established in 1983.

In Italy the first Time Bank¹¹ was established in Sant'Arcangelo di Romagna in 1995. The year 2000 was particularly meaningful for Time Banks, as Law No. 53 of 8 March 2000 was passed, entitled "Provisions for supporting maternity and paternity, for the right to care and training and for coordinating time in the cities" (Official Gazette No. 60 of 13.03.2000), which devotes Art. 27 to Time Banks. Following is the text of Article 27:

Time Banks.

1. In order to promote the exchange of neighbourhood services, facilitate the use of city services and the relations with public administrations, strengthen the

¹⁰ <http://www.lets.victoria.bc.ca/>

¹¹ The main website to refer to in Italy is that of Tempomat, Osservatorio Nazionale sulle Banche del Tempo (National observatory on time banks). <http://www.tempomat.it/>

development of solidarity within local communities and encourage individuals and citizen groups, associations, organisations and bodies intending to use part of their time for actions aimed at mutual solidarity and common interest, local bodies may support and promote the creation of associations called “time banks”.

2. In order to promote and support time banks, local bodies may take advantage of premises and services, and organise promotional, training and information activities. They may also join time banks and sign agreements with them establishing time exchanges directed at mutual help services to support individual citizens or the local community. These services should be compatible with the statutory aims of time banks and should not be part of local bodies' institutional activities.

In France Troc-Temps are widespread (from "troc", trade or barter) referring to the exchange of social solidarity-based skills and services. They spread in France from the second half of the '90s as one of the responses to the economic crisis. The first steps towards the creation of Troc Temps were taken in Montbel, Ariège, in 1994, where a community developed in which the currency was replaced by a “voucher”: those providing a service receive a cheque marked with “salt grains”. The result were SELs (Systèmes d’Echange Local ou Services d’Echange Local –Local Exchange Systems or Services) consisting of groups of people carrying out multilateral trading of goods, services and know-how. This is an exchange system not only trading skills and services as in the case of Trocs, but also products, thus proposing a system striving to replace almost entirely the current economic system.

SELS, therefore, are more similar to LETS. A French partnership consortium¹² is planning to launch an alternative currency called SOL, which will be held on a smart-card. The pilot project is about to be started in the Ile de France, Brittany and Nord-Pas de Calais regions as part of an EQUAL development partnership in 2005-2006.

In England, LETS Local Exchange Trading Systems or Schemes¹³, are mutual help networks operating in local communities, where people exchange all kinds of goods and services without the need for money. These are economically and socially-based exchanges that use a local currency, called credits, or exchange units, whose value is established within each single group, so as to protect the autonomy of each association, in accordance with the objective of enhancing the local dimension.

Recently in England there has been a wider development of Time Banks, as social tools which have been strongly supported by local administrations in

¹² The partnership consists of social economy institutions (Chèque déjeuner, MACIF, MAIF, Crédit Coopératif), local authorities (the Regional Councils of Nord Pas de Calais, Ile de France, Brittany; the Municipalities of Lille, Roubaix, Fontenay aux Roses; Ille et Vilaine General Council) and actors from the social and solidarity-based economy.

¹³ Two websites (in English) provide further information about LETS: the website LetslinkUK, UK Local Exchange Trading and Complementary Currencies Development Agency, a worldwide organisation established in 1991 with the aim of collecting the experiences of associations using the LETS system. It has the task of coordinating and exchanging information between LETS systems, in the attempt of fostering cooperation among groups <http://www.letslinkuk.net/>. The second website is LETSsystems (<http://www.gmlets.u-net.com/>) containing a lot of information material on LETS and on how to organise and manage them.

order to promote solidarity and neighbourly relations. In other words, these are services to activate voluntary work initiatives by citizens.

In Germany there are more than 350 exchange systems (Tauschringe, Senior citizens cooperatives, etc.).¹⁴ They are the result of personal initiatives originating as a consequence of the rise of the socio-political and economic deficit.

