



The systematization adventure

How to look and learn
about our practices
from our practices



ALBOAN



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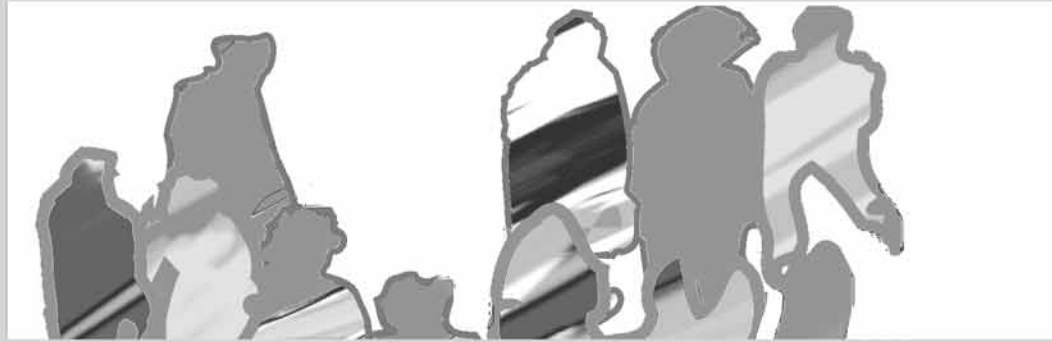
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1. Introduction

Several years ago, the three organizations behind this project (ALBOAN, Instituto de Derechos Humanos Pedro Arrupe and Hegoa) published a report entitled “Systematization - A New Look at Our Practices. Guide to the sistematization of Social Transformation Experiences” that would be the guide and the first approach to systematization from our perspective.

We have since then continued to work and, above all, to systematise. Over the last three years, we have been involved, together with several other organizations, in a process to systematise ten citizen-participation experiments implemented in the Basque Country, Valencia, Costa Rica and Colombia. We would therefore like to thank the trust, support and involvement of the nine organizations that have systematised one or several aspects of their experiences: Asociación de Mujeres del Oriente (AMOR, Colombia), Asociación Bidegintza Elkarte (Basque Country), Cáritas Bizkaia (Basque Country), Centro de Estudios y Publicaciones Alforja (Costa Rica), Colectivos del Parke (Valencia), Cooperativa Copevisa (Colombia), Elhuyar Aholkularitza (Basque Country), Escuela Popular Claretiana (Colombia) and Mujeres del Mundo-Munduko Emakumeak Babel (Basque Country). The effort put in by these organisations would not have had the results that we showcase in different publications without the support and advice of a further three organisations that have worked with the organising entities in the various locations: Centro de Estudios y Publicaciones Alforja (Costa Rica), Dimensión Educativa (Colombia), Iniciativas de Cooperación y Desarrollo (Basque Country). The result of this work are the publications of ten citizen-participation experiences systematizations, a publication about citizen participation and this guide¹.

¹ These materials can be requested from the project promoters.



2. Presentation

Supporting the systematization process of the different citizen-participation experiments has allowed us to prepare this new publication. We believe that systematization continues to be a sufficiently far-reaching and, in turn, well-known word. The systematization process allows us to consider, recover, analyse and learn from our practices. It gives us clues and criteria on how to do so, but it leaves a very wide margin for flexibility and creativity.

From this perspective, this publication is aimed at complementing the previously published guide with reflections, experiences and techniques that we have implemented to systematise citizen-participation experiences.

We believe that it is important that, at the time of getting involved in a systematization process, both guides are available as the information that appears in them is complementary. It is logical to understand the different ways of understanding systematization, which appear in the first guide, to know the background to our approach and what it is we want to do with our own systematization. The previous guide can therefore be an important element for the first steps described in it.

In this guide, we look more thoroughly at the latest points that are referred to in the previous one and share specific experiences by various organisations.

You therefore have in your hands tips and recommendations to encourage you to set off on the adventure of recognising and learning from your experiences and even to help to expand the knowledge of the people in your own organization, other organizations and the academic world.

This guide contains short tips about the systematization and development of each of the steps that we consider to be necessary in this type of process. Therefore and, for each of the steps, the key elements, recommendations and advice are spotlighted regarding the experience, together with some of the techniques used by the aforementioned organizations.

At the end of the guide, you will find reflections and considerations about the systematization processes that have emerged from practice itself, together with the contact address of each of the organisations taking part in the experiment.

3. The systematization adventure

The commitment to human development and social transformation in a globalisation context requires constant changes and adjustments to our practices. But these changes have to be based on the reflection and critical consideration of the work carried out. In other words, previous experience has to be the elements that provides us with the clues for improving our practices.

Understanding the processes of the organizations has always been a challenge facing the social sciences. It continues to be so today and to affect the work and life of many people. The proposed methodology that is set out here can be a further contribution to help us to understand the social processes and the specific practices that we implement as associations. And, not only to understand them, but also to jointly analyse them from a critical perspective and generate new learning experiences.

Therefore, this guide considers a methodological proposal that facilitates:

- ◆ Joint and share reviewing of our practices.
- ◆ Appropriation by those that have been through the experience.
- ◆ New learning.
- ◆ Tips for new proposals and new agendas.
- ◆ Generating new knowledge that can help to link what is considered and the academic aspect with the specific practices.

Without doubt, this learning and new knowledge are the result of a great effort by the organisations. The systematization adventure means beginning a path and a journey with a purpose, but without it being clear about all the routes and where they will take us, the questions that will arise and the challenges that we will come up against.

In any event, it is always up to us to play the leading role of this adventure and, as we progress, we will have the opportunity to take decisions and make the relevant adjustments to reach a satisfactory conclusion.



4. The systematization itinerary

The different systematization milestones are set out below. These milestones play a chronological role and help us and give up tips on how to perform the systematization process.

However, as we know from the social processes in which we are involved, this route is not a smooth, flat and well laid out road, but it has its setbacks, its unmarked boundaries, its short cuts and its dead-ends. However, experience has shown us that, in this systematization adventure, nothing is in vain and, at the end of the process, we learn from each of the parts of the path taken.

In any event, it should be remembered that systematization is a proposal that enables the group alone or along with any other person to reflect, question, learn and agree on tips for subsequent practices.

It is not a “recipe” but rather a flexible and open proposal that has to be adjusted and adapted to the group according to its experience, timing, resources, etc. However, it help not only to improve our practices but also all the people involved in the action to learn and be empowered.

Our aim is therefore to be able help to improve our social action, to empower those people with whom we work and to transform the world where we live.

Step 1: The starting point

Experiencing, showing interest, approaching the topic and decision taking

Experiencing

Even though it may be obvious, the key element is having experienced the experience. If we have not experienced it, we cannot systematise it. However, it may be the case that the starting point is that we want to systematise an experience that we are going to experience, that still has not happened, and during which, we can prepare the systematization that we will subsequently implement. In any case, the experience has to be experienced in order to be able to systematise it.

Showing interest

Another of the key elements is to have an experience that, for whatever reason, we believe to be interesting or from which we can learn significantly. The desire or interest shared by the most people to want to learn from experience is essential both for the more “technical” development of the experience and as motivation in the systematization adventure.

Approaching the topic

We sometimes know that we have experiences that are important but we do not know what to do with them. In some cases, we are interested in recovering all the key documents of the experience, in others to remember it and experience it and in other case to discover it, recall it, analyse it and learn from it. Therefore, we need to establish what systematization is and to recognise what we are looking for. We sometimes believe that we want to systematise and, in reality, that it is just enough to gather information is enough or, at least, it is to most of us. Therefore it is necessary at that moment.

◆ To know what a systematization process is.

It is important that the people who are going to systematise are in contact with the systematization idea, that we discuss what we understand by systematization, what steps we are going to take on this route, etc. This introduction to systematization can be a training workshop, an assembly or meeting of our organisation... in any space where, starting from which each of us knows or senses about systematization, we can enrich and expand that view. It is the time to get excited about the process and take it increasingly more onboard.²

² The material that appears in the previous publication can be used at this point. Both the printed material and that on that on the website www.alboan.org/sistemizacion.

◆ Consider what are our expectations regarding this systematization process.

Identify the expectations that each participant has regarding the systematization process and compare them with the rest of the group, as it is important to position ourselves and the other people, to get to know and recognise ourselves. When we raise this question, many different ideas usually come out. Some of them will be more directly connected with the very experience experienced, with other more personal aspects, in other cases with the systematization method... In this case, the expectations should be ordered by topics, which will allow us to see them in a more organised way and get our bearings for the next steps. In any case, this is when we need to open up to other ideas, listen to the concerns, searches and priorities of the people taking part in the systematization. That will then be the moment to set the boundaries and jointly decide on what to focus our systematization.

Decision taking

Once certain questions have been clarified and the group's expectations established, it is time to take a decision. This decision can be to perform the systematization, produce a report of our background etc.

Undoubtedly, when it comes to decision taking, we need to have a certain idea of what experience we wish to systematise and for what end. When we take the decision, we probably believe that this is all very clear, but there will be precise points and questions that need to be answered throughout the process.

We need to be aware that the decision taking has implications and repercussions for the organization. The systematization process requires time and people, requires institutional input and requires a desire to learn and question our practices.

If the decision is positive, it should be accompanied by:

- ◆ Setting up of a systematising team that will be the driving force of the process. This team will motivate, encourage and get other people hooked on taking part.
- ◆ Approximate demarcation of the time that we wish to dedicate to this process.

In this systematization adventure, this is the moment of hope, dreaming and risk.



Fundamental element

- ◆ Having taken part in the experience.
- ◆ Wanting to learn from it.
- ◆ Desire to perform a systematization process.



Recommendations

- ◆ Gather the expectations and have them present throughout the process.
- ◆ That is the moment to motivate and appropriate the process: we can put a name to it, to the different moments.
- ◆ Set up the systematization development team and the relevant timeline. The start and end dates can be set.
- ◆ Keep a record of what occurs during the systematization process.

Comments

It should be in a position to make a critical consideration of what the entity does.

It is fundamental that institutional and personal resources and possibilities are allocated.

It is essential for its development that the organisation or the maximum number of its people take this on as their own project.

◇ The starting point

Experience in which it was used:

Mujeres del Mundo-Munduko Emakumeak Babel

Title of the activity:

Systematization of Mujeres del Mundo experience: is it or is it not possible?

Goal:

- **General goal:** Explore the possibility of undertaking the systematization process of the work experience of Mujeres del Mundo Association.
- **Specific goals:** Pooling the systematization concept and create the concept for the Association. Identify the why and wherefore of the activity. Acquire work commitments regarding the systematization topic.

Implementation

The Systematization Committee made the activity more dynamic and then reported to the meeting.

1. **A presentation was made on the activity in general and its aim.**
2. **The group systematization concept was set up to approach the theoretical-academic concept.**

Blank pieces of paper and pens were handed out to the participants. They were then invited to write the first thing that came to mind when they heard the word “systematization”.

The great majority associated the term with “to organise” and others with “to order”, which indicated that they had a very good idea, based on intuition, of what the term meant.

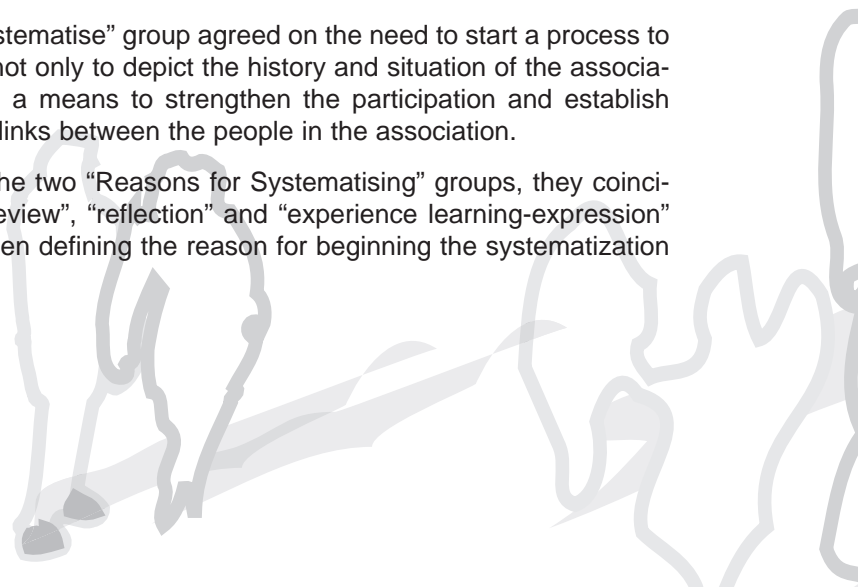
Some yellow cards were they shown brief descriptions of the systematization concept, as it is seen by the academic world. The conclusion was reached that the participants had stated the main characteristics of what is theoretically defined as systematization.

