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## TRANSCULTURAL BIOGRAPHY WORK (TBW)

### Manual



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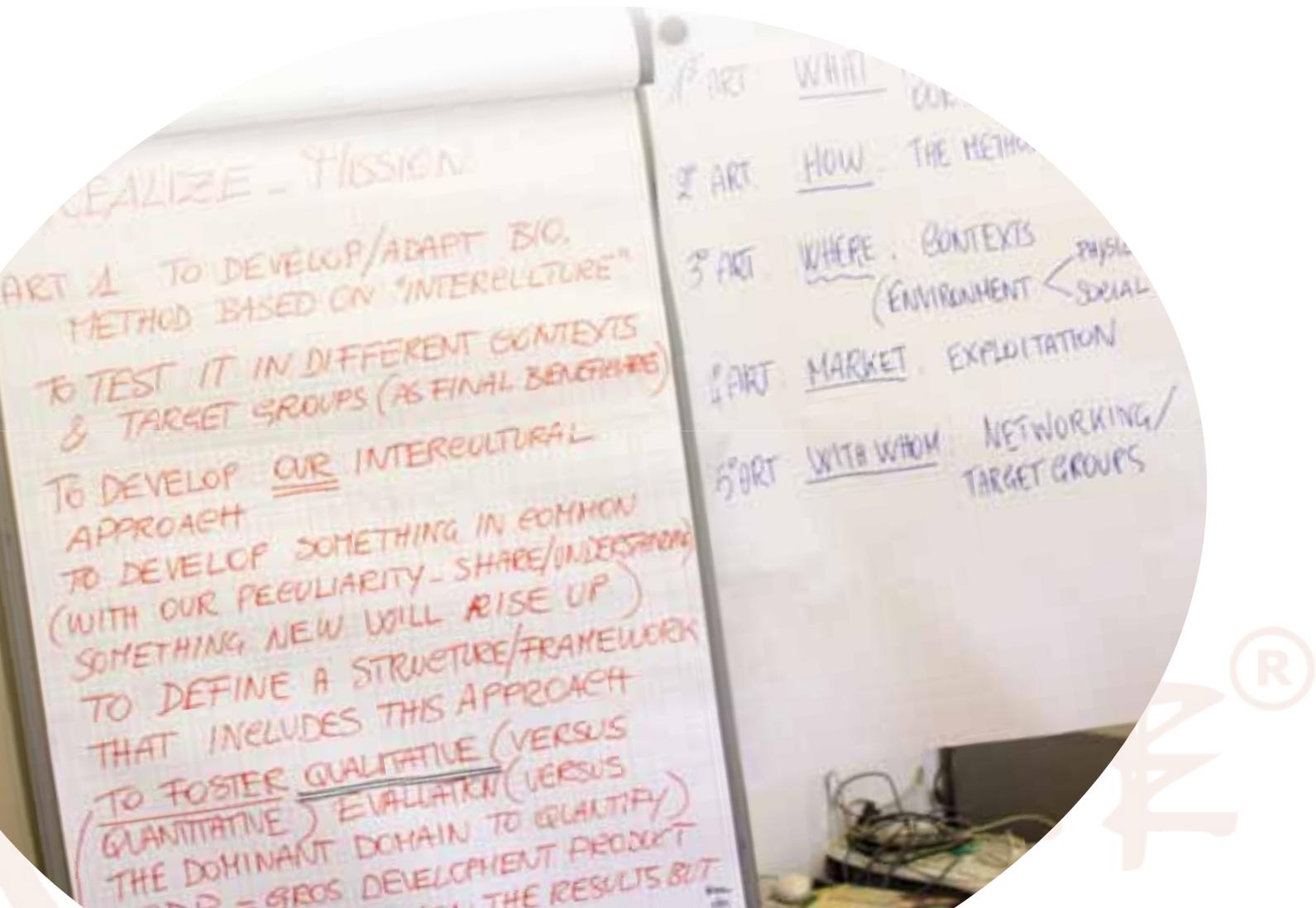
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# Transcultural Biography Work. Manual

## TRANSCULTURAL BIOGRAPHY WORK (TBW) IN ADULT EDUCATION: FOREWORD

**Elisabetta Cannova**  
**The project coordinator**  
**Speha Fresia**

Education with adult learners should involve a consistency of approaches and practices with the declared statements of “good learning processes”: holistic, situated and learners’ centred, pro-active and flexible (modular and exploiting different learning environments/methods) overall accepted by the educational community.

TBW intends to deepen the concepts and the practices of these approaches, looking also for:

- The valorisation of previous knowledge and abilities versus the attention to the “lack” of knowledge and skills, in order to cover the gap and to achieve the expected learning outcomes. As teacher, trainer, coach or counsellor, we know how important it is for our target groups to realize which the gap is in order to reach their specific objectives. We are also convinced that how to reach this awareness could play a formidable role in motivating and empowering the individuals, supporting her/his decision making process. In this framework the golden rule for educators should be “not substitute the learner role in the decision making process”. In some contexts this golden rule cannot be always met, mainly in formal education, where the transfer of knowledge, with a top-down approach, is prevailing.
- The implementation of qualitative evaluation processes centred on self-assessment methods and tools versus quantitative and hetero assessment orientation. Although the qualitative focus is fundamental for the empowerment process of individuals, it is probably weak for the standards required by the European framework of qualifications. This critical issue could be the central topic of a follow up project.
- The promotion of self-directed learning, creating, as educational agencies, the best environment conditions to facilitate further learning experiences, encouraging mobility, learning by doing, using peer-to-peer approach, networking and utilizing community engagement, among others.

In this framework adult educators should play different roles, choosing one of them or changing different *hats* in different learning situations: facilitator, coach, counsellor, trainer, tutor, advisor, mentor ... To the question “what do you teach with TBW”, the only answer could be “we don’t *teach* anything”, we want to bring back memories and through them prefigure the future directions. We are just trying to explore and share with adult learners our potentials, including us as facilitator, as part of the group.

And as part of the human consortium, the trans-cultural perspective could be the only possible drive to foster transformative learning. Inclusive education is the vital humus of social cohesion. This means welcoming new cultures and reinforcing mutual understanding and respect, freeing new energies and facilitating the realization of equal opportunity for all.

The partnership of Realize hopes you will be stimulated by applying these practices, exploiting the examples presented in this manual and enriching them with your experiences and creativity in adapting TBW in your educational environment.

Enjoy the reading and visit us at <http://www.realizeproject.eu>.



# „REALIZE – TRANSCULTURAL BIOGRAPHY WORK FOR ADULT EDUCATION“: A DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT

**Annemarie Schweighofer-Brauer, Manuela Schweigkofler and Hüseyin Gül**

## How Grundtvig programme, Realize project and TBW approach correspond

Realize project, from 2010 to 2012, was dedicated to apply Transcultural Biography Work (TBW) in different contexts with different participants with various needs and backgrounds, explore and implement new techniques of TBW, assess the effectiveness of TBW techniques, and elaborate further on TBW approach. Exercised in adult education, TBW encourages learners to find their personal access to learning and to the issues under consideration. It stimulates learning through reflecting life experience. It inspires to create new perspectives through biographical exchange among each other.

Realize project has been funded by the European Union Lifelong Learning Programme as a Grundtvig Multilateral Project:

*“Launched in 2000, Grundtvig aims to provide adults with more ways to improve their knowledge and skills, facilitate their personal development and boost their employment prospects. It also helps to tackle problems associated with Europe’s ageing population.”*

([http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-programme/grundtvig\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-programme/grundtvig_en.htm) [25.5.2012])

TBW is in line with the essential target of Grundtvig programme by inspiring individuals to develop self-awareness for learning and continuous personal development and self-esteem for acquiring new skills for social and work life.

Grundtvig programme has been named after Nikolai Frederik Severin Grundtvig, a Danish theologian, philosopher, politician and pedagogue who lived from 1783 to 1872 ([http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nikolai\\_Frederik\\_Severin\\_Grundtvig](http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nikolai_Frederik_Severin_Grundtvig); [28.5.2012]). He invented so to say the Folkhighschool with the pedagogic premises of self organized learning of pupils following questions they themselves pose; and of redesigning the relationship of pupil and teacher as a vivid exchange in contrast to hierarchic ex-cathedra teaching. TBW stands exactly in this tradition of empowering, self responsible and democratic learning.

We choose to name our project “Realize” using an acronym which has two meanings and characterising TBW as well. On the one hand “to realize” means becoming aware of something. In other words, something becomes clearer than it was before. Persons apply biographical self exploration and they become aware of their feelings, thoughts, images etc. stored in their memories. The body remembers, the emotions are called and the thoughts are recollected.

What comes to the surface now is available to be integrated into the self-image, available for further reflection, as a potential for the art of living. On the other hand “to realize” refers to the implementation of a plan by converting the plan into reality. Biographical awareness, recollected and re-evaluated memory may lead to creating a more comfortable contemporary situation and into self-exploration of one’s inner world.



## The project partners

The Realize project partnership consists of seven partner organisations in five countries. This partnership has partially already worked together in the Grundtvig Learning Partnership "PASS – Influence on personal access to education for people with migrant background". We worked with biographical in-depth interview method. Interview partners gave us a contextualised insight into what supports and what hinders that access. It was the consequent next step to elaborate Transcultural Biography Work as an empowerment method for adult education in a further project.

Realize partners are: Speha Fresia and Griot from Rome/Italy; the Süleyman Demirel University (SDÜ) from Isparta/Turkey; Haus der Begegnung and Centre of Social Scientific Research, Education and Information (FBI) from Innsbruck/Austria; the Mykolas Romeris University (MRU) from Vilnius/Lithuania; and as a silent partner in co-operation the Suisse Federation for Adult Learning (SFAL) in Lugano and Labor Transfer SA in Camorina, both from Suisse.

Speha Fresia, a non-profit organisation, has been operating since 1983 in the areas of labour market policies, local development and research. Since 1986 it has been developing measures aimed at helping disadvantaged people access employment in partnership with public and private bodies, through guidance and training activities for adults. The organisation works in accordance with UNI EN ISO 9001:2000, as regards: guidance, counselling, services for local development, design of systemic measures in support of disadvantaged groups, social research, continuous vocational training and lifelong learning. It is a regional certificated body and it is on the short lists of the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare to work with migrants, and of the Equal Opportunity Department to fight against all forms of discrimination. It has always run guidance services through autobiographical methods and tested this methodology also in action researches based on life histories, also with migrants.

The Associazione Interculturale Griot A.I.G. is a non profit organization founded in 1999 in Rome by migrant and Italian citizens for the integration of migrants in Italy. Activities in schools and in cities of the region are related to cultural dialogue, to keep alive the cultures and traditions of the immigrants and to help them with self-education and with a problem-resolution-approach. It is registered in the Book of Associations of the City of Rome, of the Lazio Region and of the Ministry of Social Solidarity. Since 2006 it has an Immigrants Information Office in Rome with free legal assistance. It has organized summer camps for immigrant children

and works on social and human questions, such as racism, homeless people, refugees, religious dialogue, civil rights, citizenship, and female genital mutilation of young girls.

Süleyman Demirel University (SDÜ) is one of the well-known public universities of the Mediterranean region of Turkey and was established in 1992. It is one of the universities with the largest capacity in the newly-founded universities. The University has three four-year junior colleges, six institutes, 40 research centres, 20 two-year vocational colleges and 17 faculties, ranging from education, communication, law, economics and management to medicine and engineering. The university has over 50.000 students and functions as the regional research, education and service centre. It has international connections with many universities all over the world and particularly the universities in EU countries. International connections and mutual cooperation efforts have gained speed in recent years. The university has such research centres as Lifelong Learning Research Centre, Village Institutes and Education Research Centre, Women Studies Research Centre among others.

FBI Centre (in German: Institut für gesellschaftswissenschaftliche Forschung, Bildung und Information) is a non-university based science shop and an independent research institute. It started as a science shop, with focus on the mediation task between civil society and university. Due to changes over time (e.g. reduced financial resources for the mediation task; shift from knowledge transfer – answering requests in a relatively short time – to research, which requires deeper investigation) and changed needs of the clients, the concept had been adapted. Now FBI Centre focuses on conducting own research projects, applying qualitative methods, especially biographical research focusing on gender issues and marginalised social groups; and making the results accessible by bridging the gap between science and civil society through publications (like brochures) and adult educative courses and seminars. In adult education we apply innovative methods like Biography Work and Scenario Workshop.

Haus der Begegnung is a training centre for adult education belonging to the Catholic Church of Austria. It is specialised in four main areas: Work and Economy, Social Policy, Ecology and Interreligious & Intercultural Dialogue. Structurally it has been established a special department for each of these four themes. A university graduated staff member is in charge of researching corresponding subjects with a need-oriented approach, planning the education offer and carrying out the courses. The department of Intercultural & Interreligious Dialogue is specialised in organising an education program for migrants and for

promoters who are working in the areas of education, health promotion, welfare working etc. and who want to improve their competence in intercultural and interreligious skills. Particularly, the program focuses on intercultural communication, migration law and policies, intercultural and interreligious encounters, affirmative action-trainings, migrants networking and ethnical and cultural fostering.

Mykolas Romeris University (MRU) is a modern, dynamic and the 2nd largest research university in Lithuania with over 21.000 students who study in the fields of Economics, IT Science, Law, Public Business Management and Administration, Political Science, Psychology, Education, Sociology and Social Work. MRU is committed to nourishing and delivering high quality education and research in line with the Bologna Process, to prepare future innovative and entrepreneurial leaders. The Faculty of Social Policy prepares professionals for the area of social services. In addition to general studies such as theoretical, methodological and practical training in social work, psychology, education, sociology and legal studies, students also have the opportunity to enhance their competences in fields as social policy, social services, demographic development and economics. The Faculty of Social Policy is partner in several international projects that are related to issues of social work, social policy and social service.

The Swiss Federation for Adult Learning (SFAL/SVEB) is the national union (umbrella organization) for general and vocational adult learning in Switzerland. SFAL has permanent secretariats in Zurich (head-office, German speaking), Lausanne (French speaking) and Lugano (Italian speaking). It groups more than 550 private and public providers of adult education, associations, and canton officials in charge of adult education, in-company adult learning departments and human resources staff as well as individuals involved in adult learning.

The Swiss Federation promotes a sustainable adult education system in Switzerland, raises awareness of the importance of adult learning and creates cooperation and networks among adult learning organizations via conducting national and international projects, conferences and informative meetings. For example, SFAL coordinates the annual Swiss adult learner's week. The Swiss Federation for Adult Learning

has also developed and currently runs a professional "train the trainer system" and a quality system for adult education providers (eduQua). Both systems are today vital pillars of the Swiss adult education sector. Key activities of SFAL within the national and international projects in the field of lifelong learning relate to various target groups like low skilled workers and adults lacking basic skills, migrants, women and elderly people. Such activities promote the improvement of the learning level of low qualified and/or marginalized people, focusing on adult educational policy,



professionalization of adult education and enhancement of the awareness of lifelong learning.

SFAL has a huge network to all relevant areas of adult education, which is very helpful and adequate for developing, conducting and evaluating research but also for disseminating project results all over Switzerland. SFAL has close contacts to policy, adult learning providers, and scientists in the field of adult education, multipliers and SMEs that are willing to contribute their knowledge to adult educational and vocational training projects. For these reasons, one of the main SFAL's objectives in Realize project is to investigate the different approaches and strategies that adult learners' staff could apply with adult learners over 50 years of age. SFAL also wants to stress the attention on the importance of lifelong learning in the elder age to prevent social exclusion and to foster active ageing.

For the project REALIZE, SFAL collaborates with Labor Transfer SA a company located in the Italian speaking part of Switzerland.

Labor Transfer is the reference partner for adult learning programs, especially in transition contexts. It collaborates with the major public agencies to promote integration and fight against unemployment. Labor Transfer offers customized solutions to companies for project management, organization, leadership, communication thanks to an extended know-how and experience built in collaboration with the major Swiss companies. Labor Transfer designs, develops and offers training courses open to the public, applies the Business Performance Management model and ensures continuous improvement according to the European Foundation for Quality Management.

## **The content of the handbook**

This handbook represents one of the main results of Realize project. It hands on practical assistance for doing Transcultural Biography Work; based on project partners experience with testing TBW in our five countries, in our different organisations, with various target groups. Therefore we do not only explain ideal type TBW; but we depict concrete adaptations of TBW exercises, techniques, methods to different contexts.

At the start of the Realize project we undertook a conceptualisation of TBW approach. The essential proposition was to link Biography Work and transculturality; respectively to explore the inherent transculturalising potential of biographical self exploration and working in groups. We based our concept on the explanation of transculturality by Wolfgang Welsch and on the understanding of biographicity of Peter Alheit (find publications of Welsch and Alheit in the listed literature at the end of this manual). We described contents, potentials and aims of TBW specified in Chapter 7 of this manual.

In the next step we defined the TBW methods for the pilot course programmes conducted for students and experts who work or may work with migrants in different professional as presented in Chapter 3.

We experienced TBW exercises among the Realize partners in an instructors training which took place in Antalya/Turkey in June 2011. Thereafter five TBW pilot courses were developed for the different target groups in our five partner countries: Italy, Turkey, Austria, Lithuania and Suisse. Those courses consisted generally of two two-day course parts with some weeks or months in between. Best practice exercises – three examples from each pilot course – you can find them in Chapter 4 of this manual.

The pilot courses were carried out with different target groups: students of the Süleyman Demirel University from different grades and programmes in Turkey; social gerontology students from the Mykolas Romeris University and professionals in this field in Lithuania (trainers and social workers); leaders and active members of migrant organisations in Italy; adult educators, trainers, teachers and coaches in Suisse; and psycho therapists, family helpers, coaches, social workers, teachers in Austria. The training conducted in the pilot courses aimed at using Transcultural Biography Work in supporting people with migrant background to create a stable identity. It is assumed that a stable identity leads to fulfilled living and makes a positive contribution in accessing education and trainings, labour market, public services, guidance, active citizenship, and cultural expression.

Chapter 5 is dedicated to important experiences and results gained during the implementation of TBW approach. Every method of TBW approach has to cope with different environments and target groups, but also has to realize its weaknesses and challenges as well as its limitations. Concerns about when and where to use TBW as well as the limitations of the approach as they came out during the pilot studies conducted in partner countries and discussed among the partners and participants of the pilot courses are described in Chapter 6. In Chapter 6, some insights are also shared regarding how to deal with such concerns and limitations.

Chapter 8 opens the window to some story telling traditions – the ancestors respectively relatives of the TBW approach – and discusses recent developments of biographic research in Turkey and Lithuania. The Appendix including some useful materials and websites on TBW techniques as well as a literature of related resources conclude the manual.

As a part of the Realize project, a website has been developed and maintained to provide information about the project and the partners, and to share project materials on TBW. The web site address is [www.realizeproject.eu](http://www.realizeproject.eu). We disseminated findings and achievements through articles in journals and daily newspapers, presentations at conferences, our conference in Vilnius and the final event in Innsbruck.

Finally, last but not least we wrote this manual to collect and provide all important results of Realize project – and to make it available for further application. We believe that the manual will also help enhance and professionalize TBW approach. The already mentioned chapters we share show our personal appreciation of TBW approach in Chapter 3.

## **Transcultural Biography Work – a short introduction**

In this manual we focus on Transcultural Biography Work – TBW as we named it shortly. In the following chapters it will be elaborated with regard to its methods, techniques, concrete exercises and theoretical foundation. Therefore in this introductory chapter, a short glimpse on it should be sufficient.

### **Biography Work**

Biography Work aims at developing a beneficial self concept and broadening the horizon of possible choices in the present and future. It encourages beneficial behaviour and decision-making processes and empowering visions.

It invites people to narrate their life stories using the strong power of memory and to open up biographical potentials for shaping one's life in the present and future. All kind of creative methods can be used to evoke memory. Biography Work as an adult educative approach is mainly oriented on one's resources and potentials. But it also may help to overcome hindering patterns of thinking, feeling and acting. Through Biography Work people explore how they handled difficult situations in one's life: How did I manage similar situations in the past? How did other people or other members of my family with whom I shared memory manage it? It supports – especially as to marginalized people lacking space, time and means of self-determination – to gain self-awareness as well as courage and the desire to realize one's potentials.

TBW supports the enhancement of self-esteem and the awareness of one's competences. While working biographically especially in a group people should experience optimism and vitality. A positive personal condition motivates to make decisions to learn and to create visions for one's future. Therefore it prepares the ground for education and working carriers.

TBW works on basic key competences to enable satisfying study and working life balance. With their participation people gain a sense for their meaningful contribution in society. Biography Work is a relatively slow process. It needs time and space to make unexpected learning processes and transformation possible. Transcultural Biography Work is oriented towards a realization process. Goals are set but unexpected results are around the corner and mostly appreciated if not highly valued. Biographical approach has already been used in and described for many professional fields – like care and elderly care,

social work, support of foster and adopted children, adult education, therapy, counselling and coaching. We assert that there are a lot of potential fields to apply it fruitfully. Biography Work is an approach that strengthens and cultivates the attitude to be interested in who other people are in reality or how and why they really act, in each others background and life story. Through Biography Work people experience how instructive and educative it is to talk to each other biographically, to listen to biographies, to compare and to learn from each other, to inspire each other. Biographical narration shows how people became what they are now, why they express certain opinions, how they put their views and ideas forward, and why they react in a certain way under different circumstances. The mutual understanding grows. This concrete practice amplifies the horizon of people, their reservoir of imaginations to perceive unknown (and also familiar) people in general.

### **How to combine Biography Work with transculturality?**

Culture is a multilayered term – broadly discussed for example in cultural anthropology or cultural studies. In our case we define culture very simply as the way how people create, organize, express, but also think, verbalize and reflect their living on earth; how they create a common understanding they can share.

“Transcultural” – following the arguments of philosopher Wolfgang Welsch – is based on the idea that cultures always change, mix, and influence each other. They are no fixed entities but there are nettings. Every human community or network defined as “a culture” went through a long historic and ongoing transformation process. Culture is not a thing but something people learn, do, transform, experience and share. So the English term “doing culture” is quite adequate. People create themselves culturally. To be socialised in an environment, in a period means to be familiarized with what people around you think, feel, do; to select how to think, act, feel; to be forced to thoughts, emotions, actions. So this is “doing culture” as well as we “do gender” – being forced to decide about oneself at the same time.

As soon as people with different (“cultural”) background meet, they influence each other and something will change. Rejecting each other because of “cultural features” or defining each other as members of certain “cultures” means to construct those cultures mentally, emotionally and even materially.

## Transcultural focus of Biography Work

Orienting Biography Work transculturally focuses on:

- Exploring what feels foreign in me – to understand better what I experience as foreign outside myself.
- Identifying and appreciating personal talents and capabilities learned through living in different cultural contexts/nets. Transcultural contexts may overwhelm with contradictory demands. Transcultural life practice challenges individuals to develop a stable psychic and mental base of decision making – to find out selection criteria and dynamic modes to interpret perceptions and experiences, to find ways to balance varieties, differences and contradictions.
- Finding out how migration experience influenced my life or the life of people I work with: Identifying what is needed to handle practical life in an unfamiliar environment and what is needed for the personal integration of contradictory experience and demands.
- Stimulating and cultivating processes of mutual understanding among people who regard themselves as members of different cultures; creating a “common third” – “doing culture” through transcultural communication.

Transcultural biographical self-exploration leads to a qualitative exchange which has the potential to change mind sets. An important stimulus for such change is the

recognition that human beings – regardless of their cultural background, gender and age – are similar in terms of basic needs and emotional patterns and reactions. A transcultural mind set and related practice does not eradicate differences but extends possibilities of mutual understanding. Approaching other people as “basically similar” creates a different perception and reflection on one selves’ and others’ behaviour, a different decision making and compoirtment than approaching other people as “basically foreign”.

TBW aims at activating communication, mutual understanding and learning processes; at stimulating comprehensive communication among participants of different origin in communication processes.

TBW helps us to express ourselves, rediscover and share our memories, get into dialogue with each other and understand our dependencies and differences on the basis of mutual respect and understanding. TBW implies to regard people’s unique experience, to start from their horizon of experience and understanding. Biography Work helps overcome misunderstanding and stereotypic perceptions among people.

With the means of Transcultural Biography Work communication processes are initiated to gain mutual empathic understanding of experience and motivations. Transcultural communication can be practiced and trained on this basis as a communicative style which supposes and therefore is aware of connection, relation, similarity, and difference in degree of human beings rather than separation and unbridgeable difference in kind. Transcultural biographical self-awareness raises individual self-esteem, but at the same time it strengthens the consciousness of human interdependence, of the ongoing mutual influence. It makes aware that the liberty to shape the interdependency grows with its acknowledgement.

Living means learning by facing new situations, people, culture-nets, or ages. And learning means transforming oneself.



## CHAPTER 2

# EXPERIENCES AND FINDINGS THROUGH TBW: STATEMENTS OF REALIZE PROJECT PARTNERS

### Being part of larger social life

**By Paolo Raimondi and Welly Marguerite Lottin from Griot**

The usual target groups of Griot are migrants coming from Africa or other continents. These persons carry with them a very dense cultural baggage different from the cultures they find in the hosting countries. Griot experienced that we must work to avoid that these people close in themselves, like in a cultural ghetto. For far not to be accepted by the local people, some of them tend to form a small group with other people from the same origins or from the same regions. This will slow down the integration process and the learning of the national language. For Griot TBW methods are important because they help migrants to tell socially their life history and their past memories: This helps them to overcome the taboos, the cultural fears of the others. This helps them also to see the similarities with the others and, in this way, to better their self conceptions. TBW can be used initially to promote a social reflection just inside a specific migrant community to then open up the process also with other different and also local communities. This helps to create a sense of being part and of living together in the new larger social life. For Griot the use of TBW is the most natural way to address the life stories and cultural backgrounds of the migrants with whom Griot works.

### Why TBW

**By Giorgio Comi and Manuela Carboni from Labor Transfer; and Francesca Di Nardo from Swiss Federation for Adult Learning**

The introduction of TBW specific methods into the continuous learning process favours retraining and professional integration paths. In fact, the participants

can think back to significant moments of their existence, in order to identify situations in which they learnt, built, or elaborated new knowledge or abilities. The valorisation of the oral exchange about autobiographic moments favours the increase of self esteem and the



acknowledgement of specific characteristics and relevant experiences in other people.

TBW is also used in the trainers training. In this context we plan the same formative path, though adding two learning loops: the meta-reflexive one, and the one that might determine a transfer. With teachers and social workers, the TBW strategy is useful to surface significant elements of one's own way of considering the other, learning, decision making, and teaching. The resulting awareness consolidates the teaching competences in general. An important passage in trainer's training is the research techniques that are transferable into specific work contexts, with children or youngsters, with adults dealing with job transition, with migrant families, with social, cultural, and administrative workers who work in the citizenship context.

Our training model offers concrete situations to facilitate

the personal reflection and the exchange amongst the participants. This is also applied to a training cycle with TBW which is guarantee of the quality of the training of youngsters and adults, might they be users with a specific training or trainers. TWB is an approach to the individual that goes through the valorisation of an autobiographic outlook. In this activity we take into consideration four actions necessary for the learning process: to notice, to transform, to direct, and to create (Reggio 2010). The use of these four mental actions within a formative situation – such as creating a chronological map of one's own relational assets, or the choice and introduction of an art piece that defines a moment of one's own existence – lead the participants to observe and listen, therefore detecting elements that they consider significant in their own existence.

Exchange and comparison favour a transformative approach since the activity promotes an enrichment of what has been created and presented. The individual and group experience is then supported by discussions on personal practices or projects that can be linked to the work carried out together. This third action leads to generating new ways of thought and of work that fit into the path of autobiographic reconstruction. This helps express the meaning that the participant wanted to give to the work; meaning that often helps to define new projects for one's own future, immediate or long term.

The reflexive approach and the exchange among participants are guided in maieutic sessions. This way we end the experiential method and the use of autobiographic techniques.

## **Learnings of pilot course participants in Isparta/Turkey**

**By Hüseyin Gül, Songül Sallan-Gül and H. Eylem Kaya from Süleyman Demirel University**

The participants of the pilot study were mostly university undergraduate and two graduate students. The first part of the pilot study was actualized as planned and in time. In general, all of the participants were quite eager to join in study. But, because of their not having enough information about pilot study, they joined in the study with a bit confused expectations such that a couple of them thought they would have taken part in some sort of a lesson. At first, recording and notes taken by us irritated them, even though they did not object to all these. They tried to take notes on papers but they got relaxed when explanations on what we were going to do were once accomplished.

It was relatively easy to establish a trusting environment because the trainers and the observer of the pilot study were the Professors at the university whom many participants knew. Besides, it was very helpful to have one trainer to read a real-life story from his diary at the beginning of the study since it helped the group draw into the mood of the TBW study and increase the trust and sincerity in the group. Moreover, working in groups and exchange of experiences and ideas before the whole group increased the trust and sincerity among participants. Second day, the participants socialized and united more, so, they started to talk, share and express more about themselves in a relaxed way.

While the participants were talking about their autobiographies within the flow of the study, their emotionality went up especially when they were talking about their traumas concerning their migration periods or their exclusion due to their wearing a head scarf, ideology, sect, ethnic identity etc. Sometimes they shed tears, sometimes their voice tones changed. Listening to others and cordial atmosphere made them more relaxed and talkative while telling about their own life stories. Trainers did not interrupt them and let them recover themselves from that emotional atmosphere. The participant with head scarf and the Kurdish one were reluctant and unwilling to talk at the beginning. But the more they listened to others' life stories and explanations, their body languages changed as well. They got relaxed more but continued to be reluctant about giving information related to their own stories compared to the other members of the group.

Especially within biography narration, it was observed that the participants coming from rural areas and crowded families made a paternal narration more and set forth self-critics of this situation.

