

# How Artistic Activities Support Learning Processes and Promote Competence Building in Adult Education



Impressions and Examples of the Grundtvig Project  
„Identity and Difference – Creative Artistic Exercises  
as Didactic Support in Adult Education“ (ARTID)



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## PREFACE

In adult education aims are often less focussed on specific knowledge or concrete skills, and more on general attitudes, presumptions, everyday reactions, or on personal competence and on the ability to develop alternative outcomes to the situations we confront, be they familiar, totally unexpected or even disturbingly strange.

This is certainly the case when adult education deals with issues such as living together with migrants, reconciling conflicting social groups, integrating the handicapped into society or tackling inter-generational conflict. Work on any of these themes will always involve encouraging participants to reflect more consciously upon their actions and attitudes, and if necessary to consider altering them.

However it has been accepted for years that this is one of the most difficult tasks to achieve in adult education. While it is true that knowledge can be an important pre-requisite, it is rarely in itself sufficient to bring about a lasting change in behaviour. Presenting arguments on a cognitive or theoretical level is important but does not necessarily affect subjective attitudes that are often deep-seated and long-established. Logic and intellectual discourse can be necessary stepping stones, but they alone cannot provide real solutions. Understanding general truths does not necessarily lead to implementing their consequences in our daily lives. We have learnt to accept „cognitive dissonances“ and to

live with contradictions between our thoughts and our actions. We don't always instinctively or consistently act according to what we know or believe to be right, and even when we become aware of the discrepancy, we often try to talk our way out of it.

The first task that needs to be addressed in adult education involves raising levels of awareness for the problem in hand. This means



sensitizing the participants to the issues and potential controversies. In the next step, participants need to take stock of their own attitudes and behaviour. Finally, it is important to open up new possibilities and perspectives, and develop alternative strategies.

Adult education has developed two ways of tackling this dilemma. The first, and more established method, is to make use of the social normalizing and stabilising effect of group work. This is the way most self-help groups



work. The method we subscribe to however has developed more recently. This approach emphasises the need for cognitive understanding to be coupled with activities that relate to the participants' emotions and experience if it is to produce the desired effect. This means that what is learnt and understood on an intellectual level needs to be "internalized". This involves becoming more sensitive and to a certain extent more vulnerable as we confront unexpected experiences. It is a process that can put into question our assumptions, which give us a sense of security. However as a result, we may be in a position to see the world with new eyes and begin to consider things from a different angle. To follow this route in adult education means creating a learning experience

which can alter our perceptions and behaviour, an experience in which we are confronted with new situations which do not only provide us with new insights but also cause us to consciously re-evaluate our own standpoint and behaviour.

Modern methodology in adult education provides a number of strategies which fall into the category of action-oriented teaching methods. The possibilities range from the use of drastic images and films, experiential or action learning to exercises in group dynamics:

Exploring the possibilities inherent in artistic experience is another of these options, which is well-established in adult education whether it be in the form of art history seminars, museum visits or courses in which there is hands-on participation in artistic activities. This publication aims to give an impression of what the contribution of artistic activities can be in the field of adult education, and discuss the didactic implications. We will investigate in how far it can enhance the learning process and contribute to an understanding and acceptance of new perceptions and patterns of behaviour.

## THE ARTID PROJECT

This publication is part of the ARTID Project (Identity and Difference - Creative Artistic Exercises as Didactic Support in Adult Education), which is sponsored by the European Union as part of its „Grundtvig“ Programme. Its objective is to report on and evaluate the projects run by European adult education institutions which all offer artistic activities as part of their programme.

Five institutions from different European countries took part in this multilateral project, facilitated and evaluated by an educational research institute, with the aim of exploring and developing in a systematic way the potential that practical artistic activities offer to adult education. The project explores the methods used and the potential didactic application of the different types of courses

and presents an overview of their underlying methodology and intended objectives. In addition the necessary preconditions for running these kind of courses will also be examined. This will involve a consideration of questions relating to identity and difference in a socio-cultural context. The project will examine, whether practical artistic activities can unlock new possibilities to experience cultural diversity as enrichment, make the process of integration with people from other cultures or social backgrounds more fruitful and at the same time make people more aware of their own personal and cultural identity. Five adult education actions were designed, focussing on different issues of identity and difference. The results of this work all flow into a common process of development and research.