3. **Whys and Wherefores? Systematising.**

Two large groups were set up and these in turn were divided into two smaller groups. Two groups considered the question “*Why systematise?*” while the other two groups worked on the “*the reason for systematising?*” question.

The two “why systematise” group agreed on the need to start a process to organise ideas, not only to depict the history and situation of the association, but also as a means to strengthen the participation and establish more and better links between the people in the association.

In the cases of the two “Reasons for Systematising” groups, they coincided in stating “review”, “reflection” and “experience learning-expression” as key points when defining the reason for beginning the systematization process.



4. Brainstorming session on the “more theoretical” whys and wherefores.

Cards were shown with brief ideas about the theoretical reasons for initiating experience systematization processes and what they are used for and their contribution. Stress was placed where theory coincided with what the group’s needs were seen to be.

5. Final reflection. Meeting point.

The goals of the session were gone over to try and reach points of agreement among all the participants.

Emphasis was placed on two key questions:

- ◆ Whether or not a systematization process would be initiated from the Women of the World experience.
- ◆ Would the systematization be carried out in the framework of the project headed by the three organizations or would it be at our rate?

The vote on the first question ended with a Yes.

In order to answer the second question, an ALBOAN representative needed to explain the current project that had been underway in various organizations for a year, its advantages and disadvantages, together with the challenges that it would mean for Women of the World to take part in it.

Once they had listened to the explanation and clarified their doubts, the Assembly voted YES to join the project and asked to receive initial training on the methodology required to work in a systematization process and also on citizen participation, which are the starting points for all the organisation involved in this systematization project. A time line was then to set up to comply with the envisaged goals.

Materials required:

- ◆ Sheets of paper, pens and coloured card.

Time required:

- ◆ The length of Mujeres del Mundo monday meeting, approximately two hours.



Comments:

In a subsequent session, the participants agreed to call the systematization process “Colour Fan” (Abanico de colores) from then onwards and named each of the steps that would be taken in the process.

◇ The starting point

Experience in which it was used:

Asociación Bidegintza Elkartea

Title of the activity:

Approaching Systematization:

As is standard practice at Bidegintza, two people were appointed to lead and be the driving force behind the systematization project/process. After an initial training workshop and a couple of initial meetings between the two promoters, it was time to pass on the progress and what had been learnt to the whole team, in order to be able to share, participate and take on board the systematization process in which we had committed to take part.

We believe that it was fundamental to call the team to a meeting that was dynamic and where explanations would be combined with comparisons, analysis of expectations and establishing consensus.

It was a totally new process and therefore attractive, user-friendly and explanatory graphic material was needed. It was the first time that the team tackled systematization and we wanted to “win over the team”, a team that was already up to their eyes with work and commitments in the coordination network, and the emphasis was on “anything that helps” with the certainty that it would help us.

Goal:

- Introduce the Bidegintza team of professionals to the systematization method/process.
- Begin to share expectations and involve everyone in the decision taking process regarding the what, how and when of the experience to be systematise, in short, to begin to reflect and decide about the.

Implementation

1. A colourful PowerPoint (PPT) document was created, with many images and little text, where the two promoters presented to the team the basic tools and concepts to be used in a systematization process.
2. We organised a meeting led by the two promoters, where apart from presenting the systematization process, the other members of the team were given to time so that they could begin to put forward questions, expectations, concerns, contributions, etc.
3. In the first part, we explained what we understand by systematization in an ordered and formal way, with the help of the PowerPoint that we had prepared. As it was a totally new process, the team needed time to digest it. Questions were raised that the two proactive promoters answered.
4. We already began to speak about the possible experiences to be systematised, with different nuances, approaches, time lines, etc., in a more informal way, and shortly afterwards, the meeting table was covered with posters, photos, and anecdotes, which recalled a load of pleasing memories and shared vital processes. And this is where we had to get down to specifying and pruning, as there was a great temptation to “systematise everything”.
5. During the second part of the meeting, we invited the two external facilitators (in charge of the citizen participation experiences systematization project) that had previously trained the Bidegintza promoters and who would then help us throughout the systematization process.

With the help of the facilitators, based on our expectations and the time that we could dedicate to the systematization, we structured “what we want to systematise”

(object), “why we want to systematise” (goal), “from what point of view” (core). We structured the work done and what still had to be done. We did this in the main group with the help of flip charts and colour felt tips, with open but specific questions and brainstorming.

6. The two Bidegintza promoters told us to come to decisions on how to go further into and qualify based on the fundamental steps that we took during that session.

Materials required:

- ◆ Power Point presentation.
- ◆ Flip chart.
- ◆ “The systematization a new look at our practices. Guide to the systematization of social transformation experiences”.

Time required:

- ◆ A four-hour working day. One two-hour session involving the whole Bidegintza team and another two hour session when the two external facilitators also took part.

List of expectations

- ◆ This experience to serve and/or complement other processes in which the entity is immersed.
- ◆ For this project not to be overwhelming in terms of time.
- ◆ To systematise an experience that has turned out badly, to learn.
- ◆ To systematise an experience that has turned out well, to strengthen us, and not yet again to burden us with “duties”, focus more on “what we do not know than on what we already know”, while setting out everything that has not been done and which should be done/improved regarding the future.
- ◆ That it would be perfect to systematise everything that Bidegintza has done over its 15 year history, for example, regarding the community decision.
- ◆ But it would have to be pruned back, therefore... we could systematise an internal Bidegintza experience, for which we had sufficient data, and in which the majority of the current. Bidegintza had been involved.
- ◆ And wouldn't it be more interesting to systematise an experience that is more external to Bidegintza, in which more people and/or organisations have participated?
- ◆ It is interesting to analyse the participation of the different promoter organisations of the experience to be systematised, but as Bidegintza works with people, why not better analyse the local citizen participation in the experience to be systematised?
- ◆ Or something a little easier, the participation of our users in the experience to be systematised, and therefore be more specific and simplified.

Comments:

Finally, these expectations were translated into:

GOAL: “Rethink how to motivate the participation of different entities in community processes”.

PURPOSE: “Process to demand free time and leisure spaces for minors and young people of the old part of Bilbao, between 2002 and 2004”.

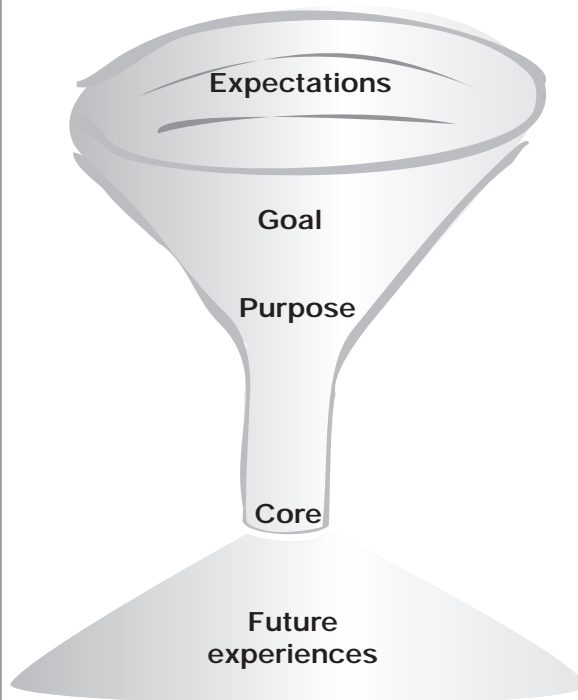
CORE: “Elements that facilitate and hinder that participation of the entities”.

Step 2: The initial questions

Why, what and from which perspective

For the decision taking to systematise, we identified an experience and expectations of what we wanted to obtain with the systematization process, and it was then time to specify these intuitions and desires.

This was a moment that is usually very difficult as it is difficult to leave “things out”, as everything seems to be important. We sometimes felt lost, and had to take a leap to define them. However, the field of analysis needs to be well marked out to go further into an experience. People warn not to take on too much and that is what we had to remember at that time. We had to clearly specify what we are going to study, trust and leave our concerns on side. Finally, we studied experiences, out the key and fundamental elements were there and always appeared. We will later see how, despite having analysed a more specific experience, the learning processes that we extracted can be generalised to many of our experiences and to the experiences of other organisations.



This is one of the potentials of systematization: based on an experience marked out in time and space, we can extract conclusions and things learnt for other experiences, times and places.

If we return to our systematization adventure comparison, we would say we came up against a bottleneck and tension at that time. Choices had to be made, while prioritising and marking out boundaries. However, I am sure that we chose aspects and key moments that generate learning processes for much more than that specific experience.

We have set out below the questions that have to be answered to define our systematization process. They are presented as they appear in the graph from the most general to the most specific. However, we will sometimes be clear about what we want to systematise and less clear about why and from what perspective. In other cases, we will be very clear about why we want to systematise, but less clear about the specific experience to be systematised... In any event, we can answer these initial questions in the order we want. What is important is that they help us to clarify and to reach agreements.

Why do we want to systematise?

The goal

The reason why we want to systematise helps us to define the goal of the systematization. We have to be clear, concise and realistic when defining the systematization goal. This goal depends on the group, the expectations, the moment, the time...

As we have already stated there is a wide range of possibilities to answer the question regarding why we want to systematise. The answer to this question is also going to mark out how to do it.

It is not the same to systematise to establish the experience of a systemising group as to analyse the causes of the success/failure of the experience, etc. Depending on where we place the emphasis: on defining the methodology, on the participants, etc, the goal of our systematization will be different.



Fundamental element

- ◆ The reason why we want to do this experience.
- ◆ Be clear about the utility of this systematization.



Recommendations

- ◆ Take the mission and institutional strategy into account.
- ◆ Take the institutional and personal opportunities and interests into account.

What experience do we want to systematise?

The purpose

The experience to be systematised is to be delimited in time and space. What is marked out may depend on the goal of the experience in itself, of the specific context, etc.

A start date and a completion date should be set for the specific experience that is going to be systematised. This specification is known as “the object to be systematised”.



Fundamental element

- ◆ Choose which experience we are going to systematise.
- ◆ Set the time, subjects and space of the experience.



Recommendations

- ◆ The whole experience does not have to be tackled.
- ◆ It can help to prune the object by recalling the significant moments, the key facts of the experience or any decision moment of it.

What central aspects of that experience are we interested in systematising?

The core

The core of the systematization needs to be specified: which is rather the focus or “the glasses” with which we are going to looking at that specific experience. It means looking from a perspective at that experience so that we do not overstretch ourselves too much, and do not try to tackle the experience in its whole complexity.

The core may be formulated in very different ways and an experience may even be systematised while considering different cores depending on what is of interest.



Fundamental element

- ◆ Knowing what aspects, dimensions, factors, components are of greatest interest to us.
- ◆ Specifying the central focus and avoid dispersion.



Recommendations

- ◆ Think of it as a thread that runs through the whole experience.

Comments

The goal, purpose and core have to be inter-coherent.

It is good to remove the concerns to focus on and be realistic when defining the whys and wherefores. Therefore, the information and time available should be taken into account.

The formulas should always be explained, so that we understand what we are talking about. It therefore may help us to define the key words that appear in the goal, purpose and core, so that we are all on the same page.

It should always be remembered not to take on too much.

◇ The initial questions

Experience in which it was used:

Cáritas Bizkaia. Community animation team

Title of the activity:

Defining our goal, purpose and core.

Goal:

- Setting the goal, purpose and core.
- Deciding our own goal, purpose and core.