For the second part of the pilot study, there was a change in time and place of the study since the air-conditioning of the room 216 in the university library was not good enough for long time working. So, it was actualized in Sociology Department Chair Room. For time change, since there was a religious holiday on 6<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> of November, it was accomplished on 24<sup>th</sup>-25<sup>th</sup> of October. In the second part of the pilot study; the participants expressed that their autobiographies, family biographies and genograms let them learn more about their own past. They underlined that they did not comprehend the importance of transculturality before and the information about their own past was inadequate. It was noticed that the participants especially coming from isolated families got shocked about their family relations and pasts while preparing genograms.

There occurred two different points of view about the most effective TBW technique/s in the plenum. The first

view was that individual techniques such as drawing were more effective. In fact, some participants expressed that they were very reluctant to use drawing technique because they thought they could not draw well. But after they tried it, they loved drawing technique. Besides, some of them stated that this technique was quite useful for expressing their own feelings and understanding of TBW. The second view was that working in groups, exchange of ideas in plenum and doing search on family backgrounds were more enjoyable and informative and some students underlined that group work and autobiographical techniques were more useful in self-exploration and understanding others. They agreed about that this helped them understand themselves and others better and the need of having different points of view, tolerating such differences and living together with all the differences.

In addition, the participants agreed on that they felt defenceless and unarmed for their own while having an internal trip; and that the study was actualized in a therapy atmosphere. Besides, they stressed that the feeling of trust built with this study helped them get square with their own and past. They emphasized that the activities performed in group atmosphere helped them see the differences and clashes better, but at the same time, the sincerity there helped them express themselves clearly, tell their life story and their past memories. The TBW techniques used during the pilot study also helped them better understand the others, who were different, see their similarities, overcome their taboos and fears about the different others. Some participants expressed that they better realized the importance of understanding other people and respecting them although we were different. All these seem to help create a sense of belongingness among the group in a world with too many differences. Some participants said that they realized that they had many differences from others but not alone and that they had similar problems or characteristics with the others. Everybody in study stated that they would benefit from these techniques in their own work life as well.

## **A new story telling practice**

**By Annemarie Schweighofer-Brauer from FBI Centre**

People enjoy talking to each other about memories. This is what I notice every time in Biography Work seminars. Welly Marguerite Lottin, director of the migrant association Griot in Rome, coming from Cameroun, told Realize partners: "What we elaborate – the TBW approach – is quite normal in everyday life in Cameroun and it is practised skilfully."

In Germany and Austria mistrust and misunderstanding between generations pervaded the relationship especially during the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The experience and in case of many people involvement into National Socialist terror regime caused traumatising, repression of memory, feelings of guilt, and destroyed perspectives. The passing on of memory has been disrupted in many families. Children and grand children felt that blind spots, dark regions of the family memory are inaccessible.

The habit to create ones self-awareness through narrating oneself embedded in a family biography, or in the biography of a neighbourhood or village (of people with whom it is possible to interact directly) became complicated, were interrupted or even got lost.

Participants of Biography Work seminars notice a feeling of release while talking about their stories. Their space expands with telling and listening. Mental pressure, lack of time, and depression consume such space. Devoting time to biographical exchange opens up space to transformation. It releases because energy and feelings flow. It is linked to old story telling traditions – passing on family histories, stories of communities or personal stories which create and communicate the meaning of a person, a family, a community.

People enjoy this release and make themselves visible as unique human beings, sharing their wealth of biographical experience. They also listen to others histories, share this space and a new history evolves – patch worked to a new common history.

Especially people with migrant background need to become visible in the new environment by weaving their stories into the prevailing story. To become visible with ones history means not to be stereotyped.

Biography Work continues the traditions of story-telling.

## **Look at migrants from another aspect**

**By Elisabeth Reiter from Haus der Begegnung**

Transcultural and interreligious dialogue can also be looked at as a dialogue of life. People from different countries, religions, culture, ages, and social surroundings get to know each other in a special way. The way of telling and listening is a very easy and nevertheless intense approach. There is no need for much theory, the learning is about you and the others. The story book is made by life.

One example motivated us to work with Transcultural

Biography Work: We organised a visit in a mosque in Innsbruck. A lot of people were attracted. They wanted to use the opportunity to visit a mosque and see how it looks from inside. Of course, they wanted to have a deeper insight on how Muslim people are, how they pray, how do they live and to get in touch with them. The participants enjoyed the comfortable atmosphere and they asked many questions. Although time was little, they got a new perspective on people with migrant and Muslim background. And there was some kind of a rapprochement between the visitors and the hosts. They discovered a lot of similarities and learnt that "these others" are not as different from them. We had several similar experiences.

Biographic exchange is transcultural because both concepts are focussing on individuals and their stories, their influences, their identities. Both support living with different life styles and backgrounds which mix, interpenetrate each other and evolve from each other.

We all are affected by cultural patterns; we have different cultural elements inside. So, we are as transcultural as others are. So, we are a big group of multifaceted different people, and the Transcultural biography work helps us to focus on the individuals, their needs and wishes, their sorrows and hardships. If we focus on individuals and their special identities we don't need to talk on integration of people with migrant background into society. We should talk about the *enrichment* of every single person and his/her unique history for the society.

## Guidance and coaching for the entrepreneurial choice

**By Elisabetta Cannova and Fulvio Campa from Speha Fresia**

A narrative approach could be exploited also when people set oneself the aim of setting up their own business, to transform their dreams, intuitions, knowledge or passions in an entrepreneurial project. The narrative and biographical approach is the key.

Through biographical approach, Speha Fresia implemented, in the framework of the Women Incubators experience, a guidance tool to accompany the person, or the would-be entrepreneurial team, in a virtual journey from one own "origin land" to the "business



territory", identifying the heritage that each one, often tacit and without awareness, can spend to develop a business idea. As in small business is the quality of the owner(s) that makes the difference and enhances the success probability; the guidance and coaching method is fundamental to sustain people in this transformation process: from unemployment or unsatisfactory working position, to the fulfilment of their potential. In this case, novels are used too in order to "open" the emotional part and to overcome that critical point where the rational part stops and becomes enabled to give answers.

Also the genogram method is used, supported by visual/images tools, and through the reviewing of the "family photo gallery" increases the awareness about the own specific strong points and values, able to sustain the person to face changes and to better cope with them. The recognition of the network around the person is another strong factor to point out, in order to be able to ask for help and supports.

The tools used in this field are related to the guidance interview practices, individual or in team, applied through different tools and approaches, like the "Bilan de competence" method (largely applied in Italy), and adapted for the self-employment solutions through a Leonardo da Vinci Multilateral Project, B-Plan ([www.bplanproject.eu](http://www.bplanproject.eu)) where you can download methods and tools for guidance sessions targeted to start-ups.

Or the Rétravailler method (gender perspectives), with significant European experiences, like the Galaxies Project, a Transfer of Innovation Leonardo da Vinci Project aiming at underlining the gender difference in guidance practices in Secondary Schools (see the website: [www.galaxiesproject.eu](http://www.galaxiesproject.eu) where you can find tools to download with practical exercises and guides in different European languages targeted to the VET system educators).

## PREPARATION OF MODULES: HOW TO DO TRANSCULTURAL BIOGRAPHY WORK – METHODS, EXERCISES, MEDIA

***Annemarie Schweighofer-Brauer, FBI Centre, with contributions of Realize project partners***

Biography Work activates biographical resources to cope with, to mould and understand life. For respective professional contexts where TBW should be applied, appropriate methods and techniques, media, activities, settings have to be selected and combined. Learning from success and failure stories works individually (e. g. in counselling) and works very well in groups (e. g. in adult education).

In this manual, the concepts of method, technique and approach are used very often. They are sometimes not easy to differentiate. Thus, it would help reader if they are clearly but shortly defined here before we further proceed. You shall notice that the concepts of method and technique are used interchangeably in the manual and both are used to refer to the each of the tools and ways in the process of conducting TBW, such as narration, psychodrama, imaginary journeys, drawing, biographical writing etc. Yet, the concept of method is also applied in a broader sense to mean an overall orderly plan, process and procedures of conducting a whole TBW study, not just one of the techniques used in this handbook, such as narration or drawing, used in a TBW course. In other words, method refers to the manner or / and planned process in which a work is carried out or done. In this sense, the word is also used as methodology in its longer version (Baydar/Gül/Akçil 2007).

In the manual, TBW is considered as an “approach” rather than a method because the concept of “approach” reflects how we, as the partners of the Realize Project, see and define TBW. Approach is preferred over the word “method” since the concept of approach indicates a point of view or an angle to look at the world as in the case of a person making an approach to depict, understand and tackle an issue. This may not necessarily involve solving the problem but in some cases the approach you take may pave the way for the development of a method to solve the issue. Thus, a method is often based upon an approach to be successfully utilized. Accordingly, in the manual, TBW is called as an approach rather than method.

### Principles of working together with TBW in a group

In the following description mainly the working with groups of people in adult education will be elaborated with some attention on coaching and counselling. Working in groups offers people the chance to compare, to exchange, to react to each other, and to give feedback.

At the beginning of a work process principles of treating each other and working together should be introduced as a basis for mutual estimation. Such principles should also make people aware of transference among participants which inevitably will go on.

- “What people narrate and reveal in this group will not leave this room”: obligation to confidentiality.
- “I see in your picture, I hear from your words...” Group members are not judging but talking about the own perception of the other’s expression. That way somebody can provide valuable impulses through a feedback but without devaluating the person addressed or forcing the own perception on her/him. Furthermore – with regard to transference – it will be clear that the perception of the person who says: “I see, I hear, I perceive this ...” has probably more to do with him/herself than with the expression of the other.
- “Your experience is unique, because it is yours, but you are not alone with it. Some of us know similar situations.” Group member do not pocket the experience of others but rather find out connection points. The group’s awareness of the uniqueness and interrelatedness of each story should be heartened. If people state that they know exactly what the other person has experienced, it may again be a question of transferring the own experience and imposing it rather than giving floor to a subtle approach and growing understanding.

## Benefitting from the group

Working in a group permits to experience directly the interconnectedness of biographically shaped individuals. The unity of individuality/uniqueness and interconnectedness/similarity can be methodologically comprised. Remembering and accounting provoke associations at the side of the listeners and memories will appear. When people react to each other by telling associated stories, a texture of stories will be generated. People can react to each other with regard to familiarity or strangeness and reflect on those reactions.

An important task of a trainer in an adult educative group will be not only to support the individuals but also to support the group development. Group development means that the individuals not only collect their stories and exchange them but also they develop something together, that they react to each other, find interconnections; that they take the chance to learn about their biographical experience connected to groups and communities. A technique to visualize such a process e. g. can be to produce together an exhibition of objects or photos of the group members and to combine them to tell a common story; or to produce a sculpture together out of objects which are biographically important for the individuals; or to design a novel out of group members memorized stories – to interweave them: What if I had met you at that certain phase of my life?

As a basic setting for Biography Work in groups, it proves to be helpful to build a circle of chairs. This circle offers the same space to everybody and allows everybody to look at everybody else. This setting underlines the democratizing intention of TBW and helps to avoid hierarchies among group members as far as possible – and also not to stress a hierarchy between a trainer and the participants. Hierarchies may hinder trust which is a pre-condition for open exchange. If there is a formal or informal hierarchy existing because e. g. the group of people already works together, the trainer has to be aware of the limits for the open exchange. In such situations Biography Work – within certain borders – may support people in hierarchical relationship, in rivalry to approach each other, to clarify situations, and to find a better mode to co-operate. The trainer has to offer a protected space – e. g. through offering to work on delicate issues in sub-groups where people can choose with whom they work.

The trainer's position of course is a special one since he/she is expected to dispose of larger experience and knowledge on the subject, to prepare the workshop or seminar, to initiate the working process, to give impulses, to observe the individual's process and the group process.

But with the trainer sitting in a circle with the participants the relationship will be different from standing in front of the group. Having a leading person standing quasi outside the group can give energy to the tendency to build up an opposition between trainer and group of participants.

Inevitably in any case participants will transfer former experience with authorities, teachers, parents to the trainer and the trainer vice versa will transfer former experience to the participants. The trainer has to be aware of transferences which may happen. He/she should be prepared to let it happen and to work with connected memory materials but not to involve him/herself.

## Process orientation

Biography Work is process oriented. That means the trainer will prepare the seminar, workshop (or counselling) but will then be oriented on the flow of the process. She/he will adapt the planning to the flow of the workshop or seminar. But she/he also should not lose the issue/aim of the seminar out of sight. In the spirit of Theme Centred Interaction, this task demands to balance the development and needs of the individuals, the development and needs of the group and the knotting to the subject of the workshop or seminar. During the seminar, the design has to be constantly adapted.

## Stimulate and express memory

The core of Biography Work is to stimulate remembering and to express memory. A lot of methods respectively media are suitable to do so – depending on techniques the trainer is qualified to use, on the target groups preferences or available materials. First of all a question has to be posed and an exercise to be described. For example: "Draw a picture on how your situation was when you came to the receiving society." "Think about how you experienced the first time when you went to school. Go for a little walk and look for some object associated to what you remember and bring it back afterwards to the plenum."

Memory can be stimulated and focused through activities like drawing, painting, collecting objects, selecting a picture, dancing, listening to music, going for a walk and so on. After such an exercise, it will be narrated what has been remembered by the participant – e. g. connected to the picture that has been produced or the object that has been found. Other participants can then give a feedback. But as already remarked, the feedback has to express that it is the perception of the feedback giver and not a judgement, not a truth about the feedback receiver. The narration of the person and the feedback can lead to a new reflection

of remembered situations or occurrences, to unfamiliar, maybe surprising perspectives on the memory, to new insights and conclusions. Therefore space has to be conceded after each exercise (remembering, narrating and exchanging, giving feedback, comparing memories) to reflection on what happened while memorizing, narrating and exchanging with the group. This reflection may provide first results of the personal processing which also can be recorded in some way (e. g. by writing).

A finalizing step – probably close to the end of a workshop, seminar or of biographical work in coaching – will be to identify former steps to be taken, intentions, plans, or visions for the near future which arouse through the Biography Work experience.

To offer different sensual approaches to stimulate memory answers to the fact that there are different types of learners/memorizers like visual, auditory, haptic, olfactory ones. Their memory can be activated best through his/her preferred sense.

Below different methods and media will be discussed to stimulate memorizing and to initiate exchange and reflection as a basis to plan TBW modules. Those methods and media can of course be combined creatively.

## Requirements for Trainers

- Trainers who work with Transcultural Biography Work first of all have to have experienced this approach themselves. They have to be aware of possible effects and impacts out of practical experience and theoretic reflection.
- They have to be experienced in guiding groups in adult education – in how to guide, use, adopt and combine different techniques – or in counselling, coaching, ... depending on the professional field they intend to apply TBW.
- They may be experienced with regard to biographical research. This is not a necessary requirement but it can be regarded as a qualification to apply Biography Work since the work and reflection process includes many similarities with Biography Work in adult education.
- They should be qualified to adapt Biography Work in adult education. This qualification will probably not be a formal one because aside from the courses of LebensMutig e. V. there are not so many training courses

available, although Biography Work modules are offered in the context of different study programmes. The qualification may stem from practice: Some trainers use biographical elements during working with groups or during counselling.

- Trainers will apply all kind of techniques or exercises they dispose of and combine it to elaborate TBW: e. g. techniques or exercises in adult education, education, qualitative research, music, creative design and expression, theatre play, oral history, psychotherapeutic approaches ...

It has been proven to be an advantage to carry out TBW by two trainers at the pilot courses for Realize project. They could share the tasks of guiding the group and taking over responsibility of documentation (taking photos, producing videos, taking notes for minutes ...). It is also an advantage for sharing the responsibilities of observing the group process, being aware of the individuals' processes and doing the ongoing process oriented planning during the seminar.

## Phases of work in a workshop/ course

In a workshop, course or seminar, some basic phases will appear and there are different models to define them and to understand their specificities. For TBW courses, we suggest to distinguish primarily three phases:

- Start phase;
- Intensive work phase;
- Phase of reflecting what has been learned and closing the seminar.



## Starting a workshop

The main aim of the starting phase of a workshop or seminar is to get in contact with each other, to build a first basis for mutual trust, to handle initial insecurity and anxieties people might face while meeting new people in a new situation. Moreover, organisational questions should be clarified.

During the start phase a first familiarization happens with the other participants, the trainer and the group as a whole as well as with the subject. The participants and trainers introduce themselves and get first impressions of each others. Enough time should be allowed to each participant in this phase.

The start of a seminar often is animated by feelings of eagerness, interest, and excitement but also by fear, insecurity and longing for orientation. Participants probably don't know each other or the trainer. Insecurity respectively repressed insecurity are normal at this stage. This phase can actively be taken to be linked to the specificity of Transcultural Biography Work. An important issue in the context of transculturality is handling the fear of the unknown, of what seems foreign and to find ways to become familiar, to find connection points, to become aware of the foreign inside one.

The whole seminar process from the beginning can be guided to mirror the processes of transculturalisation and to find out how they can consciously be initiated and reflected. The trainer may accompany this process by explaining it from the very beginning and inviting the participant to have it in mind and to reflect regularly on what they learn about transculturalisation during biographical work. It can be suggested to the participants to prepare a little booklet or a sheet of paper and to take notes and formulate recognitions during the whole process. At the end of the course or seminar this notes and recognitions can be used for the "harvest" – to point up the profit of the work process.

The start phase normally consists of an address of welcome; a description of the context of the seminar; a clarification of the organisation questions; an introduction of the organizers, trainers and participants; and a presentation of the impressions, motivations and expectations of the participants. All those clarifications at the same time serve to reduce insecurity and slowly to build the group's capacity to work together.

The introduction of the trainer and participants can already be linked to a little biographic exercise. As an example:

*The trainer spreads pictures of ways, doors, landscapes at the floor in between the chair circle; and asks the participants to regard all*

*the pictures and select one which especially speaks to him/her with regard to a question like: Which way did guide you here? Which door did you have to open to come here? During the round of introductions, the participants can talk about the picture they chose and already give a little impression about their close past and about there feelings before and in this situation: How it was to come here, what they had to leave behind, how they feel in a new group of people, etc.*

At the beginning of the course, the trainer also asks the participants about their relation to the topic of the course.

*Therefore questions the trainer asks have to be formulated to encourage exploring this relationship: How do you feel about ...? What is your connection to ...? What experience do you already have with ...? What interests you about ...? What would you like to learn about ...?*

Theme Centred Interaction trainer Heide Walbrodt suggests to foresee relatively at the beginning of a course an exercise to stress resources the participants are having available. She argues that the participants will have to work hard, to go through a maybe difficult process and therefore they need to be aware of their abilities at the beginning. To give an example:

*Ask the participants to work together in sub-groups (of four, five or six people) on abilities they already developed to handle foreign, unfamiliar, unknown people, situations, cultures ... They should write at least one ability of each sub-group member on a flip chart paper. Afterwards in the plenum these papers will be regarded together.*

Relatively at the beginning of a seminar or workshop it should be agreed among participants and trainers to secrecy about what participants reveal. What people account about themselves will not leave the working room. Also the principle of voluntariness ("I decide how I participate in the exercises and what I narrate from my memories") has to be introduced. It has to be made clear if and how the seminar process will be documented (photos, DVD, recording, writing ...).

## Phase of intensive work

In the case of a TBW course the aim of the intensive work phase is that participants become acquainted with TBW through self-awareness, through reflection of experience and inputs; further on to prepare the transfer of what has been learned into the professional practice of the participants. This phase will probably cover the main part of the work process.

In case of a seminar where TBW itself is the topic there time to be foreseen to give inputs, to try out TBW techniques, to reflect the experience with the techniques and discuss potential adaptations to the practice of the participants. There should also be time to talk about questions, concerns, ideas of the participants. The settings chosen (plenum, dyads, triads, part groups ...) should be adequate for the respective technique, content, aim.

Biographical methods to be probed, discussed and reflected during this phase are described below as well as in Chapter 4 on examples for units and adaptations in the different countries where Realize pilot courses have been carried out.

Working with the participants in seminar groups means to enter in a group process. Rivalry, conflicts among participants and with the trainers might arise. In this case they have to be respected. With regard to TBW to such conflicts a reflection can be initiated on lessons with regard to transcultural co-operation and living together. To maintain the working capacity of the group also problematic situations have to be integrated. "Disturbances and passionate involvements take precedence.", like Ruth Cohn formulates. In a TBW course might everything happen like in „real live“ but with the difference that space for reflection will be provided.

In a TBW seminar the intensive working phase is dedicated to explore the own experience with "the foreign", "the other" (inside and outside) through biographical techniques and to cultivate the transcultural awareness and consciousness, to take a step to internalize it; further on to take a step to be able to practice transculturality. Therefore also the fear of transculturality, the fear of change will be an issue: Which kind of fears can be activated if people meet foreign people, get into unfamiliar situations? Which kind of aggressions is activated? What experiences are available on handling such fears and aggressions, to transform them into understanding, and non-violent conflict management? Those questions, too, have to be explored primarily through biographical self-reflection ("Do I remember situations where I handled fears and aggressions? Have such experiences been narrated in my family? Do I have experience of failure and what can I learn out of it? Is there something to

learn for me from the narrations and reflections of other participants?").

During the seminar trainers repeatedly have to check what participants want or need to discuss, learn, experience or reflect on – also especially before the end of the course and it has to be spoken about which expectations can be realistically treated.

Against the end of the phase of intensive work it might happen that the group atmosphere becomes more and more bright, that humour and laughing starts playing an important role. This situation mirrors the alleviation about having done hard work, of having learned and experienced and that it is time to celebrate this success. It also mirrors already the situation of farewell, when grief about finalizing this special situation and happiness and excitement about what is coming up new are present. The trainers again can use these feelings to make aware of processes like this which is as well going on in (transcultural) life.

## Finalizing a workshop

Against the finish of a workshop, seminar, course or a process of biographical working in counselling, it has to be reflected on what has been learned. The transfer into the private or professional practice has to be prepared. At the end of a seminar, a good farewell for the group has to be offered.

The final phase of the course is dedicated to the harvest of the hard work done. Exercises should be planned which support the participants to reflect their profits and to plan the transfer of the learned into "real life".

*To reflect what has been learned, participants could go for a little walk individually and watch for an object which symbolizes their process and profits of the course. Later in the plenum, they can describe what the object expresses. Or they can write a list with what they learned. They can write three main profits on little papers and stick it on a pin board, explain it – one after the other.*

Exercises to operationalise the transfer task could be:

*- The participants write a letter to themselves: "My next three (or five ...) steps with TBW in my professional (or private) life". The trainers collect the letters, which have been put in an envelope by the participants with name and address, and send them back to the participants after three (or six ...) months.*

- *Peer coaching: As a first step, every person reflects individually what she/he plans to do with regard to TBW in her/his profession during the next time. After that the participants select each other for triads (groups of three). In the triads one describes her/his plans, another one counsels her/his, and the third one serves as an observer who gives her/his comment at the end of this counselling. After that, the next one describes her/his plans, another one counsels ....*

Before the course ends, there has been a last period of time foreseen to clarify open questions, to finish open processes. The trainer has to make participants aware of the meaning of farewell situations for transcultural contexts – grieve, fear of being left alone, fear to give up this familiar situation and to face again something unknown ...

At the end, there should be also time reserved for feedback among the participants, to the trainer and regarding the whole course.

*A feedback exercise among participants and for the trainer could be: Participants are sitting in the chair circle in plenum. Every participant who likes to may ask two questions to 2 (or 3) selected other participants: What do you admire with regard to me? What do you wish me?*

At the end of the course the trainer makes participants aware that the course has been a transcultural experience: Participants entered a new situation/environment, together with probably unknown people to learn and do something

together. People worked together, felt or acted out conflicts, became friends, experienced, reflected. This group situation was unique – it would never happen in this constellation again. Participants now have to cope with taking leave of each other and of this shared experience. Meeting, communicating, mixing up, becoming and going by, changing through encountering – all these existential occurrences characterize transculturality and transcultural living.

The closing of the course could be celebrated with having a group dance together, singing a song together or even organising a little party together – depending on what the participants like to do.

## **Social forms for working and learning in a group**

In an adult education course, it can be worked in plenum or in sub-groups: groups of two (dyads), of three (triads), groups of four, five..., half groups (half the plenum). To alternately apply, those settings help to keep energy in the group work and to experience vividness. Working in sub-groups composed every time by different people gives the chance to get acquainted with different people more closely and also to choose willingly with whom one wants to exchange.

The trainer plans – regarding to the content and the aim of an exercise – if participants should work in the plenum, in groups or individually. In some cases the size of the sub-group does not matter so much but it will be formed regarding to an issue, e. g.: form three groups out of all people here younger than 35, all between 35 and 50 and finally all above 50. Groups, plenum or individual work can be preferred. Those settings are called social forms.

Different social forms will frequently be combined to carry out an exercise. For example:

*The exercise deals with collecting memory on entering foreign worlds. A question could be asked: Try to remember two or three situations in your life, when you entered (completely) foreign worlds: How was the situation? What did you feel? Think? Whom did you meet? How did you behave?*

*Reflect individually and take some notes. Come together in triads afterwards and explain to each other what you remember. Finally come back to the plenum: What has been astonishing in your*



*group? Were there similar thoughts, feelings, behaviours, experiences you remembered? Or very different ones? Some notes could be taken on a flipchart to point out characteristics of transcultural experience.*

If work in sub-groups is initiated, it has to be regarded what the size of a group may cause. A dyad may jump deeper into an exchange than a triad or larger sub-group. So the trainer has to decide if she/he wants to encourage deep processes in this seminar or in this phase of the working process or not. After working in sub-groups, it normally makes sense to go back to the plenum and have at least a little exchange on how people went along. This would give the trainer the chance to detect the "mood" of the group and potential disturbances and also to keep herself/himself in the flow of the process if she/he did not participate in one of the sub-groups. The trainer in the spirit of participatory guiding of Theme Centred Interaction may take part in sub-groups.

## **Biographical methods, techniques and tools to plan modules**

### **Narration**

In historic science, the biographical approach is also called Oral History – history in terms of sounds leaving the mouth. Words are in this case the media to describe memory, to express and communicate it, to reflect on it, and to detect transformed perspectives. The words/formulations transport and create imaginations.

In Biography Work, narration frequently is linked to techniques like drawing, dancing, etc. Those techniques are used alternatively but narration and verbal communication are always part of Biography Work.

For example; a picture about their life course could be drawn by the participants and afterwards they could describe, and explain what they had drawn. But a narration could also be initiated directly. In this case a question would be posed and people would talk about it in the plenum or in sub-groups (dyads, triads ... half groups).

A biographic issue could be also treated in a plenum by narrating and associating together, reacting to others' narrations, dwell on subjects brought up for a while and merge to other subjects arising from narrated memories. This procedural method requires a big portion of sure instinct from the trainer:

This method is named "associative openness" (assoziative Offenheit). This method involve such techniques as: To support people who want to speak

but have difficulties to win recognition while other people easily communicate in groups; to vouch for issues, themes which activate fear or insecurity among participants but might be important for one participant and for the progress of the group; to handle confusion which might be felt by participants if there are many issues, preoccupations, involvements coming together through the narrative exchange in the group; to depict what links those different narrations maybe; to detect the moment when the exchange should end – when enough has been said to come to comprehension, and to have reflection materials available to go on working with it. To draw results from this "associative openness" after the associating, narrating, exchanging phase, an exercise should be planned with a stricter, result oriented working direction.

*E. g. Think individually about: What were the most impressive learning, impression, narration for you during the associative openness? Is there a question on which you would like to go on working? Please note this on a card.*

*Afterwards in the plenum participants account what impressed them most and they pin on a pin wall these cards with what should be worked at furthermore.*

*Maybe there are similar issues pinned on the wall, maybe different ones. It has to be decided with which issue to go on and if there are issues to be treated later on.*

*After that, a little pause might be necessary to give the trainer some time to plan the next step: Formulate the next issue and questions, decide on the methods to tread them and on the social forms.*

The method of associative openness can also make sense without continuing work process if it is applied in a group of elderly people to exchange memory on a historic phase or life phase. In that case, it might be good to record the narrative exchange with audio or video recorder – if the participants agree with it – to archive what has been told.

## **Adopting biographical research for Biography Work**

Biographical research provides the method of the biographical interview. This interview mostly will be recorded with tape recorder, sometimes with video recorder and transcribed afterwards. The outcome of an interview will be a biographical narration. The interview method can be helpful for counselling,

coaching. It also could be used in a course: participants interviewing each other in groups of two or three. The biographical interview with people with migrant background can also be a valuable tool for people working with them to understand their situation better, to get a deep emphatic insight, to learn about whole contexts. A narration that covers a life span allows a holistic and multifactor understanding of a present situation. The basic biographical interview methods can be described as follows: An interview consists of two phases: an open phase in which the interview partner narrates her/his memory according to her/his mental structure; and a second phase guided by a questionnaire. The questionnaire includes questions which the interviewer especially wants to explore; and questions which arose during the first interview phase – to understand something better, to discover more about interesting issues being remembered during the first phase.

In any case, the interviewer has to work creatively with unexpected information and themes. Unexpected factors might provide the interviewer with valuable insights.

Oral history means finding out about people's lives through their biographical narration, through what they remember and are ready to share. Recounted biography is constructed but not freely invented by the narrator. The construction refers to experience and influences an individual's way of acting. The results are narratives of people about remembered experiences and conclusions they drew from it.

A narrative is also the product of an event in the life of two people: a meeting and the interaction of an interviewer and narrator. Narratives are never the truth – they reflect the contemporary perspective of the narrator on what she/he remembers about what happened. This includes psychological repression, for instance because of guilt, shame or traumata.

Lies, repressed aspects, untold details etc. may of course also be interesting. The question is: Why does somebody tell a certain story in a certain way in the context of an interview?

Biographical interview has been applied during the Grundtvig project PASS learning partnership ("PASS. Influence on Personal Access to Education for People with Migrant Background"), because we wanted to find out what sense people make of their life experience. What did they learn about gaining useful knowledge on staying and living in the receiving society? What kind of knowledge do they need? Which strategies proved to be suitable? What helped them? What barriers did they encounter? And again: What knowledge and which strategies helped them to overcome these barriers?