In Germany, it has been reported of a Tauschring (Exchange ring) that existed in Bremen¹⁵ after the end of the second world war, with the aim of overcoming the economic difficulties linked to the post-war period.

Today, in some Tauschringe the economic element prevails¹⁶, in some the social one does, and yet in others the two elements are equally important. The sharing of goods is often more important than the aspect of time: it is important to share things.

¹⁴ This figure was provided by Ute Anacker at the Time Banks regional meeting in Castelnuovo Fogliani (Piacenza, Italy), on 16/12/2000 (The Italian translation of the text is available online at http://www.regione.emilia-romagna.it/banchedeltempo/castelnuovo/ute_ita.htm).

¹⁵ With reference to this topic see, by Paolo Coluccia, *La Banca del tempo* Ed. Bollati Boringhieri, Turin, 2001. Again, on the Internet, by Sara Lattuada: *Banche del tempo, Radici Comuni Nei Paesi Stranieri* (http://www.sanpaolo.org/fa_oggi/0508f_o/0508fo56.htm)

¹⁶ Those with a mainly economic structure draw inspiration from the theories by Silvio Gesell and have the purpose of creating an alternative banking system, based on a currency without interests, or to be more precise, with the introduction of negative interests; this means that the interests are deducted from the capital. This new currency has banknotes, is convertible and generally complies with the basic principles of the national currency. Historically, a grand-scale experiment was attempted in the late Twenties, early Thirties, which failed, however, as the Nazi regime viewed Talents as competitors for the State Bank.

These are very autonomous groups working as networks. All attempts aimed at grouping together the individual associations have failed so far. Cooperation among associations is very active, but each one maintains their own features. For example, in Bremen, the most important fact is that each individual does not operate on the basis of their own professional abilities, but rather, on the basis of what he/she enjoys doing; in the South of Germany and in the cities of the former DDR, circular economy groups prevail, combining private and economic interests¹⁷. The currency of exchange may be called Knoten, Knochen, Kreuzern or Talenten. The value to calculate is freely negotiated by their members. If no agreement is achieved, time will be used (for example it is established that 1 hour equals to 20 Talents).

The Movement of the Networks for the Mutual Exchange of Knowledge - MRERS

What led to the creation, in France, of the Networks for the Mutual Exchange of Knowledge was both a conviction and a realisation.

The conviction is that the assets of our Western societies lie in knowledge and know-how; whereas the (bitter) realisation is that of the growing gap between the beholders of knowledge and those who do not possess it, and between those who have the right to define what knowledge is and how this is measured and assessed, on the one hand, and those who can only aspire to get the crumbs, on the other.

Claire and Marc Heber-Suffrin once stated that we are all knowledge bearers and eager to learn, when circumstances favour the exchange, and, on the

¹⁷ The latter drawing inspiration from the *Swiss Talentexperiment Arau*

basis of this statement, they started an entity which today has branched off in many countries and involves more than 300,000 people.

The initiative was launched in 1971 in the field of schools, after reflecting on the reasons for pupils' failures in the learning process¹⁸.

What are the necessary conditions for a fruitful exchange of knowledge?

- making one, each time, the actor and the creator, irrespective of his/her history and social position;
- considering others for what they know and not for what they do not know;
- privileging approaches by trial and error;
- connecting action-research with training and communication;
- considering equality and reciprocity in the exchange of knowledge as the golden rule

“The organisation of mutual knowledge exchanges presupposes the network, intended as the reflection of the complexity of reality and the structure which favours an active citizenship. The network requires an openness, but also the movement, and even more, the interaction with a project of society providing for the fulfilment of the human being – and, in particular, the break with isolation and the recovery of his social ties”¹⁹.

Possible Hybridisations

The SCATE project had initially identified three tools which, because of their features, could represent a starting point for the development of a new

¹⁸ Célestin Freinet, Paulo Freire and Don Milani are the pedagogists of reference of this thought.