Implementation

1. The basic ideas were sets out about what the goal, purpose and core are and the doubts were clarified.
2. There was a brainstorming session with the ideas that were brought up.
3. This brainstorming was reviewed in light of the expectations that we had at the beginning.
4. The ideas were ordered according to whether they can respond more to the goal, purpose and core.
5. The decision was taking about our goal, purpose and core. In order to take the decision, we began be ruling out some aspects and arguing in favour of others. The decision was taken by consensus and based on arguments.

Materials required:

- ◆ Flip chart, roll of paper.

Time required:

- ◆ One three-hour session.

◆ Supplementary/extra material

The goal, purpose and core defined in this session were then presented.

Goal: Provide the tools and methods that foster greater participation of the different players in the extraordinary campaigns.

Purpose: Housing campaign in the Bizkaia diocese, June 2003 - June 2004.

Core: The role of the community animation team in the dynamising of that campaign.

◇ The initial questions

Experience in which it was used:

Red Costarricense de Control Ciudadano (CEP-Alforja)

Title of the activity:

Deciding our goal, purpose and core.

Goal:

- Defining by consensus the goal and core of the experience of the Red Costarricense de Control ciudadano.

Implementation

In February 2004, when the CEP Alforja was the focal point of Social Watch and had also become the driving force of the process where 14 social organisations aimed to influence the drawing up of the Government National Report on the Millennium Development Goals (MDG), the “No Excuses for Poverty in Costa Rica” citizen campaign was set up in order to turn it into a framework of actions which led to the organisation of the Red Costarricense de Control Ciudadano.

As it was an experience in the making, it resorted to the use of national context elements, working with social organisations, international CEP Alforja links that were the driving force behind the idea of creating an organization network aimed at converting it into a citizen control player regarding public policies in Costa Rica

1. This implied that the initial defining of the goal, purpose and core was, initially, defined by the Citizen Participation Programme, as this was behind the aforementioned process.
2. The proposal was put to the organization for its approval.

Materials required:

- ◇ Email.

Time required:

- ◇ One two-hour work session beforehand and one one-hour session with all the organisations taking part in the Network.

◆ **Supplementary/extra material**

The goal, purpose and core defined in this session were then presented.

Systemisation goal: Critically reconstructing and reflecting the contributions of this citizen experience to consider a new way of changing policy from society.

Systematization core: Skills developed by the Red de Control Ciudadano regarding political impact, vigilance and critical debate processes.

Comments:

In this case, the purpose was clear right from the start: the setting up of the Costa Rica Citizen Control Network and therefore, the work was to define the goal and the core.

Step 3: Recalling the process experienced

Reconstructing and ordering

This step was very attractive to carry out. It was highly gratifying, and in the majority of cases, we had skills in the organisation to do so in very creative forms and ways.

The sharing and completing this recovery of the process experience with the all the group's participants may be a means to motivate and reactivate the participation and involvement in the systematization process. That was then time to acknowledge everything that had be done and to invite the thoughts of the people who had experienced it.

However, we often dedicated it too much time and effort and we therefore barely had enough time and energy for the following steps.

Thus in our adventure, this was when we had to dig into the information, but also pace ourselves to make sure that we did not wear ourselves out for what was to come. Two important elements were highlighted as we delved into the past:

Reconstructing the past

- ◆ The aim was to gather together the moments and events which, in one way or another, had marked our experience, which had been key as they were particularly significant. In order to choose these moments, we would take into account the agreed goal, purpose and core. We also gathered those elements in the global, regional and local context, which had had an impact on our experience.
- ◆ At this point of the systematization process, our audiovisual, graphic and written records played a very important role... And also memory. It is very important that, apart from collecting data, we allocated space to gathering the different perceptions of the people who had undergone the experience.
- ◆ In order to reconstruct the past, we used different tools to gather these events: spirals , time lines, graphics, chronologies, accounts, etc. This occurred in workshops or team meetings, by interviewing specific people who were key to our experience, etc.
- ◆ When it came to implementing these tools collectively, in-depth questions and doubts emerged from the experience that we were systematising. They were noted down, but not answered or discussed. They would be questions that would guide us further one, but which we were not going to answer at that time. We used them to prepare a guide of critical questions on a flip chart, that we would later go back to and which would allow us to discover why what happened, happened.

Ordering and classifying the information

- ◆ It usually happens that after reconstructing the past, whatever the technique we use, we have a great deal of information that needs to be ordered and classified so that we can handle it and understand it. We will even need to go further into some aspects that have emerged. Therefore, various techniques may help us that appear in the examples. These techniques will allow us to recover the most important facts, break them down according to a series of the elements that are connected to the goal and core and allow the process to be reconstructed.
- ◆ We should remember that the doubts, questions, hypothesis or questions that emerge should be noted down on a separate paper (which we have previously called the critical questions guide) that will allow us to analyse and interpret our experience.



Fundamental element

- ◆ Reconstructs in an ordered way what happened, as it happened.
- ◆ Identifies the stages of the process.
- ◆ Classifies the available information.




Recommendations


- ◆ Based on all the possible records. These may be meeting minutes, “diaries/field logs”, draft documents, planning schedules, seminar reports, photographs, recordings, videos, graphs, maps, drawings... which can be used to prepare record notebooks depending on what we want to systematise and how. There is an infinite variety of possibilities that depend on the creativity of the persons and the group.
- ◆ Organise the information clearly and visibly and foster the participation of the people who have experienced the experience. They can complete the information and even get involved more actively in this process.
- ◆ We should remember that everything counts and is valid when recovering objective and subjective elements from memory.




Comments




Records nearly always exist, but it is difficult for them to hold everything that is necessary. We will have to use the records that already exist as far as possible.




The information in the records can be completed with the memories of the participants establishing a triangulation effect (reality, records and memory).




The verbal sources have to be processed with their potential and limitations.



We can use this to involve the majority of the people that have participated in the experience. We can also use it to celebrate what has been done and to motivate the reflection that we are going to do subsequently.



It is good that when gaps are discovered and questions are raised, we do not answer them immediately. It is not the time, but we will note them down to take them into account further down the line.



Reconstructing the past is fundamental for systematization.

◇ Recovery of the process experienced

Experience in which it was used:

Colectivos del Parke

Title of the activity:

The snake.

Goal:

- To recover the most important moments that refer to the purpose of the systematization as experienced by the people that participated in each of those moments. Therefore, objective and subjective aspects of the experience are incorporated.

Implementation

1. The systematising team learnt what “the snake” consisted of and the time that it would take to complete this snake.
2. A large flip chart was hung on the wall and a snake was drawn on it from one end to the other. The start date of the experience was marked on the tail of the snake and the end date on the head. Both dates were those identified in the purpose of the systematization process.
3. Once the snake had been drawn, the two facilitators asked the team to think about the moments that have been the most significant in the experience of the cooperative, in the period of time highlighted in the snake. In order to perform this step, we resorted to the different graphic documents that were in the cooperative (photos, leaflets, newspaper articles...) and which, in one way or another, reflected the history of that time period.
4. From then onwards, the work on the snake was carried out collectively. In this step, we noted down, in the upper part of the snake, the issues from the immediate and distant context that had influenced the experience and, in the lower part, the questions relating to the very cooperative that had influenced the experience. We also used a coloured felt-tip to depict the facts that we highlighted and another colour was used to show how we experienced each of them.

We would like to highlight two aspects about how the snake was prepared and completed.

- There was an interesting debate in the group about whether it was better to prepare one or two snakes. While one person argued that the correct thing was to dedicate one snake to one of the most important activities carried out during that time period and another to cover the whole subsequent process, other people considered it was appropriate to consider the whole period prior and after that activity as a whole.
- Another matter that we would like to highlight is that not all the people who took part in the snake workshop had been in the experience to be systematised, as they had joined the collective subsequently. Therefore, the participation was not total when expressing the actions carried out during that period in the snake. However, using the memories and accounts of the people that were there, the other people grasped the importance, complexity and force of what happened.

5. The two people who facilitated this process returned to the main ideas that they considered had to be highlighted on the snake to direct the following steps of the systematization process.
6. Once the snake was made, we prepared a collective account of what had appeared (a complicated but very interesting experience) which meant organising ideas and reaching agreements in the group about how to gather them.
7. Once the snake was made, we identified some key moments which were then used to carry out the following steps of the systematization process.
8. We discussed the idea of preparing a video as a complement to the snake, opinions of other local people who have been involved in the systematised process. The people that you plan to interview have to be clearly identified.. It is recommended that they be different persons from those who are in the Systematising Team. The idea is that it has be completed and viewed by the Systematising Team before taking the next steps in the systematization process. The videos have to provide new ideas about the history of the experience of the cooperative. The question to be asked to the people interviewed, in this case is: What moments do you remember as important in the history of the cleaning cooperative and why do you consider them to be important?

Materials required:

- ◆ Flip chart.
- ◆ Felt tips.
- ◆ Marking tape.
- ◆ Photos, leaflets, newspaper articles...
- ◆ Video camera.

Time required:

- ◆ Two three-hour sessions. In addition, the time required to do the video script and interviews. This time will depend on the people who we plan to interview.

◇ Recovery of the process experienced

Experience in which it was used:

Asociación Bidegintza Elkartea

Title of the activity:

The spiral of our history.

Once the goal-purpose-core was agreed, all the entities involved in the experience were called together to involve everyone in designing the spiral of our history.

The people who came to this meeting were delighted to get together to dust off memories and be able to contribute figures, anecdotes, feelings... and we wanted to produce this spiral using all the objective data that we could gain from documents, posters, photos, etc. that we had been able to compile, but also by identifying and marking subjective aspects, that we knew were there and which had marked dates, decisions, processes...

At the end of the whole systematization process, we agreed that perhaps the best, most amusing and moving moment had been making the history spiral, when photos, posters and drawings of many people, and many shared moments had appeared, and which had made us smile and which brought us together as we remember moments that were very special for all of us.

Goal:

To collectively remember all the important moments that had made up the experience to be systematised in the period set in the purpose.

Ordering all these memories, dating them, putting names to their participants, contents... placing the emphasis on the visual and being coherent with the goal, purpose and core.

Implementation

1. When the five entities taking part of the experience to be systematised were invited to the meeting, we asked them to bring any material (photos, posters, documents, cuttings, drawings, etc.) that could help us to remember.
2. The first thing we did was to draw a very large spiral on a very large flip chart, because, as all the memories did not come out in an ordered way, we had to “go backwards” several times and add and intersperse milestones, dates, etc.
3. We put all the materials contributed by the entity representatives on the floor next to the “huge flip chart”, in order to be able to see them all clearly and we began to put them in small files according to the moments that they refer to.
4. We began to reflect on the flip chart all the moments, add the date, the matter in question and added a small description of the matter. One person wrote down on the flip chart what was being said, using one colour for the date and another for the description. If any participant considered that it was important to add a note, for example about a subjective aspect or any conditioning external factor that he or she considered important, it was also added. The flip chart began to look like a “collage”...
5. Once the spiral was finished, and as we had several question marks about dates or participants, we set down all the queries on a piece of page, and we considered who could help us to solve them and, depending on that, we divided the queries between the people at the meeting and gave them 15 days to come back with the answers.