After designing the methodological setting for our interviews in the PASS project, we worked out an extensive questionnaire for the second phase of the interviews. In our discussions, we identified biographical contexts which could be meaningful for educational possibilities, barriers and decisions of individuals. We formulated questions to explore those contexts. These questions could serve as a model for questions to pose in counselling or coaching processes to people with migrant background. You will find it in the Appendix at the end of this handbook.

## Biographical writing

Writing is another element of Biography Work which can be applied creatively and alternating and also meshed with other methods – according to the abilities and preferences of the people one works with. A biographical interview might be transcribed and the written text can be a basis for further biographical work. But memories can also be written down without narrating them before.

*E. g. an exercise could be: Write down your memory about the first encounter with a person coming from another country you remember.*

*After writing the stories, participants can read out their stories in the plenum. Sub-groups can afterwards be modelled according to similarities in those memories and work on questions like: Compare your experience among each other and think about people you worked with that might have similar/different experience. What situation do those people face? What kind of support will they need? Coach each other.*

*Or: Describe your education biography. After this, select a partner to working in dyads.*

*The partners read the story of the other carefully and figure out where there are ruptures, open questions, something the partner does not understand, silence, but also very vivid, fascinating sections. Speak about your impressions of the partner's text. Before going back to the plenum reflect what was impressing, interesting, strange ... in your communication, what did you learn, find out?*

Written memories can be treating life without focusing a certain issue or it can be theme-centred. They can be ordered chronologically or certain situations without chronological order can be chosen. E. g.: Impressions of my education biography; or: My life during the 1970<sup>th</sup>.

Written sources like diaries, letters, and poems also can be used. Participants can be asked to bring such written sources of their lives to the course which would serve as a basis for reflection.

*Written biographies can be read every once in a while and it can be asked: Do I still regard this issue, this phase of my life like while I wrote this text? What has changed and why?*

Change of perspectives, perception and evolutions can become clear through rereading autobiographical texts after some time.

## **Visualizing: drawing, painting**

Many people will not be able or will not like to write. But almost everybody is able to draw in a way. The first reaction of people in biographical learning processes when they are asked to draw frequently is: But I am not good at drawing.

It has to be explained that being good at drawing is not necessary, and that drawing is used here to get in touch with memory, not to proof artistic competence (same thing concerns theatre playing etc.)

Drawing or painting pictures, modelling sculptures e. g. out of clay are good techniques to stimulate memory. In cases of working with women who can do needlework one may also embroider pictures, crochet or knit. In short, all kind of creative visualising expression can be helpful to enter autobiographical memory.

First, in applying visualizing, a trainer should explain to the participants what they should work on:

*E. g.: Draw a picture about your education carrier or model a clay sculpture while being aware of your education background.*

After creating a piece or drawing a picture, it can be worked in sub-groups (5 to 7 persons) or in the plenum if the group is not too big. The creator will talk about what she/he produced. The others will share what they perceive or ask questions. Each piece deserves special attention as an expression of personal memory. These exercises always combine creating, narrating and reflecting.

Compared to mere narrating, creative methods may open accesses to otherwise hidden memory. For people who respond to the respective sensual impulses memorizing will be much easier. A picture or a sculpture can be realized at once and detain an impression for the contemplator while a narration always needs

concentration during a period of time from the listener. Such a piece also can be taken home afterwards as a vivid memory repository – storing not only the memory which initially inspired its production but also the memory on working with it in the group, maybe on amplifying consciousness.

Examples for exercises using drawing as a memory teaser:

1. Each participant works individually: Paint a picture showing your journey through your life with regard to education and learning. Mark three important events/periods with a special colour (or put a little object on it ... Objects can be provided by the trainer or looked for outside or found in your bag).

Afterwards in the plenum or in sub-groups: Describe your picture, your pathway. The others react to you after your description: I see in your picture ... What is important is to make clear that the one who gives feedback talks about his/her perception, impression, not about what the creator did or meant. The creator should feel very free to accept the comments or not. Afterwards, in the plenum it should be talked about how people felt with this exercise, and what they experienced and learned.

2. The following exercise needs plenty of time since it develops in three steps:

*First each participant works individually:* Paint a picture about your situation when you lived still in your country of origin.

Afterwards participants may work in triads – describe their pictures to each other and react to each other like described before in the context of the first exercise example. In the following plenum, the trainer has to ask how the participants have experienced the exercise and how they have felt. She/he has to find out if anybody needs special support or if the group is able to go ahead with this work.

*The second step:* Each participant individually paints a picture about his/her present situation in a receiving country. Again it will be talked about the pictures in already created groups of three. The plenum afterward serves the same purpose as explained before.

*The third step:* Each participant individually paint a picture about your vision of your situation in three (or two, or four ...) years.

Again participants talk about it in the groups of three and again the trainer has to find out about the state of participants and the group in a plenum. After that the work could be continued by

elaborating steps towards the visionary situation in a few years.

3. Another individual exercise: Take a sheet of paper and draw a cross on it to get four sections. Into the first section draw how you observed foreigners in your childhood, in the second section how during youth, in the third during adulthood and in the fourth: how especially in your professional life (or: how do you expect it for the future).

It can be talked about the picture in the plenum if there are not too many participants. On a flip chart notes can be taken about important experience and maybe already be put in an order – to compare, draw certain conclusions, realize what has been unexpected and deepened the understanding of others through learning about their biographical pathway afterwards.

## Imaginary journeys – memory journeys

Imaginary respectively memory journeys can stimulate memory intensively. During such journeys it might be more difficult for some people to keep control of what they want to remember and what they do not want compared to drawing or narrating. Because of the relaxation at the beginning of a journey the closed doors hiding painful memory might be less guarded. Therefore this method has to be used attentively – having in mind the concrete participants and the group as a whole, as well as the purpose of the course. The impulses given during the journey have to be considered clearly before. The defence against being led to memories one does not want to touch at the moment may manifest itself through going on another trip than the journey guide offers. This might be experienced as confuse mental swirling around.

If the TBW trainer applies the imaginary/memory journey method it will be advisable to prepare it with help of corresponding literature and, of course, to self-experience it.

At the start of such a journey participants are supported to relax physically and emotionally. Often gentle music accompanies the process. Such journeys first normally guide the participants to a nice inner place like an imaginary garden, to a tree ... from where a hole or some kind of entrance leads down – maybe on a stairway or ladder – to another place, a cave, a lake ... From here the actual journey into coded memory starts.

For TBW courses we give one example – a “light” version of an imaginary journey or more exactly a memory journey to stimulate biographical exchange among participants. If we have a transcultural group, it

can be helpful to merge into the process of broadening mutual understanding by comparing concrete situations related to a certain issue. Such universal issues could be food, eating, dressing etc.. A text to guide such a memory journey you will find in the Appendix of this manual.

*E. g. “Eating”. Participants should sit on their chairs, close the eyes, relax (instructed by the trainer – from starting with the toes going through the body until the head). The trainer then will ask them to remember a situation in their past (childhood) when they ate with other people. The trainer poses questions, mostly related to sensual perception and after every questions she/he gives some time for imagination. Where have you been? What did the room look like? How about colours? Who were present? Did you sit, stand? What did the furniture look like? How did it smell? How did you feel? Who prepared the meal? Who brought it? How did it taste? How did the voices of people sound? Who spoke? What has been spoken? ..... After this little journey into one concrete past situation the trainer has to ask people slowly to come back from imagination to reality – to take the time they need to come back, to stretch, to move a little bit, to open the eyes.*

*After that experience, sub-groups – maybe of three or four – might compose themselves and exchange what they remembered. Afterwards in the plenum, it will be spoken about what was similar, very different, astonishing ... with regard to the exchange in sub-groups. The trainer has to have in mind that one purpose of this exercise is to support participant’s awareness of learning through exchange: Which prejudice did I have, what do I learn now? How can this broadened understanding, awareness be adapted at my work?*

## Objects, pictures, photos to stimulate memory

Memories are often connected to objects or pictures. Having people talk about meaningful objects or pictures can open up insights that facilitate precise support.

Photos often contain stories which would not have been told without using them.

Objects and pictures can be used to create new perspectives on past life, new interpretations. In groups, they can be combined to create a group history – to find connection points, to express learning processes.

Such objects can be arranged for an exhibition. Stories accompanying objects can be written or recorded at a tape. Objects might be cloth, furniture, vessels, toys ...

*The participants can be asked before the seminar to bring two or three photos or objects reminding them on experiencing other cultures in their past. In the plenum everybody talks about his/her photos/objects. Or people can hold there objects/pictures and come together in sub-groups having in mind: Whose picture/object is intriguing me? From whom do I want to hear more about his/her object/picture? People can talk in the sub-groups now about their objects and what was intriguing about the other's objects. This way of exchange is stimulated and should later on in the plenum be connected – by the participants and the trainer – to the overall aim of broadening mutual understanding through concrete listening, reflecting, comparing and to drawing conclusions for the own professional work.*

## Music

Music is a very special memory repository. Listening to a piece of music, to a song can suddenly rouse memories of a past situation intensively – especially emotional memories. At the same time music like food is a very apt issue for exchange between people with different backgrounds.

*The participants can be asked to bring a song, a piece of music which was very strange to them when they heard it first. They can form sub-groups of four or five and drawback to different rooms with CD-*

*players. They listen to the songs, music they brought, tell each other when they listened to it first, what happened to them, how the perception of the song changed listening to it more often. The other participants tell how they perceive this song.*

*Again the exercise experience has to be reflected in the plenum and linked to the issues of changing perception and learning to understand. In case of groups of professionals who intend to work with TBW how to use this awareness professionally is another important matter.*

## Pedagogic role play, psychodrama

During Grundtvig Learning Partnership "PASS" we explored education biographies of people with migrant background in Lithuania, Turkey, Italy, Austria and Germany. Based on those narrations Mario Azzopardi, director of the Malta Drama Centre, wrote a biographical social theatre piece. It was rehearsed and acted by a group of young migrants in Innsbruck/Austria, by a group of migrants in Aurich/Germany and also by actors from the Malta Drama Centre. The last version has been filmed as a studio production.

Pedagogic role play or psychodrama is helpful to work on situations where people are or were involved and where they felt angry, unsecure and ambivalent; experienced injustice; and faced conflicts, etc. Theatral methods are very valuable if combined with biographic work to change perspectives and gain options to model situations actively in the future.

For TBW courses, such methods could be utilized to work on transcultural experience and related questions that participants bring from their professional life. The participants further on can apply role play linked to biographic work in their practice with people they work with.

The trainers as well as participants who use those methods in their professional practice have to have a preparation and/or experience with regard to pedagogic role play or psychodrama. A table of the techniques used in TBW approach is presented below. This table is of course incomplete, but gives a short overview of methods discussed in this manual



**Table 3.1.**  
**Biographical methods/techniques overview**

<b>Category</b>	<b>Methods</b>	<b>Context</b>	<b>Social forms</b>	<b>Materials/ preparation of room</b>
Verbalization/ <i>narration</i>	Associative openness	Associating memories on a certain topic – following the flow of memory exchange. To be followed by an exercise to work on important recognitions through the conjoint associating.	Plenum or groups of at least five people	Chair-circle
	Interview	Starting question, first interview part without interruption by interviewer, second part – interviewer posing questions	Dyads, triads	Recorder, questionnaire
Research	Exchange on a defined issue	To be done after all kind of memorizing techniques (painting, music ....) The issue to be talked about should be clear – clear questions; everybody has the opportunity to speak	Dyads, triads ..., plenum	Chair-circle Maybe paper to take notes
	Interview	Modelling Biography Work process like a research – e. g. "My family background"	Individual or in sub-groups	Recorder, paper to take notes Questionnaire
	Diverse Sources (Diaries, letters)	Watching and analyzing available sources e. g. on family history	Individual or in sub-groups	Available sources, paper, pencil Maybe a register or computer – internet

<p>Writing</p>	<p>Writing down memories</p>	<p>Can be combined with e.g. visualising techniques to stimulate remembering before or with narrative techniques to speak about what has been written. Writing: keeping, modelling, and assimilating memory.</p>	<p>Individual, exchange in groups</p>	<p>Writing utensils Booklet</p>
<p>Visualization</p>	<p>Contemporary and future  Painting, drawing</p>	<p>Also a present situation can be described in written form as a basis for memory work in the future. Or future visions can be written down to retrace changes and what has been accomplished in the future.  "Draw or paint your pathways through life – according to a certain issue" (e. g. "My educational pathway")  A sheet of paper will be parted by a cross into four sections. In the sections, pictures will be drawn about childhood (left above) – youth (right above) – adulthood (left below) – future vision (or profession ...) (right below): according to a certain question (e.g. how did you regard man (or woman) during your ...)</p>	<p>Individual. Exchange in groups  Individual; exchange in sub-groups afterwards (in plenum if not too many participants)  Individual; exchange in sub-groups afterwards (in plenum if not too many participants)</p>	<p>Writing utensils Booklet  Papers in size ca. 60X90, wax crayons, coloured pencils, felt tip pens ... Enough space for everybody, tables  Papers in size ca. 60X90, wax crayons, coloured pencils, felt tip pens ... Enough space for everybody, tables</p>

		<p>This exercise can be preceded/ accompanied by memory and imaginary journeys. First phase : Draw a picture about your situation (e. g. professional situation) three years ago. Second phase: Draw a picture about your present situation. Third phase: Draw a picture about your vision – how it will be in three years.</p>	<p>Individual; exchange in triads after each drawing phase</p>	<p>Plenty of time!!! Papers in size ca. DIN A 3 or DIN A 2, wax crayons, coloured pencils, felt tip pens ... Enough space for everybody Tables</p>
Collages or taking photos and present them	<p>Flashlights of the past, present, and future situations. To be talked about afterwards.</p>	<p>Individual. To be talked about in groups afterwards (in plenum if not too big). Maybe basis to produce an exhibition</p>	<p>Journals, magazines, papers ... to have pictures available Camera</p>	
Sculpturing	<p>Theme centred – produce a sculpture thinking of a situation in your past, when ... A period in your past, when ... Or: I express my feeling about the 1980s (or: of my time in school ...) with clay.</p>	<p>Individual or in sub-groups. Also a plenum sculpture could be produced if there is enough space (in a garden e. g.)</p>	<p>Materials like wood, clay or waste materials ...</p>	
Textile work	<p>Theme centred – like sculpturing</p>	<p>Individual or in groups</p>	<p>Plenty of time!!</p>	
Exhibition	<p>Products of visualising methods, as well as sources (with interpretation, description) or recorded narrations can be combined in an exhibition.</p>	<p>Plenum, maybe sharing tasks among sub-groups</p>	<p>All kind of materials, presentation tables ... Plenty of time!!!</p>	

<i>Imaginary journey</i>		Can be applied to stimulate memory before painting, drawing, sculpturing... Or stimulating memory through it and talk about it afterwards. Always guiding participants to relax physically before journey starts.			
	Into genealogical tree	Guiding into roots, trunk, branches, leaves, blossoms ... meeting with relatives in history. This method should possibly be guided by a person with psycho therapeutic background	Individual – guided by trainer. Followed by plenum or sub-groups talking about experience	Maybe background music (relaxing)	
	Into past, future situations	Guiding into a concrete situation: e. g. thinking of a room, where you worked three years ago; work now; will work in three years.	Individual – guided by trainer. Followed by plenum or sub-groups talking about experience.		
<i>Stimulating memories through:</i>	Into specific past situation – sensed	Sitting on chairs. Guiding participants in one past situation – encouraging memory through asking for sensual memory.	Individual – guided by trainer. Followed by plenum or sub-groups talking about experience	Respective materials	
	Photos	Before a seminar or course starts, participants can be asked to bring objects which have meaning to them. To talk about: What does it mean? Which memories does it contain?  Stories can be told and animated by photos. Photos can also be used for creating exhibitions.	Plenum or sub-groups.	Photos	

Pictures	Pictures brought by participants or by trainer (to be picked by participants) to be connected to memory	Plenum or sub-groups	Pictures
Objects	Objects brought by participants or searched for during the seminar or brought by trainer (to be picked by participants) to be connected to memory	Individual, plenum, sub-groups	Objects
Music	Music can animate to talk about past situations to which it is connected. It can animate to sing or dance. Singing and dancing again activate memory. Often joyful memory – memory on feeling alive.	Talk about it in plenum or sub-groups. Singing and dancing preferably in plenum.	CD Player or disc player. Maybe texts of songs Space to dance.
Theatre	Pedagogic role play	Plenum or groups (not to small)	Enough space, maybe few requisites.
	Psychodrama	Plenum or sub-groups (not too small)	Enough space, maybe a few requisites
	Forum theatre, social theatre	Bigger groups, plenum	Space, maybe a few requisites Audience to be involved actively.

<p>Genogram</p>		<p>Can be produced by a professional to save information about family relations of people she/ he works with; or by people who are counselled; or by participants of a seminar. Very good basis to explore family background, relations, obstacles, resources.</p>	<p>Individual, to be exchanged in groups (three, four) and partially in plenum.</p>	<p>Writing utensils</p>
<p>Album, book of life</p>		<p>Can be produced by people who are counselled; or by participants of a seminar.</p>	<p>Individual, to be exchanged in groups (three, four) and partially in plenum.</p>	<p>Booklet, writing utensils, pictures ...</p>



## CHAPTER 4

### BEST PRACTICE EXAMPLES OF TBW EXERCISES FROM THE PILOT COURSES

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#### Planning tool: Programme templates

For planning the pilot course programmes of Realize project we used mostly a programme template suggested by the Italian partners. We also worked with a simplified version of it. In both versions we noted at the beginning:

Title of the course/seminar:

Place:

Time:

Participant's number (maybe also characteristics like professional fields, gender balance):

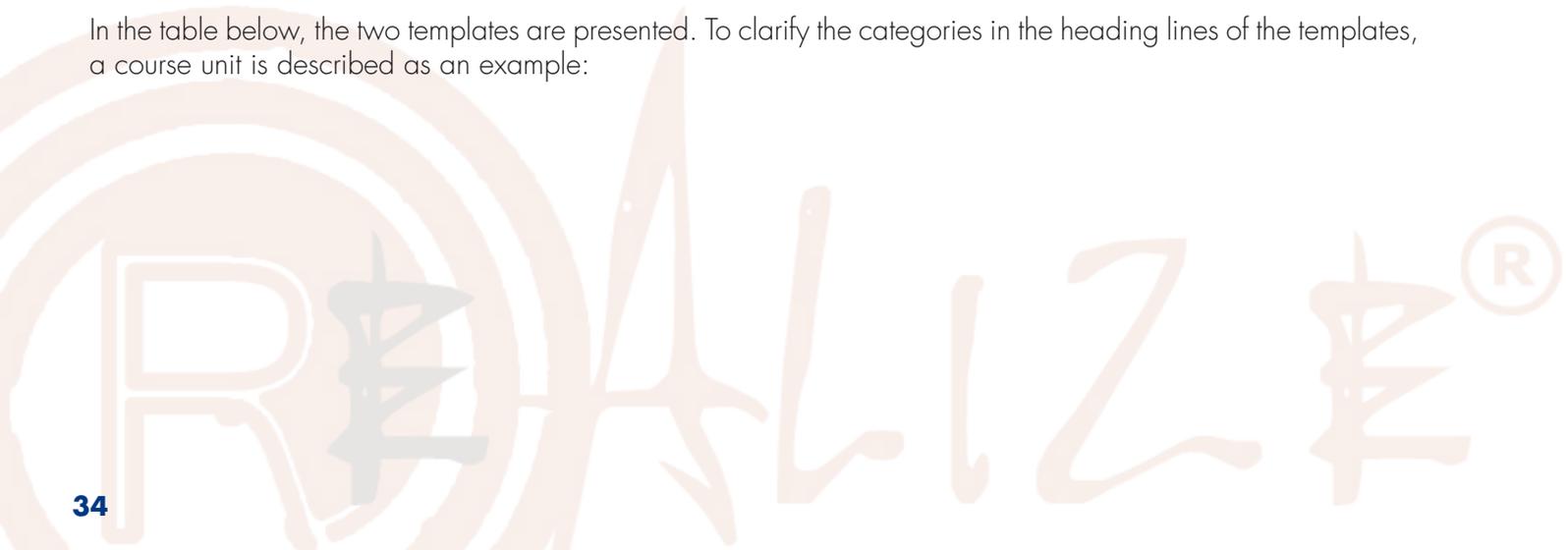
Trainer/s:

Media, material, room available at the seminar place:

Trainer brings/prepares:

Main goals of the seminar/course:

In the table below, the two templates are presented. To clarify the categories in the heading lines of the templates, a course unit is described as an example:



**Table 4.1.1. Template 1 of a training unit in a course**

<b>Time</b>	<b>Training unit</b> (Title of the unit and time range: min/max)	<b>Objectives</b> (specific aims for each training unit)	<b>Contents</b>	<b>Methodology</b> (social forms and training method applied)	<b>Setting and training materials</b>
15:00-16:30	<i>To remember – recordor (Latin) : take it to my heart again</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- initiate processes of remembering</li> <li>- start the learning process with a personal potential</li> <li>- collect proofs from participants' experience that Biography Work is helpful to handle life here and now</li> </ul>	Biography Work orients on resources. In busy and exhausting learning processes it is helpful to become conscious about ones' resources/potentials first: "This is what I ones' resources/potentials first: "This is what I am already able to!"		Chair circle
20 minutes			"Think of a situation, a time, when remembering was helpful for your present life. Describe this experience in your portfolio and select a card that fits to it."	Individual work – participants take notes in the portfolios. Cards lay in the middle of the room.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cards with various motifs provided by the trainers</li> <li>Portfolios of participants</li> <li>Writing utensils</li> </ul>
30 minutes			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>"With whom do you like to have an exchange now in a subgroup?"</li> <li>"What memory do I have on taking advantage of remembering? What potentials do I have?"</li> </ul>	Participants create sub-groups of three. Exchange in sub-groups	Space for subgroups

40 minutes			<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. "How was this exercise for you?"</li> <li>2. "I selected this card because ..."</li> <li>3. "Keep the cards you choose as a symbol for the potential you start with into the learning process: 'In this situation I learned from my biography.' Cards can be glued; you're your portfolios."</li> <li>4. "How can this exercise support you to reach your learning target?"</li> <li>5. "Is this exercise adaptable to your professional field?"</li> </ol>	Exchange in plenum	Flip chart to take notes Portfolios of participants Glue
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**Table 4.2. Template 2 of a training unit in a course**

Time and unit	Social form and structure/ methods	Title of training unit and contents	Training materials, media
<b>28<sup>th</sup> of October 2011</b>			
15:00 to 16:30	<p><b>To remember – recorder (Latin): take it to my heart again</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Initiate processes of remembering</li> <li>- Start the learning process with a personal potential</li> <li>- Collect proofs from participants' experience that Biography Work is helpful to handle life here and now</li> </ul>		
20 minutes	<p>Individual work – participants take notes in the portfolios. Cards lay in the middle of the room.</p>	<p>"Think of a situation, a time, when remembering was helpful for your present life. Describe this experience in your portfolio and select a card that fits to it."</p>	<p>Cards with various motifs provided by the trainers Portfolios of participants Writing utensils</p>
30 minutes	<p>Participants create subgroups of three  Exchange in sub-groups</p>	<p>"With whom do you like to have an exchange now in a subgroup?"  "What memory do I have on taking advantage of remembering? What potentials do I have?"</p>	<p>Space for subgroups</p>
40 minutes	<p>Exchange in plenum</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. "How was this exercise for you?"</li> <li>2. "I selected this card because ..."</li> <li>3. "Keep the cards you choose as a symbol for the potential you start with into the learning process: 'In this situation I learned from my biography.' Cards can be glued; you're your portfolios."</li> <li>4. "How can this exercise support you to reach your learning target?"</li> <li>5. "Is this exercise adaptable to your professional field?"</li> </ol>	<p>Flip chart to take notes Portfolios of participants Glue</p>

## TBW exercises

### To start a seminar/icebreakers

#### **Title of the exercise: pictures of roads or doors (Lithuanian pilot course)**

Time (minimum/maximum): 30 to 60 minutes

Target groups: This method is suitable for most diverse groups: teachers, social workers, migrants, unemployed, senior adults.

Description: This method is suitable as the ice-breaking activity for the start of the activities. Participants are asked to choose one picture which best answers questions: What way did you take to come here? Which door did you have to open to enter this place? Participants in turn speak of the picture they chose, about the feelings they had before this situation, what they had to overcome before arriving to the seminar, and what they felt in a new group of people. At the close of this activity, all participants shared what they felt while carrying out the tasks. This should take about 30 minutes.

Setting: A large room, a circle of chairs.

Training supporting materials:

Trainers prepare pictures of doors and roads, lanes, paths and display all on the table.

The number of pictures should be such that even the last participant could have a choice.

Outcomes/Achievements: Introduction and sharing experiences through the use of an object or a photograph helps the participants to open up in front of the group and to talk to the audience. This is a good start for further activities.

#### **Title of the exercise: food, spices and fruits – a bridge of taste (Italian pilot course)**

Time (minimum/maximum): 60 minutes and more because the exhibition will stay all the time and one can get back to it if it is wanted.

Target groups: All, particularly migrants and people coming from different regions.

Description: As in the pilot project realized in Rome by Griot and Speha Fresia a relative large number of participants were leaders of migrant organizations coming from different countries, like Nigeria, Cameroon, Capo Verde, Madagascar, Albania, Japan, China, we decided to use food, spices, fruits, and perfumes for our exercise. All these elements are very important and useful in stimulating memories and

in provoking positive discussions both on apparent differences as well as on overwhelming similarities.

We selected food from different origins, so called exotic and local products, like manioc, sweet potatoes, potatoes, green bananas, onions, carrots, different hot peppers, rice, flowers and beans, pineapple, bananas, saffron, different curry, ginger, different oils, perfumes, etc. but also different objects, African instruments like bongos, bal phone, old and new telephones apparatus, old typing machine, oil lamps, etc. All foods and objects were presented in a nice way on a table with a colourful cover and flowers. Very attractive!

This was done already before the beginning of the pilot. The best could be in a separate room, immediately visible in a reception room, where later people could have their coffee breaks. The preparation can take about half an hour directly in the facility where the pilot will take place and some more time to collect or to buy the stuff before the session. The cost is just few Euros and the materials can be used or eaten later.

People coming to the session usually gathered around the show room, looked at the exhibition and began to exchange opinions and discuss informally. Some one began to tell stories of her/his birth town. It is a very good warming up and ice breaking in a very natural way. People asked questions and wanted to know names and uses of the aliments and of the objects and remembered for example when they used some of them or they posed questions on their taste, etc. This exchange was done also without the presence of the facilitators.

It is relevant to underline that the show room during the entire day, particularly during the coffee breaks, became the place where participants continue to share their memories and opinions and to get to know each other better.

Then the exercise consists in a continuation of the informal discussions where people can select an item from the show room, a fruit or a vegetable, as something known to them, important in their countries or in their personal life. Participants recount memories linked to the chosen aliment or object, why they choose it and what they remember of their life in those relations.

This exercise does not challenge the identity but softly prepare to initiate a longer memory journey. The facilitators can easily guide the participants also to see the similarities of the food. They will discover that African or European onions have the same smell, for example.

Setting: Dispose the aliments in a very attractive way on a table, well decorated and colourful, eventually with old music instruments or other old objects. Better is

in a separate room from where the session takes place.

Training supporting materials:

Small examples of diverse food, spices and fruits, also different objects (as described above).

Outcomes/Achievements: Relaxed social contact and direct informal involvement. It creates a family atmosphere, opens the dialogue and easily stimulates positive memories.

Evaluation tools: It is an instrument to know immediately and in a very positive way few memory references of the participants. It produces initially small but concrete and important indications for the future work.

Tips for facilitators: The exhibition should be left for the entire session because it can give ideas and other stimuli to continue the discussions or to depart from difficult and tense situations.

**Title of the exercise: Dear friend, I'm writing myself a letter (Suisse pilot course)**

Preamble: We present three activities carried out during the pilot course Realize, managed by Labour Transfer in Switzerland (Cantone Ticino). The first two activities (Dear friend, I'm writing myself a letter; The location as experience) are normally proposed during the first meetings, whereas the third one (Music (first part) – the musical piece and Music (second part) – History of music) requires the participants to be better acquainted with each other and to trust one another. In fact, with this third activity, it is possible that some participants will share intimate details of their biography, which would favour a rich and significant experience of exchange and reciprocal discovery of the individual.

The training starts by deciding together the forms of listening and exchanging, the confidentiality of what is heard, seen and lived, and the effort of avoiding judgemental behaviours towards the other. During the training, participants might have emotional outbursts, judgements, comparisons with other experiences, out of context criticism about behaviours and so on. We do not create forms of censorship, but rather we use these moments to underline the necessity to understand the other, even though a confrontation with one's own beliefs and values.

All the activities are proposed for personal experimentation and leave enough time to analyze them with a double outlook. After the experimentation, 1) we encourage the discussion about oneself and how the activity was; then 2) we propose an

exchange so to imagine possible applications in one's own professional practice.

Time (minimum/maximum):

*1st part:* 20 minutes of individual work (writing)

10 minutes of discussion all together

*2nd part:* 10 minutes of individual work (reading)

30 minutes of discussion all together

Target groups: Trainers, facilitators, social workers, who work in migration contexts and other branches of the training of adults and education in general.

Description:

*1st part:* The participants write a letter to themselves. The letter is sealed and given to the trainer who will give it back at the end of the course.

This way, the participants send themselves a message into the future; this letter contains where they want to get, how they imagine themselves to be at the end of the course, what expectations they have, and what will be achieved.

At the end of this activity, there is a moment all together where the trainer starts the discussion about how the activity has been lived (for instance: how did you feel? How did you challenge yourself? Did you define an arriving point? Did you already know what you want to obtain? ...)

*2nd part:* The trainer will keep the letters until the end of the course, when the envelopes will be given back to their owners.