¹⁹ Taken from the introduction by Jacques Robin to «LE CERCLE DES SAVOIRS RECONNUS», épi Desclée de Brouwer, Paris 1993, by Claire and Marc Héber-Suffrin.

tool which would encompass some of these characteristics and that could promote lifelong learning.

The investigation process carried out by the partners during partnership meetings, seminars, and other individual research opportunities have resulted in the addition of a fourth tool to the first three, i.e. the Networks for the Mutual Exchange of Knowledge.

It should be underlined that this was possible thanks to the specific features of the partnership. Therefore, the remarks contained in these pages do not aspire (nor do they have the potential to) be a model for other working groups with different features.

There are a multitude of tools available and each one of them is variously characterised depending on the social, political and educational context where it develops. As we have seen, the structure and significance of time banks vary according to the countries and historical times in which they develop. In other documents produced within the SCATE project²⁰, the crucial differences between Swedish and Italian Study Circles were highlighted, also pointing out the differences existing among Italian circles, depending on the regions where they are started, at least from an organisational point of view.

The analysis carried out on Time Banks has met some practical obstacles. There are some very active Time Banks in Italy, however, at the moment in the Liguria Region the few active time banks are very small and are faced with fairly serious survival issues.

²⁰ Handbook on Study Circles, Analysis and dissemination of good practices at national and international level, 2006, Edizioni Provincia di Genova. Available at the website <http://www.scate.info>

The bank of the AUSER Association was a very useful resource for the project, as, despite the small size, it enabled the participants to understand the mechanisms supporting it, and to learn about the kind of problems that may arise. The system of cheques and its related accounting of services is undoubtedly interesting as it enables services to be traceable and it may contribute to keep the system balanced. It was thus the organisational system of the bank that particularly attracted the interest of the partners. As to the type of exchanges, on the other hand, know-how in this case was specifically limited to the English language, and the majority of exchanges regarded services. This has nothing wrong in itself, however, in the context of a project focused on knowledge, the lack of exchange of know-how was a limitation for the joint discussion of partners.

The introduction to Claire Héber-Suffrin, the inventor of the RERS, took place during a project seminar in Paris. There she held a speech which, together with the possibility of reading her books, convinced the Partners that they had found a tool similar, in some respects, to a time bank, focused however on the exchange of knowledge rather than services (or goods).

The fact that the impression was right was then confirmed during the meeting in Sofia, where Claire Héber-Suffrin not only presented the history of the RERS, but she also led a seminar which enabled to simulate the launch of a network.

Following these contacts, a further link was established with the Association which introduced RERS to Italy, that is APRIRSI (an acronym meaning in Italian ‘opening up’, which stands for Associazione Per le Reti Italiane di Reciproci Scambi di saperi – Association for the Italian networks for the mutual exchange of knowledge).

Therefore, in the second year of work, the analysis and reflection have concentrated on four tools, without losing sight of the ever-changeable general background, featuring the vitality and rapid evolution of the concepts linked to lifelong learning²¹.

What are the elements of the tools studied that, all together, could form the basis for a new tool to be implemented by public bodies or third sector players interested in promoting and supporting lifelong learning?

Tool	Key element
Time Bank	Traceability of activities, lack of imbalances guaranteed in the activities
Study Circle	Identification of a specific theme and definition of a shared learning/further study path
RERS	Reciprocity as a must, equality of roles for all (actor-creator both for men and women)
Trees of Knowledge	The mapping of knowledge possessed by individuals and groups (and even of all participants in the activities). The possibility, as a consequence, of highlighting knowledge that is weak or totally lacking. The system of patents, enabling a recognition of knowledge.

The most relevant aspect of Time Banks, in relation to our goals, is organisation. The fact that exchanges are monitored and traceable, through the cheque system, provides for the management of a hypothetical service

²¹ The European Commission and the Member States have defined lifelong learning, within the European Employment Strategy (1997 Luxembourg) as: “all purposeful learning activity, undertaken on an on-going basis with the aim of improving knowledge, skills and competence”.

connected with a public body and the third sector. This is also a guarantee for those participating in the activities, especially if the service is on a large-scale, which makes direct personal knowledge of the participants beforehand difficult. The guarantee of having the participants interviewed and their official details entered in the system may ensure greater trust on the part of those interested in becoming part of the exchange.