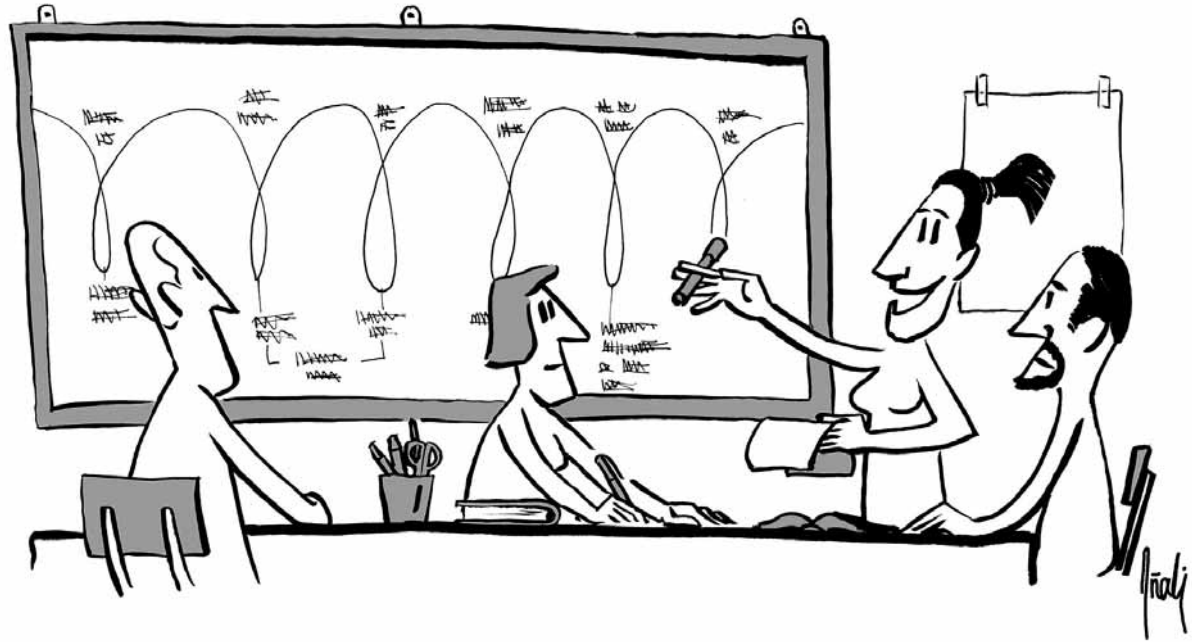
6. Two participants undertook to make a fair copy of all the contributions in the second meeting. This meant it would be easier to add the new data that was found and we could approve the spiral and move on to the next step in the systematization process.

Materials required:

- ◆ Flip chart.
- ◆ Colour felt tips.
- ◆ Minutes of the meetings, important milestones, etc.
- ◆ Photos, posters and everything that could help us to remember...
- ◆ ...and "a long memory".

Time required:

- ◆ An initial two-hour work session as a group.
- ◆ Time (we set ourselves 15 days) to look for or collate lost or forgotten data.
- ◆ A second meeting lasting one and a half hours to complete the spiral with the data obtained in the search and collate space.



Comments:

Finding a good archive of published materials and documents is not always very easy.

Memory is often unreliable and makes you confuse dates, events, etc.

It is often difficult to avoid the bias created by the subjective experience of the facts lived, for example, in order to give it to a more or less importance specific milestone, or to define this milestone as a facilitator or as an obstacle, etc.

◇ Recovery of the process experienced

Experience in which it was used:

Escuela Popular de Neiva

Title of the activity:

The memory bus.

Goal:

- Recovering and reconstructing the history of the experience according to each of the collectives involved and highlight the key moments for each of the collectives.

Implementation

We began with various MOTIVATION encounters with the educational players: teachers, former students and parents. Each group met separately on different dates. Various encounters with the teachers in different places. In each meeting, and using different dynamics, each person had the opportunity to express how motivated they were to undertake a task that meant additional commitments. The systematization goal and the contributions that each person could contribute to the qualification of the experience were gradually clarified.

1. Two days retreat at a venue near to the city was programmed for the teachers. This workshop was aimed at the colleagues taking part in the Bogota encounter and the following steps were followed.
2. After reconstructing the background of systematization in the context of popular education, comparative exercises were performed between the qualitative and the positivist research, in order to conclude with the need to turn systematization into a qualitative research process with the participation of the players themselves. Using an extended graphic, the proposed methodology was worked and we then moved on to recalling the history of the school.
3. Some exercises had been previously carried out and helped to understand the subjective part of the knowledge and the different visions and attitudes that could be presented in the research. A traditional bus, a traditional object, stimulated each participant to recall a fact or event in their life. This exercise was very rich due to the variety of shared experiences and the different representations that it has for each one. Special emphasis was placed on the different attitudes with popular sayings, such as: "everyone sees things from their point of view", "sticks and stones may break my bones but names will never hurt me", etc. The group analysed some of the sayings and tried to explain the attitudes that make it difficult to listen to views that are different to their own.

4. To recall the experience, an audiovisual was used that portrayed the natural and social setting of the school in its early years. A micro-exhibition was also prepared with photos, albums and documents.
5. Three groups were then organised according to the period that each educator had been linked to the innovation. Each group prepared a graphic that depicted the crucial moments of the years that they had experienced. Feedback became a surprising and collective reconstruction process as it was started by the most recent group and complemented with the other groups.
6. Before raising the in-depth questions, each put a personal question to the school, which allowed the meaning and the unfavourable and favourable implications that the experience had had on its life to be highlighted. E.g.: Dear school, why did you so influence my family and personal life?....
7. The goals of the systematization were then reformulated with emphasis on participation that in the majority coincided with the proposals by the colleagues in the Bogota workshop. The work plan was then traced where the group and personal tasks were established to expand the information.

Materials required:

- ◆ Exhibition of photographs from specific moments in the process.
- ◆ Audiovisual presentation.
- ◆ A model bus.
- ◆ Flip chart and felt tips.

Time required:

- ◆ Two workshop days.

◇ Recovery of the process experienced

Experience in which it was used:

Escuela Popular de Neiva

Title of the activity:

The memory stroll.

Goal:

- Recalling and reconstructing the the experience according to each of the collectives involved in it and highlighting the key moments for each of the collectives.

Implementation

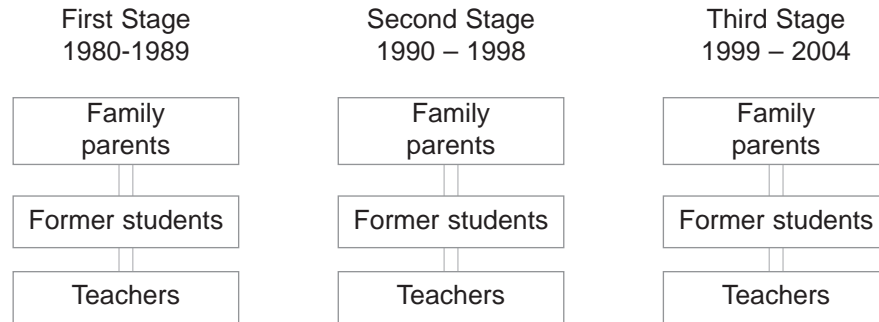
1. For the case of the former pupils, the workshops to recall the past of the school were run with 27 people who worked in organised groups broken down into the three significant stages (1980-1989; 1990 - 1998 and 1999 - 2004) which had characterised the educational experience. The same methodology was used as for the parents that consisted of a photography exhibition that we called THE MEMORY STROLL as a means to stimulate the memory. "The memory bus" was used with the teaching staff and they watched audiovisuals of the fundamental stage of the experience.
2. The workshop as such then began, with a brainstorming session", when the notions that the participants had about systematization were collected. They recalled their experiences in the classroom projects during the years of schooling and they recalled the six methodological steps by means of which the simple research processes were developed. These processes were implemented by the questions raised by the same children. The notions were considered one by one and a feedback session was held and expanded with the help of the workshop counsellors.
3. Then, the work groups, with the help of two teachers, reconstructed the path of the experience that each had undergone. A graphic representation was used which highlighted most important moments, products or facts of the experience recalled with respect to each of the participants at school.
4. The result of each group's work was pooled and an interesting question was raised. Once answered, it would enrich the memory and introduce changes in the graphics, to identify other important facts that have been omitted. The graphics showed the substantial differences between one and another stage and it was agreed to set up a commission so that the graphics were organised according to the time line and thus integrate the contributions in a single historical graphic.



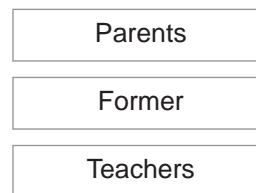
5. At a later stage, the results regarding the historical recovery obtained by the teaching staff, the parents and the former families were pooled. Three groups were organised by stages which included parents, former pupils and teachers. The work took place in two different periods, the first by stages and sub-groups and the second by strata in the following way:

First Stage 1980-1989	Second Stage 1990 – 1998	Third Stage 1999 – 2004
Parents	Parents	Parents
Former students	Former students	Former students
Teachers	Teachers	Teachers

1. Partial pooling by stages and sub-groups.



2. Presentation In group session.



6. During an hour and a half, each group discussed the most important graphics and events that marked their stage. The coincidences and variants were highlighted and doubts and concerns clarified. Dynamics were then prepared to communicate to the group sessions the part of their part of the account, based on the graph.

During the group session, a group set out the collective history with an interview. Another group resorted to the radical technique of a report using puppets and the intervention of the other players. The third group presented a television programme with a grassroots team and the interactive participation of the other members.

The group session allowed the whole past to be viewed by uniting the three stages of each account and it was completed by recording the significant coincidences and variants. Various questions were raised that expanded the basic information. It was seen that more precise data needed to be collected with respect to any fact that marked a crisis moment in the experience. It was therefore agreed to interview the members of the community who could not take part in this encounter.

In addition, the results of the historical recovery were passed on to the current parents in a very interesting collective event, which was aimed at motivating them to participate in a more sustained, aware and supportive way with those people that work to achieve a worthy school and within the reach of today's children.

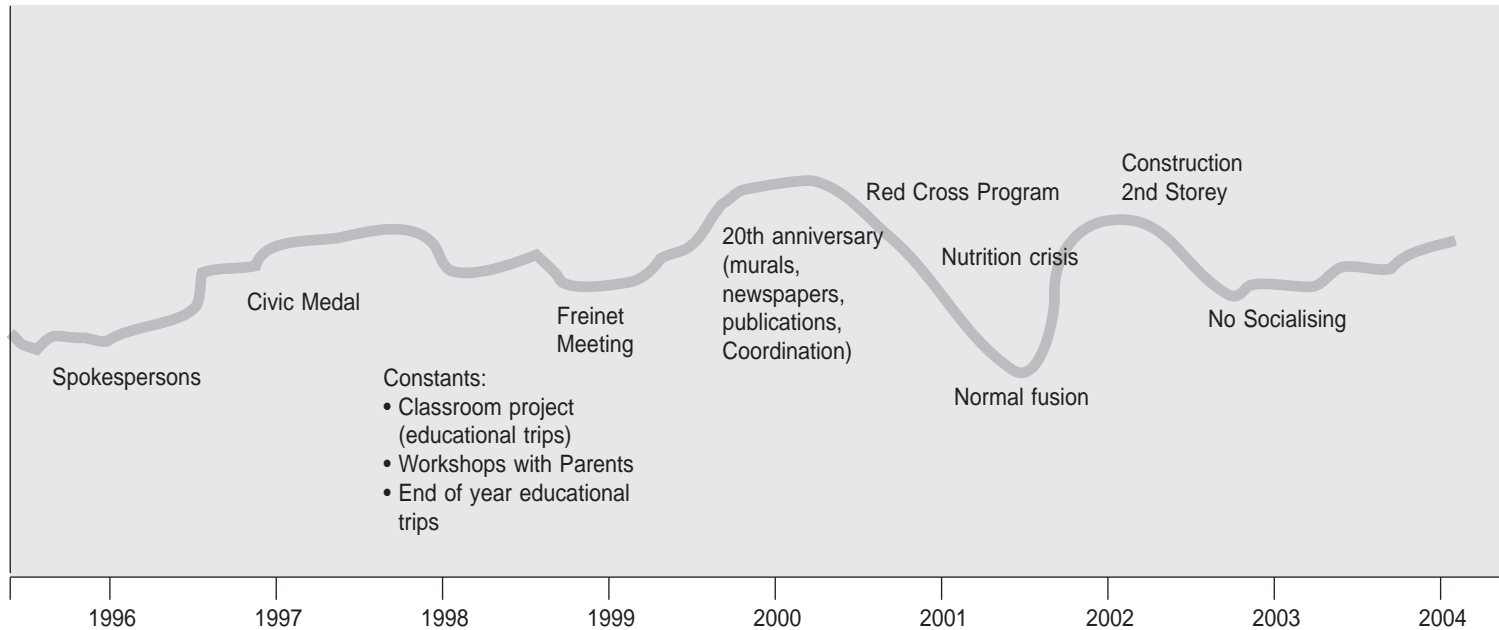
Materials required:

- ◆ Photography exhibition from specific moments in the process.
- ◆ Flip chart and felt tips.
- ◆ Material for the puppets, the radio account...

Time required:

- ◆ Some five-hour sessions.