## THE IMPACT OF ART: THE PLAYHOUSE DERRY/ LONDONDERRY, NORTHERN IRELAND

Practical artistic activities can be applied in many different ways in adult education. Here are just a few examples. One of these, which probably has the longest tradition, involves exposing the spectator to a work of art and the themes that it expresses. According to Aristotle the aim of classical Greek theatre was to present the tragedies of great personalities in order to produce a strong reaction in the audience, a catharsis or „cleansing“, which can shake up deep-seated habits and lead to reform and a more moral course of action.

Schiller continued in this tradition, developing the idea of a „Schaubühne“ (an „exemplary“ stage) as a „moral

institution“, as did Berthold Brecht who wanted his plays to open the audience’s eyes to society’s injustices and contradictions in order to influence their political behaviour in the outside world.

This approach is still common in adult education today. Themed film and art shows and literary evenings all use works of art as a focal point, as does much of the educational work through drama and in museums. However, to change attitudes and behaviour means going beyond “academic” commentaries and involves engaging with the content of the work and the intentions of the artist.



The "Theatre of Witness" based in "The Playhouse" in Derry, Northern Ireland is one of the activities within the ARTID Project that typifies this classical approach. Plays are used to enhance reconciliation between the opposing groups of Catholics and Protestants and the clear aim is to plant the seeds change in the audience's social and political views. Social transformation is achieved by recreating, in an artistic form, authentic stories drawn from both personal and collective biographies.

*The initiator and founder of „Theatre of Witness“, Teya Sepinuck, established contact with former combatants from the Northern Ireland conflict, including former police officers, army soldiers, IRA and UDA fighters, and encouraged them through a long interview process to recount their story. She then moulded this material, without adding anything to it, into a stage script, which was then modified and developed together with the person she had spoken with, until they felt in a position not so much to play their own story but rather to „present“ it to the public with alternating parts and a minimum of props and theatrical effects. The spectators were moved to tears and deep emotional empathy, a reaction best compared with what we know about how Classical tragedy*

*affected Greek audiences. Witnessing the human face of the tragedy dramatically brought to the fore aspects of the socio-political conflict that had been suppressed for years. The protagonists have on the one hand experienced scenes of horror and have been indoctrinated and misled, even if for honourable reasons; on the other hand we can catch a human insight into their reactions, their feelings, doubts, wishes and limitations. Political differences and affiliations are seen for what they are: „masks“ they wore that have become superfluous. „That’s how John the fighter become John the freedom worker“.*

*When the spectators leave the theatre, they don’t go out in silence. They want to speak about what has happened, about what effect it had on them and about their own viewpoint. It is a starting point for exchanges between people from opposite sides of the divide who share the hope that this madness should never be repeated and are determined to do something about it. One of the actors talks about „giving your enemy a human face“ and you hear words such as „liberation“, „overwhelming“ and „shedding a new light on life“. It is at last possible to see „behind the mask“ and experience the universal dimension of thoughts, reactions and emotions.*

It is difficult to evaluate just how lasting the effect of this reaction will be. However, the deep emotional impact of this use of art in adult education and its ability to instil new insight and understanding of the political conflict is undisputed. Instead of entrenched political opinions and confrontations of ideology or personality, the stage presents people with familiar emotions, thoughts and doubts, with which we can identify. It is precisely this feeling of identification

which creates the strong desire to do something that will bring about real change. This does not happen as a consequence of theory or explanation but results from the way art provides a vehicle to express what has happened. In addition, there is a political dimension to this work. By condensing the material and presenting it as a play, a public platform is created for both the individual and the opposing narratives of the conflict. This can act as a forum in which people can for the first time express what they have experienced and the traumatic emotions that persist to this day. As such it represents an opportunity to tackle issues that lie at the heart of the collective psyche (in this case of Northern Ireland). All this demonstrates how, to this day, works of art can, under certain circumstances, elicit a sense of catharsis and initiate a moral transformation in the spectators, that is to say the consumers. Besides this, „Theatre of Witness“ also offers a different dimension of artistic experience, namely for those creatively engaged as „actors“ who through the medium of art recount and transform their own story.

