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CO-EVALUATION

-AUGUST 2022-



Name of Country: FRANCE

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Please answer the questions below, providing as much detail as you can. Each partner is expected to send their responses to the Yeditepe University Team by October 03, 2022.



1. Expectations at the start of the local process

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How did the participants approach your local process? (Prejudice? Enthusiasm? Doubt? Excitement? etc.) What did they expect/anticipate? Please give as much detail as you can, relying on your observations or informal conversations, or formal interviews, focus groups and surveys you may have conducted.

In order to understand the way the young people expressed their expectations as regards to the project, we would like to come back to how they were enlisted and introduced to it. The organisations DMZ and ToHAI, represented by their professional members, positioned themselves as ambassador organisations. This means that those who engaged in the project were necessarily members of these organisations. As a matter of fact, some participants were already involved in the organisations' activities. Participants were mainly enlisted in an informal way.

The organisations' presence on social media such as Instagram made for another channel of communication and an alternative way to present the project. The posts relating to the project brought about new interactions with the young people who read them. Practicing English and participating in a European project also motivated some of the participants.

At first, the young people pointed out that the presentation of the project was not always very clear. Actually, getting a grasp of such a project sometimes takes time, even for youth professionals. The project's description, for instance, was sometimes very vague (as to issues, goals, etc.) However, as time went by, the young people involved gradually got a clearer understanding of the project. They found the topics on which we worked stimulating and inspiring: *"A European project between several organisations, that promotes informal knowledge not taught at university (including rap), now that is awesome"*. It helped maintain a certain dynamic.

The participants explained that they had only very few expectations as regards to the project and therefore few fears or doubts. Indeed, the people who made up the team of facilitators gave off an air of calm. What's more, some of the young people had already taken part in other projects with members of the team of facilitators.

It is also an offer that does a world of good. Indeed, some point out that European media are very pessimistic (fascism, war, etc.). This project brings us together and helps us realise that we are not alone. It is also a way to share our common wishes to act (more solidarity, less inequalities).

The young people involved in the project

The young participants have all had at least one experience with university, good or bad, involving various fields such as arts, communication, psychology, political sciences, social sciences, etc. They value the independence they are given at university. But they find the teaching methods still too top-down, sometimes even dehumanising. They feel like university is thoroughly disconnected from reality.

At ToHAI, the young people involved in the project were mainly those who participated in the microadventures. The group then expanded through word-of-mouth. All the young people are students at university, but none of them feel comfortable there.

At DMZ, the young people involved in the project were at first mainly those directly involved in the organisation (interns, young people doing voluntary community service and volunteers). The group then grew to include those young people who are used to associating with the organisation.

The part played by each person

Each person played a quite different part in the project. At ToHAI, the obligations and wishes of each and every one had to be taken into account (as everyone there is a volunteer). Zakaria favoured the research process, making sure to provide it with a framework (he read, listened to podcasts, gave interviews and transcribed them). As for Sophia, she developed a horizontal relationship with the young people involved in order to assist them in their work. She also took care of the administrative follow-up of the project. According to ToHAI, there is little difference between the facilitators and the young people they supervise. All of them are young and participate in the project in order to learn. At DMZ, Rémi dealt with teamwork and administrative issues, whereas Kevin supervised the artistic programme. Gradually, the rest of the team and volunteers took an active part in the project. As for ToHAI, the boundary between facilitators and the people they supervise seems quite blurred.

Goals

ToHAI's goal was to raise awareness of the low representation of racialised young people in natural spaces. The goals of DMZ were: 1. To participate in a European project with a political reach that echoed the organisation's own actions; 2. To develop a complete musical course, from writing to recording, in fact all the way to performing on stage. The important thing is that everyone should enjoy themselves.

Concrete actions

ToHAI's first concrete act was to take a group on an alpine hike and to have them engage in research on the absence of racialised young people from such spaces. Group interviews were conducted during the trip. More interviews were conducted on their return, as well as a world café and a walking debate, followed by reciprocal interviews and street interviews.

Up till now, there have been four phases to DMZ's project: the public performance at the Pasteur Hotel, the links with the students from the university, the hike at Cap Fréhel and the organisation of freestyle sessions.

2. Evaluating the local process as young people

Overall? Particular phases/aspects of the local process? What did they like? What did they dislike? Did they have any recommendations? Etc.