At a set time, the trainer gives back the letters. The trainer gives time to the participants for them to read their letter, then she/he encourages the discussion about the activity and about how the participants reacted in front of the concordances or discrepancies between what





had  
been  
written  
(the expectations)

and the conclusion of the course (the situation of that moment) and what are their thoughts (how do they feel, what do they want to say, do, propose, how do they think back to the letter?, etc.).

Didactic setting: This writing activity connects the beginning and the end of the course. This allows the participants to fix the objectives. Through the formative experience, they elaborate new knowledge, new activities and new skills.

The trainer encourages the participants to evoke situations in which, often, the competences emerge only in retrospect, when they take a look at the work done. Frequently, the results are there but are only noticed by retracing the steps backwards (idea of flashback). Because this is an individual activity, it is recommended to organize a space where the participants can go somewhere quiet where they can think.

The trainer proposes the activity using words that favour reflection, an evocative language, in a far away space, in a far time (what do you imagine, in which situation would you like to be, which desires ...). It is therefore necessary to avoid concrete examples and precise data. That might push the participants to think about new skills and didactic actions, whereas what is key to this exercise is for the participants to focus on themselves.

Training supporting materials:

- A4 papers,
- Pens,
- Envelopes.

Aims and goals: The participants define their own expectations and write them down on a paper. (First part)

Then, the participants confront themselves with the described expectations and rethink about the formative path. They offer their own reflection and analysis on expectations, objectives, work done, and their vision of their own future.

Evaluation tools: A first evaluation is given by the participants themselves when they read the letter. A second evaluation takes place during the discussion all together.

Tips for facilitators: In our situation, the duration is motivated by the beginning and the end of the path, which is about six months. It is imaginable to work with longer or shorter durations, depending on possibilities, expectations, and on the objectives that one wants to reach.

The title of the activity, "Dear friend, I'm writing myself a letter" is inspired by a famous Italian song - "L'anno che verrà" by Lucio Dalla - where the author starts singing "Caro amico ti scrivo" ("Dear friend, I'm writing to you") and imagines to send his friend a letter telling him what happened during the year that is about to end, and imagining what will happen in the following year.

**Title of the exercise: The location as experience (Suisse pilot course)**

Time (minimum/maximum):

*Individual reflection: 5 minutes*

*Group reflection: 20 minutes*

Target groups: Trainers, facilitators, social workers, who work in migration contexts and other branches of the training of adults and education in general.

Description: This activity, in our case, has been presented to initiate the residential part of the training.

Instructions are given to the participants: they have to think about and list the elements that are used to compare the place where they are in that moment and the place where they normally are. They have to describe their experiences of when they go back

home, and of when they are in a different place. Then, they bring their reflections to the whole group.

The trainer, when discussing all together, can suggest the creation of categories so to gather all the elements expressed by the participants. If the discussion does not start naturally, the trainer favours a reflective analysis of what emerged using a few questions: What do you feel when these feelings are evoked? How do you leave your place of origin? How do you get in contact with a new place? What are the concrete reference points in our existence?

By this way, the group can explore the themes of migration, travel, work away from home, and so on.

Didactic setting: During discussions, the trainer can use several open questions to encourage the discussion itself. For instance: What elements make you feel/not feel at home? What elements favour/limit the well-being in a new territory? How do you leave your place of origin? How do you approach the new place? And so on.

This activation method can be used to reflect more in depth about the territory as a place that welcomes but that requires an adaptation and therefore the activation of certain competences. The reflection can be encouraged by talking about starting places but also, and most importantly, about arrival places, or using the journey once again (intended as changing place, country, work, and so on) to help the participants reflect on the journey as a migrant. Moreover, the journey allows the comparison with one's own experiences: What objects do I recall? What actions make me remember? Which values do I attach to a place and a time of my life? And so on.

Training supporting materials: This activity can be adapted to situations that do not require a significant displacement. The activation can be adapted for instance by starting the training in a classroom and telling the participants that after a while they will go to another room, which is very different: It might be empty, have unexpected decorations, etc.

There is no need for supporting material, what is important is the change of setting, the physical place where you are working.

Aims and goals: The participants describe a location, objects, relationships, solids and voids, inside and outside, similarities and differences compared to their usual spaces.

They elaborate individually and then discuss together what it is to arrive at a place and how to be/stay in a place that is different than the usual and what makes us feel at home.

Outcomes/Achievements: On top of the reflection about what makes us feel at home, the place can be seen under different aspects. The place where we live and the elements that make us feel at home. It is the place as an arriving point after a journey and the elements are the things for the comparison with the expectations and representations that we had.

The new place, whether it welcomes us or not, and that always requires a physical and mental adaptation, and that encourages the comparison between the starting and the arriving points.

The theme of the journey also allows starting working on an internal journey, useful to rebuild one's own steps of the itinerary in which the skills and knowledge have been acquired, and during which behaviours, values, and convictions have been consolidated.

Evaluation tools: The evaluation is given by the participants themselves during the discussion with the whole group.

Tips for facilitators: In our case we took advantage of the change of location (from the classroom to the external training centre) in order to stimulate the participants' reflection on the elements that make us feel at home, that help us adapt, or that make us feel not at ease. This activity helped the participants to reflect on concrete aspects of migration, but also on the competences that are activated when moving, changing, adapting, and rebuilding a 'home' made of spaces, objects, ideas, relationships, habits.

## **Further suggestions**

Theme Centred Interaction graduate Heide Walbrodt suggests frequently in her seminars to pack a resource rucksack at the beginning of the learning path which helps you walking through the seminar. Especially if the subject of the seminar implies demanding and disturbing learning situations, people might need some provisions. For this exercise, first people are invited to form sub-groups (of four, five or six) and to talk about what they already know regarding to the subject of the seminar; they should note one ability of each of the sub-group participants on a flip chart paper. Back at the plenum, the sub-groups present the abilities collected in their groups. By that way, the participants become aware that they are already experienced and capable. They do not start at point zero. That helps to walk through the learning path in the seminar more self-reliant (compare tables 4.1/4.2).

## During the course

### Title of the exercise: Biographical interview (Italian pilot course)

Time (Minimum/Maximum): 90/180 minutes

Target groups: Migrants' association leaders, cultural mediators, social workers, adult educators, counsellors.

Description: Participants are introduced in using semi-structured grids for the interview of people with migrant background, in order to collect useful information for their inclusion in educational, health, welfare or labour policies programmes/actions. The introduction can take five minutes, and facilitator asks to read first individually the "Questionnaire template" without any comments (five minutes), but giving time for any doubts or questions (five minutes). Then trainees are divided in couples, and they will "role playing", exchanging among them the roles of interviewer and interview-partner for 40 minutes (20 minutes each person). Depending on the time availability, you can also expand the role playing, but it is very important to calculate at least ten minutes for each couple to give their feedback on the exercise at the end of this session. In plenary, the visualisation of participants' feedback is suggested, in order to provide the global contribution of the group.

Setting: Facilitator introduces the "Questionnaire template", focusing the attention to each specific "working environment" and asking to participants to make couples, and to simulate the interview between them. The couple of trainees should also declare the "role" played during the interview.

Training supporting materials: The semi-structured interview grid implemented during the previous Learning Partnership Project "PASS - Personal influence on access to education for people with migrant background" (Italy, Austria, Germany, Lithuania, Malta and Turkey) (to be found in the Appendix).

Outcomes/Achievements: The simulation of the interview among colleagues allows the comprehension on how to target the use of language and which questions, referring to the interview partner and her/his background, are more appropriate. As result of this section we can also achieve, for each situated learning/counselling action, a list of "priority questions" and the selection of questions needed to deepen specific focuses, determined by the aims of the learning/counselling actions. Furthermore, colleagues could observe their partners and from this observation finding out some critical or strong points in their acting the interview, with the possibility to give suggestions, in order to improve the effectiveness of this exchange and the quality of the service provision.

Evaluation tools: The collection of the trainees' feedback after the role playing is devoted to the self-assessment which should be centred, on one side, on the questionnaire template, and, on the other side, on the working situation created by the role play and the competences acted during the interview process.

Tips for facilitators: This exercise, targeted to the further training of practitioners, generally experienced in their field of intervention, it is very useful to engage participants in a more aware knowledge-sharing between peers, using this example of learning as practicable in every day working life, asking for instance to another colleague to "observe" you, maybe for a few time, during a specific task, or taking some time to reflect about how we practice our work.

### Title of the exercise: genogram (Turkish pilot course)

Time (minimum/maximum): 120-180 minutes

Target groups: Students from different grades and programs; all kind of people.

Description: The participants were assigned with a project on learning their own family backgrounds, so they were asked to interview an elderly family member; to learn her/his familial past; and to bring some private objects, photos, diaries etc. for acting memories. Then, the participants were asked to draw a family tree and write down all the members of the family going as far back in family history as possible. (Guidelines to draw a genogram – symbols, issues, depict types of connections between people – you find in chapter 5, paragraph: "How to use biographic methods in coaching and counselling".)

Setting: Chair circle.

Training supporting materials:

- Photos,
- Colour pens,
- Personal objects,
- Reflection cards,
- Flip chart,
- Barco-vision,
- Map of Turkey.

Outcomes/Achievements: To trace family background through genogram; to learn more about transculturality in family background; to discuss transculturality in family background; to compare and contrast family backgrounds for transculturality; to explore the method of genogram as TBW method

Evaluation tools: The family tree, real objects

about the history of the family and family members; personal contribution; exchange of familial stories and experiences

Tips for facilitators: Let the group feel comfortable and safe in a quiet and trusting atmosphere and make the participants feel that their ideas are valued. The trainer can also draw her/his family tree to demonstrate how to apply the method. The trainer should act trustfully, respectful and emphatic towards differences.

### **Title of the exercise: Music Workshop (Italian pilot course)**

Time (minimum/maximum): 2 to 6 hours

Target groups: This exercise has been tested mainly among migrants and refugees (maximum 15 participants) and it is suitable for different beneficiaries: teachers/trainers, social workers and adult learners in multi-language learning environments.

Description: The music workshop bases its methodological approach on transcultural autobiographical techniques.

*Step 1: Participants introduce themselves (15/45 minutes)*

They are invited to talk freely about anything relates to their own, or concerning the specific focus of the meeting, share the expectations about the Music Workshop. The purpose is to break the ice, create a sense of group and to collect and share individual aims.

*Step 2: Choice of instruments and talking about ourselves (45/135 minutes)*

Each participant chooses an instrument among those available placed at the centre of the room. Through music, the participants will be encouraged to initiate a reflection on their own cultural identity. The aim of the discussion is to talk about reasons that have led to the choice. The participants are invited to talk about emotions and reminiscences *realized* through the instrument choice.

*Step 3: Playing instruments (40/120 minutes)*

On the assumption that the participants do not speak the same language, the aim is to create alternative ways of communication. Music is the space within which learners will try to overcome their cultural barriers to contaminate each other, finding out similarities and new combinations.

*Step 4: Final collection of emotions (20/60 minutes)*

The participants are invited to talk about the emotions felt while playing the instruments. The facilitator collects the description of the emotions felt and distributes a

copy to the participants as the result of this "transcultural journey" through the music.

Setting: Wide open space, the soundproofing of the premises may be useful.

Training supporting materials:

- Paper,
- Pen,
- Lap top,
- CD player,
- Loudspeaker,
- Microphone,
- Percussion,
- Rhythmic instruments (as maracas, tambourine), met-allophone, harmonica, guitar, and all the instruments it is possible to find from different countries,
- Wide blackboard to collect and show participants' contributions.

Outcomes/Achievements: A satisfying discussion should be promoted towards cultural inclusion. These techniques are useful in facilitating the process of effective communication of experiences and mutual understanding, emphasizing and highlighting similarities and differences in order to overcome divisions and to achieve genuine knowledge of the other. It encourages individual and in group experimentation and increases competence in dealing with a codified system of rules, as music requires. The result will be a transcultural biography musical workshop, where learners and facilitators will affect each other giving rise to new reflection points through the music.

Evaluation tools: Participants' evaluations can be collected during the development of the whole workshop if facilitators are two, otherwise the last step 4 is devoted to the self-reflection about this learning experience and facilitator can propose a "common mind-map". The focus questions could be: "What did I learn and how do I feel now?"; "Which are my emotions encountering other/new cultures?"; "Have my expectations been met?"; "What did I like the most?" etc.

It is very important to distribute a copy of the final common self-evaluation of the workshop to all participants before leaving.

Tips for facilitators: It could be helpful to integrate the music workshop with images too, and the availability of a video projection could better support the workshop development; also projection of a video on the origins of those instruments. The goal is to convey to the

participants the concept that music has embraced the whole history of humanity in transcultural way. These videos will stimulate the guests with the different musical backgrounds. Other purpose is facilitating the memory through the mixture of music and images.

**Title of the exercise: one story by objects/ photographs of participants (Lithuanian pilot course)**

Time (minimum/maximum): 60 to 180 minutes

Target groups: This method is suitable for most diverse groups: teachers, social workers, migrants, unemployed, senior adults.

Description: Participants are asked to bring a photograph or an object, which could be related to the experiencing of other cultures. The participants are divided into smaller groups of five to seven people and in these groups they are asked to share their object/ photograph stories. The follow-up task for the smaller group is to produce a common story from individual group stories. This could be done in 60 to 90 minutes. Separate groups work in separate rooms without interfering into each other's function. The common stories are introduced to the reunited whole-participant group. This should take about 45 minutes.

After hearing all the stories, the participants share their experiences and insights in this activity. This should take about 30 to 45 minutes.

Setting: A room (could be used several rooms), a circle of chairs.

Training supporting materials:

- Objects and photographs for stimulating memory work,
- One or two rooms for sharing individual histories and working on a common history. If the participant number is 15 or more, the group should be cut into two to three (or more) smaller exchange groups. It is recommended to have five to seven people in one group so that all participants could have their time for story sharing.

Outcomes/Achievements: Memories are often pegged on objects or images. People talking about meaningful objects may uncover deep insights. Photographs often keep stories which wouldn't be told unless they are taken to the activity.

Objects and photographs can be used in shaping new perspectives onto past lives, new interpretations of experiences and new empowerment. Group work allows to combine all into a group history, for participants

this means ability to find points of combinability and to identify learning processes.

**Title of the exercise: visualisation - drawing method (Lithuanian pilot course)**

Time (minimum/maximum): 1 to 5 hours

Target groups: This method is applicable for very diverse groups (teachers, social workers, migrants, unemployed), but it is particularly suitable for work with senior adults.

Description: First, it is important to announce what is being drawn. As an example, the participants may be asked to draw their learning roads. Each participant receives A1 paper sheet and chooses coloured pencils and markers. The participants may stay in the same room. They may leave for other rooms or for the corridor. All the participants draw their learning roads. This activity may take 60 to 90 minutes. When the drawings are ready, the group resumes work as a whole group or splits into smaller sub-groups. This depends on a group size. If the group numbers 15 or more, the group may be split into two to three (or more) sub-groups to discuss drawings. It is recommended to form groups of five to seven participants. Each drawing is discussed separately.

First in discussing the drawing, the participants (not the author) are asked to share their impressions. The person who gives feedback should speak of understanding, impression but not about what the author depicted or intended to depict. The author may choose to accept the comments or ignore them. After listening to all comments, the author comments on one's own drawing and the story behind. This activity takes 120 or 150 minutes. After discussing, the participants of the group share their reactions and feelings what they experienced and learned from this task. Their experiences and impressions should be discussed in the bigger group as well. This part takes about 30 to 45 minutes.

Setting: For the application of the visualisation method, it is necessary to provide space so that the participants could place A1 paper sheets and draw without inconveniencing each other. If the room does not provide enough space, several rooms could be used for the participants to have private space for reflection.

Training supporting materials:

- A comfortable spacious room (several rooms can be used), chairs put in a circle,
- A1 paper sheets,
- Coloured pencils, markers.

Outcomes/Achievements: This creative method could either open up or block memory channels. People who show reaction to emotive impulses will easily memory work. This method always combines creative narrative and reflection. Participants listen to comments, in this way they are supported and often empowered to rediscover significant stages of their lives in a new light.

### **Title of the exercise: partial biography game (Austrian pilot course)**

Explanation: *Partial biography game* we developed for the Austrian pilot course following a concept of Hubert Klingenberger that was published in the book "Lebensmutig. Vergangenes erinnern, Gegenwärtiges entdecken, Künftiges entwerfen" (Klingenberger 2003). The partial biography focuses on a part or aspect of a person's life. A biography is like a cord, one writes, consisting of different strings.

So, there are the social biography, the cultural biography, the natural biography, the worldview/perception biography, the educational biography, biography of personality and the gender biography.

You can find a description of the partial biography concept in the Appendix.

Time (minimum/maximum): The explanation of the concept takes about 20 minutes followed by a brief discussion about the content if necessary. Depending on the number of subgroups and participants in the subgroups it will take 30 minutes to prepare questions regarding different parts of the biographies. The game itself takes another 30 minutes.

Additional time for personal and group reflection should be foreseen. (20 to 30 minutes).

Target groups: The method can be used with almost everybody. For children or teenagers some adaptations may be necessary.

Description: First the trainer explains the concept of partial biographies (a short version, see below).

Then the group is split into subgroups. The number of subgroups depends on the number of participants – a

subgroup may consist of 3 to 7 persons depending on the available time. The more the persons are the longer the game lasts.

Afterwards, the group members choose the one of the partial biography which is the most important one for them. They write down 11 questions on the prepared cards. These questions should be open and concrete like: What was your most impressive learning experience in your childhood? Which role model did you have in learning? (Educational biography) Or: Which cultural events did your parents visit with you? (Cultural biography)

The questions should also be clear and comprehensible. The participants formulate and reformulate until they are satisfied/happy with the phrasing of each question.

When each group has prepared their questions, they exchange their cards and the game starts.

Each participant rolls the dice and answers the question on the corresponding card. The card remains in the game and the dice is passed on. The next participant follows and answers her/his diced question and so on... If different participants dice the same number – everybody answers the question from her/his experience and memory. The game continues until every participant has answered at least one question.

Setting: The method is suitable for groups of six to 20 persons; at each moment of a course but it is also considered as a very useful method to start the work on biography in general.

#### Training supporting materials:

- A brief instruction on partial biographies for the use of the participants,
- Two dices per sub-group,
- Eleven cards with numbers from two to twelve on the back side for each subgroup.

Outcomes/Achievements: The concept of partial biographies helps to focus on special parts of a person's biography. It allows to work very concentrated on certain aspects of a biography and even to guide carefully if uncomfortable memories turn out.



While preparing the questions, the participants talk about their experiences and their memories. The same happens while playing the game. The questions and the answers of the other participants stimulate the exchange of memories.

Evaluation tools: It is important in biography work to end every exercise regarding memory with a personal reflection. Which kind of memories came to me while writing the question, in answering them and listening to the others? Were there some light bulb moments? Is there something, I have learned (for the future)? After the personal reflection the group should exchange on lessons learned – probably guided with the following questions: Which points of my reflection do I want to share with the group?

Tips for facilitators: To adapt the game for counselling, coaching or others you can prepare the questions concerning the partial biography yourself. That allows you to guide the process of memory and exchange more directly.

### **Title of the exercise: memory journey (instructor's training – with members of the Realize partner organisations from five countries)**

Time (minimum/maximum): 75 to 120 minutes

Target groups: Can be practiced with people of all ages, sexes and professions

Description: The memory journey invites participants to make a “guided tour” into their memory. The exercise starts in the plenum. The trainer asks people to choose a comfortable position where they can imagine spending the next 15 or 20 minutes. If they sit, the feet should have good contact with the floor. The trainer selects relaxing background music. The music is started and the trainer slowly and calmly reads the text of the journey.

The mentioned example regarding eating, cooking, food you find in the Appendix; you can also invent a text of your own on the memory subject you want the participants to travel to; or you can just guide the relaxing part and then let the participants travel themselves – guided by an issue – for some time. This could be five to ten minutes. A possible introduction to such a travel which is not accompanied by trainer's words you will also find in the Appendix.

After the individual journey, participants come together in groups of three or four and exchange on: How was my journey? What did I experience? What was exciting, strange or astonishing? This exchange can last from 30 to 45 minutes – each participant should have enough time to describe her/his experience.

Finally, all participants come together in the plenum and the trainer asks: How was this journey for you and the exchange in the sub-groups? Did you learn from each other? What was astonishing, strange when you compared your journeys? Is there something you learned and you want to go ahead with?

Setting: a quiet room to enable concentration and relaxation; big enough so people can lie down on the floor if they want or sit comfortable on a chair. During the first part of the exercise, people are remembering individually in plenum, the second part they exchange in sub-groups of three or four, finally in plenum, they report their impressions of the sub-groups (differences, similarities, insights ...)

Training supporting materials:

- Text to accompany the memory journey (you find a text on the subject of eating, cooking, food in the Appendix),
- CD player and relaxing music.

Outcomes/Achievements: This exercise helps the participants to enter into a slower pace allowing them deeper level of awareness of themselves and others. It amplifies mutual trust and understanding among participants.

Evaluation tools: Giving feed back after the exercise how the participants experienced it and what they learned is the main evaluation procedure. This feedback can be taken by an assigned person or similarly participants can be asked to give a written feedback.

Tips for facilitators: It is very important to read the text of the memory journey clearly, slowly and calmly and to concede enough time for the exchange in sub-groups because the important learning and realisation effect happen there.

### **Title of the exercise: name game (Turkish pilot course)**

Time (minimum/maximum): 30 to 45 minutes

Training supporting materials:

- Flip chart,
- Colour pens,
- Ball.

Description: The participants were asked to share the story of their names on the base of their own biographies, family past and transculturality with the whole group. They also shared the cultural, religious, familial, political aspects to their name. The line was followed with the ball passed through each other. The participants were allowed to write on the flip chart if they chose to do so.

Target groups: students from different grades and programs; all kind of people

Setting: circle of chairs or U shape sitting

Outcomes/Achievements: To explore one's familial background, religious, ideological, political views and values; to learn how to apply transcultural biographical methods through self experience and reflection; to understand and tolerate differences (cultural, traditional, ethnic, regional, religious, gender etc.)

Evaluation tools: The whole group evaluates those who share the stories of their names with the group according to their own political, cultural, ethnic, religious etc. background.

Tips for facilitators: Let the group feel comfortable and safe in a quiet and trusting atmosphere and make the participants feel that their ideas are valued. The trainer can use the story of her/his name as an example. The trainer should act trustfully, respectful and emphatic towards differences.

### **Title of the exercise: music (first part) – the musical piece (Suisse pilot course)**

Time (minimum/maximum): Four + five minutes for listening to the piece and the participants' commentary; and 15 minutes for group discussion

Target groups: Trainers, facilitators, social workers, who work in migration contexts and other branches of the training of adults and education in general.

Description: The participants have the task to choose a musical piece before the formative meeting and to give it to the trainer:

We have to leave Planet Earth.

Each participant can only bring one musical piece in which they recognize themselves. It can be a musical piece or a song that has been discovered at any moment of their life.

During the meeting, the trainer plays the musical pieces, one after the other, without indicating who they belong to. After listening to every piece, the participants who chose the musical piece are invited to explain the reason of their choice and to share what that piece evokes. After listening to all of the pieces, it is asked that the participants comment on the activity.

Didactic setting: This activity allows us to introduce ourselves with a very evocative mean (music), and the level of getting to know each other in this situation is enriched. Emotions clearly come to surface. The discussion among the participants allows underlining the importance of emotions to improve the memory of our personal history. Moreover, then chosen musical piece allows the participants to get to know each other better. For this reason, it is important to propose this activity when the group is already formed (it is better to wait at least until after the second meeting).

Training supporting materials:

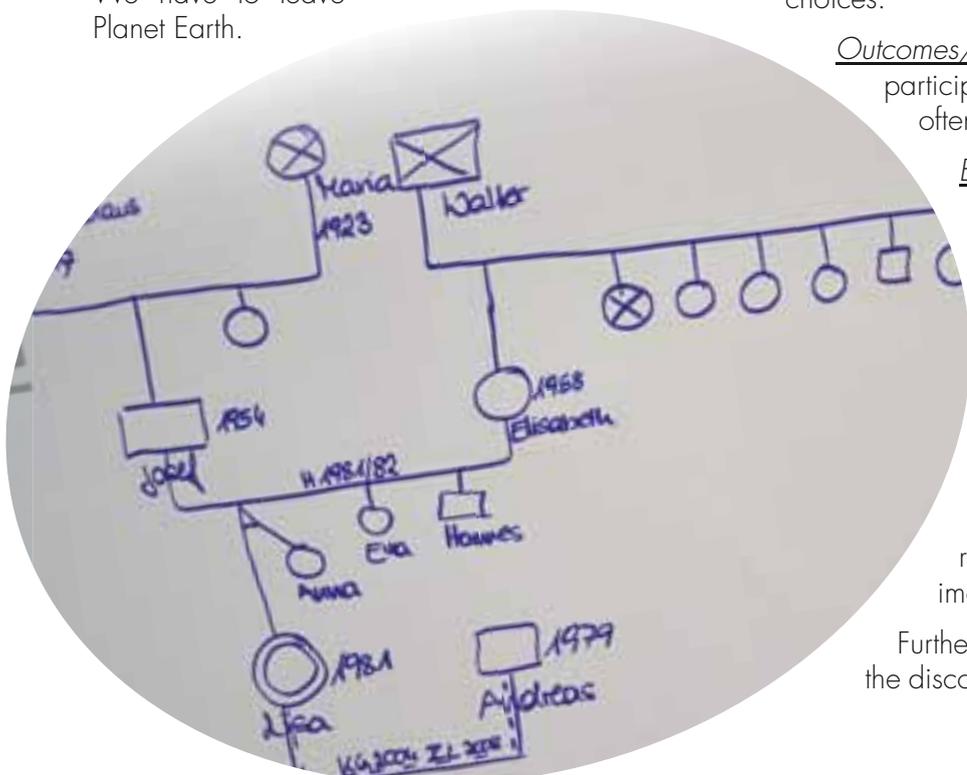
- Ask beforehand to bring a technical support or a web link with the chosen musical piece.
- Plan to bring the necessary tools: radio/musical player/computer/internet connection

Aims and goals: The participants retrieve in their memory a significant situation, linked to a musical souvenir. They explicit aspects of their autobiography linked to their experiences, feelings and emotions. They compare musical choices and highlight the differences and similarities in the way of interpreting these musical choices.

Outcomes/Achievements: With this activity, the participants present a part of themselves and often find common ideas or emotions.

Evaluation tools: The autobiographic work allows the participants to access different parts of their memory. Music facilitates the evocation of situations that are rich in experience, feelings and emotions. The participants appreciate the attention placed on elements that are not linked to doing, planning, producing, reacting, solving. They consecrate the time to remember moments of relax, encounters, exchange, solitude, imagination.

Furthermore, the exchange in a group allows the discovery of different ways to think about the



same musical piece, or similarities shared with other participants. The feeling of surprise while listening to someone else's piece that reminds the participants of their own past creates a strong feeling of belonging to the group. This strengthens the awareness of having a personal history that is interwoven with the history of others.

Tips for facilitators: This activity allows the participants to present a part of themselves that might surface deep feelings and emotions. This is true for both, who presents and who listens to the musical piece. It is important to be sure that the context be adequate for an activity that requires serenity and trust in others. There cannot be any external interference. The trainer must make sure that the group is willing to listen without judgement.

**Title of the exercise: music (second part) – History of music (Suisse pilot course)**

Time (minimum/maximum):

1st part: individual, 15-20 minutes

2nd part: in pairs, 10-20 minutes

3rd part: as a group, 30 minutes

Target groups: Trainers, facilitators, social workers, who work in migration contexts and other branches of the training of adults and education in general.

Description: This activity can also be used to discover the participants' paths, that can be similar, both for musical choices and emotions that might emerge, in the same period, but at different ages.

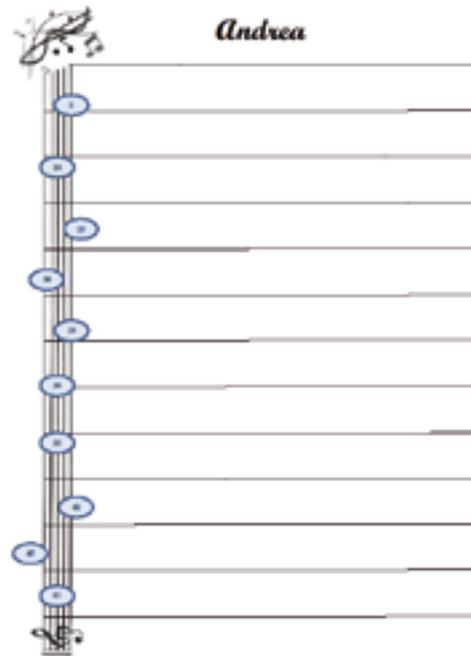
The participants create a personal Curriculum Vitae linked to the music.

The trainer hands out a paper with a timeline. The participants insert the musical piece they presented during the previous activity. Then they start thinking about their own musical history and they fill the hand out with titles, names of singers, or other references to specific musical pieces. Afterwards, in pairs, the participants compare their musical timelines. During this activity, solitudes and differences might emerge.

The trainer concludes with the group as a whole. There is a reflection about the meaning of the activity, about what happened during the exchanges in pairs. The discussion is lead in order to find and point out the links between the musical pieces and moments of one's own life, - significant, positive, sad, linked to decisions, encounters, and so on.

Didactical setting: This activity can start with the same initial simulation: "Having had to leave Planet Earth at a different age, what music or song would you have brought with you?"

Training supporting materials: Hand out with a time-line with the ages, example:



Aims and goals: The participants rebuild part of their biography (or all of it) through memories of musical pieces linked to different ages. To this memory they link one or more significant moments of that stage of their life.

Outcomes/Achievements: Through the musical CV, it is possible to share life paths of people of different ages, who have had different experiences. There are people who discover that they have listened to the same music in a period even though they have a considerable age difference. Other people who are at the same age find out that they listen to very different types of music, and so on.