These „players“ are amateurs who present their own individual story with the support of professional actors. They report how the interviews with the producer and especially the process of transferring their experience into a literary narrative, followed by the many hours of rehearsal with the finished text, all helped them to confront and understand their own biographies. As the rehearsals progressed it seemed to matter less and less that they were playing their own stories and everything became more objective. The story began to detach itself from the actors, as if they were performing the experiences of others and not their own. „When

you play and perform your own story, it disconnects from you as a person and becomes part of a larger picture,“ according to one of the actors. As a result, the protagonists begin to relive their own experience from „the outside“, to understand what was driving them, and to re-evaluate their own actions. This process can lay the foundations for a fresh start in the future. This is a radically new experience that can help to overcome apparently insurmountable barriers, and result in the first steps towards working or even just speaking to people from „the other side“, and sharing their stories.



## ARTISTIC EXERCISE: THE ALANUS WERKHAUS IN ALFTER, GERMANY

As the title suggests, art is not just a question of the appreciation of works of art; artistic practice can have a direct effect on the attitudes and behaviour of adults with or without any formal training, provided they participate actively in an artistic process. Art is formative not only through the enjoyment of its masterpieces, but also when practised as an artistic process.

The Alanus Werkhaus' contribution to the ARTID Project focuses on this formative potential and on how artistic exercises can lead to an enhanced awareness of the world around us.

In their workshop they explore aspects of daily life with migrants in Germany. It is common knowledge that calls for tolerance and hospitality are largely ineffective. For this reason the Werkhaus has consciously avoided a theoretical, moralistic approach. Practical artistic exercises are used instead to open up a new world of experience which can initially appear unusual, even contradictory, but which can lead participants to reassess their values and „play“ with alternatives.

*Participants are led into a room in which there are many small wooden figures on a big board in the centre of the space. They have been placed in an „antagonistic“ order, with groups of different colour confronting each other. The participants were encouraged to „play“ with the figures, to try out alternative patterns and groupings. Only after a protracted period of experimentation were they asked to find the pattern they considered most pleasing. The first step in this process was always to break up the „antagonistic“ blocks and to mix the coloured figures, but what alternative pattern can be found? The range of possible alternatives is exciting and endless. Each creates its own impression and signals a different social relationship between the figures. This is not explained in a theoretical way but is experienced by the participants in the course of the activity. Typically, this process first leads to a stage of total individualisation, in which different coloured figures are distributed more or less evenly and randomly. The response to this situation is unanimous rejection: „There's no tension. It's totally uninteresting. It lacks dynamism. Boring!“. This quickly results in new colour groupings in different constellations, including rows and other interesting patterns that create relationships as well as polarities. It is these relationships that then become the focal point of the activity.*

*In the subsequent evaluation of the exercise it is immediately evident that the participants' actions were based on aesthetic judgements, such as composition and colour harmony. When asked how the participants would relate this experience to inter-*



*cultural relationships in Germany, there is general consensus that eliminating differences would result in a dull, uninspiring situation just they experienced with the figures on the board. What makes society interesting, vibrant and rich are the individual and cultural differences, and it is precisely this variety that helps us to define our own identity.*

*The next exercise follows on from this experience. The participants stand around a large sheet of paper on a table in the centre of the room. Each participant has one colour but the task is to paint a picture together. Once the activity gets under way, the focus of attention naturally shifts to the parts of the picture where two or more colours meet. In no time at all new colours appear with a whole range of secondary and tertiary colours that were not there to begin with. The next step is to establish centres of gravity, areas that need emphasis, parts of the picture that link, protect, recur and others that disappear. In the course of this work it became also evident how fruitful difference, tensions and the confrontation of opposites can be, and how art involves dealing with these issues, either by reconciling them and overcoming the tension, or emphasising and relishing the resulting polarity.*