Recruiting difficulties

At ToHAI, Zakaria and Sophia wish they could have included young people who are not at university, or young exiles. The young participants do not have much time to spare because they have gone on with their studies and/or are abroad. DMZ's main difficulty was to maintain the young people's participation all through the project by continually trying to take their respective constraints into account. Both organisations wish they could have involved the students that they met at the presentations of OUIE to a greater degree.

Teamwork

At ToHAI, the year 2022 has been particularly dense in terms of group dynamics: the group got together practically every week; the trip to Finland then helped reinforce the process. Since the end of the summer holidays, however, the meetings do not really take place anymore.

The group dynamics at DMZ were, from the start, very strong: the prospect of going all the way to performing on stage was a powerful motivation for the young people involved.

On a practical and organisational level, the group appreciated being assigned responsibilities, sensing the team of facilitators' trust and being assisted in building something collectively. According to the young people, they are assisted on several levels: organisation, idea sharing, promoting self-confidence... The help they receive is always based on a horizontal relationship between participants and facilitators. All the participants feel included in the project, and that the place they are given is based on their wishes and availability, whether this place be central or peripheral.

Facilitating difficulties:

The most difficult thing to do today at ToHAI, is getting the young people to participate in collaborative writing.

The facilitators at DMZ were under a lot of pressure to offer the young people something entirely new, such as creating a staged performance of "A Rap Course at University".

Adjusting actions during the project:

The actions organised by ToHAI had to be adjusted each time one of the participants' statuses changed: the three people initially in charge started out as students at the beginning of the project, then found jobs which

took up a lot of their time; some young people went on with their studies, others moved abroad. The group became less and less available, thus leading Zakaria to favour remote work for instance, or activities through social media.

DMZ's actions took shape over the whole course of the project, but quite a few of these activities were new to the facilitators: gathering sounds from nature during the hike at Cap Fréhel, facilitating the conference with Anne...

Resources employed

ToHAI mobilised many resources: social media, written texts (not necessarily in French, nor always scientific), podcasts and YouTube videos presented by racialised people, as well as song lyrics.

Because of the variety of actions they carried out, DMZ mobilised many different resources: writing, beatmaking, recording, performing before an audience...

Cooperating with the university

ToHAI had intended to submit its theoretical framework to two researchers working on the project but did not carry that plan out. It is possible that the June meeting with the team of the IUT (University Institute of Technology) came about somewhat too late.

DMZ already had a few connections with the university, but these connections were strengthened by the project and extended in the form of courses that are currently being given both at the IUT and at the EHESP.

All the young people involved believe that projects such as this one fit in at university, as it is, according to them, a place of learning. They believe, however, that society does not value academic knowledge enough, and that it is therefore not a real stepping-stone. Nevertheless, such projects are a way of anticipating students dropping out, and of offering them new content, approaches and teaching methods. Such as using rap to tackle academic subjects for instance.

Assessment

At ToHAI, Zakaria and Sophia wonder whether the project was too ambitious, and whether there should have been more concrete elements. According to them, however, the young people's involvement in this project will change the course of their lives and help them feel more at ease at university. Their assessment of the project is positive: it gave legitimacy to their actions and made them more visible. However, they wish they had had more time to engage in it, and, maybe, that they had promoted it better on a local level.

At DMZ, both the young people's and the facilitators' assessments are very positive. They all found themselves new skills, discovered new actors and new actions to experiment. The project was quite fulfilling.

The participants found the experiment rich. They mention knowledge passed on in an informal and sensitive way, based, for instance, on their emotions and life stories. The more formal workshops also helped overcome mental barriers. Some of the participants now allow themselves to write, travel and practice activities which they used to consider as out of bounds.

Setting aside the main theme, this type of experiment is also for them a way to put themselves in somebody else's shoes and exchange on complex and sensitive subjects without exposing themselves. The issues of mental health and gender, for instance, were addressed parallel to the formal workshops.

All in all, the participants appreciated taking part in the experiment. According to them, this project connects people and brings them together, thus helping them break their daily routine. It makes them openminded, enables them to experience group learning, as well as learn to compromise, and most of all helps them make progress together.

Socially, participating in an experiment of this kind brings people out of isolation and feels good on a social and emotional level. Some say it serves the public interest. They mention the fact that they are surrounded by people who have real values. According to them, this makes them feel well, comfortable with themselves, which means they allow themselves to dream, accept themselves for who they are, they are more confident and can therefore move on with their plans for the future.