Comments:

When analysing the results, we can conclude that the most important ones for the oldest former pupils is the re-encounter that just occurred in this workshop and they were also struck by the transformation that had taken place in the school. They began to establish contrasts between the former and current physical buildings, to recall the spaces and pleasant facts. All the memories focused on pleasant aspects and no sad or unfortunate experience emerged.

The presence of the participants was evaluated and it was noted that the greater number of delegates were in the first and third stage, while very few people were present in the second. An clear task for the next meetings is to improve the means of notifying the people about the meetings and to establish a balance regarding the number of delegate per stage.

◇ Recovery of the process experienced

Experience in which it was used:

Centro de Estudios y Publicaciones ALFORJA. Democracy and Gender Programme

Title of the activity:

Women leaders, women with history.

Goal:

- To share and enrich a historical reconstruction of the process recovered:
 1. The individual experiences and feelings.
 2. The experiences and main feelings of the collective process.
 3. An initial approach to topics to be critical analysed and interpreted in greater depth.
 4. Some lessons learnt.
- Preparing a historical reconstruction of the process that is reached at by consensus and which strengthens the collective identity, the process vision and the individual adhesion.
- Provide elements about the contribution of the experience systematization regarding the collective and individual processes to empower women.



Implementation 1. A reflection seminar lasting a day and a half was organised as set out in the subsequent worksheet.

Topic	Goals	Contents	Technique • Procedure	Materials
1. Motivation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introducing the workshop goals. • Raising awareness about the importance and wealth of the various perspectives. • Recovering glances at the process from institution and from the “first glance”. • Situate the workshop in the framework of the systematization process and its meanings. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Goals. • Contents. • Activities and timetable. • Goals of this Systematization. • Core. • Meaning of the systematization regarding the process. • What systematization is and its meanings. • Historical reconstruction. • Different perspectives to approach the reality. • The goal and the subjective. • The personal history and the experience and interpretation of the situations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In group session: welcome and organisation of the workshop (timelines, goals, etc.). (10’) • In group session: Status of the process systematization and this workshop. (20’) • Photoword: A picture was stuck on the whiteboard and the group looked at it Then, everybody wrote on a card what they could see. The ideas were pooled in a group sessions and was related to the systematization process. The contents and method were decoded with respect to the process systematization. (30’) • Break. (15’) • Sculpture technique: One of the participants was asked to make an initial sculpture where she expressed her intuitions and “feelings” about the process experienced by the women of the Cantón Central de Puntarenas. Two or three volunteers were asked to change the sculpture to reflect their perspective. Notes were written down on the flip chart and the others were asked to give their feedback without working on the statute. Feedback in a group session. (60’) • Lunch. (60’) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flip charts, pens, coloured cards, photographs, masking tape, attendance sheet.



Topic	Goals	Contents	Technique • Procedure	Materials
2. Towards a common vision.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make an initial attempt at a collective reconstruction of the process, collecting the individual approaches by the rural and urban women. • Identifying the common aspects and the differences. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Common stages - topic identification. • Main unforgettable moment. • Main fear experienced. • Powers won. • Powers lost. • Changes. • Untouchable areas. • Changes in the ways of understanding different practices. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guided group work: The group was divided into two. They reviewed the summary master copy, particularly the stages and flip charts. prioritised unforgettable moments, fears, anger, powers gained and lost, collective and personal changes, untouchable areas of the organisational and personal life, changes in the ways of understanding. (60') • Break. (15') • Group session: both groups set out their proposals of each stage and discussed until consensus was reached. With respect to the other aspects, one group presented and the other complemented. An initial level of analysis was performed, putting forward topics to be discussed and identifying topics to be considered in greater depth. (120') 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pages with master copies, master copies on.
3. Reconstructing a shared vision.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collectively reconstructing the collective process, recovering a vision of the process, which included the common and collective views; what is affirmed and negated; the view of the leaders and the women in general. • Identifying any synergic hubs regarding the critical analysis and interpretation. • Considering the lessons learnt using the experience. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Major milestones in the process seen from the movement of women. • The district. • The regional. • The balances of the process: the organisational, the political incidence, personal empowering, the better condition and quality of life. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dinner. (60') • Working in 2 groups: using the picture of a river, with tributaries, bridges, dams, waterfalls, dikes, which runs past villages, crops, etc. and which flows into a large lake that represents the women's movement, a drawing was use to represent, the process and identify the contents. (45') • In group session: feedback and identification of synergic hubs and lessons learnt. (60') • Assessment. (15') 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Newspaper paper, markers and colour pencils, masking tape.



Supplementary/extra material

Personal background sheet.

My life history as a women leader (1) 2000-2003

Stages in my experience as a women leader	
•	
Unforgettable moments in each stage	
•	
Happiness experienced in each stage	Fear experienced
•	•
Anger felt	
•	
Personal and collective powers gained	
•	
Personal and collective powers lost	Losses experienced or felt
•	•

◇ Recovery of the process experienced

Experience in which it was used:

Asociación de Mujeres del Oriente

Title of the activity:

The tracks of our path.

Goal:

- Collectively reconstructing the history with the women participants in the organisation.

Implementation

We designed an initial encounter with the women for the historical reconstruction. We therefore thought about the strategies and about the key women to be invited, we prepared the material that we needed and we organised the information collected from secondary sources (reports, documents, publications, etc.).

1. With respect to the guests, we initially prepared a list of the most important women that were part of the process for over ten years, while trying to take care that there were representatives of all the moments experienced. A very attractive and suggestive invitation card was then designed and decorated with butterflies (the butterfly is the symbol of reconciliation and as women we use it repeatedly).
2. The meeting was designed to be implemented into four stages.
 1. The first aimed to send the women on a totally unprepared journey and without instructions on billboards (10 billboards, one for each year) with little information, then a space for pooling the feelings that emerged during the reencounter and the journey through the past.
 2. A second moment where simple words were used to express the systematization process, its scope and motivations and the instruction was given for a second, rather more directed journey where the women wrote down their stories of the experience and stuck them on the relevant boards.
 3. In the third stage, we planned an activity in groups, organised according to the years when the women had participated in A.M.O.R in order to detect the factors hindering and facilitating the process to be worked in a group to pool and go beyond the individual view to the group.

4. The fourth stage, which was held as a discussion with the group as a whole, the women considered the positive or negative (changes) effects that the organization had had on them in the social, family and personal sphere.
5. For many women, this is already a lost space where they had not participate for a great period of time for family or work reasons, or due to conflicts, and we therefore thought that the re-encounter needed a special space of expression at night to be able to share their experiences outside the organisation, their new experiences, in short, their daily lives.

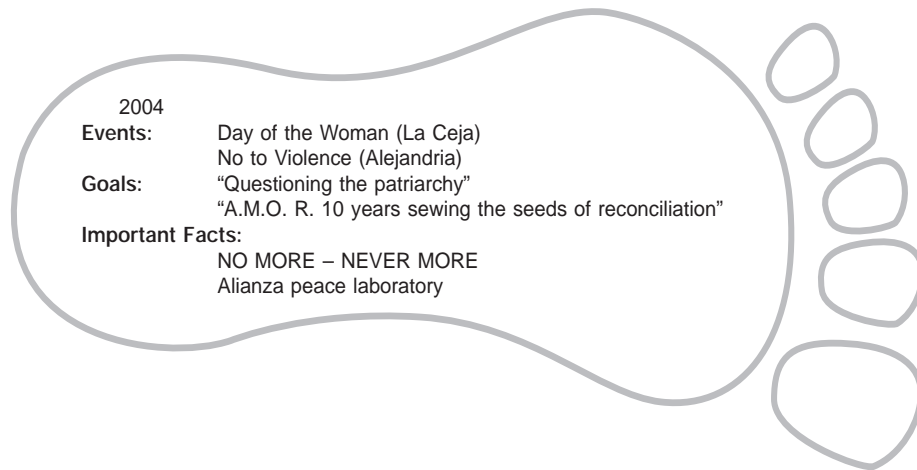
Materials required:

- ◆ The boards with the history of each year that became the historical route.
- ◆ Posters with the relevant information: the goals of the meeting, the agenda, the work background, the processes in which the organisation has taken part, the guiding questions, etc.
- ◆ Flip chart and felt tips.

Time required:

- ◆ One full day and one evening.

◆ Supplementary/extra material



Comments:

But, before carrying out this activity, a general meeting of A.M.O.R. was to be held to awaken the interest and motivate the women with regards to the systematization process, in order to collectively construct this concept and held an evening discussion group to investigate which A.M.O.R means for the women present. We also used this opportunity to send the invitations for the women to the municipalities.

At this general meeting, we aimed to establish what the women knew about these processes using the following questions: What do you think systematise means? Why should A.M.O.R be systematised? What do you want to know about A.M.O.R? What questions would you raise about systematization? What can you contribute to the systematization? A quilt made out of remnants was used where the women answered using art and creativity. During the group session, the information from the women was conceptually expanded and any doubts were clarified.

That evening, we held the discussion group where the women spoke openly about what A.M.O.R. meant. Surprisingly, we discovered that many of the women considered A.M.O.R. to be more related to a feeling than to the organisation that they were part of. This concerned us greatly and was even disappointing.

◇ Recovery of the process experienced

Experience in which it was used:

Elhuyar Aholkularitza

Title of the activity:

The River.

Goal:

- Reflecting on the Basque Language plan of a company, about the factor that boosted this plan and about its results, with its progress depicted in a graph.

Implementation

Defining the key aspects of the evolution of the plan (participation, communication, structure, coordination, results...) and agreeing the symbols that express and assess each of them. Then, set out the history of the plan and reflect the annual variations using symbols. At the end of the process, the diagram is shaped as a river (broadening, obstacles, curves...). The main factors related with the changes to the river flow are reflected on its banks.

Materials required:

- ◆ Blank sheets of paper (preferably size A1), coloured felt tips and paints, sundry craft material (stickers, Plasticine).

Time required:

- ◆ It depends on the process to be analysed: in our case, three hours for the implementation and a further two to pool the information and perform the necessary adaptations.

◇ Recovery of the process experienced

Experience in which it was used:

Elhuyar Aholkularitza

Title of the activity:

Implementation Guide.

Goal:

- It is a matrix that will assess, at any given time or action of the plan, the impact on the use of various key factor, together with the strengths and weaknesses of each action.

Implementation

Once the factors impacting the use had been defined, each action was chronologically analysed according to different parameters, and its strengths and weaknesses were identified. In the majority of cases, it was very difficult to isolate the parameters, due to their interaction. Therefore, we analysed each action according to five core areas and we described their impact on the use.

Materials required:

- ◆ Writing material (paper, computer...).

Time required:

- ◆ Six hours.

◆ Supplementary/extra material

Action	Period	Participation	Power	Relations Communication	Subjectivity	Structuring	Use Main	Difficulties	Points	Notes

Step 4: In-depth reflection

Why did what happen, happen?

This is a key moment in the systematization. Another step has to be taken, a further look at the experience. The history has to be critically analysed and interpreted. Not to look for solutions or blame anyone, but rather to understand why what happened happen and to be able to carry out a real in-depth reflection.

It is usually the most challenging moment in the systematization process. Sometimes, barely any energy is left for this moment. On the other hand, it is a time for reflection and analysis, when it is often difficult to get many people to take part if they are not given clear guidelines.

It often happens that the analysis and interpretation has already had an impact on recalling the past (during the interviews or the workshops), as it is often difficult to separate the description from the interpretation. It is good to be aware of this and to subsequently to reserve a special and specific time to carry out that critical in-depth analysis and interpretation.

The best way to begin is to look at all the work that has already been done. We had the questions that had appeared throughout the experience that we have previously called critical questions guide. Starting from the core of our process, we now have to add new questions that we want to put to the experience, in order to discover “what did what happen, happen? In short, to let ourselves be clarified by the experience.

The questions should be ordered by thematic blocks or by categories that are connected to our core points in order to reflect and look for interconnections and relationship between some and other elements.

In the systematised experiences, this moment was led and implemented more by the systematization promoter group or systematiser team, which subsequently discussed their hypothesis or interpretations with the wider group.

At this moment, importance was given to discussing with other people that have not participated so far or have done so periodically, along with more theoretical documents.