Also, the fact that it is always possible to consult the details regarding the number of hours offered and what has actually been taken advantage of enables to keep a record of exchanges which, over time, may help to avoid any imbalances in the system.

In Study Circles, instead, it is important that the topics of investigation and discussion are specific and agreed upon within the group. This allows participants to define their involvement beforehand, while remaining totally free for any future engagement, and encourages the repetition of learning paths setting out from an already tried basis. This appears to be important especially in circumstances where people do not have a lot of time and thus must be able to assess their own path in a fairly precise way, avoiding or at least reducing the risk of abandoning the group or even the system.

In the RERS the necessary requirement of reciprocity and equality of roles for all are the most interesting elements. At the basis of reciprocity as a must is the conviction that each individual is a bearer of useful knowledge, capable and eager to learn, a promoter of change, and can evolve together. The level of empowerment that a service based on these principles can promote is huge, as it fosters the involvement and enhancement of each person taking part in it. The equality of roles enables people to each time

experiment with their role as an actor or as a creator, as a learner or as a teacher. This triggers a virtuous cycle promoting self-esteem and self-awareness which, in turn, involves other people in this growth process, who are all aware of their own path and find it easier to recognise that of other people.

Lastly, both from the point of view of actors and promoters, the possibility of mapping knowledge offered by the Trees of Knowledge is crucial for the purposes of planning as well as of personal, group and service development. Equally important is the concept of recognition of acquired skills and knowledge (through a "patent"), as it strengthens the service, by ensuring the possibility of implementing career paths within it as well as their recognition within the community.

Is something missing from the kind of tool description proposed here? In our opinion, the community level at which all the tools analysed act is limited in relation to today's society. In other words, integrating a component that enables people and groups to interact also from a distance, thus expanding the service to a much wider community, or being able to more easily identify skills on topics that are less common or further away from the local community's experience, may be a crucial element.

This is possibly helped by the fact that the service hypothesised here focuses on the exchange of knowledge and skills, rather than providing for the exchange or sharing of goods and services. On the other hand, the integration of this aspect would entail a considerable amount of networking in order to link the bodies interested in supporting and promoting the service.

The Observatory of Empowerment

The analysis of the tools identified during the project's inception stage, and the further study of knowledge based on all the other tools linked to formal and non-formal learning²² have led the partners to focus particularly on two concepts.

The first one starts from the fact that the variety of solutions is huge and the evolution of systems and services is ongoing. The project has directly looked into the experiences of the four Countries involved and has indirectly explored, by and large, what is happening in other European and non-European countries. The idea of securing, in one way or another, the practices observed in order to derive from them new and artificially constructed hypotheses, that are not the natural result of what already exists, runs the risk of failing. What, on the contrary, could help is the establishment of an observatory: a reference tool aimed at assisting those working in this field, enabling them to more rapidly and better learn about the many different initiatives that exist and monitor newly developing ones. This observatory could ensure an essential aspect which could not be part of

²² The Commission services working document "A Memorandum on Lifelong Learning" - Brussels, 30.10.2000, identifies three basic categories of purposeful learning activity: formal learning, that takes place in education and training institutions, leading to recognised diplomas and qualifications; non-formal learning, that takes place alongside the mainstream systems of education and training and does not typically lead to formalised certificates; informal learning, that, unlike the other two, is not necessarily intentional learning, and so may not well be recognised sometimes even by those directly involved, as contributing to their knowledge and skills.

a mere catalogue of the existing services and/or tools, that is the understanding of the social and cultural mechanisms underlying each single initiative, which make it possible for experiences with a similar name (sometimes identical) to actually be very different. In other words, although one may start from an Italian Time bank in order to learn more about similar experiences in other countries, the analysis of Time Banks and Banques du Temps would not necessarily guarantee the same outcomes. The same is true for Study Circles, which are so different in Italy and in Sweden that other tools should be considered, rather than those with a similar or even the same name.