Some of them were also able to pass on their art. This was very important for them, as they have very little opportunity to do it, there being few spaces dedicated to that. According to the participants, it is very rewarding when real actions are carried out, even though for some, what they value the most is the encouragement they receive: *"I feel like I'm totally benefitting from this project!"*

Some also felt like they were halfway between facilitators and participants, given that they were able to pass on techniques (rapping, hiking, studio recording, developing self-confidence).

All in all, they believe such projects can offer young people several things: feeling useful and valued. In this case, it also gives keys to understanding the academic world and that of non-profit organisations.

However, they also mention the fact that the project requires making yourself available, both physically and mentally. This project would also benefit from being more precise from the start, by clarifying its goals. Some also felt the language barrier, despite the whispered translations that we saw to. This was a bit frustrating for some. Last of all, they all mention the fact that this project helped them define what they will do next.



3. Evaluating the local process as facilitators/coordinators

Participants' attitudes/feelings/concerns/expressed thoughts? Any eureka moments on your part?

Patricia: I did not attend all the events of the project, but it seems to me that some of the highlights were the gathering at the Pasteur Hotel, the hike at Cap Fréhel and the trip to Finland, followed by the show at the BAM in June. Being an academic, the trip to Finland was, for me, a high point to get to know the participants better, to understand their respective actions more thoroughly and to exchange points of view. On several occasions, I felt like I wasn't following the progress of the project enough, that I was lagging behind, but one of the participants described a similar feeling to me, so I suppose we essentially had this feeling because of the project being so rich.

Yoann: Several "symbolic" moments throughout the experiment were key to the project's success. The launch at Pasteur marked the true beginning of the project with the young people. The hike to Fréhel enabled the two organisations to truly meet and start working on a common course. For many, it helped raise awareness of certain societal issues. From then on, a wish to build something together appeared. The roundtable was the first large-scale event, giving us a glimpse of how the project was progressing and of its realisation. The trip to Helsinki was an opportunity for some to meet the other European partners. That is how they became aware of the European dimension of the project. The various moments dedicated to presenting the project were crucial to understanding it. Celebrating helped bring the group together. The showcase was one of the high points because it also represented the end of the experiment. Last of all, even though some continue to work remotely, the experiment marked the end of a cycle for most.

4. Concluding thoughts and reflections

What have you learned during and after your local process? Anything that worked great, and you would recommend to other practitioners? Anything you would have done differently if you had to design and carry out your local process all over again?

Patricia: I learned so many things during the project. First, I was absolutely fascinated by the skills displayed by the young people involved in the project, whether in terms of artistic production or technical command. It seems to me (but, once again, I did not attend all the events) that the greatest success was the production of “A Rap Course at University”. The young people involved were all able to express themselves, write high-quality lyrics and produce an equally high-quality recording. I would therefore recommend carrying out such actions for similar projects, with, perhaps, a more diversified public: they are a way to acknowledge each person’s skills and consolidate group dynamics, while providing substantial content which can be used to report on the project. From my point of view as a researcher, if we were to start over, I think it would be interesting if there were more crossovers between the facilitators from the organisations and the researchers in the parts they play.

Yoann: I am thoroughly convinced that such projects are crucial to helping young people reveal their skills. I believe this kind of experiment should be mandatory for students starting their higher education, and that they should simultaneously include young people for whom university is a distant reality. It also makes me wonder about the limits of academic work, both in terms of load and pace, and therefore about the need to reform the contents of course units and teaching methods. Classical methods (oral expression, written expression, educational methods) are, according to me, still too standardised. It would be interesting to encourage university in welcoming new expression and learning spaces on campus (e.g., summer schools, hip-hop concerts/festivals, etc.), but also if university could turn to new academic learning spaces, such as Third Spaces.

During this experiment, the rigid framework of university held us back on certain aspects of the project. But university can also make things easier on an administrative level when it comes to hosting projects such as OUIE. I am positive that alliances could be made formal, which would include the emancipation of young people on a daily basis. Reciprocal practices (relation to writing, to demonstrating, to reflection, etc.) should be developed, as well as the use and reinterpretation of academic research methods. Last of all, identifying the symbolic violence sometimes generated by university should be a focus, as well as identifying how university can, on the other hand, be associated with recognition in young people’s minds.