There are sometimes logics that we discover and we do not understand that we can turn into the theory to better understand them.

This point of the adventure is where the path goes from the theory to practice, from the promoter group to the people that have undergone the experience, from question to answers that help us to formulate new questions... We may initially believe that our the questions are beyond our response capacity but by being systematic, returning to the core topic, to the theory and to the dialogue, with experience we can find answers to nearly all questions, and what is more interesting, answers that will surprise us.



Recommendations

- ◆ Ask about the reasons for what happened, why it occurred in this manner...
- ◆ Analyse each component separately and carry out synthesis and interrelations.
- ◆ Observe specific features and the overall, what is personal and what is collective.
- ◆ Seek to understand the key factor.
- ◆ Seek to understand the logics of the experience.
- ◆ Compare with other experiences and theories.

Comments

We are looking for the stages for what occurred, which in reality served and not the difference between what was raised in the project and what happened.

It can help us to discover institutional logics or to consider topics that have not been raised so far. It is important to have a relationship with the institutional direction.

It requires spaces of trust to be generated.

It should be pointed out that we are carrying out the process with the aim to learn about our practices and not to judge, or evaluate, but understand.

◇ In-depth reflection

Experience in which it was used:

Cáritas Bizkaia. Community animation team

Title of the activity:

Flow chart.

Goal:

- Critical interpretation of the experience.
- Assessment to prepare the conclusions with respect to the purpose of the systematization.

Implementation

Throughout the systematization process, we set down the critical questions in a guide, which ended up with 28 questions.

With the contributions and recommendations of our facilitators, we better adjusted the implementation guide to the context and method sections, and we restructured the critical questions guide, which we grouped into four blocks (campaign, assessment, participation and dynamising role), which allowed us to begin the flow gram.

The Critical Questions Guide had been there in the form of a large poster throughout the whole process. We added all the doubts as they appeared and that we had conscientiously avoided answering so as not to slow down the systematization rate and, as we were going to consider them later in the in-depth reflection.

1. We therefore distributed the task: we prepared the flow grams in small groups using each one of the blocks where we grouped the critical questions that had emerged. The flow gram is a technique that facilitates the critical analysis and the in-depth reflection with the help of questions. It started with raising critical questions that were answered yes or no, then for the given answers, creating new questions that were answered. The answer would sometimes be yes, sometimes no, and sometimes the answer would be yes or no.
2. We began each of the blocks with a closed section to answer yes or no and, based on the first, and other questions emerged one after another that we shared, discussed and particularly considered the different aspects.
3. We discovered that many questions were interrelated and that various ideas pointed in the same direction. We considered that this work dynamics appeared very interesting and highly productive as it allowed us to combine very different questions: the general with the specific, the theoretical or more ideological with the practical, the goal with the subjective, light and darkness.

Materials required:

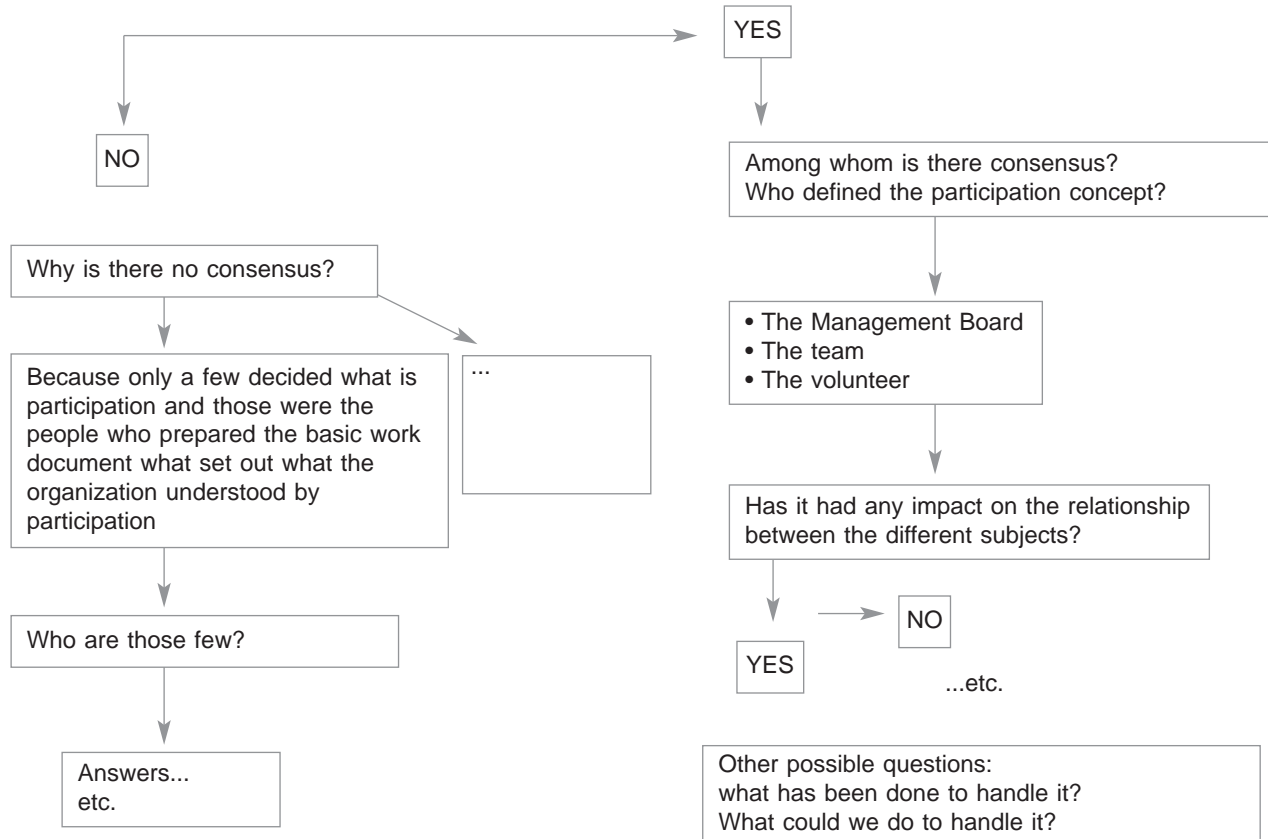
- ◆ Critical Questions Guide, paper and biro.

Time required:

- ◆ Two sub-group sessions (around three hours each) and other with the whole group (four hours).



Do we agree about what we understand by participation?
(this would be the critical question)



Comments:

All the critical questions have to be formulated in such a way that the answer is yes or no. It is a way to facilitate that the analysis and reflection are open and in any event, more specific questions usually follow on from open questions (how, why...?).

◇ In-depth reflection

Experience in which it was used:

Cooperación COPEVISA

Title of the activity:

Common account.

Goal:

- To critically interpret the memory of the experience and reach an agreement among all the participants about the account of what the experience was and what happened in it.

Implementation

1. The starting point was the large mural prepared in a meeting with those people that had undergone the experience that crossed the work core points with the time line, which allowed a joint look of the history of the experience. This mural stayed on a wall in the centre so that anyone who wanted to, could add to it with texts or photographs.

2. As a result of this phase, the promoter of the systematization produced a global account of the history of the experience.

In order to prepare the account, we started with a trigger question that connected with the goal, purpose and core topic. In order to answer it, we discovered a key point in the memory recall, also in the questions that have emerged throughout this process. We organised these questions in thematic clusters as they arose.

With the help of the facilitators, some authors and articles were identified that could help us to look at the experience from another perspective and be able to reply to the questions.

3. This account was pooled with the other members of the organisation in a workshop, where the key elements were identified in a debate and then interpreted.

4. Subsequently and, with the draft account, a meeting was held with the other groups of the Colombian team that performed the systematization. Once the problematic clusters to be considered in each experience had been identified, the group analysed the information, using different procedures. Meeting and workshops were also held to read some of the specific topics and tackle the concepts and relevant reflections in order to carry out the interpretation synthesis. Therefore, the preoccupation for the participation forms and instances, the weight of the subjectivity, the type, the politics of the national and local settings were incorporated as key to better understand the experiences.

5. An account of the experience was then again prepared with the added wealth obtained from the sharing with other groups, in the workshops and the reading sessions.
6. This account was shared with the remaining people of the participant group in the systematization.

Materials required:

- ◆ Flip chart, biros, items of interest related with the thematic clusters detected.

Time required:

- ◆ Several sessions of the promoter group, two morning sessions with the participants from the organisation, a workshop with other organisations over two days.



Supplementary/extra material

Example of the work carried out prior to drafting the document.

Trigger question: How did the COPEVISA experience enable (or not) women, young people and children from popular sectors to become local, community, organisational and personal subjects?

Thematic clusters	Questions
1. Participation and subjectivity – day-to-day routine.	What personal changes have been triggered in the participation processes?
2. Participation, identity, democracy.	What power practices have been present in the COPEVISA dynamics?
3. Community.	What is meant by community and how is it constructed?
4. Participation – Holders of rights, public policies, local power and gender.	Background. Motivation to participate at local level. How has the participation occurred? What have been the power practices that have occurred in the participation spaces? What was the impact on the Local Participation Agenda?

The following will be taken into account for the work methodology:

- Mainstreaming.
- The narration (memory – polyphony).
- Strategic planning.

Authors such as A. Séller, H. Gallardo, Hepenhamer, Zemelman, Alfonso Torres, were used as to consider the topics in greater depth.

◇ In-depth reflection

Experience in which it was used:

Mujeres del mundo- Munduko emakumeak Babel

Title of the activity:

Asking Our Trees.

Goal:

- Sharing the recovery of the historical memory.
- Questioning the experience which learning processes allows us to respect our core position.

Implementation

1. We began by trying to involve the whole assembly in the reflection work. Therefore in an assembly meeting, we formed 5 small groups so that the people could discuss things in depth. Each one of us would be in one of the groups and take minutes so that it could be returned to the people the following Monday. Each group would work on several questions that had emerged in the experience from each of the core elements:
 - Acceptance and reciprocity questions.
 - Tenderness and personal interest.
 - Listening and sincerity.
 - Belonging.
 - Other questions.
2. We used this input for a one-day workshop where the benchmark was our memory recall and what we had discussed in the previous session. Our recovery of the past had been depicted in our centre using trees. Each tree represented a milestone (in our case a type of assembly to be analysed) and where the following appeared: the context in the roots, the participants in the trunk and the comments on each of the aspects of our core on the branches.
3. We therefore began the workshop with group work about the trees that represented a type of assembly.
 - The critical questions were discussed.
 - They were displayed in writing on the trees.
 - 15 minutes before ending, we identified the three priority elements of our debate (remembering the core) that we wish to showcase in the feedback.
4. We had a feedback session on the group work.



5. In different groups (one person from each previous group if possible) we worked on trying to fill a table with:

- Conclusions.
- Learning.
- Recommendations.

This was based on:

- What had been worked in the memory recall session.
- The answers that had been given in the previous assembly.

Each group would be given some of the “important elements” that had appeared in the previous feedback session. In any event, the systematiser team would highlight some points that had appeared in previous meetings.

6. The feedback session was held.

7. The session was assessed.

Materials required:

- ◆ Elements that make the history of the experience visible, paper, coloured pages and felt tips.

Time required:

- ◆ Two prior work sessions of the systemiser team, one two-hour session with all the assembly and a four-hour workshop.





Supplementary/extra material Critical Questions Guide around the core:

- | | |
|--------------------------|--|
| Reciprocity | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Do we do something to foster the integration, the active participation of new people? |
| Acceptance | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Did the person who asked you to contribute help to make you feel accepted and that they accept you?• What was done to make us feel accepted in the group?• What prevented it? |
| Personal interest | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What interests were satisfied by coming to the Assemblies?• Are the personal and group interests compatible?• Do we know how to put collective interest before personal interest? |
| Listening | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What elements encourage listening?• Is it only the lack of time and the day's activities limit listening? |
| Tenderness | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Do you believe that affection fosters closeness? |
| Sincerity | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Do you let yourself be critical and self-critical? |
| Belonging | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Does belonging have anything to do with participation? |
| Other questions | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What are we more interested in: being efficient regarding methodology or foster moments of welcoming, affection, warmth, acceptance?• What is our raison d'être?• ¿How can the assembly be moderated so that we can all participate?• How has the fundamentals of the association been constructed? |





Step 5: Arrival points

Conclusions, learning and recommendations

We can learn much throughout the systematization process. In the majority of cases, we are made aware of the importance of having all types of records about what we do and we also learn about our form of organisation to confront several topics, etc.