Many participants find links with their own biography through this musical exercise. The activity (1st and 2nd part) opens the memory with unusual strategies. This favours a separation from the "how I normally remember", in order to discover elements of one's own life that are not easily visible. From the experiences remembered with this method, it is possible to move on to the description of the period of life that is being considered. From that description, it is then possible to get to the activities, to the ways of thinking and of dealing with others. The following passage might lead to describing a series of attitudes and specific skills in a given period of one's life.

Evaluation tools: Comparison among participants; group communication; the produced material and the possibility to continue alone.

Tips for facilitators: As said, this activity needs to be

proposed when the participants already know each other and the group is consolidated. It might be towards the end of the meeting since music, other than carrying emotions, helps relaxing.

### **Title of the exercise: biography (city) mapping (Turkish pilot course)**

Time (minimum/maximum): 60 minutes

Target groups: Students from different grades and programs; all kind of people.

Description: The game "biography (city) mapping" was played on board. First the trainers wrote then the participants were asked to write the city names where they were born, they lived most, they loved most and then to write a city name where they will live in the future and to explain why, on the board accepted as Turkey map. While marking the city names on board, some basic questions – e. g.: What is the importance of birthplace? Where else did you live? What was the most important for you there? What were the other important things that you remembered? Where will you work in the future? – were also asked. Everybody who participated in the game talked about the characteristic features of these cities written on the board. After writing city names, each participant came next to board to tell about their stories, feelings and expectations related to the cities named. As a result, except their birthplaces, Ankara, Istanbul and Izmir, the largest three cities in Turkey, were preferred as the most common cities. In addition, within a broad sense from Russia to Azerbaijan and from South Korea to USA and Canada, the biographical and transcultural panorama of cities was obtained. The meaning of especially living in Istanbul and Izmir and the importance in terms of TBW were expressed. It was expressed that the cosmopolitan structure of Istanbul formed a space for multiculturalism but this situation scared especially the outsiders of the city. However, Izmir was defined as the city which is the city of liberty and can include very different groups of people without discrimination. Ankara was expressed as the city of students, officers wearing suits and bureaucracy.

Setting: circle of chairs

Training supporting materials:

- Flip chart,
- Colour pens,
- Barco-vision,
- Pictures/photos.

Outcomes/Achievements: To explore transcultural characteristics of different regions-cities in Turkey; to explore cultural/regional /ethnic similarities and differences among them

Evaluation tools: group discussion; personal contribution; exchange of ideas; group evaluation; sharing one's life course

Tips for facilitators: Let the group feel comfortable and safe in a quiet and trusting atmosphere and make the participants feel that their ideas are valued. The trainer can write the names of the cities where she/he was born or lived to illustrate how to apply the method. The trainer should act respectfully and emphatically towards differences.

### **Further suggestions**

Biography Work with plants: Everybody has a different story related to plants or gardening which can be told – e. g. during a walk through nature.

Biography Work with food: cooking together and exchanging memories on food, cooking, eating meanwhile.

Textile Biography work: Along clothes you had when you were young you do the memory work. The reflections are inspired by photos, clothes or by needle working together. You can also choose different textile techniques as well as handicraft and woodworks to teach each other while sharing experiences.

Inventing biographies: The trainer prepares pictures of people (e.g. from papers) and distributes it to the participants. Participants walk around with their picture and invent a biography related to it. They introduce themselves to each other; sit down in a circle and account their invented biographies. "I am ..."

### **End up a course**

### **Title of the exercise: go through the labyrinth of our life. A Labyrinth exercise (Austrian pilot course)**

Explanation: As human beings, we usually give affections and attach memories to different items and objects: we are somehow making a fetish out of it. Once integrated in our biography, these things store memory which can be activated: feelings, thinking, pictures, stories, sensual memories ... They bring back positive or negative memories. This exercise wants to make life span experience visible by using objects we care about.

Time (minimum/maximum): The participants are instructed to bring some objects which are made to symbolize learning experiences during their whole life (three to five objects). The description of the objects will last at least 30 minutes depending on the number of participants and objects. Make sure to be restrictive in case your group is big.

Walking through the labyrinth will take at least half an hour. It is very important that the participants have enough time to walk through the labyrinth in their own pace. The exercise is winded up with a personal and group reflection (20 to 30 minutes).

Somebody has to prepare a labyrinth before.

Target groups: This exercise can be used with every group.

Description: Make sure that every participant has her/his personal object or photo. Let them show and describe their objects in the group and explain why they picked it. Immediately, they start talking about their experiences and memories.

Before going through the labyrinth, the trainer can read a text on labyrinths like we added below. Going through the labyrinth, she/he stands for lifespan from now to birth. It is important to do the exercise very slowly and contemplatively. There can be also some calm and gentle background music. The participants walk in one rhythm and pace and they take their time they want. You as a trainer make sure that they are walking one after another giving enough free space between the first and the follower. They put their personal objects in chronological order on places in the labyrinth where they have the feeling that it's the right places for it. They can also stop at objects or pictures from others and maybe remember similar or different situations, positive or negative feelings. If a participant reaches the centre of the labyrinth, she/he goes back and picks up her/his objects while going back into today's present.

If everybody has finished, every person does her/his personal reflection on: How was it to show the chosen objects and pictures and describe the memories and see the objects from the other participants? How was it going through the labyrinth, putting the objects and reflecting on some others? How was it being in the centre and going back again? The group exchange winds up the exercise.

Text on going through the labyrinth of your life: "My way through the labyrinth of life. – I go back to the starting point of my life, maybe it is the goal – who knows? I stay where I want to do it, look around, forward and backward. I feel or think about, which place in the labyrinth my objects belong to. I can try which position is the best. Where it fits, I put my object.

Slowly I go to the centre; I stay there as long as I need. Then I go back – the way can lead you to the beginning or to your goal. On the way back I pick up my objects again and, of course, I can stop at the objects from the other participants. I take my objects with me outside the labyrinth. I also take my treasures of my memories with me into the present."

Setting: Every participant describes the meaning of

each object and why she/he has carried it. Usually it is a very pleasant moment to listen to the stories of the objects. You get a deeper view of the participants and sometimes some surprising view. If the group is very big, it is better to split it into two. Otherwise, the presentation of the objects takes too long.

Training supporting materials:

- The trainer has to tell the participants in advance to bring some objects or photos using guiding questions. E. g. Which object stands for a life learning situation? Which one reminds me of something new in my life, when I have to deal with a new situation, like going to a new school, new working place, journey, new environment.
- Maybe you can use an existing labyrinth (e. g. in Tyrol at certain places in nature labyrinths have been built: <http://www.labyrinthe.at/labyrinthe-in-Tirol.php>); or built a labyrinth in a garden or in nature with stones, wooden sticks, traces in snow ...; you can also built a labyrinth in a large enough room from strings of wool or yarn...
- How to build a labyrinth: [http://www.labyrinthbuilders.co.uk/about\\_labyrinths/labyrinth\\_building.html](http://www.labyrinthbuilders.co.uk/about_labyrinths/labyrinth_building.html).

Outcomes/Achievements: Participants use some personal objects and pictures to get back into their memories. They have to think at home what they pick, so they have a little preparation before joining the group. They present their objects and can control the degree of telling. Talking and listening to other descriptions activate the memories of the group. Going through the labyrinth, everybody can choose when and how long she/he wants to do it. Again one can control the depth of one's memory. But the trainer may reckon that the participants go into their memories very deep because of the meditative way the exercise is carried out.

Evaluation tools: Every method stimulating the memory should end in personal reflection and evaluation: What was important for me in choosing the objects at home? In presenting them in the group? In hearing the description of the others and listening to them? Walking through the labyrinth? Leaving my objects on their places, seeing the others? What was your feeling being in the centre of the labyrinth and walking back again? Is there something, I have learned (for the future)?

After the personal reflection there should also be an exchange in the group. This exchange among the group may be guided with the following question: Which points of my reflection do I want to share with the group?

## WHAT TO CONSIDER WHEN WORKING WITH DIFFERENT TARGET GROUPS IN DIFFERENT COUNTRIES

### Adaptations: Italian pilot course

**By Paolo Raimondi and Welly Marguerite Lottin from Griot**

Griot works mainly with migrants, migrant organizations leaders and social workers very directly involved with migration questions and life problems. They are not only African citizens but people coming from all over the world. Griot's president is an elected member of the Representative Office of Foreign Citizens of the city of Rome working with all the communities living in the Lazio region.

In other words Griot does not deal only with people with migrant background but also Griot leaders are themselves migrants.

Therefore we needed to create a good working mix of local and foreign people with different professional backgrounds. Primarily these migrants are cultural mediators working in different fields with specializations in education, health, cultural communities, and cultural ambassadors of different origins.

One difficulty is to involve these persons in integration activities because many do not understand immediately the emotional interest in doing it. Griot goes towards them and participates in their cultural initiatives and then presents the notion of the Griot, the African story teller, to overcome many taboos, diffidence and apathy. The most important aspect is to create confidence in the present and to re-establish a relation with the past, with the origins, with the cultural roots. This process helps to create a network of contacts through particularly an information tam tam. To achieve this we cannot only use abstract means like leaflets and email messages but we need a personal communication from mouth to mouth. In such a way the contacts see that they can relate and transmit his/her own culture to others. To be motivated to action the contact asks first what such participation brings to his life and to his community.

For this it is important and indispensable to find a place in common, where there is something which people can share. Food is something in common with many communities and can help to unite people. Small

traditional objects can also help in such a process. In such situation then migrants try to speak Italian to communicate with the others. Everyone for example uses rice in the kitchen, or people refer to the use of hot pepper as a medicine.

Another important help can come from the music. It is important in fact to have pieces of music of all the communities and cultures involved in the session because this opens up immediately a situation of relaxation and of confidence. Then people feel free to begin to tell about the origins of their life.

It is important for example to hold hands together in circle already at the beginning of the session because this also creates this immediate sense of relaxation and of holding together.

A further important moment is to organize lunch all together sitting around a table to listen to other's stories and to share ideas. This helps to create a family environment which is essential to create a feeling of friendship with migrants. Another alternative is to have a big plate full of food from where each one can take his food to eat, to share it with justice.

We saw that in such a group it is important to invite the participants to bring some small objects done by the participants. This is an immediate way to personalize the relations and to make them deeper.

An adaptation of working with TBW to our context was also related to the length of the sessions. We saw that to organize a pilot course in two sessions of two days each with a relative long distance between the two parts could be counterproductive and could not work properly. It is not for the lack of interest but in the life of persons, particularly those with migrant background, there could be so many events and developments that could profoundly change the life course and also the participation of people.

The best is to organize a long week end (Friday early afternoon until Sunday) eventually out of the city where people live, eventually in a nice nearby countryside where people could feel freer, distant from the day to day routine and more susceptible to learn new things and new ideas.

## Adaptations: Turkish pilot course

**By Hüseyin Gül, Songül Sallan-Gül and H. Eylem Kaya from Süleyman Demirel University**

In SDU pilot study, university undergraduate and graduate students were the participants. A very diverse body of students was selected among around 600 applicants. They all had ethnic, sect, religious, ideological, national, socio-economic, gender differences. Besides, they all had different life styles and all of them had either national or international migration stories personally or in their family past.

Different cultural contexts of the pilot studies in each partner country were the most important different and unique aspect of TBW studies. For example, in order to select the participant students, biographical information forms were used to gather data about the family and personal background of the applicants. These biographical information forms included questions on "family income", "marital status", "size of family" and "place where you currently live or stay".



Such questions would draw various reactions from the participants of the pilot studies in the other partner countries. For instance, in Austria probably the question about family income would be regarded as too intimate.

In the biographical information form for the Turkish pilot study, we had to make some changes and additions according to the characteristics of Turkish context and

our target group. Besides, we devoted some time during our pilot study for the exploration of family background of the participants as a TBW approach. For this purpose, such TBW techniques as genogram, city map, name game, interviews with elderly family members, memory calling etc. were tested. Comparison and contrast of family backgrounds, the cultural characteristics of the hometowns of participants etc. for transculturality were studied as well. In order to work with such methods or test them, we needed to select participants with relevant family backgrounds.

Family size is also important in Turkish case because it considerably varies from one region to another. For example, the size of a Kurdish family from South-east part of Turkey may be ten persons or more, while in Western Turkey, it is three or four persons in general. Questions such as "where a student lives, or whether a student is married, has a girl/boy friend or fiancé", are important to understand their way of living and culture. To illustrate; many students live in houses that are run by religious groups and such students have different attitudes toward having a girl or boy friend. They are very often not allowed to date girls or boys or have a girl or boy friend, so they have to get married or engaged during their university years. They also have different family backgrounds, stories, incomes, religious orientations etc.

With regard to the question on family income, we assumed that it would help us to differentiate the applicants according to class/socioeconomic status. For example, two Kurdish students, each with different family incomes, are more likely to approach transcultural issues differently from each other. In Turkey, it is okay to ask questions regarding family income in questionnaires. However, we preferred to ask the applicants to scale the economic status of their families rather than directly to ask them the income of their families.

In the biographical information forms, the applicants were given those choices: poor, low income, medium income or high income group. By this way, the question would be assumed to be less intimidating.

Such above-mentioned questions were needed to make selection among the applicants because we wanted to select the ones that would make sense for the purpose of the pilot study. In addition, we constructed the application form accordingly so that it would help us make informed selection among the applicants. We did not think that it would be a problem to ask such questions up front at the stage of application.

During the pilot study, we had to utilize some techniques that were sensitive to cultural context. For example, we found out during the pilot study that the names of many participants had religious, cultural, historical, ethnic, political etc. meanings, characterizing their familial, cultural and ideological background.

Finally, due to cultural and religious factors, male and female students tended to sit next to the same sex persons. Besides, the male students chose to sit at the corners of the U forms sitting style in the room. Thus, the female participants sit in the middle of the group in U form. Moreover, two graduate students stood out in the group in the sense that they seemed more critical of the TBW study than the undergraduate students were. They also shared with the whole group on the second day of the pilot study that they had not thought that such a biography study would have succeeded. Yet, they were surprised with the effectiveness of the TBW study.

## **Adaptations: Austrian pilot course**

**By Annemarie Schweighofer-Brauer from FBI Centre; and Elisabeth Reiter and Manuela Schweigkofler from Haus der Begegnung**

In the German speaking setting of Austria and Germany the term Biography Work is well known and people do show a high level of interest whether for private or professional use. We learned from the feedback of our course participants that people do not devote time to biographical exercises, but they enjoy doing Biography Work when they form part of a group. Although some of the participants already used biographical methods with clients or learners in their professional fields they confirmed that working with TBW methods intensely during the course opened up new perspectives. In any case: TBW methods have to be attuned to the concrete situation.

## **Adaptation of the course programme to the energy flow during the course**

Since TBW is a qualitative approach working with it has to be oriented on the energy flow of those who work together.

E. g. at the beginning of the second part of the pilot course in Austria – three month had passed since the first part – the participants seemed to be very involved in experiences, concerns, happenings they just came from. Some of them expressed that they were busy with intense biographical self exploration since the first course part and naturally with many other things going on in their lives. TBW was quite effective at the personal level. Some of them started introducing TBW into their work.

Our original plan was to collect questions that have emerged in the time between the two course parts and to work on those during the first phase of the second course part. Participants wrote issues and questions on little cards and pinned them on a pin wall. Trainers asked: Which of the issues and questions you noted on the cards interests you most now? With which issue shall we start? We did not get a clear feedback – none of those issues/questions seemed to energize, fascinate or intrigue the group. When we proposed one of the issues at the pin wall it neither inspired obvious eagerness. The participants' reaction was rather hesitant: "Just do what you planned, we will see." Consequently the trainers decided to adapt the course programme to this situation and to introduce an exercise foreseen for the second course day: the musical Biography Work. We expected that this exercise would bring back participants to the course micro cosmos, to the narrating and exchanging and that it would stimulate their joy and passion. And it worked!

## **Adaptations of TBW exercises to different target groups**

At the beginning of the course our participants expressed their wish to learn methods to work with their clients – e. g. in the support of unemployed people or elderly people with migrant background, in counselling of migrant women and in psycho therapy with migrants.

The participants stated that TBW is a very apt approach which offers clear tools to work with; and that it is necessary to test and experience it oneself to be aware of the effects it can have. The participating psycho



therapists concluded that it is adaptable for therapy.

In order to apply TBW in therapy settings it is necessary to provide a protected environment to clients or learners and to make sure that they participate voluntarily in the exercises. Enough time has to be available and basic needs have already to be fulfilled. That means that TBW is not appropriate in ongoing crisis when severe feelings of fear and threat prevail.

One participant described the adaptation process of TBW in a *Women Café*, a meeting point for women with migrant background. Also the coffee shop atmosphere doesn't prepare a protected zone as it is necessary for counselling or similar group settings, the participants acted self responsible and choose how deep they wanted to enter into their life memories.

The participants discussed variations from the methods tested in the course (some described in Chapter 4 of this manual)

The game of the partial biographies could be guided in that way, using biographic questions which are important to the respective client. This would help clients to reflect certain aspects of their life more closely. As time in counselling is usually limited it would help to drive faster to the point. The game could also be offered to strengthen the exchange of experiences in groups like in the *migrant women's café* or generally when it comes to collect ideas or any memories for e. g. with a group of youth to produce movie or drama. When you work with elderly people the method can be useful for memory exchange circles.

The drawing method as described in Chapter 4 for the Lithuanian context ("visualisation - drawing method") was also discussed on how to apply it in counselling and therapy. Clients could be asked to prepare the drawing for the next session. With pupils it could be used to examine how to contact other cultures. A variation could be to use different materials like wool, yarn, fibres, objects and photos to design a "path of life picture".

In our pilot course we did a musical Biography Work exercise which stimulated intense memory and the exchange of it. Participants had to select a song or piece of music which were meaningful in a certain time of their life. In the group or also the sub-group you can combine the narration and the listening to the song. So the song of one group member most probably stimulates memories of another member. The participants agreed that the effect of musical Biography Work is extraordinary strong and therefore needs a protected environment when experimenting with it. Music addresses emotions more directly; it goes deeper than words and can impact on your self

control. It is advisable to use this method with people who are already experienced in self-reflection and self-exploration.

Generally spoken music is already used intensively in elderly care in order to bridge the gap between life span experience and the early loss of memory.



## Adaptations: Lithuanian pilot course

**By Irena Zemaitaityte, Sarmite Mikulioniene and Leta Dromantiene from Mykolas Romeris University**

Following the Realize Project partners agreement, the seminar on TBW methods were delivered on 16<sup>th</sup>/17<sup>th</sup> September and on November 2011. 15 participants were present in the seminars. There came active social partners of Mykolas Romeris University: Social workers of the Day Centres, students of Social Gerontology Master Degree programs and professionals of the higher education school – education science specialists. The partners agreed that the seminars should have been attended not by direct beneficiaries (e. g. migrants, representatives of social exclusion groups, unemployed), but by social workers, education science specialists, and future social workers (students), who would be able to apply Transcultural Biography Work method in their further function.



There was no special participant

selection procedure in Lithuania, since all invitations were met with interest and confirmations of participation followed.

Seminars progressed smoothly; the participants shared their experiences and feelings, actively participated in all activities. Since the group united students and teachers, it was a satisfying observation (noted by the participants themselves), that informal atmosphere of the seminars deleted the distance between students and teachers, present in a formal environment.

At the close of the seminars the participants mentioned their experiences in their reflections. Their experiences were nice, interesting, warm and pleasant; and the surroundings encouraged understanding:

- *"I feel elated. I understand that a lot of work, planning, tasks are ahead. But now I want to make a pause and enjoy the moment ... When we are together we learn about the others and the surroundings, but we, first of all, learn about OURSELVES. By learning oneself it is easier to learn about others..."*
- *"I understand that a self exploration never ends. (...)"*
- *"I feel great. Creative tasks allow us to know each other much better (...)"*

When asked what they learned in these seminars, the participants stressed tolerance and the importance of sharing experience.

- *"I learned to tolerate others, since everyone because they are not me are immediately different from me. I learned to listen to another person and make no judgment, since I understand that a different opinion is not necessarily wrong. (...)"*
- *"I learned to open to virtual strangers and still feel safe. This experience will help to communicate with colleagues, family members and with people whom I barely know."*

- *"Personal growth – how interesting, meaningful and pleasant sharing experiences can be."*

In addition, the participants noted that during the seminars they could pause to reflect on their experiences and in our fast and continually changing period they cannot spare any time for this at all.

- *"I discovered important things in my life, I took some rest from running through life (...)"*
- *"For personal growth I learned to stop, to listen, to accept my positive experiences and to value (...)"*
- *"It is a method which in my opinion can stop time, can turn one's look into oneself, to know oneself, and at the same time, allows to understand and accept the other person (...)"*

By analyzing features of Transcultural Biography Work application to Lithuanians, seminar participants mentioned that Lithuanians were reticent to open up in a group of new people; the years of transition formed the feeling of rush, therefore often there was no wish to make a pause, it gave one a fear to stand out of the group. The participants also pointed out that this method could be applied to children since they would be the generation which would deal with new misunderstandings and would form the future.

- *"It is important to notice Lithuanian 'coldness', the fear to open up."*
- *"People must be encouraged to stop and to distance from permanent seeking results and permanent activity."*
- *"I think this method must be applied rather widely, starting with children. They will be the ones who deal with conflicts and misunderstandings, connected to culture differences."*

## **Peculiarity of the formative cycle realized in Switzerland**

**By Giorgio Comi and Manuela Carboni from Labor Transfer; and Francesca Di Nardo from Swiss Federation for Adult Learning**

### **Trainers of adults**

*"The autobiography is only seemingly a private tale: in truth it mirrors events shared with others."* (Demetrio, Duccio (1994): Apprendere nelle organizzazioni. Proposte per la crescita cognitiva in età adulta, Roma)

The reference target of the training organized in

Switzerland was diversified:

trainers of unemployed people, trainers of trainers, social workers, parents trainers, teachers trainers, APEL worker (Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning – VAE, validation des acquis de l'expérience).

The exercises and the path were redefined to meet the expectations of the specific target. Moreover, the specific experience of Labour Transfer allowed two important strategies in adult and trainers training to be integrated: the situated learning and the reciprocal maieutic approach. With these two didactic elements we built about 15 examples of activities centred on TBW:

- Each exercise drew on a short experience.
- The activity was developed with the TBW elements.
- The activity was enriched with a discussion about imagined behaviours, actions, and values that were at the base of our way of thinking and acting.

Trainers wished to understand the concepts and theories upon which a didactic strategy stands. For this reason, in the seminar we integrated the moments of discussion about the theory itself.

Autobiographic work is conceived to rebuild the history of one's own learning and acquisition of competences in specific situations. The concepts used to read one's own story are also important to know, because we can only read what our subjective theories allow us to read.

## **TBW and the development of the person**

The proposed training revolves around the theme of self-esteem. TBW, like all training strategies, can be used for different purposes. Our seminars are always thought for the training, the orientation, and the development of the participants. For this reason, even TBW is presented and tested as an instrument which is useful to the participants to recognize their own potential (self-esteem). The autobiographic activity conducted in a group allows the participants to recognize themselves in the words of others and to share stories and reflections in a social context where the individual is followed and heard. The sharing of personal stories goes beyond the narration and becomes a moment of exchange and of research of a common meaning. It is thus a matter of helping the participants to build a shared meaning of their own story – of their own stories. For this reason, discussion and negotiation are key parts of this method. Thus, TBW allows also to take a look at their own training and professional history, with an outlook that is more open to finding moments and situations where to highlight knowledge, abilities,

and skills: competences; competences that need to be used to plan the next steps, during and after the seminar.

## **TBW integrated in other paths**

The participants work in different contexts. TBW was presented with two objectives:

- To discover the peculiarities and the potential of an autobiographic training
- To find use strategies of single exercises to integrate in different courses with different targets.

The individual experience, at the end of the course, allowed us to compare many variations and many results. The individual experiences were carried out with youngsters and teenagers, parents, unemployed, migrants registered in language courses and trainers. Each experience were presented and discussed. Each exercise was enriched with numerous variations.

## **The model**

The work organization counts 1) moments of getting to know each other and reciprocal approach, 2) an intensive seminar, 3) a period for individual experimentation, and 4) a moment of exchange and synthesis.

The common activities are used to get acquainted with the method, to have a group experience, and to prepare and evaluate individual experiences. The didactic strategy initially favours autobiographic exercises with activities of description, narration, and interview. Then it is time to highlight and appreciate individual resources, projects and objectives. During the course, the participants were invited to rethink, narrate, and discuss situations linked to their personal experiences and convictions. If there was a string and trust relationship within the group, exercises of emotion and feeling evocations were proposed and there were even moments of comparison based on reports of transcultural situations.

## **How to use biographic methods in coaching and counselling**

**By Annemarie Schweighofer-Brauer from FBI Centre**

Basically the described methods in the Chapters 3 and 4 can be applied for biographic work in coaching or counselling processes with people with migrant background and in a transcultural environment:

drawing, painting, and modelling, narrating, writing etc. The biographic interview (Chapter 3) and the genogram (below) might be especially applicable as well as encouraging the clients to create an album or book of life (below).

### Working with genograms

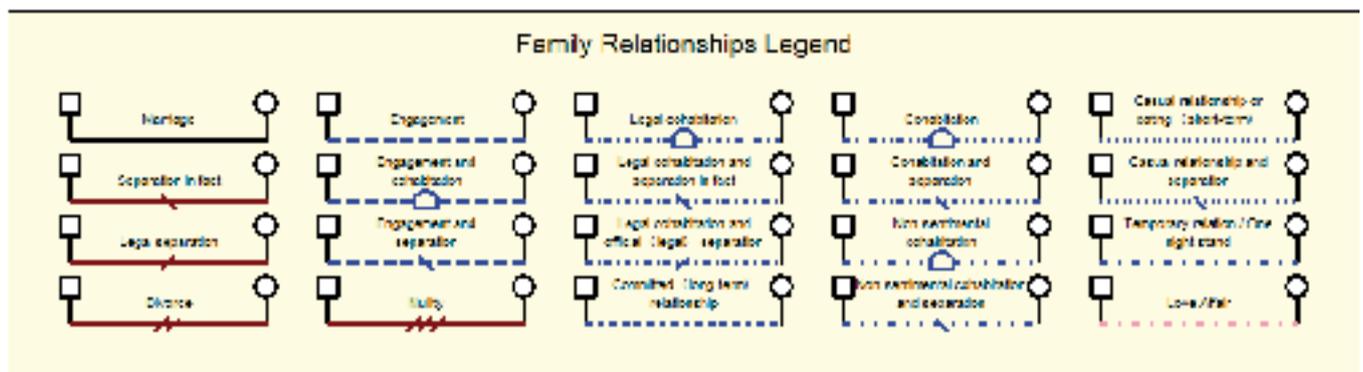
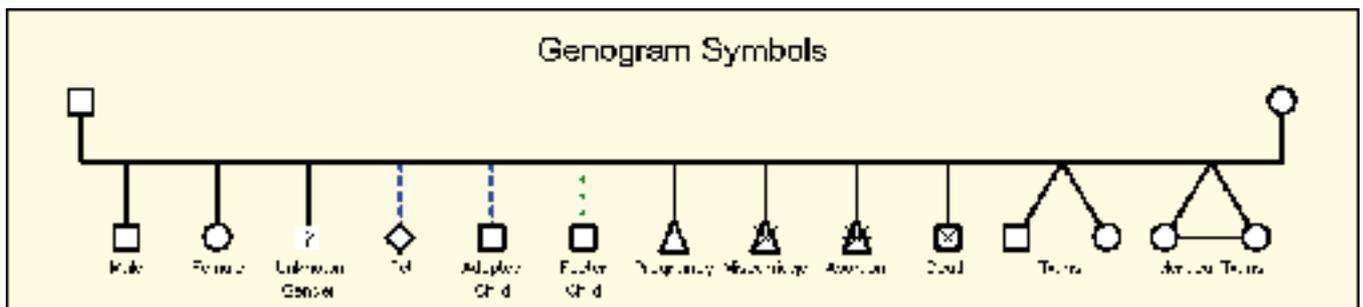
The genogram derives from family therapy and depicts family patterns. It contains information on family members and their relationships throughout at least three generations. Hereditary and psychological patterns shaping current relationships, decision making

processes and every-day-acting become visible.

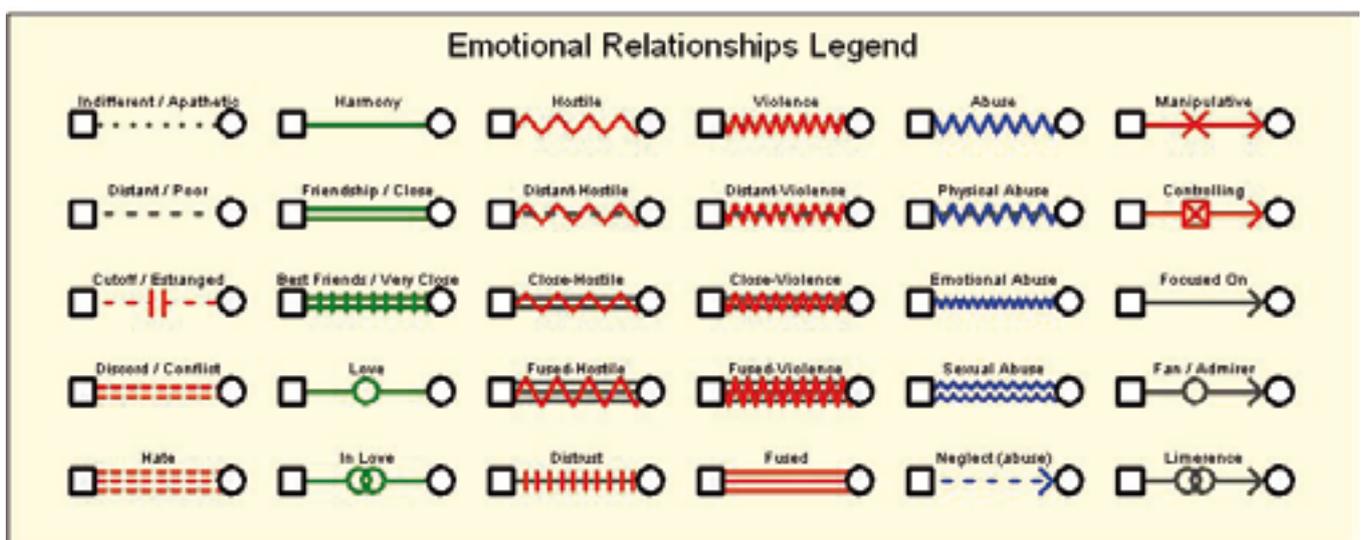
Genogram is actually used in a variety of context like medicine, psychiatry, psychology, social work, or education.