This observatory, whose observation and analysis criteria could be easily defined on the basis of the experience carried out in the frame of the SCATE project, could also be a valuable resource for the monitoring of the evolution of the various systems and hybridisation processes that could spontaneously originate.

The second concept emerged out of the partners' reflection is empowerment. Empowerment²³ is a widely used and (abused) English term and, as often the case for English terms, it is difficult to find a translation in other languages using one single word. Two expressions should be used for the translation of empowerment: strengthening of individual abilities, and support of independent and self-determined development. The first expression is closer to the original meaning, however, it loses the concept of potential contained

²³ The definition and reflections on the concept of empowerment are based on the chapter: Empowerment, inclusion o integrazione? (Empowerment, inclusion or integration?) In *Le idee vincenti. Esempi di buone prassi nello sviluppo della cultura imprenditoriale e dell'accoglienza* by Rita Bencivenga. Report made within the Equal Project "Albergo in via dei matti n.0" available online in PDF format at www.alfabeti.org/EQUAL/LE%20IDEE%20VINCENTI.pdf

in the original term, therefore the second expression seems to give a better idea. Empowerment enables the growth of a person in his/her general abilities, as well as the development of his/her self-awareness. Thus empowerment denotes an approach that considers people as capable of self-determining and living their life independently, rather than taking over, protecting, and relegating them to secondary roles. A certain contemporary sociological current of thought rejects this term. Indeed, especially where the State reduces resources, the fact of promoting empowerment and leaving the individual faced with the only option of having to cope by themselves may be negative, as it leaves room for situations where some groups of people may be left unprotected. This definitely needs to be considered at a political level, and there should be no running the risk of burdening people further, who already have other problems to deal with. Therefore, the strengthening of the individual's power is good, however, it becomes bad when it is set in a political framework that aims at reducing the responsibility of the public service.

On the basis of these reflections and on how participation in Study Circles and in Networks for the mutual exchange of knowledge can be an important starting point to promote empowerment, it was decided that this theme should be further studied and a hypothesis of tools devised capable of promoting people's empowerment instead of only offering pre-set learning and exchange paths. This is obviously a sensitive issue, as the promotion of autonomy and independence triggers paths that may be beyond one's control. This is a problem particularly when the organisers of the service are from the public or third sector as, because of their organisational structure,

they can almost exclusively work within highly structured and definite contexts.

An “Observatory of empowerment” could thus become a useful tool for those promoting the exchange of knowledge, both as service promoter and as service user.

The Observatory of Empowerment in the French Experience

Bernadette Thomas, Cité des Métiers, Paris

The Encounter of the French Networks of Popular Education at the Basis of the Idea

Right from the start of the SCATE project, the objective of Cité des Métiers of Paris has been to try and promote the project as much as possible, by combining the project's implementation with a certain number of French networks involved in self-education and learning in small groups, including distance education. These networks are listed below and are involved, in one way or another, in the popular education movement: RERS (Networks for the mutual exchange of knowledge), Trees of Knowledge, APPs (Ateliers de Pédagogie Personnalisée – Personalised teaching workshops), Cité des Métiers, CIRASTI (the inter-associational body, grouping associations of general and specialized popular education involved in the development of scientific and technical knowledge activities for all, since 1985), Cyberbases (the Cyberbase network grouping more than 430 multimedia public places in France. These are places open to all, with technological equipment providing access to the Internet, as well as a number of other new technologies).

At first, during 2004-2005, Cité des Métiers of Paris actively participated in the various national meetings organised by these networks, in order to present the objectives of the SCATE project and to raise participants' awareness towards an active involvement in the project, hoping that they could, in turn, use their experience and give their contribution to achieve the project's objectives, and particularly the hybridisation of the different tools

analysed, enabling the development of individuals' empowerment and the promotion of lifelong learning.