Thus, our reflection would tackle different topics and elements that would have different depth, interest and importance for each of us. What is important is that we are able to prepare and formulate our in-depth reflection in such a way that it is understandable to each of us and to people from other entities. It is fundamental for it to be useful for us to improve our practices. We here propose to order them in conclusions, learning process and recommendations with a possible diagram that we will use if we see that it helps us.

Sometimes, according to how it is formulated, a single reflection may be the conclusion, learning process or recommendation.

It may also happen that the attempt to situate the results under one section or other hinders more than helps us. Therefore, it is better to go to the fundamental, to try and describe and learn what the experience has taught us.

The experience now shows us that not only conclusion, learning processes and recommendations can be obtained in systematization process, but also other entities can obtain a work agenda with specific and other more general actions. In any event, we here set out some suggestions for the seasoned adventurers who want and can follow our clues.

Conclusions

◆ The aim is to present general reflections, which go slightly beyond the specific experience. It is a step further in our reflection, where after answering the critical questions, we were encouraged to prepare some benchmarks that could be extended to other associations.

Learning process

◆ One can learn from all the experiences. It is therefore recommendable ask what we have learnt from the experience. This learning may have different implications. They are sometimes practical things that solely and exclusively apply to our experience and at other times, we extract learning processes that can be generalised to other similar experiences.

Recommendations

- ◆ Analysing the experience allows us to identify recommendations that we would make to other persons and organizations. We could formulate them by answering the question: what would we recommend to other persons and entities in a similar experience to ours?

Comments

They are the main statements that come out of the process.

They can be practical or theoretical statements.

It is of interest for them to be starting points for new learning processes.

They may be doubts or new concerns. They can generate new systematizations and even new practices in our organisation, a work agenda.

They are reflections with very different depths and implications.

◇ The Arrival Points

Experience in which it was used:

Asociación Bidegintza Elkartea

Title of the activity:

Preparing Conclusions, Learning and Recommendations. We had already recalled, analysed, questioned and interpreted the experience.

Everything had been gathered together using flip charts, diagrams, documents, photographs...

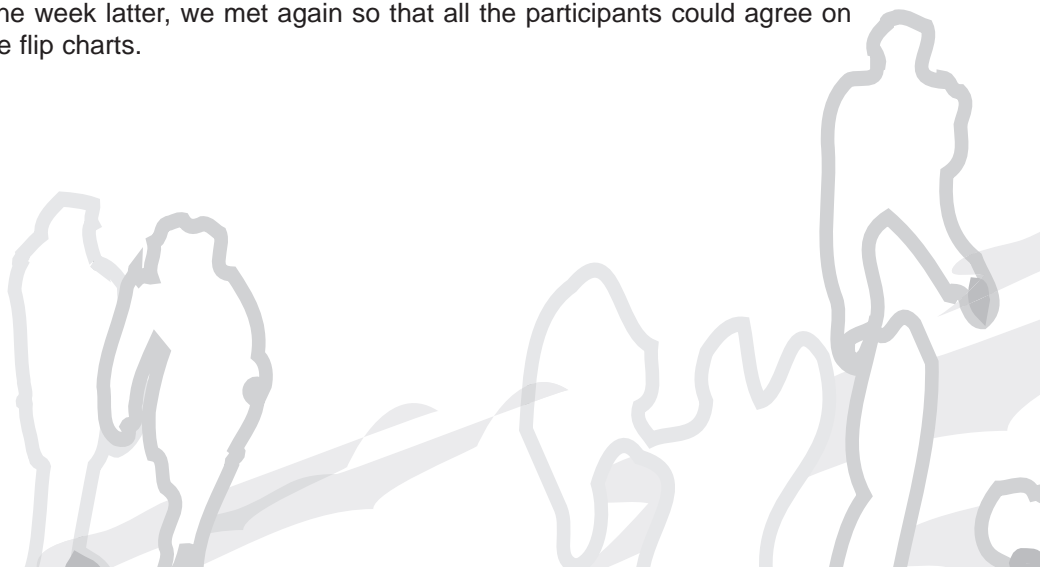
It was then time to put this all in order, in a congruent way that is easily understandable so that other groups that ever had the intention to begin a project similar to our, could use our experience.

Goal:

- Collect everything put forward and analysed in the in-depth reflection.
- Put all that material in order.
- Approach it in such a way that it was understandable and easy to set out (in terms of its contents, not so much in form).
- “Building” knowledge.

Implementation

1. The person in charge of writing down the ideas put forward by the delegates prepared a flip chart for each of the five thematic blocks in which we had ordered our in-depth reflection. On each paper, the title of the block was written and then with three different colours the space was marked for “conclusions, learning and recommendations”.
2. We then placed all the material on the table (photos, documents, diagrams..) and on the wall (flip charts, diagrams...) and through brainstorming, we went further in-depth and divided all that had been considered as conclusions, learning and recommendations.
3. We went through the flip chart to ensure we kept on track, even though, of course, we sometimes needed to return to something that we already had considered to be finished, to qualify or add things.
4. Keeping the limits between what were the conclusions, learning or recommendations was a difficult task, and therefore the fact that the two facilitators were present in this meeting was, again, a great success. As they had witnessed the systematization process from outside, they had a greater capacity to assess everything that had been done more globally, they helped us a great deal to keep an order and be schematic and operative, always working with the perspective of “this had to serve other persons and entities”.
5. The person that had been noting down the contributions on the flip charts undertook to provide a fair copy.
6. One week latter, we met again so that all the participants could agree on the flip charts.





Materials required:

- ◆ All the material (flip charts, diagrams, documents, photographs...) that we had worked with.
- ◆ A flip chart for each of the five thematic blocks (or “force ideas” as we call them) that we had worked on throughout the process. Colour felt tips.

Time required:

- ◆ One three-hour meeting to fill in the flip charts.
- ◆ A further two hours to make a fair copy.
- ◆ Another two-hour meeting for the feedback and the final consensus among all the people and entities involved.



Supplementary/extra material

Conclusions, learning processes and recommendations of one of the aspects analysed as an element to facilitate or hinder the participation in this experience (core).

1. Level of involvement of the different promoter entities

Conclusions

Necessarily and inevitably, based on the fact that the promoter entities are so different, there was a variety of levels of involvement. However, these differences were considered positively, but from a perspective of what was complementary rather than from confrontation. And each entity was involved in what it knew how to do, with each remaining in its operational sphere and experience. Therefore, the fact that we did not try, from the start, to change or force any of them, greatly helped to good understanding and flow of the experience.

There may have been a moment of tension (not of conflict) among the larger entities with respect to the often low participation level of the two voluntary entities (Jatorrak and Biharko Gazteak).

In addition, the reaction of the other two professional entities (Bidegintza and the Fundación EDE) towards this low level of participation was different, depending on the final goal that each of them pursued. Thus, the Fundación EDE, whose final goal was to implement a new resource, used imbalance to adapt to what there was. However, the Bidegintza association, which was clearly linked to the territory and to the beneficiaries, and whose fundamental role has always been to ensure that the things were fair but “in a determined manner”, felt more called to fight to ensure a determined level of participation/involvement of the voluntary entities.

Learning

There were therefore difficult moments, where the balance between the nature of each entity and the necessary level of involvement for the project to progress, was difficult to achieve.

It was therefore fundamental to acknowledge, from a calm point of view, that the whole process was fluctuating and that, therefore, the level of involvement and participation, along with what we can understand by network, etc., would vary over time.

There are different ways to participate, and all are good and acceptable. Therefore, for example, Bihotzean, the neighbourhood association, always supported us, and was periodically informed of the development of the UK project, even though they did not directly participated in it. It is a different way to participate, but it was always positive, probably, because its bases were clearly defined from the start.

Recommendations

The fundamental approach to this situation is the needed for each moment or phase of the process is one of the entities that explicitly assumed the role of the leader, heading the process and the other entities, in order to thus be able to clarify and drive forward in the process.

Therefore, starting from what each one is and can contribute, collecting and dedicating time to the voluntary entities, that normally requires a greater level of support to guarantee their participation and involvement, and ensure that they do not break away from the process.

◇ The Arrival Points

Experience in which it was used:

Mujeres del mundo - Munduko
Emakumeak Babel

Title of the activity:

Establishing the learning
processes and recommendations.

Goal:

- Formulate the learning processes, recommendations and conclusions learnt from the experience by consensus.

Implementation

1. We initially jointly defined the points to classify what had been learnt from the experience. Taken to mean:

Conclusions: it was the first general response that came out of analysing experience, and related with the core point that we had marked.

What we had learnt from the experience, a more in-depth consideration of the conclusions that came out of the experience.

Recommendations: specific points for our association and general points to be shared with other associations.

2. Second of all, based on the results of the workshop based on the critical answers, we would extract the conclusions of this systematization process.
3. We subsequently tried to order the conclusions, learning processes... linked to each element of the core that we were analysing and placing them as conclusions, learning and recommendations as we had previously defined.
4. We also spent several sessions discussing an initial grouping and considering which things have come out in the process and they were not there.
5. We subsequently agreed on a document that set out all that information.

Materials required:

- ◆ Paper, biros, computer and quill to facilitate the agreed work and high dose of patience.

Time required:

- ◆ Various sessions of the promoter team, depending on the accuracy and degree of consensus that you wished to achieve.

Supplementary/extra material

We have set out below how we grouped together the ideas initially in conclusions, learning processes and recommendations.

Conclusions	Learning	Recommendations
Raison d'être and organization of the association		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No coercion which means compromise. • It is an association that it is focusing on itself does not attract people (now). • There are different types of participation; workshops and assembly. • Mujeres del mundo allows double militancy: it is not a very "ideologised" space, there is no dogmatism, it is creative and free. • It is all based on the assembly, it allows us to feel accepted. • There are many forms of leadership (not playing a key role, not proselytising, but yes with initiative). • It is easy to be women of the world and this fact has good results. • There is no prior process or requirements to be met. • Our <i>raison d'être</i> is defined in assembly. • It is a media to realise ourselves, empower ourselves, making ourselves known as people without frontiers who recognise the value of reflection and their own things. • It is a means to remove the stereotypes with respect to the "foreign". 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need to go outwards, to organise more activities regarding convocando other people and involving others. • We are sometimes not open to the debate but the methodology, the style encourages it. • The ongoing invitation to participate is important. • Belonging inside to Mujeres del mundo is because I have come to the organisation, I feel good, I take part in the assembly. Belonging outside (outside Mujeres del mundo, but in its name) becomes more important as I integrate further. It is when I am also going to represent outside Mujeres del mundo, I acquire that responsibility. They are like two phases. There is a maturity process behind it. And it may be that even though I do not go to the assemblies, I can represent it outside. The latter has a positive and negative side. • The association has been built as a permit to find the women from who we are and from what we need as a woman's collective. The complicity of women in difficulty and in happiness, utopia. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The methodology has be based on the assembly and without a great deal of protocol right from the start. <p><i>Organization of the assembly</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Self-introductory every day of the people attending the assembly Wider presentation for the new people. 2. Possibility to include the topic of interests on the agenda on that very Monday. 3. Weekly frequency strengthens, motivates and facilitates relations and interactions of the participants. 4. The agenda of each encounter facilitates and motivates the relations of the group as it informs and backs participation and the empowering of each person. 5. With respect to everyone being entitled to speak and all the people can use this right. 6. Each participant is entitled to vote without distinction. <p>Transversal elements in each action of the assembly and the association:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Openness - listening communication - empathy Understanding - respect Sincerity – affection <p>Self-reflection</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A space is necessary to stop, to be self-critical, to reflect as an organisation and pass to another stage as Mujeres del mundo. • It is important to be self-critical about the <i>raison d'être</i> of the association. Putting it in the centre of the reflection to generate other stages. The organisation as such has to take the self-criticism as part of itself. • The moderation has to be rotary, collective. This is an effort for those who moderate and for everyone.

