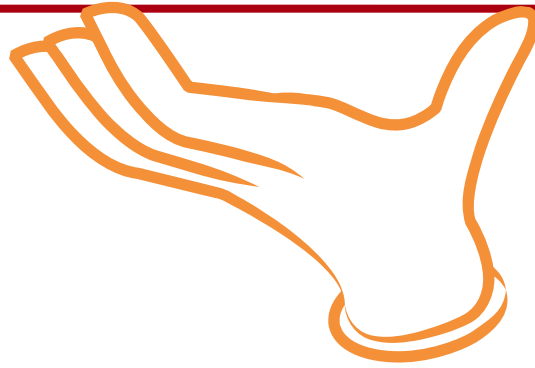




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THE SECRET OF A TASTY TRAINING PAELLA



It was summer 2004, we were in Barcelona, had just woken up and were looking out of the window. Barcelona's very essence is sunlight and humid sticky weather, so we concluded that we had chosen the right season to spend a few days in the city before and during the World Youth Festival Barcelona 2004.

Gazing at the sunrise, we wondered what kind of a day we were going to have – just as is sometimes the case with training, with issues such as how to deal with the unexpected.

So there we were, waiting for our partners to arrive from all over Europe to spend two weeks together. We had a full menu for the period: for breakfast, a bowl of volunteers to train towards a shared sense of belonging to a group; for lunch, a tasty annual meeting of the Pool of Trainers (PoT); and for dinner, a spicy small card with an invitation, “Kiss me”, a PoT activity as part of WYFB’04.

► **But... what were the ingredients in our full menu?**

To begin with, we had a diverse target group of trainers working as cooks. We can assure you of their sense of belonging to a team : they had met in Kyiv nine months earlier at the PoT meeting and had been working together since then. This time, they were all working as a big team with a concrete aim : they had to provide a large group of volunteers with skills to communicate and enable them to assist thousands of participants from all over the world who would be arriving a week later.

Through themes like presentation methods, intercultural learning, conflict, communication and energisers, we seasoned the Festival volunteers, producing a tasty paella: a mixture of flavours, with none overshadowing the others

and all merging to achieve a common goal. In order not to miss any ingredients, we split the participants into six groups headed by a couple of trainers responsible for leading them through various stages. To begin with, we introduced the volunteers to the importance of creating a climate of confidence among Festival participants, with energisers being the best ingredient here. But, of course, they were not enough! So we had to go deeper into communication skills - a useful resource for listening actively to participants' needs and assisting them throughout the event. After that, we were able to mix these elements with the main ingredient of paella: rice. For that, we had intercultural learning, which is as obvious for trainers working in multicultural groups as rice is the basis of paella. Lastly, conflict-management and problem solving workshops were the final, secret ingredient, just as saffron gives paella its famous colour and flavour.

After this wonderful experience of working together with fellow PoT members and excited volunteers, we started the PoT meeting in high spirits. The meeting was an opportunity to get back to our roots, to the sense of being a trainer, with the skills and methodologies we can develop, while also highlighting the challenges of the PoT and the benefits it can offer member organisations of the European Youth Forum. The synergy within the PoT was immediately reflected in our planning of the PoT activity for the Festival, following on from the PoT meeting; another great opportunity for us to join forces and pool our resources!

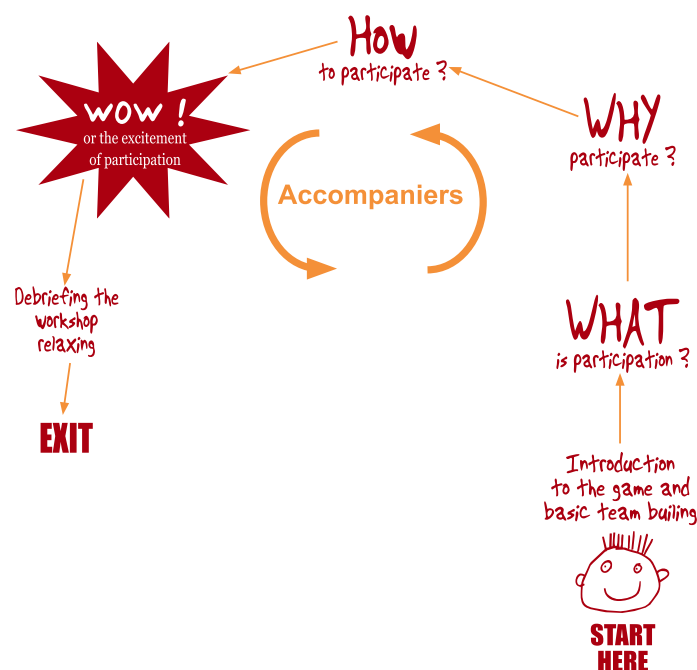


► So, how to be sexy, attractive or even explosive? ► “Modern participation methods”

That was the point: how to attract the attention of a large number of people moving around in a huge arena full of concerts, circuses and multi-media exhibitions and get them to join in our activity and also enjoy it? Our session was about Modern Youth Participation Methods – an important issue, but maybe not attractive enough among the countless other activities taking place within the Festival programme. As we therefore had to devise a marketing strategy, we had the idea of using trainers’ favourite material: post-its, with a clear statement, which we stuck on participants’ chests:



The marketing campaign planned at the PoT meeting, which had a big impact on participants, was a great invitation to get them to come and take part in an activity called “Modern participation methods.” It worked: they came in large numbers and shared their thoughts on participation in civil society:



Being sexy is not the point, of course: behind any marketing strategy, there is a concrete aim, with a consciously designed method to achieve a goal. To some extent then, our aim was to raise awareness about how participation is inherent in us, as individual human beings, whenever we interact in different spheres of civil society. We wanted to encourage the Festival participants to look for suitable ways of taking part themselves in the decision-making which shapes their lives. In a way, that is a guarantee of democracy, which helps sound the alarm when things go wrong.

We therefore decided to set up a “tunnel of participation” in the activity room. Groups of 20 people would be built at the entrance to the tunnel and would then embark on the “participation adventure” accompanied by a guide. On the journey participants would stop for various exercises, brainstorming, debate about what participation is, confrontation over “why participate?”, non verbal communication focussing on how to participate. They would then finally meet “wow” the participation guru and taste the participation excitement! Relaxation in the tunnel’s oasis was then essential before the debriefing.

We all joined the PoT as active youth workers/trainers because it is an effective channel for participation through empowerment of other young, active citizens. The PoT activities in Barcelona were a great opportunity to show our commitment. We hope that we managed to move one step closer to our goal: activating youth participation in society.

Our commitment to the Pool is central to the concept of participation, just like hunger is inextricably linked to the human need to eat. Given the sense of belonging and the common goal they involve, we must highlight the fact that community-building tasks are, indeed, the tastiest meal you can ever eat.

Don’t you think so?

Try a bite!