Some bilateral meetings (in the form of national seminars) enabled a large number of people, coming from different experiences, to take part in the International Seminar, which was held in Paris on 7 October 2005, to discuss the SCATE project all together.

On the other hand, the privileged relations with “Città dei mestieri” of Genoa have greatly contributed to the whole of the International Network of Cités des Métiers, through discussions within the project in relation to the specific practices of Cités des Métiers and to the question: How can Cité des Métiers benefit from the SCATE project? Many representatives of the Network of Cités des Métiers participated too in the meeting of October 7, (the French cities of Rouen, Belfort, Alençon and the Portuguese city of Porto).

At a later stage, after the successful October 7 seminar, further work with each Network was undertaken, in order to present the progress of the project, and to discuss the ways in which Networks could take ownership of the project's results enabling them to better pursue their mission. During this stage, the CIRASTI networks (meeting in Tours of January 2006), the APPs network (discussion in Toulouse in May 2006), the networks of the Trees of Knowledge (Palabres d'Arbor&Sens in June-July 2006) were especially involved. In parallel with these activities, and as a follow-up to the 7 October event, the networks expressed the desire to jointly start basic work, which they deemed necessary for the sharing of views and to obtain a real hybridisation of practices.

In fact, the underlying idea of this new activity is that hybridisation should not be prescribed but, rather exercised. In other words, we may ascertain,

observe, and analyse why and how it is produced in order to then be able to put into practice the means to achieve the desired objective. Each network has its own methods, habits and practices and, although it might more or less be aware of those of other Networks, they are never involved in a direct and constructive exchange.

A working group (consisting of a hard core of a dozen of people, with another twenty or so joining them when available) was thus created, which regularly met for one year (eight meetings from November 2005 to July 2006).

When the activities of the SCATE project were drawing to an end and the supporting framework was about to disappear, the participants of the group agreed to carry on with the work beyond the deadline established by the European project. Considering the large amount of contributions, participants decided to formalise the work done by creating an observatory of empowerment based on what had been achieved during the meetings.

Who Turned the Interest in the Cooperation among Networks into Reality

In actual fact, in France there are practices, as in the case of RERS and APP networks, which are similar to the Study Circles and Time Banks developed in Sweden, Italy and Bulgaria. The French National Seminar, which was held in June 2005 with the members of RERS, emphasised the fact that hybridisation practices already existed within the Networks for the Mutual Exchange of Knowledge, particularly with the Trees of Knowledge.

The recognised link between the movement of the trees of knowledge and the methods developed by the networks for the exchange of knowledge is

also due, however, to the fact that some Networks have, in turn, adopted the computer-based tool created and developed by Trivium.

This observation raises some questions: What are the real contributions made by the tool for the exchange of knowledge? If this represents a plusvalue, why hasn't this practice been generally adopted by Networks? What are the impediments to its use? Is it possible to find a remedy? How? At the same time, the seminar has revealed the wealth of innovative situations and the desire to continue and experiment with new hybridisations and, thus the need, not only to better know what other groups or networks undertake, but also to look into the ways in which knowledge is acquired. How do hybridisation processes originate and develop? How can all networks be assisted in better equipping themselves and better use the tools they have? How can other methodologies, developed within other networks, be used to improve one's own activities? In what can we draw inspiration from the long experience of Study Circles?

It is with the purpose of giving an answer to these questions that the group has established a working plan which encompasses a variety of aspects.

Clarifying the Representations of Empowerment in relation to Practices

As early as the first meeting, the need emerged to clarify the term "empowerment" which was not translated into French on purpose, as we believed that the official translation "autonomisation" did not reflect the vastness of the concept, outside the political, economic, and social context it applies to.

The French partners have thus started a cooperation process among networks to clarify their own representations, by using the tools of the Trees

of Knowledge in order to compare them and to identify commonalities and differences.