*Yet another exercise concentrates on the experience of migration and transience in our own biography. The participants walk over a suspended beam into an unfamiliar room. There they can use different media including paint, pencils, paper, the voice or elements of the room itself, to create pictures, poems, collages, stories or installations that express what transience means in their own biography. In conclusion the*

*participants can present their individual work and share their thoughts and experiences. Despite the infinite variety of individual expression, there is a common understanding of the experiences they portray. It's the first step towards grasping what makes others different.*



All these exercises provide expression to elements of our inner life, our own emotions and experiences, and at the same time they can be transformed into an artistic form. Initially these activities are undertaken as a purely artistic experience. Any input the course leader or artist may make refers to the artistic process, for example by suggesting taking a step back to observe, or reflecting on what colour could be used to restore balance in a composition. The content – in this case the topic of migration – is kept in the background of the process but is not tackled directly. The artists who give these seminars have “translated” their subject into an artistic task which may reflect the topic structurally (and

possibly symbolically) but does not refer directly to it. It is thanks to this indirect method that issues can be addressed without the ballast of our habitual „standpoint“ and „opinions“, a process which often allows more objective factors to the fore. Since most people are generally not familiar with the artistic medium used, they enter into what for them is a new world and can experience, within this environment, new relationships, connections and challenges which they



have to resolve for themselves. The sixty-four thousand dollar question is how to relate the artistic experience to the topic at hand.

This relationship is not made explicit. Under no circumstances should the reason for the exercise be „explained“ in advance, nor should there be any speculation about what participants are expected to experience, since that would be a sure way to prevent any such process taking place. The result would be that intentions, personal viewpoints and preconceived opinions would colour the experience made, and

prevent any new development. The highlight of any such exercise is the moment when one of the participants suddenly cries out: „This is exactly like...“. It is at moments like these that the analogy that underlies the exercise becomes apparent and the connection is made. At that moment they grasp the issues in relation to the artistic activity they have just experienced and transpose what they have lived through in the exercise back to the underlying theme. This is a process that is similar to what happens when the formulation of a short passage can suddenly uncover the key to the interpretation of a whole novel. The artist giving the course can carefully guide the activity to the point where this transfer is possible.

The Werkhaus works with people with a background of migration who need to find their way in a foreign society, making use of artistic activities. The theoretical exposition of Germany's political system, constitution, customs and history, which forms the content of most „integration courses“, is not much help in coming to terms with their own biography and developing initiative in the society they live in. The Werkhaus has developed the following two exercises in response to this need. The first is called „Storytelling“, the second „Photo Gallery“. Both are based on a similar premise to the work of „The Playhouse“ in Derry.

*22 participants from 16 different countries took part in the story telling. At the outset, they were presented with a large number of everyday items in the centre of the room (anything from dolls' teacups to old lamps or a broken treasure-box). Each participant is asked to select one item that relates in some way to an important personal experience. The participants then recount this incident to the other*

*members of their small group. One of the incidents is chosen and used as the basis for a short theatrical scene. The participants can allocate each other parts and the scene is improvised, discussed, repeated and modified. In the final plenary session each group presents their play to the others.*

*These short plays can reveal a great deal not just about the person who chose and „directed“ the scene, but also about the socio-cultural background from which it is taken. This can often lead to surprisingly intimate insights into a foreign world, precisely because they convey the emotions, experiences, the hopes and fears of an individual, who we can empathize with, within his or her specific context.*

*In the exercise called „Photo Gallery“ the participants are each given a single-use camera, and asked to take photos of their environment, bearing in mind questions such as: „What is really different from where I come from?“ or „What do I consider to be typically German?“ The photos are then developed and presented to the group who then talk together about why the specific motifs were chosen. Finally the participants create in small groups a collage in which they incorporate their photos.*

These exercises give us the opportunity to „build bridges“ and get to know and understand people from different cultures. They can contribute to a feeling of social solidarity and understanding despite the evident differences. This inter-cultural solidarity is not forced upon the participants as a moral expectation, nor explicitly called for. It is simply there as a by-product of the exercises. This is something that can be felt as a very real experience,

and it is part of the task of the subsequent evaluation to explore reasons for why this is so. The context of art is an ideal environment in which to develop new experiences and insights that can affect the way we live with people from other cultures, and consider innovative alternatives to the images and preconceived assumptions that are often propagated by the media and hearsay.