A genogram uses symbols for gender and links themes with different kinds of lines to visualize types of relationships. Horizontal lines are expressing marital relationship, vertical lines child-parents relationships.

For the following systematisation of genogram symbols, we cite <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Genogram> [accessed on 6.6.2011]:



The dates of birth and death should be noted and the name of the person. Kinds of relationship will be noted. Different colours can be used to mark family, emotional and social relationships.



For TBW purposes places where people migrated from and to could be noted, but also their belonging to social classes, sexual orientation (and its change) or religious affiliation; further illnesses, disabilities and traumatizing experience.

A genogram provides plenty of information on an individual's background, situation and connectedness with regard to family relations but can also be applied to visualise social relations outside the family.

It can be produced by the coach/counsellor for clarifying family relationships of a client. Through the visualisation of a genogram insights can be shown which otherwise do not appear. A genogram can also be produced by a counsellor together with a client or by the client her/himself. It can provoke the client's interest to explore her/his situation and to collect new biographical information. This way the awareness of factors influencing the present situation may become clearer and broader. A new basis for purposeful decisions can be created.

A genogram can be developed continually – by investigation, asking (elder) relatives and family members, exploring available sources on the family's history, watching photos and asking questions.

Working on a genogram will be a good reason to ask relatives who otherwise would never have shared certain memory. It can be a way to find out more about roots in the country from where a migration process started. Genogram is useful for any profession in regard to social interaction – to “visualize complex interactions between individuals and to study patterns of behaviours and diseases.” (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Genogram>; [8 .3. 2011]) There is genealogy software available to integrate a big amount of data. With regard to genogram compare also McGoldrick et al 2009.

### **Album, book of life**

In a counselling process learners can be encouraged to make an album or book of life. It could contain a warrant of apprehension respectively curriculum vitae, photos, drawings, texts on biographical events/memories, letters, or poems. It can also contain an ongoing written reflection on the counselling process. Dreams can be noted or interviews with relatives on the family history (compare with Lattschar/Wieman 2007).



## CONCERNS AND LIMITATIONS OF TBW AND HOW TO HANDLE THEM

*Hüseyin Gül with contributions of the Realize project partners  
Süleyman Demirel University*

### Concerns regarding the term and concept of transculturality

- The concept of “transculturality” is found Eurocentric to some extent by Austrian and Turkish pilot course participants because of its reference to a Western discourse.
- Communication networks to accelerate transculturality are not available or accessible to people all over the world.
- From a therapeutic point of view being open and boundless toward others the transcultural model of cultures as networks implies are questionable because a stable self has to be conscious of its boundaries and may need them.
- Transculturality referring to “doing culture” helps to understand cultures as ongoing process but “doing culture” is not a value-free activity. It produces injustice, unequal conditions and hierarchies. However, transculturality emphasizes equality and wholeness in contrast to arguments presenting culture as involving “puzzled or fragmented identities”. (The term “culture-sensitive care” is still used in the fields of care and social work rather than “transcultural care” in order to point out that people are shaped in and by their cultural environments.)
- Sometimes in pilot or other courses organized in European offices, it is difficult that different socio-economic and even legal (for migrants) status of the people tend to block an open exchange of experiences and frank dialogue.

### Concerns on how and where to apply Transcultural Biography Work

- The main concern regarding the use of TBW methods and techniques is the provocation

or recollection of unpleasant or sometimes profoundly painful and traumatic memories, experiences and fears. In such cases, it could be difficult to control and manage the situation.

- To avoid adverse provocation of memories, exercises helping to remember positive experiences or memories in the past should be particularly utilized. Besides, a nice and positive environment for TBW study/course should be created for the participants so that they remember such events and moments. For this purpose, it is also necessary that participants in TBW studies/courses be voluntary.
- According to participant psycho therapists in Austrian pilot course, if painful or even traumatic memories appear it might be helpful:
  - To focus on the current situation right away and bring the attention of the person to the present.
  - To focus on positive feelings of the participants before the traumatizing incident in their past happened.
  - That resource-oriented questions are asked.
  - It can be necessary to recommend seeking advice from a professional consultant or psycho therapist for traumatic cases.
- In addition, according to the participants in Austrian pilot study:
  - It would be beneficial to acknowledge traumatizing incidents step by step and to appreciate the survival after trauma.
  - We should trust into peoples’ resources for survival.
- There is no need to be afraid of people expressing emotions (e. g. crying, sadness, grieve).
- TBW approach involves several techniques requiring the sharing of autobiographic life experiences and very personal data. This necessitates that the information shared be kept within and shared only among the group.

- Personal exchange of information in TBW seminars requires that trainers take the needed time to explain the logic of TBW approach, get people feel comfortable with each other and the TBW techniques; create an environment where the participants can develop trust, share their personal memories and experiences, get to listen to one another and develop a welcoming attitude toward various opinions and ethnic, religious, cultural and other differences. Otherwise, the participants do not feel comfortable about getting involved in TBW activities. Thus, it is necessary to treat the activities as a part of self-helping and sensible sharing or exchange of personal information. In many cases it might be necessary to avoid the entry of new members once the training has begun. Besides, TBW activities require protected places and exchange/study in pairs or small groups.
- It is also necessary to have appropriate space and time for listening, elaboration, re-elaboration and personal reflection in TBW activities when such activities are planned.
- The participants may also seem to hesitate to get involved in some TBW activities since they feel evaluated and some of their personal information or experiences are shared with all the participants in the group.
- It is generally necessary to clarify the objectives and content of TBW seminars (or studies) and share them with the participants before starting and to get the participants' voluntary formal or informal agreements for them. Yet, such clarification and agreements may initially discourage the people from participating in TBW seminars because the tasks and activities to be done may require dealing with personal issues, private data sharing activities and travel to one's past.
- TBW activities can favour increasing awareness of one's own profile and personal baggage, which could result in an ingenuous attempt of psychological interpretation of the participant's testimonies. What is proposed needs to be treated with sensitivity, helping the people involved to redefine their own objectives and to feel revealed from clear discomfort. Moreover, the trainer must protect the group from psychological interpretations of the objectives and activities of TBW.
- The length of the sessions of the pilot studies may have to be adjusted according to the age and educational attainment of the group members. It would not be appropriate to utilize "one-type fits all" approach.
- Especially in applying Transcultural Biography Work method in Lithuania it was an important issue to convince the participants from the very start of the seminar to relax and take their time in reflection and task performance. Often, especially more senior participants would cut the reflection time as pointless, wasted and ask for a more dynamic training process. Yet, at the close of the trainings the participants were happy with the pace, reflection time and the value of reflection. Therefore trainers were challenged to proof the worth of taking time and reflect, and of allowing oneself to take time. Although the participants would object to it at the beginning, after practicing in TBW study people frequently begin appreciating the importance of having time.
- Organizing the pilot courses in two two-day sessions and putting a long period of time such as more than one month in between in some contexts will work in some contexts but be counterproductive and not work properly in others. It may not necessarily be for the lack of interest on the part of the participants but in the life of persons, particularly those with migrant background, there could be so many events and developments that could profoundly change the life course and also the possibility of the participation of people in the second part of the pilot. Thus, if there is too much time period between the two parts of the pilot course, the participants may lose interest or may not have the opportunity in taking part in the second session of the pilot study.
- In any case it will be interesting to have a follow up meeting to measure the impact of the TBW experience on the participants. The follow-up meeting may be done a few months after the seminar.

## Concerns on the use of the TBW techniques

- While discussing the difficulties and challenges in applying Transcultural Biography Work training in Lithuania and Turkey the first thing to mention is that the participants showed a considerable reluctance when asked to draw their learning road. The first reaction of participants in Biography Work training when asked to draw anything led to comments: "I cannot draw well, I draw badly, no one will

be able to understand anything." Therefore, some time was taken to explain that this exercise did not ask for skills in drawing but, instead, drawing could be used as a method of connecting with one's memories, and not for the sake of demonstration of artistic inclinations. For this reason, in applying visual (drawing) method the participants subsequently were asked to "visualise" their learning road without resorting to the word "draw". In discussion this negative reaction to the word "draw", many participants connected it to the negative school experience, when any drawing which did not match the teacher's instructions received negative evaluation and public criticism in front of the classmates.

- Migrants living with traditional large families, having a traditional family gathering where everybody is invited to participate and to share

publicly their options may be the most effective and even the only way to get them involved in TBW studies.

- Generally spoken the use of TBW techniques requires that the participants understand them well before implementing or applying them. Thus, the trainers should take enough time at the start of any TBW learning process or before the application of each technique to explain the techniques in order to improve the effectiveness of the whole process and/or a specific TBW technique. Besides, explaining the TBW techniques and allowing the participants enough time to grasp the meaning and usage of it and then to apply it would help get the participants motivated to the process of TBW learning and the application of a specific TBW technique.



## CHAPTER 7

# TRANSCULTURAL BIOGRAPHY WORK (TBW): BASIC CONSIDERATIONS

**Annemarie Schweighofer-Brauer, FBI Centre, with contributions of Realize project partners**

Biography Work is a methodology to work with people in elderly care, in the support of foster and adopted children, in adult education, in counselling and coaching and in psychotherapeutics. Transculturality is a perspective to perceive cultures as networks rather than separated entities.

In the following section, Transcultural Biography Work is reviewed through presenting its origins and development; through discussing the notions “biographicity” and “transculturality”; and through attuning the concepts to each other.

### Foundations, embeddings and basics of the TBW concept

#### Roots of Biography Work

Biography Work can be traced back at least to three roots:

1. To the oral traditions of storytelling – passing on personal memories, memories of families, kinsfolk, and social communities. The narrations transferred knowledge about life: about meanings of persons, family, history, community, the sense of life, how to life and make decisions.
2. To (psycho) therapeutic biographical methods. Such methods have been practised since the beginning of 20<sup>th</sup> century.
3. To biographical research since the 1920s. In fact, Oral History has become quite popular among historians since the late 1960s.

*“The biographical method with its various forms has been a part of sociology’s history since the Chicago School in the 1920s (Thomas and Znaniecki 1918-20). In the 1980s and 1990s, sociologists and scholars in other disciplines have expressed a renewed interest in the biographical method. As the life experiences of a person are the very foundations of educative processes, it is*

*natural that the biographical method is used also in educational research and especially in adult education.” (Antikainen 1998)*

Chapter 8 of this manual depicts traditions of storytelling; therefore it will not be treated further here. Psychotherapies work with and some even rely on biographical self-exploration. Therapeutic memory work makes aware of transferences. It supports clients to trace back obstructive personal patterns. Memory work in therapy also makes aware of personal resources. The aim is to prepare constructive thinking, feeling, and acting.

Biographical research has been practiced in ethnological field studies, sociological qualitative research, and Oral History. Biographical research theory is often linked to post-structuralism – it supposes that a historic truth (“what really happened”) does not exist. Language, narrations and memory create a reality. This is historically and personally/psychically meaningful: because how people remember, perceive their past and present reality determines their thinking, feeling, speaking, deciding, and acting.

Since the 1990s also educationalists develop biography based concepts. In this context Peter Alheit inserted the term “Biographicity” (Alheit 1993; Alheit/Dausien 2000). Biographicity as a human living condition results from post-modernity, when faith in commonly accepted ideologies or relations about the world gets lost. Many beliefs, ideologies, life-styles and possibilities how to life co-exist in western societies. People have to decide what they believe and how they live. The notion “biographicity” expresses this imperative. At the same time “biographicity” is defined as a means of personal and social empowerment to endure or productively use the necessity to choose. Conscious biographical reflection becomes a way of life. “Biographicity” means to create a personal life-course. The life-course has to be attuned to the social groups a person is linked to. Social and historic biographic research works mainly with narration as a method to collect data. Meanwhile Biography Work in care, coaching, and adult education applies much more methods than the narrative one to access personal memory.

In historical science biographies have been spotlighted almost since historiography exists: the life-stories of powerful people and families, of emperors, later on also of famous or important artists, scientists and persons whose actions were thought to have obvious impact on societies. This biographical historiography focused on written sources.



Following the protest movements against authoritarian and repressive societal structures the Oral History movement emerged. Historians challenged mainstream historical understanding but also quantitative social history – especially during the 1970s and 1980s. The biographical interview became a prioritized method to produce historical sources. Historians proclaimed to write ordinary peoples’ history – of labourers, peasants, rural and domestic servants; but also to explore ordinary peoples’ experience and motivations in context of National Socialist and further fascist regimes. Biographical research has been conducted on victims, perpetrators and opportunists in totalitarian or authoritarian political regimes. Feminist historians used biographical interviews to produce sources on female experience which often has been obscured or ignored in written sources. Oral Historians pursued to democratize historical significance. That means: The history of every human being contributes to the collective history.

British sociologist and Oral History pioneer, Paul Thompson, born in 1935, founded the Oral History Society and the journal Oral History in 1971. He inspired and worked together with German and Austrian Oral Historians. Their common main issue was to explore what the working class experience was and how family structures changed during the 20<sup>th</sup> century in Europe. In 1987 Paul Thompson founded the National Life Story Collection at the British Library National Sound Archive in London. Small scale and larger archives were compiled in different research contexts. For example: in the mid/late 1980s in Tirol an Oral History project on fabric workers biographies was conducted, financed by the Arbeiterkammer für Tirol (an institution to represent workers rights). The recorded interviews and photos collected from the interview partners were

stored in a little archive at the Arbeiterkammer, later at the history department of the University of Innsbruck.

In Germany Lutz Niethammer, born in 1939, was one of the most important Oral History pathfinders. From 1980 to 1994 he represented Germany in the Oral History Association. He is one of the editors of BIOS, the German biographical research journal. Gabriele Rosenthal described and theorized the biographical interview exemplary in the context of her research (Rosenthal 1987). Her understanding is based on the method of biographical-narrative interviewing which Fritz Schütze, German sociologist, explained in the mid 1970s (Schütze 1976).

In the 1980s Oral History was already applied in adult educative settings. Elderly people shared memory on certain issues in exchange groups. Historians initiated and accompanied those groups. For example Oral Historians in Vienna like Elisabeth Wappelshammer, Ernst Blaumeiser, Ela Hornung, Margit Sturm or Eva Blimlinger worked in that way in the Folk High School of Ottakring. In the early 1990s they described this approach already as Biography Work with elderly people (Ertl u. a. 1994)

Opponents of narrative research argue that people would not remember objectively, but subjectively and selectively. The proponents of Biographical science respond: “We do not aim at writing truth. We want to understand how people create an understanding of their environment, of their world. The understanding of people influences their decisions and actions. Decisions and actions influence the historical process and development of a ‘reality’”.

Oral historians further state that written sources are not objective either. They are selective and have to be subjected to critical analysis.

The practice of narrative interview seems to have raised issues and questions that have similar effects like Biography Work. For example:

- The interview generates close contact between interviewer and interview partner. Therefore researchers reflect ethical, moral and methodological questions.
- Memory work impacts on interview partners. Narrators cannot be treated like written or material sources. They have the possibility to react to what scientists make out of their relations.
- Narrations initiate thinking processes; a re-evaluation of old memories respectively habituated interpretations of memories. They bring up memories which have been laid idle for long time; and force memories to appear which have been repressed. Narrations follow certain rules: "Gestaltschließungszwang" (force to complete a story), "Kondensierungszwang" (force to condense it) and "Detailierungszwang" (force to provide details). This means that as soon as a story is told, it forces the narrator to come to an end, and to provide enough density and details to be plausible and meaningful.

Biographical research intends to find out the answers to the questions of: How do people respectively certain groups of people built their biography? Which construction and moulding plans are they following? How do they experience their world as something real, objectively existent, while they built it themselves in a process of ongoing interpretation?

Oral History, narrative sociology, education science etc. aim at reflecting past or present situations based on descriptions and reflections of contemporary people – asking for their perception and interpretation which influences or even guides present action and attitude. Biographical research in this sense can be understood as a collective Biography Work. It has contributed to create new patterns to perceive and understand history, historical experience and events. Biographical research has contributed to and in some occasions even initiated collective processes of working through more or less difficult collective experiences.

Biographical research and its outcomes support Biography Work in adult education and other contexts. On the one hand, they provide knowledge on the

collective historical contexts of learners. On the other hand, they develop methods to explore such issues.

During the 1990s biographical research and qualitative in-depth interviews also has been frequently used to explore migrant's experience in European countries.

## Biographicity and transculturality

TBW approach is linked to the concepts of biographicity (Alheit/Dausien 2000) and transculturality (Welsch 1995). The two concepts rely on a similar analysis of historic-societal developments and similar humanistic assumptions. Biographicity focuses on the life experience of individuals. Transculturality focuses on change and transformation through converging cultures.

## The modern biographical self – biographicity

*"We do not live normal biographies like our grandparents did, we have option-biographies or, to be more accurate, 'handicraft-biographies'. We take our choice out of a bigger assortment of possibilities to design life and we **have** to choose. We are forced to fulfil ourselves because without 'Self-fulfilment' we are obviously nothing. And to fulfil ourselves means nothing else than choosing from possibilities. Anybody who does not have a choice is not able to fulfil him/herself. Otherwise anybody who is forced to fulfil him/herself can not disclaim choice. And the wonderful chance 'Be yourself!' at the same time is a dark threat. What if it does not work out?" ("Wir leben keine Normalbiografien mehr wie unsere Großeltern, wir haben Wahlbiografien, oder genauer 'Bastelbiografien'. Wir wählen aus einem immer größeren Sortiment an Lebensmöglichkeiten, und wir **müssen** wählen. Wir sind gezwungen, uns selbst zu verwirklichen, weil wir ohne diese 'Selbstverwirklichung' augenscheinlich gar nichts sind. Und uns verwirklichen heißt nichts anderes als auswählen aus Möglichkeiten. Wer keine Wahl hat, kann sich gar nicht selbst verwirklichen. Wer sich dagegen verwirklichen muss, kann auf die Wahl nicht verzichten. Und die wundervolle Chance 'Sei du selbst!' ist zugleich eine finstere Drohung. Was ist, wenn mir das nicht gelingt?") (Precht 2009, p. 293; translation by Annemarie Schweighofer-Brauer – referred AS from now on)*

Constructivist theory assumes that we construct our world already while perceiving it. Our perception follows habitual and mostly unconscious patterns. We select, evaluate and organize hierarchically what we memorize, what we remember, and what we narrate.

Biographical narrations can be analysed to understand how people shape their world by perceiving, remembering and narrating.

How people memorize and narrate underlies historical change. In European Modernity – since the Enlightenment (*the Aufklärung*) – the understanding of what a human being is changed strongly according to a changing social, economical and political environment. Clan and social class origin lost remarkable of its power to determine the pathway of individuals. The modern individual has some choices to create a self determined pathway. During the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the possibility to make choices converted to the necessity to decide every single aspect of life – at least in middle and upper classes of Western societies.

Currently people are challenged to create a live story, to choose and make decisions. They are forced to find their way through a broad range of opportunities and possibilities. People do not often have the freedom to create their lives; they are forced to do so. Alain Ehrenberg, French sociologist, argues that Sigmund Freud's psychoanalysis answers the needs of people raised in 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century societies where repression of emotions and determination of pathways was a collective fate. Psychoanalysis treated neuroses produced through the repression of basic psychic energies.

Alain Ehrenberg further argues that during the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of 20<sup>th</sup> century neuroses has been replaced by depression to be the dominant collective psychic reaction to existential requirements. In this time the ongoing process of the individualisation of consumers, the mobilisation of work force and consumers, and the destruction of traditional, collective life styles produced according psychic patterns.

Alain Ehrenberg defines depression as a result of having to cope with the illusion that anything would be possible. Consequently people in modern capitalist societies take over personal responsibility for self-realization, success and luck – not as a chance but as a duty. They are permanently overwhelmed by this unachievable request. Many people fall into depression, senselessness and addiction (Ehrenberg 2004).

Peter Alheit, as already mentioned, describes '*Biografizität*' (biographicity) as a key competence of modernity ([http://www.abl-uni-goettingen.de/aktuell/Alheit\\_Biographizitaet\\_Schluessel\\_Flensburg-2006.pdf](http://www.abl-uni-goettingen.de/aktuell/Alheit_Biographizitaet_Schluessel_Flensburg-2006.pdf); [8.2.2011]). He states that our attitude towards

biography consists in planning: We make big plans like for our professional career. We make small plans like what to do the next weekend. We believe to willingly handle our life. We make sense of our life disposing of much more possibilities than we are able to realize. Our practical consciousness contains this knowledge and therefore offers a reservoir for learning processes –

*"our secret knowledge of not or yet not realized life possibilities ...", "... the possibilities we suspect to have inside suggest to broaden or narrow biographic autonomy to act...".* (Alheit, [http://www.abl-uni-goettingen.de/aktuell/Alheit\\_Biographizitaet\\_Schluessel\\_Flensburg-2006.pdf](http://www.abl-uni-goettingen.de/aktuell/Alheit_Biographizitaet_Schluessel_Flensburg-2006.pdf); [8.2.2011])

Biographical knowledge also enables to change frameworks of our existence. All learning is biographic learning, as Alheit suggests. For pedagogic practice this means to motivate pupils and all learners individually.

*"The idea of biographical learning is closely connected to the notion of 'biographicity' which Alheit introduces as a 'hidden capacity' to lead one's own life (see Alheit 1995, p.61). The idea of 'biographicity' can be seen as an attempt to reclaim a place for agency in sociological theories about the transformation of modern societies (see for more detail Alheit 1995, pp. 61-65; see also Alheit 1990). This is not an idea of agency 'against' structure, but more of agency 'within' structure. As Alheit explains: 'Biographicity means that we can redesign again and again, from scratch, the contours of our life within the specific contexts in which we (have to) spend it, and that we experience these contexts as 'shapeable' and designable. In our biographies, we do not possess all conceivable opportunities, but within the framework of the limits we are structurally set we still have considerable scope open to us.' (Alheit 1995, p.65). To 'utilise' the 'capacity' – if it is a capacity – of biographicity we need to engage in learning processes and, if we see it correctly, these learning processes are referred to as 'biographical learning' (see for the first use of the term in Alheit 1995, p. 69). Alheit links biographical learning to emancipatory adult education. The main task of such education, he argues, is that of 'biographical coaching' (ibid., p.68), which involves 'the joint discovery by teacher and learner of biographical opportunities for shaping social, occupational and political*

existence more autonomously' (ibid.). Coaching also means, exerting a particular influence on the 'social ecology' of learning – i.e., in practical terms, the framework of social conditions – in order that individuals' hidden possibilities are brought to the surface and developed, and that 'unlived' lives can be lived instead.' (ibid.). He highlights that the 'basic structure' of such educational processes is narrative (ibid., p.69). He also points at the importance of communication, since it is communication with others which 'triggers ... a new dimension of self-referentiality' (ibid.)." (Tedder/Biesta, [http://www.learninglives.org/papers/working\\_papers/WORKING%20PAPER%207.pdf](http://www.learninglives.org/papers/working_papers/WORKING%20PAPER%207.pdf); p. 5/6 [14.2.2010])

### Self and community – interrelated individual

"All real life is encounter." ("Alles wirkliche Leben ist Begegnung." Martin Buber, *Ich und Du*, 1923 Reclam 1995, Nr. 9342) "Encounter is an event or situation in which relation occurs"; (Mark K. Smith 2009, <http://www.infed.org/thinkers/et-buber.htm>; [24.1.2011])

Philosophy of the European Enlightenment (*the Aufklärung*) (18<sup>th</sup> century) was incredibly engaged in defining the modern self.

Economical-political-social-ideological transformations in this time caused a new awareness of life which had to be apprehended mentally.

A major transformation experience of people was the shifting of reliable community structures observed as natural or God-given – very slowly, in some social classes or professional situations earlier. In traditional communities individual and community/society were not perceived as contradictory. People's place, tasks, possibilities, value and destiny were more or less predetermined by clan and class relations they were born into. Modern time's transformation questioned traditional community order. State and industrialising economy started competing against traditional clan and regional communities' solidarity. An example for the kind of conflicts people had to cope with because of that competition would be that: A person was not supposed to participate in ceremonies lasting for days when he/she worked in a factory. But the meaning/ position/reputation a person embodied in a clan and local group made it necessary to participate.

The emerging modern states and industrialising economies started to dismantle traditional social relations. Possibly the most successful instrument was

the creation of an ideology which during 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century by and by took influence

on peoples imagination and self-understanding. The core of this

ideology was the new foundation of stereotypes of gender and generation relations. The

'nuclear' family was labelled as individualized cell of the

state. The dismantling of traditional relations and solidarities

generated a collective fear of a selfish individual pursuing

the own advantage by all means. This fear influenced the construction

of European bourgeois gender stereotypes. The

male stereotype emphasized the selfish, violent, dangerous,

unbound individual. This individual was a contradiction to community.

The female stereotype emphasized the altruistic, loving human being,

representing the possibility of community and humanizing the

rough male in matrimony and in the nuclear family (Kucklick 2008).



It was supposed that man would be naturally dangerous and had to be disciplined by woman and by often cruel education. Against this supposition reform movements emerged already during 19<sup>th</sup> and especially at the beginning of 20<sup>th</sup> century. They acted on the assumption that individual and community were not opposed to each other. They presumed that education had to be valuing and respectful and had to offer space for the individual's talents and wishes. By this education peaceful, adult societies could be created. In Germany and Austria social and psychological scientists developed a basis to understand the modernity individualization process; psychologists together with the flourishing reform movement in education tried out emancipating practice. But all that was cut by the fascist and national-socialist regimes during the 1930s and 1940s. A lot of progressive scientists migrated or flew to the UK or to the USA. There they went on developing humanist psychology. Especially during the 1960s they experimented with group work. One of them was Ruth Cohn, grown up in Berlin, born into an assimilated Jewish family. She flew to Swiss in 1933, studied Psychoanalysis there and later on emigrated to the USA where she worked as a therapist. Based on humanist psychology she developed an approach to work with groups in non-therapeutic contexts, like e. g. in adult education. Her main concern was to find out how to reconcile the individual with the group and also with the global community. She opposed also to trends in individual psychology and group therapy which encouraged to "do your own thing" and emphasized the need to consider other people's attitudes and needs. She balanced self-realization, respect for others, and integration in groups for working together on an issue/theme.

She based her Theme Centred Interaction (TCI she called her approach) on a model of balance between I – WE – THEME/OBJECT. All aspects have to be regarded equally in a working process in a group. A group working and growing in this sense should be like a little yeast dough contaminating larger groups and societies. TCI provides a concept to shape social situations.

The reconciliation of individual and collective is expressed through three axioms, which are an irreducible basis of TCI:

- A human is a psychic entity and part of the universe – to the same degree autonomous and interdependent. The autonomy of an individual expands the more he/she is conscious of the interdependency with everybody and all.
- All living beings and its growth deserve awe.
- Free decision happens within inner and outer borders. It is possible to broaden the borders.

Similar attitudes have been discussed concerning the biographical approach in science as well as in education: People are basically interrelated – autonomy can only be realized together with social interrelatedness.

Human beings adapt and incorporate given patterns, habits, and imagination structures to function psychically, mentally, physically. They are absorbed by an ongoing process of adjusting themselves to their world and adjusting their world to them. The more the options are, the greater is the variety of possibilities people seem to dispose of. The more has to be over-viewed, or figured out, the more responsibility has to be taken for decisions and their results.

Gender studies provided an understanding of socialisation as an active and never ending process – of adapting or rejecting gender roles, of changing them, varying them. This gender socialisation happens within given social structures, within borders (which can be broadened). Gender studies use the terms 'doing gender', 'doing masculinity' and 'doing femininity' to point out this concept. The doing term has been also combined with culture: 'doing culture'.

People react while being socialised respectively socialising themselves to what they learn, perceive or experience. They learn within relationships. They actively develop responses within their net of relationships. They are not free to decide, react and act however they want. Their socialisation develops unconsciously and pre-consciously to a very large degree – actively but not necessarily willingly and consciously. Practised behaviour patterns sink into the unconscious and later on seem to be natural. This is the case with patterns, habits, manifestations which are perceived as male, female or also culture-specific.

Transcultural contexts may offer or overwhelm with even more and possibly contradictory demands. Transcultural life practice challenges individuals to develop a stable psychic and mental base of decision making – to find out selection criteria and dynamic modes to interpret perceptions and experiences. H. Eylem Kaya, from Süleyman Demirel University, writes in a Power Point presentation on Lifelong Learning:

- *"According to Alheit and Dausien reflexive learning processes do not exclusively take place 'inside' the individual but depend on communication and interaction with others.*
- *This concerns the 'sociality of biographical learning' and brings in questions of context or 'learning in context'.*
- *It makes visible that the biographical and the institutional are always interrelated.*

- *Against this background Alheit and Dausien argue that '(l)earning within and through one's life history is ... interactive and socially structured, on the one hand, but also follows its own 'individual logic' that is generated by the specific, biographically layered structure of experience.*
- *The biographical structure does not determine the learning process ... [but] it significantly affects the way in which new experience is formed and 'built into' a biographical learning process.*
- *Alheit and Dausien warn against an individualistic interpretation of self-willed learning.*
- *'All too often, they [such concepts] presume an autonomous learner who has a reflexive and strategic 'grip' on his own education and training.*
- *This model overlooks the multi-layeredness of biographical reflexivity.*
- *The point here is that although biographical learning processes operate in self-willed ways 'they [still] permit unexpected experiences and surprising transformations that in many cases are not foreseen by the 'learner' himself, or are not 'understood' until after the event.'*"

## Transculturality

People with migrant background may have to handle diverse and contradictory demands within different environments. It may be a big challenge to stabilize their self-consciousness – a biographical self – in such circumstances. Transcultural environments make it necessary to balance varieties, differences and contradictions mentally and emotionally in everyday's life. They may also face devaluation, or being labelled as 'the other' which may influence the self-understanding.