The collection method used focuses on the expected benefits deriving from actions aimed at promoting empowerment. Indeed, what is important to participants is the use of this concept with a view to exercising a legitimate, well-established, recaptured or reintroduced power, rather than in the weaker sense that some group management training practices have recently attributed to it.

This clarification is essential before engaging in the widest possible collection of recounts of experiences on empowerment practices and empowering learning actions.

Developing Specific Observation Tools

During the meetings a specific tool was developed in order to observe empowerment practices and find examples of hybridisation. This is a collaborative platform based on SeeK Linkage allowing group members (however, the platform is equally open to all those interested in this topic) to share their experiences and practices, trying to analyse them through a reading grid which will later make it possible to find and share collective knowledge.

By applying a methodology used by those familiar with the Trees of Knowledge, the participants get to the heart of the action research, they experiment with new tools and offer an insightful perspective on hybridisation possibilities and new knowledge acquisition methods.

Because hybridisation cannot be reduced to a simple transfer of methods, the participants were led to conduct the analysis of their practices in this way, to

identify what objectives are essential in these empowerment practices, and to reflect on how the Networks practices are themselves the result of previous successful instances of hybridisation.

This observation resulted in the need for a tool, an observatory, aimed at finding, analysing and capitalising on hybridisations, but also at experimenting with new practices.

Developing and Observing Empowerment Practices by Decoding them

The observatory cannot limit itself to decoding existing practices but it also has to contribute to enhance hybridisation. This is why the group expressed the desire to operate as a workshop which, starting from the similarities and complementarities existing within networks, would promote the exchange of practices and testing of new hybridisations.

That is how some action research projects have already been launched, in parallel with the already existing workshops, such as in Cités des Métiers, in Paris, and particularly with: creators' clubs and job search circles; experience sharing workshops for those over forty-five who either look for a job or try to grow in their current employment or in their professional life in general; mediation systems aimed at empowering users of Cités des Métiers and at making them independent when undertaking professional guidance.

The dissemination that took place through the International Network of Cités des Métiers has produced some results, and in other countries such as Portugal, attempts were started to create study circles backed by local insitutions.

On the other hand, the observation of the sharing of practices by the different networks should become long-term, and both the process and the outcome should be equally focused on. All too often, we only keep track of

achievements, however, we can also learn from mistakes. These remarks are at the origin of the idea that the observatory should also pay attention to the unsuccessful attempts and look into the reasons for their failure.

Increasing the Impact of Work by Creating a “Real” Observatory of Empowerment

The working plan for the future observatory is the natural continuation of what has been already implemented so far. It relies on the collective work inspired by the common values shared by Networks. In future, the programme could be the manifesto on which the future observatory will be founded. This text, that is a communication tool aimed at people and groups interested in joining the working group, informs on the practices, the specific contexts and the role played by the actors in the specific context.

On the basis of the patterns used to define empowerment and describe the situations in which it may be found, a new threshold has been crossed, consisting in the passage from visualisation to the building of a reference, enabling the collection of evidence on empowerment and the identification of patents on a wider scale than that gathered by the initial group, particularly at international level.

What still needs to be concluded is the creation of a thesaurus with the purpose of describing and comparing practices.

Based on these premises, the ongoing collection of evidence relating to hybridisation practices will make it possible to refine this tool so as to make it operational also in other cultural contexts. Together with the willingness to cooperate, it is important to agree on how to cooperate. This is why, with a view to future expansion, a survey was launched on expectations in relation to the observatory and what will be the object of the observation.

Although the role and the object of the observatory still need to be defined in detail, we believe that the concluding seminar of the SCATE project may be an ideal time to give it an international dimension and continue together the work that has been carried out throughout the project, involving and integrating the international partners in the work that we have done nationally. Within the framework of the working group, we share ideas with a group of individuals coming from different Networks, who agree on setting aside their group belonging to share their experience with collective practices.

This is therefore a varied group self-determining itself and implementing collective empowerment at its level. We can now imagine to observe and transfer collective empowerment mechanisms, which were at the basis of discussion workshops, to a wider context also involving international partners.

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