The aims pursued in the improvisation exercise „Storytelling“ and image-making exercise „Photo Gallery“ use artistic means not as a didactic model for revealing underlying connections to a particular theme, as was the case in the exercise with the coloured wooden figures. Instead the aim of these exercises is to create a specific social awareness which can result in closer identification and understanding for other cultures. This is also the objective of the exercises undertaken by the project described in the next section.

## WORKING TOGETHER ARTISTICALLY TO OVERCOME SOCIAL DIVISIONS - THE ALYTUS MUSIC SCHOOL, LITHUANIA

The Music School in the town of Alytus in Lithuania is integrating people of different origins, classes, background, ages, and above all people with physical or mental handicaps, by encouraging them to make music together, either through singing or using musical instruments. The aim is to facilitate an easy access to this world of music even for those who do not play a musical instrument or who normally sing. They have achieved this by using songs and instruments from the Lithuanian folk tradition.



*Learning to play the instruments of this folk tradition, such as the one-tone flute, the xylophone, the percussion and string instruments and the Kankles or Baltic zithers, can lead to remarkable mastery, as can be witnessed in the professional concerts put on by the Music School. However what is more surprising is how beginners, with no previous experience, are able to produce real tones of quality*

*on these instruments, and this is all the more true when the participants really played or sing together in a group or a orchestra situation. They do not have written music nor any formal musical training. Instead they learn to listen to what the others are playing and to respond with their own instrument. One of the basic exercises is to enter into a dialogue with one or two others in which the instruments themselves „converse“. In this way, the players discover the „voice“ of their instrument. This form of free improvisation can easily be taken up in a larger group. Melodies can be learnt solely by ear and imitation, without recourse to language. The music of folk culture can inspire enthusiasm for narratives and traditions which can be put to music and naturally lead to movement and elements of folk dance.*

This return to the folk tradition is part of a conscious drive by the Music School in Alytus to revive and support the spread of Lithuania's cultural heritage, although it does not exclude folk music from other regions of Europe. Complete strangers who would not normally have anything to do with one another discover how easy and straightforward it is to make music together using these simple instruments. The fact that someone cannot walk or has a serious speech impediment is of no importance in this process. They are an integral part of the „orchestra“ and can express themselves in their own way.

Working together in this way is a real step towards social integration, and not just a token symbol. The language of art expresses a rich cultural diversity, but remains in essence „transcultural“:

it is possible to understand, respond to and participate in the artistic expression of other people, even if you know nothing about their language, culture or traditions. Art represents a universal language that transcends borders and divisions. All too often this fact is overlooked in today's globalized world, and yet it is at the heart of every orchestra or music band: in order to create a musical sound in a group (a unison), each participant has to consciously play his/her own part, on the one hand, and on the other hand, listen and react to the others in the group. Identity and difference are keystones of the ARTID Project. Unison is only attainable as a creative interplay of different, individual voices.



This principle is an integral part of the artistic work in the Alytus Music School.

## DEVELOPING PRACTICAL ARTISTIC COMPETENCE - THE EUROPEAN ASSOCIATION FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF WALDORF EDUCATION (EUROB) IN BOLZANO, SOUTH TYROL, ITALY

In the context of its artistic ARTID workshop, the association EUROB also deals with a very basic element of musical expression and its differentiation. This project does not bring people together to make music (and the social experience this involves) but rather focuses on the issue of how to overcome social differences and tensions. This is a particularly topical issue in South Tyrol where three languages and national groups (German, Italian and Ladinish)

live together in what is often a tense social and political environment. Indeed it is paradoxically the success of the autonomous status which has entrenched the differences and therefore led to the current tensions. EUROB therefore sets the focus of its artistic exercises not so much on social and cultural integration, but rather on exploring what the nature of these social tensions is, what can be learnt and transformed as a result.