'Migration' according to common perception is associated with '(national) culture' or 'Ethnie'. In this understanding culture (also *Ethnie*) is supposed to characterize a certain society, or a population of a country. People coming from certain regions, countries, even continents are regarded as carriers of the respective cultural/ethnic features. Genetic dispositions, environmental peculiarities or cerebral development are thought to create specific cultures. Such widespread, popular opinions are contradicted by the concept of transculturality.

When migrants arrive in a receiving society they are not representatives of a fixed culture but they are further

mouldable products of their former life story: of their experience, possibilities to learn and choose; of their interpretation of this experience; and of their concrete social networks and interactions within the networks. This fact also applies to the members of a receiving society.

The active socialisation continues lifelong. People may have already lived in different environments and have handled the necessary psychic, mental and physic balancing – like it was the case for many Turkish migrants coming to Austria or Germany. They often migrated from a small Turkish village directly to some Austrian or German cities. Receiving society natives may have grown up in a little community studied or worked in a bigger city or spent some time abroad.

In the new environment migrants may have been seen to belong to a lower social class compared to their reputation and their feelings of belongingness in the place of origin. While shifting adequate behaviour patterns might have not been available, familiar and other social networks would not be at hand to the accustomed extend. A big deal of mediation work had to be done; the sense of identity, self-awareness, and self-perception had to be adopted for the new situation. In many situations people are able to handle this task and the insecurities and barriers linked to it. In other situations people fail because they may lack necessary competencies or they may face unsolvable problems within their new environment.

People with migrant background – children or grand children of migrants – often will be confronted with different and diverging life styles. They might have to balance different norms and habits and sometimes might follow contradicting requests. They might also have to cope with experiences of latent or open devaluation, marginalisation, and disregard – with the experience of not being involved in dialogue and communication but to be treated along unquestioned prejudices and transferences – the above mentioned being labelled as 'the other'.

Wolfgang Welsch, German philosopher, proposed a theory of the transcultural society in 1997 and shaped the term 'transcultural' ([http://www.forum-interkultur.net/uploads/tx\\_textdb/28.pdf](http://www.forum-interkultur.net/uploads/tx_textdb/28.pdf), [3.2.2011]).

The concept of transculturality refers to the contemporary reality of border crossing identities which are contradicting the old imagination of closed, homogeneous national cultures. It also differs to the concepts of interculturality and multiculturality. Transculturality invites to understand culture beyond the opposition of an 'own' and a 'foreign' culture.

The concept of interculturality preserves this opposition because it continues regarding cultures as islands and only suggests moderating some problematic

consequences. The supposition of separate cultures determines a communicative incapability and difficult living together of cultures. Welsch judges the intercultural concept as not radical but only cosmetic, similar to the concept of multiculturalism. Multiculturalism also still assumes separate and homogeneous cultures, and asks how they can live together within one society/country. It intends to foster tolerance, acceptance and conflict resolution. But it does not offer an interpretative horizon to perceive cultural heterogeneity within culturally defined groups, and to understand hybrid, transgressing, and converging cultural forming.

Having in mind what has been written about the monadic individual in the context of transforming economical and social structures in 18<sup>th</sup> century this perception of culture mirrors the monadic individual. Monadic individuals cannot really relate, they are impermeable entities just like the imagined cultures of inter- and multiculturalists, as described by Welsch.

Welsch states that cultures nowadays are not any more homogeneous and separate. They have never really been so, (and Welsch, too, gives examples for past hybridizing cultures). Every 'culture' in past and present can only be defined as something fixed if it is stabled as a picture of one single moment within this endless changing, merging, mixing, integrating, and adapting. Every encounter leads at least to confusion, re-evaluation and reflection. Change and amalgamation is inevitable.

But we agree with Welsh that especially during the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century a new quality of transculturalisation appeared:

*"The new forms of entanglement are a consequence of migratory processes, as well as of worldwide material and immaterial communication systems and economic interdependencies and dependencies."*  
Welsch, <http://www2.uni-jena.de/welsch/Papers/transcultSociety.html>; [3.2.2011]

The concept of transculturality as described by Welsch goes along with post-modern de/constructivist thinking of cultural studies. Modern cultures are characterized by a variety of different ways of life and lifestyles and they are border crossing.

*"In substance everything is transculturally defined."* (Welsch, <http://www2.uni-jena.de/welsch/Papers/transcultSociety.html>; [3.2.2011])

Following his argument, the task of TBW is not to find out ways to interconnect people of different cultural background but to cope with the irreducible reality of transcultural existence and make people aware of it. Accordingly migrant's situation cannot be adequately understood by using their assumed cultural background or cultural characteristic as exclusive interpretative framework. But their personal experience, memorized experience – embedded in collective experience in hybridized environments – has to be explored.

Welsch states that cultures once regarded as totally different nowadays are handling the same problems. There is no concept of absolute own and absolute foreign any more.

### **Biography Work approach and the concept of transculturality**

*"Nothing of what has been in the past will not be contained in the future, nothing of what is in the present, will not also be anticipated in the past. More cannot be said after all about what time means for humans. This should weigh enough not to exchange time to be against an illusionary future. Then our children still will have to tell a lot of stories: exciting, colourful, violating, and liberating stories about people and cultures, times and spaces, which are allowed to be different from each other, but just because of being different and therefore ephemeral, part of this great narration, which was called 'the creation' in former times."* ("Nichts von dem, was in der Vergangenheit war, wird in der Zukunft nicht enthalten sein, nichts von dem, was in der Gegenwart ist, war in der Vergangenheit nicht auch vorweggenommen. Mehr als das lässt sich über das, was Zeit für die Menschen ist, letztlich nicht sagen. Dies sollte genug Gewicht haben, um Zeit zu sein nicht gegen eine illusionäre Zukunft zu tauschen. Dann werden wir und unsere Kinder noch viele Geschichten erzählen: spannende, bunte, verletzende und befreiende Geschichten über Menschen und Kulturen, Zeiten und Räume, die sich voneinander unterscheiden dürfen und trotzdem, gerade in ihrer Unterschiedlichkeit und dadurch Vergänglichkeit wegen, Teil jener großen Erzählung sind, die früher einmal 'Schöpfung' genannt wurde." (Obrecht 2003, p. 315; translation by AS)

Important for Biography Work endeavour is the fact that non-acceptance or denial of something regarded as foreign is a symptom of disregarding ones 'inner foreign'. Biography Work might help to explore the inner foreign, to find ways to accept it.

*"The concept of transculturality aims for a multi-meshed and inclusive, not separatist and exclusive understanding of culture. It intends a culture and society whose pragmatic feats exist not in delimitation, but in the ability to link and undergo transition. In meeting with other lifeforms there are always not only divergences but opportunities to link up, and these can be developed and extended so that a common lifeform is fashioned which includes even reserves which hadn't earlier seemed capable of being linked in. Extensions of this type represent a pressing task today.*

*It is a matter of readjusting our inner compass: away from the concentration on the polarity of the own and the foreign to attentiveness for what might be common and connective wherever we encounter things foreign." (Welsch, [http://www2.uni-jena.de/welsch/Papers/transcult\\_Society.html](http://www2.uni-jena.de/welsch/Papers/transcult_Society.html); [3.2.2011])*

A transcultural mind set and practice does not erase difference but extend possibilities of mutual understanding. Approaching other people as 'basically similar' creates a different perception than approaching other people as 'basically foreign'.

Biography Work with people with migrant experience or background therefore has to be based on a transcultural concept of perception, interpretation, and practice.

Biography Work – especially if carried out interactively in groups – encourages internal transculturality, encourages a net to be weaved with a multitude of colourful fibres connecting own and others narrations and memory. Internal transculturality makes it easier to deal with external transculturality – to find attaching points in multifaceted situations respectively environments.

Biography Work helps to discover internal cables to connect. Connecting to external transculturality makes a world full of interesting phenomenon accessible.



Acknowledging transcultural reality enables to estimate, interpret and try out different hypothesis about what is going on rather than to judge it without alternative.

*"The more elements cultural identity of an individual consists of, the more probably an intersection with the identity of other individuals will exist. Therefore such individuals, despite of being very different, will be able to exchange and communicate much better than before. They are able to discover existing similarities and develop new ones. Encountering the 'foreign' they will be able to practice communication rather than sticking to a defensive attitude. This is one big advantage offered by the transition to transculturality." ("Denn aus je mehr Elementen die kulturelle Identität eines Individuums zusammengesetzt ist, umso wahrscheinlicher ist es, dass eine Schnittmenge mit der Identität anderer Individuen besteht, und von daher können solche Individuen bei aller sonstigen Unterschiedlichkeit in weit höherem Maß als früher in Austausch und Kommunikation eintreten, sie können bestehende Gemeinsamkeiten entdecken und neue entwickeln, sie werden in der Begegnung mit ‚Fremdem‘ eher in der Lage sein, statt einer Haltung der Abwehr Praktiken der Kommunikation zu entwickeln. Darin liegt einer der großen Vorteile des Übergangs zu Transkulturalität." (Welsch, <http://www2.uni-jena.de/welsch/tk-1.pdf>; translation by AS)*

Transculturalization unfolds in the context of globalising capitalist economies which cause a great deal of migration. Therefore the creation of the identity of individuals is often established through necessity, repression, and poverty. People are not free to choose and combine elements of their identity, as Welsch writes. Options are limited, not only for poor or marginalized people. But there always exists some space of choice.

### **Transcultural communication: acknowledging the basic similarity of people and understanding the genesis of differences**

Main merit of conceptualizing Biography Work transcultural is to stimulate and suggest comprehensive communication to participants in communication processes. Professionals working with migrants gain subtle and empathic understanding of their experience and motivations. In group work in adult education mutual understanding of the participants will grow. Transcultural communication can be practised and trained on this basis: a communicative style which supposes and therefore is aware of connection, relation, similarity and difference in degree rather than separation and unbridgeable gaps. Perceived differences will be acknowledged and understood rather than denied. In case of resistance one will take a certain distance. But one will not destroy what one disagrees with.

TBW initiates transcultural comprehension processes which will be multiplied through people who experienced it.

Transcultural biographical self-exploration leads to a qualitative exchange which has the potential to change mind sets. An important stimulus for such change is the recognition that human beings – regardless of their cultural background, gender, age – are similar with regard to basic needs and emotional patterns and reactions.

In 2008 the Dachverband transkulturelle Psychiatrie (roofing bond transcultural psychiatry) has been founded in Hamm/Wesfalia. Alexander Friedmann (died in 2008), psychologist and important promoter of transcultural psychiatry, expressed that he is not only academically interested in this work but through the theory he feels deeply connected with his life, his family and the Jewish people.

*"Today, many years later, I am convinced that people, also culturally differing, are psychologically very similar. They react with and suffer from the same type of insanity*

*and the same torturous life experiences, but describe their hardship in different languages and physical symptoms."* ("Heute, viele Jahre später, bin ich überzeugt, dass Menschen, auch wenn sie sich kulturell unterscheiden, sich psychologisch sehr ähneln. Sie reagieren auf und leiden unter dem gleichen Krankheitstyp und den gleichen qualvollen Lebenserfahrungen, aber sie äußern sich über ihre Bedrängnis mit verschiedenen Sprachen und Körpersymptomen." (Friedmann, <http://www.transkulturellepsychiatrie.de/Alexander-Friedmann/>; translation by AS [7.2.2011])

The founders of the Dachverband transkulturelle Psychiatrie state:

*"Increasing cultural variety makes special qualification in psychiatry, psychotherapy and psychosomatic necessary. About 15 to 20% of the clients in German utility services are having migration background. They have specific problems directly or indirectly being connected to migration. Because of emotional effects of traumatic experience, language barriers and social as well as economical problems they challenge clinical and therapeutic daily routine. (...) Similar barriers to give assistance to immigrants do exist in Germany, Austria and Suisse."* ("Die zunehmende kulturelle Vielfalt erfordert gerade im Bereich der Psychiatrie, Psychotherapie und Psychosomatik besondere Fähigkeiten. Etwa 15 bis 20 Prozent der Patienten in den entsprechenden deutschsprachigen Versorgungseinrichtungen haben einen Migrationshintergrund. Sie haben zumeist spezifische Probleme, die mit der Migration mittelbar oder unmittelbar zusammenhängen. So sind diese Patienten durch seelische Folgen traumatischer Erlebnisse, durch Sprachbarrieren und besondere soziale und wirtschaftliche Probleme eine Herausforderung für den klinischen und therapeutischen Alltag. (...). Außerdem gibt es in den deutschsprachigen Ländern Deutschland, Österreich und der Schweiz vergleichbare Hindernisse in der Versorgung der zugewanderten Patienten." (<http://www.transkulturellepsychiatrie.de/Warum-gibt-es-uns/>; translation by AS, [7.2.2011])

Migration experience is described as the starting point of Biography Work by Jan Kizilhan (psychologist,

psychotherapist, managerial psychologist at the psychosomatic Michael-Balint-Klinik in Königsfeld in Germany, professor and author). He defines Biography Work as an approach in professional counselling, care and treatment and points out its potential to overcome misunderstanding and stereotypic perception in counselling and treatment of migrants ([www.soziales.ktn.gv.at/35139p\\_DE.doc](http://www.soziales.ktn.gv.at/35139p_DE.doc); [14.02.2011]).

Biography Work as 'narrative therapy' is not used as a basis in psychotherapies, but for working through certain psychic conflicts. He points out the potential of Biography Work to lead to positive change and to create knowledge about personal, familial and social correlations to stimulate conscious acting.

Kizilhan emphasizes that 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> generation migrants are usually more alienated from their parents' or grandparent's culture of origin. They grew up between different worlds. Often they do not have a clear identity and they experience conflicts between their parent's culture and their familiar society. Parents feel devalued because of their children's choices. This may cause failure in education and profession, consequently in feeling integrated. At the same time they have to endure discrimination and social marginalisation, often living in small apartments, having an unprotected legal status and not being able to handle the challenges in a foreign language.

A biographical identity may be difficult to develop because only fragments of the family story are available to those young people. The historical framework of the receiving society to identify oneself as part of a society (e. g. like it is taught in schools) does not fit to their experience.

Meanwhile mixed identities and cultures young migrants create are frequently devalued – by their families and by mainstream opinions in the societies.

Biography Work can help to create a 'narrative truth' by integrating difficult experience into self-concept.

Kizilhan's use of the term 'intercultural' is not far from Welsch's understanding of the term 'transcultural'. He writes that knowledge of the involved cultures is necessary in order to prevent a superficial classifying of problems and conflicts as culture specific and to recognize conflicts linked to cultural specificities. Biography Work implies to value people's unique experience.

Biography Work can activate a learning process. While narrating the own biography a person is fully present. He/she can account from past to present, integrate feelings and rationalize at the same time. Maybe even what has kept shamefully secret can be spoken about and make new sense. Biography Work helps to create ideas how difficult situations can be

handled or even changed and open out into broader awareness and satisfaction

*"Eventually it does not come down to deal with a biography of dates and facts, to do historical Biography Work, but it comes down to create a live story, a narrative memory, which makes living easier and bearable because of knowing the own identity. Dealing with the own past makes the present clearer and enables new future perspectives." ("Letztendlich geht es nicht um eine Biographie, die sich nur an Daten und Fakten orientiert, um eine historische Biographiearbeit zu leisten, sondern es geht um die Hervorbringung einer Lebensgeschichte, eines narrativen Gedächtnisses, dass das Wissen um die eigene Identität das Leben erträglicher macht. Durch die Bearbeitung der Vergangenheit wird die eigene Gegenwart klarer und ermöglicht neue Perspektiven für die Zukunft." ([www.soziales.ktn.gv.at/35139p\\_DE.doc](http://www.soziales.ktn.gv.at/35139p_DE.doc)))*

## Working with TBW

*"What can be done with a past that cannot be shaken off, and how can it be transformed into the future?"*

*("Was tun mit einer Vergangenheit, die sich nicht abschütteln lässt, und wie lässt sie sich in Zukunft verwandeln?" (citation of Barbara Frischmuth; translation by AS)*

Transcultural Biography Work is a methodological approach related to the concepts of biographicity and transculturality. Or as Tedder/Biesta describe it:

*"The 'biographical turn' is thus not simply connected to the adoption of new research methods and methodologies in the study of adult learning. It is also motivated by an explicit intent to bring different dimensions of the learning of adults into view, and to understand these dimensions in relation to transformations in late- or post-modern societies, without reducing them to such transformations." (Tedder/Biesta, [http://www.learninglives.org/papers/working\\_papers/WORKING%20PAPER%207.pdf](http://www.learninglives.org/papers/working_papers/WORKING%20PAPER%207.pdf); p. 3 [14. 2. 2010])*

How can the described conceptual considerations be converted into an approach to work with people?

First of all TBW methodology has to be embedded in humanistic values. As a support for people – as a stimulus to act and behave creatively in given circumstances and influence them, to transform hindering attitudes and to develop helpful interpretations on experience and concepts for the future.

For the elaboration of practical Biography Work approach (Chapter 3) the group work and group leading model of Theme Centred Interaction (TCI) will be adapted.

## Humanistic values: axioms

At the start meeting of Realize project in Rome the partners group shared values and goals for the coming project period. We found out that we have very similar reasons to work with qualitative methods in research and adult education. Therefore we agree on an ethic foundation of our Transcultural Biography Work methodology.

The axioms proposed here are not scientific concepts but values with a visible impact in the conduction of TBW.

Ruth Cohn formulated the three axioms as a basis of Theme Centred Interaction. Ruth Cohn, who died at the beginning of 2010, was born in a Jewish family in 1912 in Berlin, fled – like already mentioned – to Switzerland in 1933 after the National Socialists gained political power in Germany and studied psychoanalysis there. In 1941 she immigrated to the United States, worked there as a therapist and developed TCI during the 1960s as a method to work with groups in non therapeutic contexts. She was driven by the question of how to create a humanistic society. Therefore TCI approach was primarily based on three humanistic axioms:

- *Humans are holistic beings and part of the universe, as well autonomous as interdependent. The autonomy of an individual is the larger the more he/she is aware of his interdependency with all and everybody.*

Alheit/Dausien and many other authors on the biographical approach emphasize the interconnectedness of people. 'Biographicity' refers to human living as a permanent exchange

process. Life is experienced and biographies are constructed interactively or transactively.

- *Every human being and his/her growth deserve awe – 'Ehrfurcht' (German term for a spiritual or transcendent kind of respect). This means to take evaluating (and conscious) decisions.*

At the website of LebensMutig e. V. it is also expressed that Biography Work means to value people – the members of LebensMutig base their work on a similar value system.

This second axiom has been discussed also critically by some TCI graduates. They are concerned that uncritical praise of growth may strengthen the capitalist rational of unlimited growth which obviously forwards the hegemony of rivalry, exploitation of resources (also human resources), immense inequity of distribution of wealth and well-being among people. This growth may lead to the exhaustion of the human life basis on earth.

We should have in mind that growth (following physical principals) happens through a transformation of something into something else – growth needs substance/energy to be changed into what grows. So the decision to grow is the decision to transform something into something else. Therefore growth has to be accompanied by the consciousness to support balance among all living beings.

- *Free decision happens within inner and outer boundaries. It is possible to broaden the boundaries.*



Achieving more decision and action freedom by Biography Work arises from the chance to remember, to remember newly; to dive into the unconscious and work on appearing memories consciously; to reinterpret memory and experience; to activate healing processes; and to re-evaluate decision patterns. Biography Work supports the endeavour of broadening the boundaries.

This freedom exists at an individual level as well as on a collective one. Collective 'Erinnerungsarbeit' (work on remembrance) is done more and more especially with regard to traumatic experiences of whole societies in recent years. Biographical accounts published in books and visualized in films play a crucial role for this collective work. In individual and collective psyches repressed issues come to the surface and can be worked through. This work transforms injury, pain, trauma materialized in emotional, mental, physical self repressing patterns into consciousness and greater freedom to feel, think and act.

With regard to the transcultural issue of Realize project it has to be noticed that collective repression (which of course materialises in individual repression) of certain experiences or emotional marks leads to habits and costumes which are then defined as 'culture-typical' (like the obsessive working, unemotional, accurate, anxious Germans who, like Sabine Bode (2006) assumes, developed such attitudes also to repress 2<sup>nd</sup> World War and Post-war traumatic childhood experience).

Acknowledging the three axioms means to continually reflect on which contexts and how to use Transcultural Biography Work. Biography Work implies an attitude towards life, and offers time and space to make unexpected learning processes and transformations possible. It does not force to define the necessary results in advance. It supports individuals to become responsible, conscious and congruent members of societies. Congruent denotes a respective emotional and mental life and wilfully decided behaviour and self-expression.



## Working with memory – walking at the border between education process and therapy

*"If you don't have a heritage, you are an outcast."* Tylor Williams, Canadian Native American from Ditidaht Nation (interview by AS, 1994)

The constructivist framework in which biographicity is considered suggests that biographic awareness influences self awareness, self esteem, self understanding. New interpretation of memory and access to hidden memory parts through new perception enable change and broaden the range of prospective decisions and actions. Therefore, Transcultural Biography Work which is primarily an educational approach can have therapeutic effects. That means that it is not created as a therapeutic method but can lead to healing processes. It can stimulate memories which should be worked on in a therapeutic setting.

The border between educative and therapeutic effects of Biography Work is not rigid. This awareness is important to plan and carry out TBW in adult education regarding the border. The adult educators of the association LebensMutig e. V. distinguish Biography Work from therapy: Biography Work's aim is to strengthen and emphasize potentials instead of weaknesses; Biography Work helps to gain or broaden biographical competence ([www.lebensmutig.de](http://www.lebensmutig.de)) – which is similar to the conscious handling of biographicity (Alheit/Dausien 2000).

According to LebensMutig, Biography Work should be understood twofold as follows:

*"The preoccupation of every single person with the own biography – personal past, present and future – as a personal duty. Biographical working as specific offer in adult education, elderly education, counselling, care and spiritual guidance – as a professional duty." ("Beschäftigung jedes einzelnen Menschen mit der eigenen Biografie, also der persönlichen Vergangenheit, Gegenwart und Zukunft = persönliche Aufgabe. Biografisches Arbeiten, als besondere Angebote und Handlungsweisen in der Erwachsenenbildung, Altenbildung, in Beratung, Pflege und Seelsorge = professionelle Aufgabe.")* (Kreacan-Kirchbichler, [http://www.lebensmutig.de/images/stories/Konradwas\\_ist\\_biografiearbeit.doc](http://www.lebensmutig.de/images/stories/Konradwas_ist_biografiearbeit.doc); translation by AS; [4.5.2010] – this version of the HP is not available anymore)

Hubert Klingenberg, founder of LebensMutig e. V., writes in „Infobrief Biographiearbeit“, February 2011 (periodic newsletter of LebensMutig):

*"Healing, orientation and encouragement – that is how the three effects of Biography Work can be described." ("Heilung, Orientierung und Ermutigung – so lassen sich die drei Wirkungen der Biographiearbeit beschreiben")* (Klingenberg, Infobrief Biographiearbeit, Februar 2011, p. 1; translation by AS).

## **Working with memories**

Incorporated memory: Biography Work provides methods to generate memory stories and memory narrations, and to reflect on them. The memories are expressed in e. g. an oral narration or in a drawing. Human beings store and record memories physically, emotionally, and mentally. The experienced will be stored from the moment of birth and already before and will be incarnated in human's patterns of feeling, thinking and behaving. But the origins of those patterns become mostly unconscious. This memory is not only saved in brain cells but materialized throughout the whole body.

Alexander Lowen (1919-2008), medical doctor and psychotherapist, student of Wilhelm Reich and founder of Bioenergetics Analysis, expressed the idea that human existence is embodied existence (in this case with regard to mental illness):

*"From this point of view the concept of mental illness is an illusion. There is no mental disturbance that is not also a physical disturbance. The depressed person is physically depressed, as well as mentally depressed; the two are really one, each is a different aspect of the personality. The same thing is true of every form of so-called mental illness. The belief that it is 'all in the head' is the great illusion of our time, ignoring the fundamental reality that life in all its various manifestations is a physical phenomenon."* (Lowen 1993, [1972<sup>1</sup>], p. 12)

He makes aware that the word 'emotion' connotes movement and happens physically as well as mentally. Also formulated in the early 1970<sup>th</sup> this concept can still be helpful to understand what happens in the process of working through one's biography.

Memorizing moves humans physically, sensually, emotionally and mentally. Attention is paid to these movements. The person realizes how he/she is moved. This awareness – allowing the movement time to happen, admitting the emotions time and space to appear, giving the possibility to unfold and reveal formerly hidden, repressed, latent aspects – gives space to change, to transformation.

Human beings are designed by what they went through. They translate their unconscious memory constantly into thinking, feeling and acting patterns, into dreams and imaginations. They transfer conscious, unconscious and repressed memory into the present life in many ways. Transferred memory can be perceived in terms of physical emotions, feelings, thoughts, imaginations, automatic actions or behaviour. Humans work through present experience again by transferring available patterns – what Sigmund Freud called 'transference'. Transference is a necessary activity – because one cannot learn everything newly all the time. Contemporary experience has to be met by the transferred past. Transference can be hindering if this past is not constantly inspected and adapted, if it stems from traumatizing experience, and if it is materialized in stubborn patterns with little potential to keep up with contemporary challenges. Biography Work combines transferring with transforming by holistic reflection. It offers space for transformation outside every day's life stress, where habitual comportment is usual.

Memory layers and inflections: Memorized life story contains different layers:

- The pre-interpreted experience/impression/event;
- (Unconscious, habitual) interpretation while

experiencing (which involves as soon as available transference of former experience and its interpretation);

- Interpretation while remembering (again and again in different situations).

People not only interpret, reflect and select memory but also 'inflect' it: more or less intentionally they leave out parts; they confound details; and they stress or negate the significance of events or of people. How people manipulate their memory has to do with their contemporary needs. This inflecting can reach levels of lying, perverting or leaving out.

But also 'false memory' of course contains lessons to learn. On a collective level it is important to find out which contents are normally forgotten or perverted to understand how a society functions, what past it has to carry and what future developments possibly have to be anticipated. On an individual level the forgotten, the repressed and the lies talk about trauma, difficult experience, about experience connected to guilt, fear and anger.

Biography Work in therapeutic contexts can touch hidden memories by raising the awareness of transferences and reflecting on them – tracking them down to their roots. Biography Work in adult education will focus more on "upper" layers of memory which also offer connection points for realization and transformation. The methods themselves and how they are guided and combined determine whether the direction would be a more educative or therapeutic one.

Contents of memory: Memorizing brings forward imaginations. What we remember are imaginations of what we experienced. Different types of events produce stronger or slighter impressions on the memorizing body and psych. There is no rule what leaves more or less impregnation but it is totally individual. Which memories may lay more on the surface and how intensive they appear also depends on the life phase when somebody remembers and narrates the situation.

Imaginations of past events can be sensed in terms of inner pictures, sounds, feelings, smells, tastes, emotions.

Memories can contain daily routine of the past. Especially this 'normal life' has to be re-questioned for being so 'normal' and therefore not striking. It is convenient to compare the past routine with the present (e. g. which tools did people use before; how did they cook; what work did a farmer have to do daily, weekly, seasonally).

If any variations occurred it will be remembered as variations of the normal (e. g. "We did the same work like every year at the fields but that summer was especially dry so we had to adapt to the situation.")

Remarkable changes, ruptures and dramatic events will be remembered or repressed especially – events which are frightening, hurting, violating and difficult to integrate; or very joyful and successful. Working through these memories needs lots of energy and can be very tiresome. Sometimes such experiences have to be repressed in order to maintain balance.

Remarkable collective change and experience also leaves clear traces in memories and substantiates in individual experience.

### **Super ordinate target of humanistic approaches and operational targets of TBW**

The super ordinate target of Biography Work and of course Transcultural Biography Work as a humanistic approach is to contribute to people's and societies well being. The target is a conscious handling and development of biographicity in modern/post-modern life conditions. Biographicity should be available to influence one's concrete situation, e. g. to be able to learn, to work and ensure survival, and to actively communicate and exchange in the community and society. Conscious biographicity provides a multitude of connection points with different people and communities and helps to make sense out of one's life. Biography Work with migrants or people with migrant background in the family pursuits to make aware of and to create connection points with people, institutions, and the course of events in the environment. It supports people who regard themselves as members of the receiving society to develop those connection points as well.

The operational aims of Transcultural Biography Work to make memory stories available can be described as follows:

- A pool of connection points to be able to broaden one's possibilities to understand what is or seems to be different/strange/foreign;
- A starting point for empathic communication, mutual understanding through listening to each other, exchanging and comparing stories;
- A pool of examples on how to handle situations in transcultural worlds. This includes not only success stories but also stories about failure and how to live through difficult times.

*"I am inclined to interpret the lists of learning experiences produced as stories to manage life. They relate the knowledge and skills that have helped one to cope with problems in life." (Antikainen 1998, p. 221)*

## ORAL TRADITIONS AND ORAL HISTORY

**By Annemarie Schweighofer-Brauer from FBI Centre**

A family memory pool of stories of living through hard times is an inestimable treasure for the offspring. Those stories hand on the message: "It is possible."

Stories to learn from can be the own ones, can be family heritage or heritage of a greater collective – told again and again and transformed and enriched with further memory while having been told many times.