*The workshop begins with short exercises that direct the listener to focus on certain harmonic elements from musical masterpieces. Practical rehearse of folk music from the region and further afield follows. Finally sound bowls with different tunes get played in the context of group exercises.*

As a result a basic musical tenet becomes apparent, namely that music depends on tension, on dissonance which the artist can transform into harmony in an infinite variety of ways. Tension is therefore experienced as a dynamic pre-requisite for development and not as a problem. This development, however, is not a given result, but grows out of a transformation of polarity in a dialectic process in which a synthesis on a higher level is attained. This process cannot take place if the two sides of polarity are simply added to each other, but requires a qualitative transformation which, like in music, can lead to new fields of tension. This is a process which anyone who sings or makes music in a group continually experiences, and is a true reflection of the role of tension in a social context.

This „interpretation“ remains on an implicit level in the work of the

seminar. It is in the musical experience itself that this process can be understood. In fact it can be claimed that artistic activities in themselves have a profoundly transformative effect since every musical progression depends on the accumulation and resolution of tension. This is therefore a process with which we are familiar and leads us to the hopeful assertion that art, and in this case music, is inherently capable of developing abilities. To sing and maintain a part in polyphonic music is in itself the ability to create, sustain and overcome tensions with others, which requires no intermediary. Practising this ability in a variety of different musical contexts, in other words repeating the process with different pieces of music, broadens the scope of this ability, extending it beyond the original situation in which it was experienced and giving it more universal application.

*The musical modules of the seminar are supplemented, like in the Werkhaus in Alfter, by exercises from the field of drama that also focus on the development of ability. In one such exercise, participants are required to stand up, blindfold and without speaking, in a numerical order, given to them in secret. Unbelievably this actually does work! Another exercise involves different groups, each with its own battle-cry, trying to evict one of the other groups from their „territory“ - a process that has no resolution. Participants discover the way tension mounts; they can then learn how easy it is to be drawn into this process; and finally they experience what it takes to actively stand up against it. A third exercise sees numerous partners, all linked by equal lengths of cord. In the first stage, the partners cross each other's paths and become hopelessly knotted as a result. In the second stage of the exercise, the knot has to be*

*unravelling without speaking. Although this may appear to be an impossible task, it turns out that, if each person concentrates on tackling the part of the knot between them and their closest neighbour, it is possible to unravel it all, much to everyone's surprise. Trying to get an overview of the whole entangled knot, however, is impossible and totally ineffective.*

The aim here is to show that artistic exercises do not only affect our consciousness but that they are directly responsible for the development of abilities. They actually create social and personal skills. Artistic activities are inherently capable of instilling competence which is transferrable to a general context. One such competence is the artistic activity itself, which requires the ability to master unresolved processes, to take action in uncertainty, and to react in an experimental, flexible way to situations of flux. Artistic practice strengthens these skills in the same manner as training enables a runner to cover greater distances. Do different artistic disciplines train different skills? And does each person need to find an individual approach to this process? These are questions that open up a whole new field of research.



# ARTISTIC ACTIVITIES AS A MEANS OF INVESTIGATION - THE ANTHROPOSOPHICAL ACADEMY OF ADULT EDUCATION IN VIENNA, AUSTRIA

The Anthroposophical Academy of Adult Education offers an interdisciplinary artistic approach in which artistic elements and theoretical discourse are evenly balanced and can therefore complement each other in the work of the workshop. As in the other workshops, the focus of the artistic activities is intended to develop skills and capabilities. What typifies the Viennese approach is the recognition that in adult education every learning process must go hand in hand with greater awareness of the issues involved.

*The theme of the seminar „Kunst ma nôt höfn“ (Can't you help me) is transgenerational learning, in other words how we can work towards an understanding and resolution of the conflict that exists between generations. The seminar brings people of different ages together in artistic exercises, in this case clay-modelling and drama. In between the*

*exercises themselves, there is the opportunity to reflect upon and discuss what effect the exercises had on the participants. The activities focus on the different qualities of „young“ and „old“. This can be done, for example, by miming the way an old or a young person sits on a chair. These sorts of exercises reveal stereotypical elements but also highlight how these are often contradicted in individual cases. This leads us to the question of characterisation or cliché. An artistic approach has an inherently „investigative“ quality which can put what is „typical“ into a new perspective.*

In the clay-modelling exercise, each participant creates their own form with their eyes closed. In the second step a pair of participants, one older and one younger partner, work to integrate the two forms into one piece, still with their eyes closed. The resulting forms are then discussed, analysed and grouped into a progressive scale - an exercise that requires concentrated observation! At one end are the forms that are compact and relatively undifferentiated, at the other more „developed“, elaborate, unstable pieces. This leads to some interesting questions: At what point does the tendency towards simple, solid form on the one hand change into the opposite? When does „young“ become „old“? And what does this tell us about the concept of „development“?

And finally a task from improvisation: the participants are asked to play out a scene of their choice which depicts a „typical“ conflict between generations. The result was somewhat surprising:



generational conflicts are in essence no different to „normal“ social conflicts, which can only be overcome if we are prepared to abandon preconceived stereotypes. One method for doing this is „paradoxical intervention“. This involves avoiding the behavioural patterns which your partner expects of you. In the subsequent discussion, the participants came to some surprising conclusions. The problems between generations have to be seen in a wider context. They can be resolved like other conflicts by mutual respect and tolerance. We can only expect these qualities in other people if we practise them ourselves in our encounters with others.

The artistic activities we employ enable us to develop a complex raft of possibilities in our adult education seminars ranging from „warm-up“, introductory exercises to artistic activities that relate directly to transgenerational issues. We were able to identify two important features that characterize artistic activities in this context:

*1. Artistic activities have an inherently investigative character. The exercises are not prescriptive and give the participants scope to develop their own initiative. They select and determine the scene they wish to perform and develop it in their own way. In other words, the participants „experiment“ with the situation, without a clear definition of the result.*

*2. These activities always lead, sooner or later, away from a controlled, clearly defined situation, into a process that is more open, with all the potential*



*but also insecurity that this involves. In such a situation, we cannot be sure what will happen, but we can affect the outcome if we are prepared to be proactive. Sometimes this leads to solutions that no-one would have predicted. Indeed the drama exercises show clearly that new possibilities appear when we accept the need to abandon fixed ideas and assumptions.*

Both these features of adult education focus on artistic activity, on exercises that are characterized by openness, playful investigation, an interplay of experimentation and contemplation, and the ability to react to a given situation. Artistic activity can indeed be seen as a paradigm of how to deal with social situations, as in the example of generational relationships. These exercises unlock the potential for a more active approach in which, by reappraising and altering our behaviour, we learn to cope with difficult situations. They allow for experimentation which can lead to practical alternatives, which in turn makes us more flexible and tolerant

## CONCLUSION

Within the ARTID Project, adult education institutions from five different countries have explored the exciting potential offered by employing artistic activities in the field of adult education.

The possibilities range from:

- the re-evaluation of our own biographical situation and its transposition into an artistic form
- didactic exercises that awaken and broaden our awareness of the world
- the integrating power of undertaking artistic activities in a group
- the specific training of artistic abilities as a first step towards dealing with social challenges
- the use of such artistic exercises to shed new light on specific life-situations
- the practice of art as a way of promoting flexibility and arriving at unexpected solutions.

All participants commented on how much enjoyment the artistic activities had given them and how initial resistance was swiftly overcome with the help of the artists responsible. The value of artistic activities for adults is that they enable us to express our feelings and thoughts and at the same time learn to see themselves in a new light. This can only happen if we feel free to experiment and discover more about ourselves, the world around us and the materials we use. This approach in adult education must avoid a „didactic cramming“ of difficult problems into one exercise. It is far more effective to allow participants and the accompanying artists the freedom to explore new situations and experiment without a fixed idea of the outcome. It is the creative activity itself which leads to new horizons and possibilities and not the underlying „idea“.



Notwithstanding the rich variety in the different approaches to artistic activity, it is clear that they all provide trainers with a complex tool which can complement and enrich what is often considered as a cognitive bias in the field of adult education, relating to participants on an emotional level which can have an effect on their attitudes and habits without being manipulative or authoritarian.

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## PROJEKT DETAILS

Project acronym:  
ARTID

Project title:  
Identity and Difference - Creative  
Artistic Exercises as Didactic Support  
in Adult Education

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