Oral cultures used and use to qualify specialists for story-telling. Native American societies did so in the past and still do so. In middle European agrarian societies, like in Tirol, some people were known for being good storytellers. In the expanded families stories have been told by elderly people to the younger, so they have been handed on from one generation to the other to provide orientation and destination.

As above-mentioned, the task of Transcultural Biography Work is comparable to the one of a storyteller: to offer models of how to understand and mould processes happening in life, to create spaces of free choice within such processes; and to make people aware that difficult times are part of life and that there are ways to overcome or to endure such times. Thus, Transcultural Biography Work aims at teaching transcultural living and the ways of coping with insecurity, fears, contradictory identification requests, prejudice, discrimination, exclusion and marginalisation by helping the people of different backgrounds make effective use of their resources. To do this, Transcultural Biography Work uses techniques to reach personal memories as a starting-point to work on human attitudes.

### The griot

**By Welly Marguerite Lottin and Paolo Raimondi from Griot**

A griot is the African storyteller. He delivers history as a poet, praise singer, and wandering musician. The griot is a repository of oral tradition, he knows many traditional songs and he must also have the ability to extemporize on current events.

His satire is very direct, creative and constructive and his knowledge of local history is formidable. Most villages also had their own griot, who told tales of births, deaths, marriages, dreams, battles, hunts, affairs, and hundreds of other things.

He can also travel from village to village to spread the local stories and link the lives of the people habiting in the same region.

The griot gathers the people of the village, men, women and children together, under the baobab and recounts the history of the people giving also day to day advises. Or in the evening he gathers the people around a big fire.

Although they are popularly known as 'praise singers', griots may also use their vocal expertise for satire or political comments with the help of musical instruments like the kora, balafont and drums.

In every African region each storyteller is called with a particular name. The word griot is the Western name identification and it may derive from the French translation '*griote*' of the Portuguese word '*criado*' or masculine singular term for 'servant'. On the contrary, for the African continent, what we now call 'griot' is a very important person worth of the highest respect for his role of educator and teacher of life.

For instance, in the history of the Mali Empire (Mali Empire) from its height in the middle of the 14<sup>th</sup> century, the griot played a very important role all the time as an adviser of the king, of his family and of his administration.

A griot can also play the role of historian, arbitrator, praise singer (patronage) and storyteller. Essentially, these musicians have been walking history books, preserving their ancient stories and traditions through songs. Their inherited tradition has been passed down through generations. They are said to have deep connections to spiritual, social, or political powers. Speech is also said to have power as it can recreate history and relationships.

Today some important popular singers are considered griots because they can transmit life stories and inspirations through their music and words.

## Story telling in Uganda

**By Manuela Schweigkofler, Haus der Begegnung, Austria and David Okello, Caritas Gulu, Northern Uganda**

Once upon a time, there was Mr. Rabbit and his brother, Mr. Hare. As grown up "boys" they are to help their mother who was an elder with cultivation. They chose to plant "kodi ngor" seeds from green vegetable (boo). But, Mr. Hare comes with a suggestion to the mother, that for them to get better yields this time, the mother has to fry roast the seeds for them. The old woman, being ignorant, agrees to roast the seeds. Mr. Hare and Mr. Rabbit wake up every morning; pick their hoes and the roasted seeds to go to the farm. Along the way, they would sit under a cool tree shed and start feasting on the roasted seeds and tie when it's approaching mid day (time most people return from the garden). Then, they make sure that they dirty their legs with mud as if they have been digging. On arrival back home, the mother welcomes them with food and as they are eating, they narrate to the mother how hard they have been working in the garden and they feel so tired. That trick continues for some days and finally they report to have finished planting, and now are awaiting harvest.

On the other hand, Mr. Elephant is busy in his garden planting the real seeds. Mr. Rabbit and Hare have learnt of the garden of Mr. Elephant since they use to pass by the field as Mr. Elephant is busy digging.

Now the time for weeding has come and as it is in our culture, normally it is women that do the weeding and the old woman want to go and weed. Mr. Hare, as usual (tricky man) thought that since there is no garden they have dug and there is nothing to weed, he needs to come up with another trick for the old woman. He said; "Mum, there is a very big tree that fell across the road to the garden when it rained last week and you as an old woman, will not be able to jump over the log. Leave the weeding to us; I will do it with my brother." The old woman has nothing to say, but to accept. The

time comes for harvest! The old woman reminds the boys to start harvesting since the time is up. It is at this point that they (Mr. Hare and Mr. Rabbit) start stealing from the Elephant's garden. They do this for about five days and the mother is happy with the good yield while, Mr. Elephant spends days and nights searching for those stealing his crops.

After failing to track down the thieves, Mr. Elephant consults a witch doctor (Mr. Tortoise). Mr. Tortoise tells Mr. Elephant to come back to him the second day. In the meantime he will have found a solution to the thieves.

On that fateful day, Mr. Elephant goes back to the witch doctor that has moulded very nice pictures of two beautiful girls using a glue gum; one black beauty and the other a white girl with long hair. The instruction is that Mr. Elephant take these and place them strategically in his garden in the evening. Then he will go back the next day to check the outcome around mid day.

Mr. Elephant picks the beautiful ladies and does as instructed. That night, Mr. Hare and Mr. Rabbit plan to do their final harvest in the garden. They pick their baskets and early morning, they leave for the garden. On arrival, they see these two beautiful ladies standing and smiling with them. With excitements, each of them proclaim: "the black beauty is mine" says Mr. Hare and Mr. Rabbit says "Mine is the brown one with long hair." They rush to shake hands. The right hand gets stuck on the glue. They say: "You gal, leave my hand." Again, they use the left hand to greet the gal, it gets stuck too. At this point, they



realize it is becoming serious and start fighting (kicking, knocking with the head) and all these get stuck and they become helpless.

It is at this point that Mr. Elephant arrives. "I have finally got those who have been stealing my crops; I will deal with them today." Mr. Hare as usual instructs Mr. Rabbit that: "When they start beating us, you cry very loud and they will leave you. For me, I will cry only once." Mr. Elephant starts beating Mr. Rabbit. Mr. Rabbit cries loud, beats twice, third time, he keeps crying loud until he is beaten to death. On reaching Mr. Hare, he is beaten once, cries once and keeps quiet. Mr. Elephant thinks Mr. Hare is also dead and yet he is not. He picks them up, put them in the basket and head home to prepare the two for his lunch. On the way, Mr. Hare is still whispering to Mr. Rabbit: "Rabbit, Rabbit, eat some seeds...". But Mr. Rabbit is dead.

On arrival, the wife and children of Mr. Elephant are very happy to see their dad come back with meat. The wife jumps into action; puts a cooking pot on fire, pours water and puts Mr. Rabbit and Mr. Hare on fire. As the water starts boiling, Mr. Hare pushes the dead body of Mr. Rabbit to the bottom of the pot and for him, comes on top. The wife of Mr. Elephant sends one of her young daughters to go and check how the food is cooking and add some salt. The young girl goes, finds Mr. Hare almost jumping out of the pot. She runs back to the mum and says: "Mum, I found the food looking at me with the eyes open." "Idiot!" said the mother, "how can a dead food look at you? Go back and add some salt." The young girl has to obey the command of the mother, goes back and pours salt. But, Mr. Hare pretends that he is dead although he opens wide the ears and collects all the salt poured in the ear.

It is now almost time for lunch; the "kwon kal" is ready, steaming. The woman does her gender roles of serving the food. Mr. Hare is served for women. Mr. Rabbit is served for men and the family sit in their circle (eating from one dish) to enjoy their late lunch under the shade at home. After eating the soup, a young boy from the women's circle asks the mother to give him a piece of the meat and he wants the ear of Mr. Hare, very delicious! Upon hearing that Mr. Hare gathers strength, kicks serving dish (made of clay), brakes it, jumps out of the pot and sprints away. While the men continue enjoying their meal, the women miss out their food. And here ends the story.

What lessons do we take from this story?

1. One should not tell lies. At one point, the lies will catch up with you.
2. Do not steal, stealing is bad.

3. Do not be lazy, work for yourself.

4. Be aware of strangers, those beautiful girls can trap you into problems.

When Acholi, a tribe from Northern Uganda, do story telling they come always along with some morality. – Not directly but hidden in the story. This is the way to teach the children, and to develop culture. The stories stick in the mind of the people.

"What happens is that the stories are usually told during dry season (festive season). People sit at fire place enjoying moon light and the fire well aware that there is no any tough duty waiting the next day. Story telling is usually for leisure. Most of our stories are educational stories. They draw conclusions and after the conclusion they bring some lesson learnt."

They have also the aspect of fun. The stories itself have usually some funny touch but also in between the stories it is nice. People laugh and laughing gives relief. But it comes also to very sad moments. They start talking in frightening ways. It brings the imagination out, some lose the courage and they run straight away to bed, scared and in the night while sleeping they dream and scream.

There are usually people seated and listening – only one person narrating the story. The stories are quiet clear, and punctuated with songs. Very little room is left for questioning and any message is connected in a clear way. The story teller talks and talks without interruption, one story is giving the next.

What are the stories about? They are just around family life, community set up, children, and every day experiences. Although, the characters in the stories are usually animals like hare, tortoise, elephants etc. Most of the stories are between reality and imagination...

Passing time, adding salt, overthrowing each other is another aspect which takes place when people are sitting at the fire place. During wang oo – (telling stories at the fire place) it happens that people educate their children, they pass their culture from the elders to the younger's and they discuss even more important things like conflicts in the community e.g. land conflicts, use of alcohol in the communities, etc. They use the setting of wang oo to sort out quarrels and disputes. Telling a story when it comes to serious problems can channel the conflict itself and has huge influence on how people sort out the dispute. In this case the story telling comes along with advising and guiding people through a conflict which is not the literally meaning of storytelling.

## Biographical research methods in Lithuania

**By Irena Zemaitaityte, Sarmite Mikulioniene and Leta Dromantiene from Mykolas Romeris University**

Biography method is known and applied in Lithuania mostly in sociology as a research method.

In 2003 there came out a collective study "Social memory, commemorations and deleted memory" (Krukauskienė/Šutinienė/Trinkūnienė/Vosyliūtė 2003), it was dedicated to the traumatic experiences of the Soviet period. The book interpreted results of a biographical research. The authors sought to determine circumstances in which the memories were formed or deleted: "What aspects of the traumatic Stalinism's period events are memorised, which are deleted from the individual and collective memories?" (Krukauskienė et al 2003, p. 11). In 1994 Natalija Kasatkina researched Russian intelligentsia of the Republic of Lithuania, reviewing the culture of an ethnic group (minority), its historic background, which is important not only for the country's ethnic composition studies but for the understanding of contemporary ethnic relations. Agnė Dorelaitienė and Natalija Mažeikienė in 2011 in their article "Biography method: construction of professional identity of social male workers" approach an issue of how social male workers construct their professional identity. The authors present qualitative research, when male social workers tell their biographies and reveal professional choice motivation.

Family History method was used in a 1996 project titled as "Social chants in the Baltic and Nordic Countries", with the goal of searching "Family and living conditions in the Baltic Countries", which was carried jointly with the Lithuanian Institute of Philosophy and Sociology. Family history studies in Lithuania through Biography method are found in Aušra Maslauskaitė's 2002 doctoral dissertation, titled "Family interpersonal relations in transitional societies: biography research of young families", and in 2004 this work was published in a book. In 2003 Sigita Kraniauskienė defended her



doctoral thesis „Identity construction in biographies (generation and gender identities in 20<sup>th</sup> century Lithuanian biographies)". Sigita Kraniauskienė in her article "Biography method: two theoretical methodological paths" in 2000 analysed Biography method as one of the trends in sociology methods which encompasses not only practical methods of social research but also some fundamental theoretical considerations. Broad theoretical spectrum of the fundamental Biography method provides a belief that this method with one core element – life history, could combine quantitative and qualitative methodology elements and could provide a broader and deeper and more thorough social life analysis (Kraniauskienė 2000).

Application of Biography method in Education Science is not observed. Therefore we expect that "Realize" project will fill this gap and this published guide will encourage education researchers to resort to Biography method, which promotes individual and collective

cognition processes in search of personal roots and resources shaped by unique biographies. Application of Biography method to adult education and social work will allow looking into subjective personal and public sides of life, to foster a more supportive positive behaviour for the individual decision making processes and to create empowering future visions.

## Oral History in Turkey

**By H. Eylem Kaya from Süleyman Demirel University**

Biographical work itself has been generally applied through Oral History praxis in Turkey. The roots of Oral History whose foundations were laid by Allan Newis academically and institutionally in the world may be traced back to the compiling of the folklore work done in the frame work of the public houses that were one of the first and very significant cultural institutions of the Republic Era. However, later, those compiling work could not be followed by the new samples and the interests of people; especially historians have remained limited with far more old and new eras. From that time to these days, the Oral History work has taken an important place in sociological and anthropological contexts of the country, e.g. the sociological researches about observation of the mutual social changes in mountain and plain villages written by Behice Boran in 1942.

Before the 1980s, the author Yusuf Hikmet Bayur did a biographical work on Atatürk, founder of Turkish Republic, by talking to people who knew Atatürk. In the 1990s the number of workings based on the life histories began to increase on the pages of newspapers and journals, e.g. Pazar, Albüm and İstanbul. In 2000, another author, Behaeddin Yediyıldız, tried to write about whether or not some historical events and identities existed by going ahead public rumours. There is a most remarkable Oral History archive effectuated in Turkey and it belongs to TRT (Turkish Radio and Television) Centre. This archive has been consisted of documents related to the social and political issues. Besides, state institutions such as Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Education, and Ministry of Internal Affairs have also some documents but these are not easy accessible.

Although there is not an out Oral History archive of that, Turkish History Foundation has started to compile the Oral History work gathered via the projects done by the institution itself and downloaded it in a network system. Nowadays, in our universities such as Bo aziçi University, Ege University, Dokuz Eylül University, Sabancı University, Süleyman Demirel University (Oral History on Village Institutions as a Scientific Research Project) the interest for Oral History work via the curriculums and their outputs for example thesis, projects, researches have been come up. Another institution, Woman Work Library in İstanbul has an important Oral History collection related to the interviews with some women who struggled for woman rights and represented women in social arenas.



# APPENDIX

## Memory journey

### Text to accompany the relaxing before the proper journey

Sit down or lay down on the floor. Make yourself comfortable.

Close your eyes.

Make sure to be in a position which is convenient to be kept for a while.

If you are sitting: put your feet on the floor to have good contact with the floor.

Breathe constantly, breath in and out calmly.

Perceive yourself, your body.

Feel your feet, how they are making contact with the floor.

Move your awareness up to your lower legs and feel them, come to your knees, is there tension in your knees? Try to let go.

Climb up to your thighs and feel how they touch the chair (the floor).

Notice your bottom and let it feel relaxed.

Come further to your hips, breath into your hips and allow them to feel free.

Come to your back, your spin, feel the vertebrae – each single one – and if there are tensions, let your breathe flow into it and allow the tension to disappear.

Feel your vertebrae and continue to your shoulder blades, how they touch the back of your chair (the floor).

Go ahead to your shoulders and let tensions go, breath.

Walk down your arms, feel the elbows, your wrists and allow them to feel loose.

Continue to your fingers and notice every single finger.

Come back to your shoulders and feel your neck, your throat, breath and let it relax.

From your throat move on into your mouth, your tongue, feel your mouth inside and let tensions go.

Come to your cheeks, your nose, the ears, your eyes, let all parts of your face relax.

Continue to your head, feel the skin on your head, let it relax.

Enjoy how you feel relaxed and light for a little while.

Keep your eyes closed.

### Journey accompanied by trainers' words: sensual memory stimulating text on eating together in a past situation

Now, I will guide you into your memory, to a past situation.

Walk into your body to the place where memory is stored – to your personal archive.

Search it through for a past situation – maybe when you were a child or a teenager – for a nice time when you came together with other people to eat.

Where are you going to eat?

What does the place look like?

How does it smell?

What sounds do you hear?

Is it cold, warm?

What do you feel, how do you feel?

Whom do you meet there?

How do you perceive these people there?

Do you talk to them?

What do they say?

What do you do after coming to the place?

Do you move around, do you sit down somewhere?

How does your body feel being seated?

How is the table, the chairs? Do you touch them with your hands, fingers, how does it feel?

Is there already food at the table?

What kind of food? How does it smell?

Do you start eating right away something? Which drinks are offered?

How does it taste? Which sounds are there produced by taking food?

Does anybody speak? Who? What are people speaking about?

Who cooks? Who serves?

How do you perceive the people cooking or serving?

Do they talk? How do they move? How is the expression of their face?

What do you eat? Go through the different kinds of food: what ingredients do they consist of?

Remember the different tastes, the smells, the sounds produced by the people using dishes ...

Take your time to remember.

Do people talk during eating? Who talks? How do the

voices sound? What do they talk about?

How do they look like?

Take your time to regard every detail coming up from your memory archive.

Enjoy the situation.

How does the eating together end? Remember smells, voices, feelings.

Do you stand up? Do you help cleaning up? Do you just go to another room? Do you say goodbye?

Leave the memory situation slowly. Remember to be in your memory archive in your body.

Come slowly back to our here and now.

If you want you can slowly move your fingers, arms, your feet, take a deep breath.

You can open your eyes and come back into our present situation.

### **Journey not accompanied by trainers words: Memory of a day in my life that made me tingle (to be used e.g. in the context of musical Biography Work)**

Now I guide you into a past time of your life. Walk into your body – to the place where your memory is, your personal archive. Look around in your archive. You are looking for a memory of a wonderful day in your life making you tingle and sound, when you felt fully alive, when you were very happy. Take this memory out of your archive, place it in front of you and enter it. Go to this day and live through it again. Now I leave you alone with your day for a while.

### **Finish**

Are you still in there – at this wonderful day? Look around what else you want to regard. Do you want to take something with you? Take it and wrap it and then come back from your day into your archive and put the memory back to its storing place. Come with what you brought with you slowly back to here and now. Move a little bit, maybe you have to yawn. Open your eyes as slow or fast as you need to.

### **Partial biographies**

An abstract based on Chapter 5, "The strings in my hand – how to look more precisely on biography(ies)" ("Die Fäden in meiner Hand – wie man genauer auf Biographien schauen kann; Translation Elisabeth Reiter) in Hubert Klingenberger's "Lebenmutig. Vergangenes erinnern, Gegenwärtiges entdecken, Künftiges

entwerfen", pages 106 – 140.

Partial biographies help to deal with the complexity of life experience through focusing on certain aspects. Our biographies consist of different partial biographies like a cord is made out of several strings. Looking at parts of our biography in a more focussed way enables to get new findings.

- *Social Biography*: Social environments and their changes: family, friends, neighbours; the experiences of loneliness, foreignness, migration, privacy, housing; and the feeling of belongingness to a certain social group, income class, status or place.
- *Cultural Biography*
  - "High culture": music, theatre, painting, literature, etc.
  - More important: common culture – culture of living, of dressing and dining; argumentative atmosphere; urban or rural culture; recurrent attitudes and daily rituals, which give us guidance and safety, etc.
- *Natural Biography*: The story of my body and the experience of nature:
  - *Body*: with our body we are expressing our unique identity. Our body is subject of changes and influences; health, doing sports, beauty and body care, scars, handicaps.
  - *Nature*: village or town, mountain or sea – different environments stand for different experiences and influence our memories. E.g. important places where I have lived, places with a special meaning, holiday destinations, places of protection and safety.
- *Worldview/perception Biography*: Biography of our beliefs, our ideologies, our convictions, our view of the world but also religion, spiritual beliefs and tradition, different impressions and their integration or negation, ...etc.
- *Educational Biography*
  - Biography of our learning processes in institutions like school, university, our degrees, further education modules
  - Learning along the way, lifelong learning: Learning is always connected to the knowledge, competences, experiences we already have.
- *Biography of personality*: All aspects mentioned before influence our biography. They determine our identity.

- In psychology 5 basic dimensions of human behaviour are distinguished: more or less emotional, more extro- or introverted, openness or shyness towards experiences, compatible or incompatible with others, conscientiously or not. These aspects can change during lifetime.
- Time and experience of time
- Skills to realize personal borders or to establish boundaries or to defend them.
- Professional biography
- *Gender Biography:* We are all born as girl, boy or in between and this is our sex. But what a society refers to a girl or boy, a woman or a man differs remarkably. How we have been socialized as girls and boys, women or men, which importance and values were attached to the different genders in my familiar environment, how I experience myself today as a woman /a men. Sexual identity, partnership identity, etc.

Of course, none of the partial biography stands isolated but they hugely influences each other and are usually interwoven. They are parts of our biography.

## Questionnaire: Template for biographical interview

(Source: PASS Learning Partnership)

General remarks on questioning in the oral history interview context

First phase: The interview partner should be informed about the project context of the interview. It should be explained to her how the interview is going to be led – that there will be his/her narration first and questions afterwards.

After a very general question the interview-partner narrates his/her story and should not be interrupted through questions – because we want to perceive his/her view and logic, how he/she constructs the story with his/her memories. The general opening question could be: Please tell me about your life, I am interested in everything you remember and want to tell me, starting with your ancestors, what your grandparents and parents told you, what you remember of them, about your childhood, how you lived later ....

Second phase: After the interview-partner communicates in one or the other way that he/she is done with the narration ("I do not remember anything else." "What more do you want to know?" ...) we

use our questionnaire. For this kind of questionnaire in German we use the term "*Leitfaden*" – guiding thread. We know our areas of interest but how we concretely put the questions depends on the interview partner, the interview situation. We are free to stress one area more than another; we are free to develop new questions apart from the "*Leitfaden*", if the interview partner talks about something unexpected. We will not ask questions the interview partner already talked a lot about in the first phase of the interview.

As Ela Gökalp (Turkish PASS partner organisation Hydra) expressed it:

*"Also the main questions are not selected, all questions are kept in a pool. To ask the questions is trying, sometime you get a short answer and have to reformulate the question to get the information you want to get, maybe around some issues a lot of questions are necessary. The goal is to get a picture of the live like a movie of the interviewed person."*

Qualitative methods are related as much to art as to science: Together with the interview partners we aim on creating a (new) way to know, to think and to interpret experience – a way that helps to find appropriate ways to act and so to improve life conditions.

## Questionnaire

### Family structures/networks

- Do you remember something about your grandparents, what did they tell you about their lives?
- What did your parents tell you about their lives before you were born?
- What do you know about the circumstances of your early childhood?
- What do you remember?
- How many siblings do you have? Male, female? What did they do later on?
- With which people did you live during your childhood (grandparents, parents, siblings, other children, other relatives, non-relatives)?
- What did your grandparents (male and female), parents (mother and father) work? How did they earn money?
- Where did you live (town, village, house, apartment), what did it look like? How was living there?

- What did you play and with whom?
- What duties did you have as a child?
- What did you learn from your people, from whom and how did you learn?

If somebody is 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> generation migrant:

- Where there people, organisations, (migrant) networks around your immigrant grandparents or parents they have already known?
- How did they meet new people?

If somebody is 1<sup>st</sup> generation migrant:

- With whom did you leave your place of origin?
- Where there people, organisations, (migrant) networks around you already knew?
- How did you meet new people?
- With whom did you make friendship? Out of which context?
- Who belongs to your family and relatives? (You can draw it, if you want) (Ancestors, grandparents, animals ...)
- Who is important in your life? (Blood lines, marital lines, family and relatives)

### **Motivation for migration**

- When or how was the idea to leave your country born?
- Which coincidences or casual facts have influenced or drove your decision? (person you met, relatives or friends that already have done this choice, etc.)
- Which imagination/vision did you have of the receiving country?
- Which was originally the country where you wanted to go? Is it this country?
- Do you think that this is the country where you can realise your life project?

### **Social-economic conditions**

- Did you emigrate for economic reason? Or for which other reason did you emigrate?
- Which image did you have of the hosting country?
- What did you find? Confirmations or delusions?
- Did you have a job before emigrating? What

kind? Which income level? Enough to support your family? Qualification? Were you satisfied with your job?

- Did you find a job in the hosting country? Had you arranged a new job before leaving your home?
- Is this job according to your expectations?
- Do you make use of your qualifications?
- Is the language knowledge important for your job?
- Are you involved in a new job formation-education process?
- Through which channel did you find a job?
- Do you have trade union contacts? Do you participate in other labour associations?
- Do you have knowledge of the rules and laws related to working responsibilities?
- Do you know how to work through the institutions?
- Do you think to change your job? For income reasons? Status? Qualification?
- Is your working place a place of integration?
- Did you experience cases of racism or exclusion?
- What about the relations with your comrades?
- Do you support your family at home?

### **Education**

- Do you have educational background? If so, can you talk about your educational background?
- Do you have diploma/certificate etc? (Educational or vocational)
- Where did you complete your last education?
- Could you continue your education in the host country?
- If not, what was the reason? If yes, can you explain a little bit?
- Could you tell me about the education system in your home country?
- Have you experienced any difficulties regarding education in your home country?
- Are you informed about the education system of the host country?
- Can you compare your home country and

the host country regarding educational opportunities?

- Have you experienced any difficulties regarding education in the host country?
- Have you experienced any difficulties/discrimination on the base of your gender in your family and in the education system?
- If you had a chance what would you change in your education history such as studying different subject or continuing education further?
- Would you like to start/continue your education?
- Have you attended any courses for language or have you participated vocational training or integration courses in the host country?

### Cultural identity

- How long do you live in the host-country?
- What was the main reason to leave the home country?
- Which expectations did you have concerning the host culture?
- What are the main elements of your culture (rites, religion but also including food, dress, music, dance etc.)?
- Which of them do you practise in everyday life?
- Do you teach these elements to your children?
- Which language are you speaking at home?
- Are you planning to ask for the citizenship of your host country?
- Do you feel integrated in the host culture?
- Do you feel personally accepted?
- Did gender conflicts arise between the gender roles of your home country and your host country and how do you deal with them?
- Are you in contact with associations of your community (can be helpful, but protection can improve isolation and be some kind of social pressure)?

*What is important is to find out what they know about the different themes, but not what the reality is.*

### Personal competence

This questions should be used for self reflection, to find out about the type of learning, resources and

weaknesses, abilities of concentration, problem solving, working together, ...

### Opening questions

- Which games did you prefer / as a child ... do you prefer?
- Which hobbies do you have?
- Compare your life with the life of your parents / your mother / your father? In which points does it change?

### Questions

- How do you learn best?
- How do you deal with problems?
- What are your personal competences? or What can you do best on the job / at home?
- How do you behave in groups?
- How do you deal with stress?

### Peer-review of the structure of the biographical interview

Realised during the second part of the Pilot in Rome (IT), March 2012, the peer-review had the aim at targeting this "open tool", centred on education experiences of the interview partner, towards "more vulnerable" groups, like refugees and other migrant people with particularly traumatic background.

For these cases, only some questions were selected from the previous grid by the social workers and cultural mediators as main keys to open further communication and to deepen individuals' needs and potentials.

The selected questions are:

- Where did you live (town, village, house and apartment), what did it look like? How was living there?
- When or how was the idea to leave your country born?
- Which imagination/vision did you have of the receiving country?
- Which was originally the country where you wanted to go? Is it this country?
- Which kind of hindering do you see if you would like to leave this country?
- Did you emigrate for economic reason? Or for which other reason did you emigrate?

- Which image did you have of the hosting country?
- What did you find? Confirmations or delusions?
- Did you have a job before emigrating? What kind? Which income level? Enough to support your family? Qualification? Were you satisfied with your job?
- Did you find a job in the hosting country? Had you arranged a new job before leaving your home?
- Do you make use of your qualifications?
- Is the language knowledge important for your job?
- Do you have knowledge of the rules and laws related to working responsibilities?
- Do you have diploma/certificate etc.? (Educational or vocational)
- Where did you complete your last education?
- Could you continue your education in the host country? (If not, what was the reason? If yes, can you explain a little bit?)
- Could you tell me about the education system in your home country?
- Are you informed about the education system of the host country?
- Have you experienced any difficulties regarding education in the host country?
- Have you experienced any difficulties/discrimination on the base of your gender (*in your family and*) in the education system?
- How long do you live in the host-country?
- What are the main elements of your culture (rites, religion but also including food, dress, music, dance etc.)?
- Do you teach these elements to your children?
- Which language are you speaking at home?
- Did gender conflicts arise between the gender roles of your home country and your host country and how do you deal with them?
- Are you in contact with associations of your community (can be helpful, but protection can improve isolation and be some kind of social pressure)?

All the “opening questions” are applicable, while about the question: “How do you learn best”, it would be better to formulate this question in a different way, like “What do you like to do/learn?” Also the content of the question related to the labour market rules would need to be explained, in relationship to the interview partner background.

Questions about the family structure and the social networks are all applicable only after a trusting relationship has been created between the social worker and the user. Starting with questions about relatives could be absolutely ineffective to open a dialogue and educators could touch traumatic experiences (violence, wars and conflicts, poorness and deprivations, etc.), without any help for the interview partner.

Furthermore, some lacks were underlined by our practitioners, and the missing fields are related to:

- *Health care and traditional medicine*: “How does it work the health service in your origin country?”; “Are there hospitals?”; “In your village, are there doctors?”; “How do you take care about your health (or of your family)?”; “Do you know how does it work the health service of the hosting country?”; “Where were you used to buy medicines?”; “Where do you buy medicines now?”.
- *Food and feeding*: to ask about the alimentation habits is strongly linked to the previous point. Some questions could be centred on the availability of basic traditional foods or “when and with whom” interview partner shares his/her meals. If he/she follows specific rules in preparing foods, or if they have difficulties with the new alimentation habits of the hosting country. In specific cases, psychologists could investigate the relationship with alcohol and other addictions.
- *Sentimental relationship and vision about sex*: this investigation area could show specific difficulties, linked to cultural bindings often oppressive for the free expression of individuals about sexual orientation or about the choice of the partner (role of family and traditional rules).
- *Environment*: it deals with the relationship with the natural resources, but also with the waste management, or the use of energy. Investigating this area, social workers/counsellors/educators could also face strong critical thinking about the global exploitation of the “North Countries” against the “South” of the world.

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