Step 6: Showcasing what we learnt

Pooling what has been learnt

Systematization, like any adventure, is a return process. It always ends up returning to its departure point. But it is not the same when it returns, as the people have changed and the place to which it returns has changed. Numerous experiences have occurred along the path and learning has been generated, new knowledge that any adventurer feels the need to communicate to the people that surround him and even to other people who he does not know.

Something similar happens with systematization. It is a long process that allows us to learn more about ourselves, acknowledge the work carried out and learn from it. In this process, we involve many people and it is important for them to be given the result of their effort. At the same time, people and organisations deserve to learn and learn with our practices.

Therefore, and because we believe shared knowledge is what generates new opportunities and possibilities, it is important to disseminate the results of the systematization.

This communication may be different when it is internal or external of the organization. For each of the spaces, we can communicate different aspects and the communication method can also be different. Both levels have in common the importance and wealth of sharing and the feedback that this sharing generates. It is the solidarity dimension of systematization.

At an internal level, when we communicate our systematization progress, we manage to:

- ◆ Facilitate the participation within the entity, cohesion.
- ◆ Opening the way for everyone.
- ◆ Feedback.
- ◆ Inform our organisation about the systematization process.

It is recommended that this communication be continuous by means of newsletters, workshops, making use of other moments in the life of the organisation, etc. We have to make sure that we use the informal and formal moments. Communication is important in all of them.

Externally, by communicating the results of the systematization, we manage to:

- ◆ Disseminate and share our experience, our reflection, learning, recommendations... with other entities.
- ◆ Strengthen and highlight our work.
- ◆ Generate learning in third parties.

Some examples of ways to communicate systematization are: publications (or all or part of the systematization process), training workshops or courses, educational materials, visit exchanges, audiovisual material (films, staging...), leaflets, posters, street theatre...

In any event, what is communicate and in what way will be the decision of the organisation that has systematised.




Recommendations


- ◆ Make the teaching of the experiences communicable.
- ◆ Prepare various communication products.
- ◆ Share the results with all the people involved in the experience and with third persons and organisations.
- ◆ Resorting to creative and diverse forms.




Comments




Ethical and practical considerations would have to be taken into account.




It must be useful and communicable.



The results of the process should be communicated to all the people who have participated in the process.



The communication is marked out by the goal. What is interesting is to communicate to continue debating.



Not every one can always be consulted to give validity to the whole proposal. Balance has to be found (disseminate a draft, for people to discuss it...). It is better to propose various outputs, "products, which includes the debate (there may no be a second product but the debate has been generated in the first).

◇ Communicating the learning processes

Experience in which it was used:

Mujeres del Mundo - Munduko
Emakumeak Babel

Title of the activity:

Party.

Goal:

- Sharing the conclusions, learning and recommendations obtained in this process.
- Present the outcome of the work.
- Celebrate the shared work.

Implementation

1. Two assemblies will be held to share the conclusions, learning and recommendations obtained from the systematization process, as well as identifying the most important aspects to be able to share with other in seminars and conferences to which we are invited.
2. A presentation will be made by the systematization team and, subsequently, the opinions of the other women will be collected.

In the second assembly, a day will also be established to organise a party where the publication prepared with our report, the work done by everyone and also the happiness that this causes will be presented.

In order to organise the party, we will have a preparation commission, the contribution of the artistic skills of some of the women of the association and cooking contributions by everyone.

Materials required:

- ◆ Publication of the systematization.
- ◆ Flip chart and felt tips.

Time required:

- ◆ Two one-hour work session and a party last approximately two hours.

◇ Communicating the learning processes

Experience in which it was used:

All the experiences

Title of the activity:

Final document.

Goal:

- Set out in a final document, the systematization process and the learning generated by it.

Implementation

1. Throughout the systematization process, all the actions and activities that were performed were written down: meeting minutes, workshop reports, etc.
2. A document outline to be worked will be defined taking into account that this document is for other organisations that cannot know the experience. Trying to communicate simply without it being taken for granted that much is known about the entity.
3. The ideas to be presented will be agreed in the group and the draft publication will be reviewed in different work sessions.
4. The publication will be published and distributed to interested entities and people.

Materials required:

- ◆ Paper and biros. If possible a computer and printer to produce the document. And, a huge dose of patience.

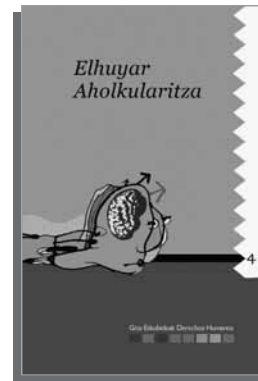
Time required:


- ◆ Various work sessions to review the document, at least one and, a maximum number should be set.

Supplementary/extra material

The outline of the publication is set out below that we have tried to follow all the publications of our experiences.

1.	Presentation Organization Context	3 pages
2.	Systematization whys and wherefores Methodology used	3 pages
3.	Account of the experience	9 pages
4.	Learning on citizen participation Contributions to the participation	14 pages
5.	Conclusions	1 page





Step 7: Complementing and preparing knowledge

Debating and relearning

The systematization ends when we manage to understand the internal logics of the process and to obtain a valid learning process in relation to what happened which should translate into greater knowledge that will direct further intervention in that field.

Thus, the conclusions of a systematization process should be formulated in learning terms for forthcoming actions or interventions. Likewise, it should conclude with some lessons that can represent “generalisation seeds” so that what we have learnt with our experience can be used for similar experiences, as well as when formulating specific policies or rethinking the theory and concepts from our own practices or, at least, to raise new concerns and new questions for their theoretical preparation.

In the case of the project that this publication has generated, the fact that citizen participation experiences have been systematised allows us to share the specific learning of each experience, see common, different elements, shared concerns, etc. This, together with the theoretical debate about participation allowed us to go further into the participation.

This moment will allow us to go beyond the very practice of its critical interpretation and analysis, enrich it, share it and create new knowledge.

◇ Complementing and preparing knowledge

Experience in which it was used:

AMOR, Copevisa and Escuela Popular de Neiva

Title of the activity:

National Reflection Workshop.

Goal:

- Sharing what has been learnt from the reflection process.
- Comparing them with the other experiences and theory.
- Going further into any of the thematic aspects.
- Reviewing what has been learnt so far.

Implementation

1. The starting point was a draft of the account of the systematised experiences. A meeting was then held in the other groups of the Colombian team that participated in the systematization process.
2. The problematic clusters to be considered in greater depth in each experience were identified.
3. The facilitator team provided articles and documents of interest that illustrated, from the theory, greater depth in those thematic clusters.
4. This jointly enriches the reflection about those thematic clusters starting from the experience and read in the articles.
5. With these contributions, we went back to the original group to compare and reformulate what has been learning, conclusions... in the light of what has been shared in the workshop.

Materials required:

- ◆ Documents/articles of interest.

Time required:

- ◆ Two days.

◇ Complementing and preparing knowledge

Experience in which it was used:

Systematization of citizen participation experiences

Title of the activity:

International seminar.

Goal:

- Sharing our systematization processes together with our reflections about the participation.
- Identifying common elements, difficulties and challenges.
- Setting new agendas for our organisations and reflection elements for all the theories.

Implementation

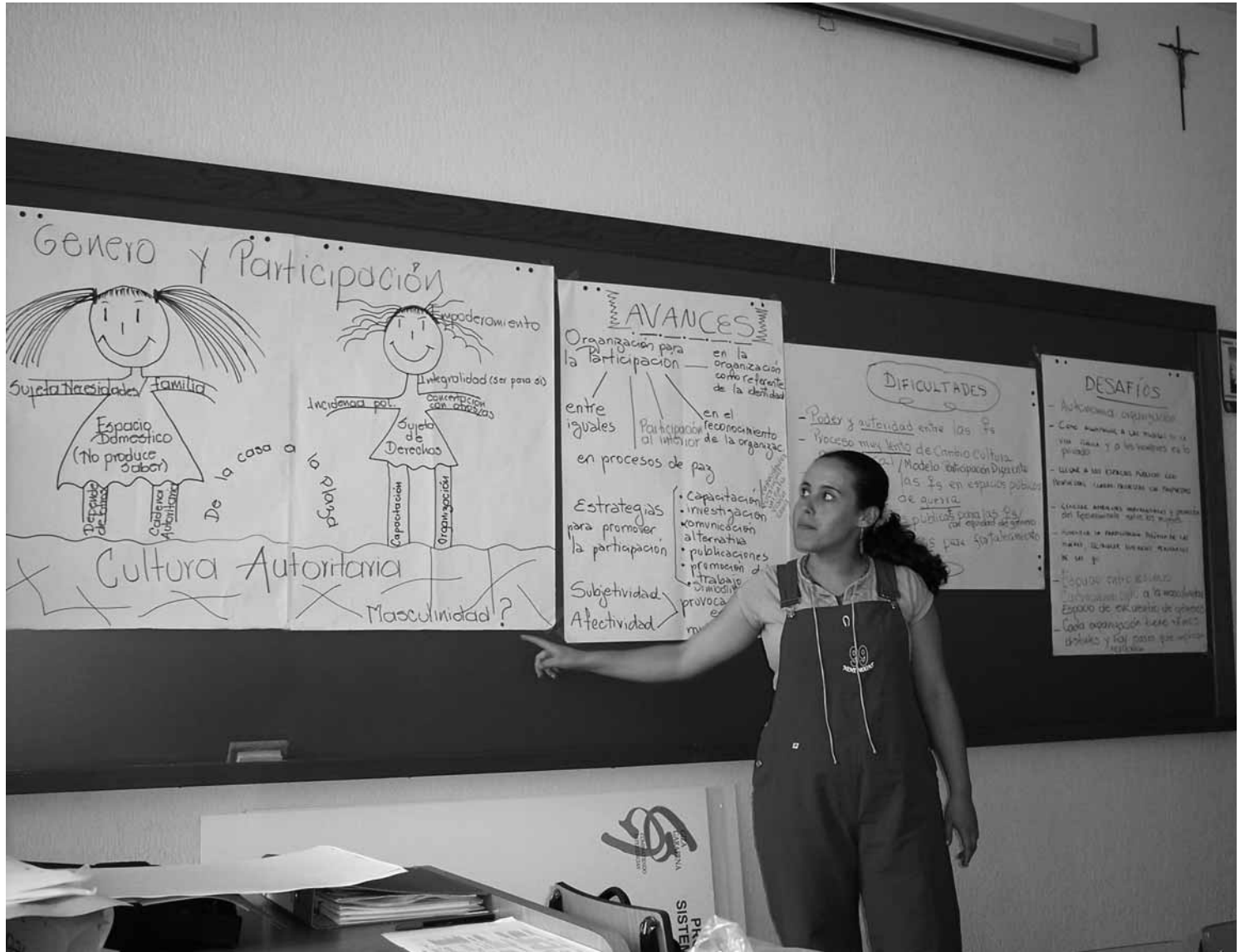
1. After a prior work to systematise each of the experiences, all the organisations were invited to a seminar to meet and share their experiences.
2. The seminar was divided into two phases:
 - a. Internal work
 - I. The systematization process was shared and an attempt was made to break it down into common elements, difficulties and challenges. The systematization process of each organisation was set out on the panels what would be in the corridor, where they could be seen both by the people from the other organisations and the outsiders who came on the last day.
 - II. A brain storming session was held about what had been considered and enriched with a debated involving everyone and the people from the facilitator entities.
 - III. Something similar occurred with participation. Work was carried out in groups that share collectives or work spaces: participation and gender; participation and community development; and, participation and political pressure. And an attempt was made at identifying common elements, difficulties and challenges.
 - IV. A brain storming session was held about what had been considered and enriched with a debated involving everyone and the people from the facilitator entities.
 - b. Open to the public
 - I. The reflections obtained from the participation was shared with other entities and interested people, and, again, some topics were considered in greater depth by the people who had not participated in the experiences.

Materials required:

- ◆ Panels to present the experiences.
- ◆ Advertising for the open day.

Time required:

- ◆ Internal two-day seminar and seminar open to the public one morning.





5. Some thoughts and what we have learnt from our specific adventure

From the experience of the organisations involved in this systematization process, we want to highlight some key elements as potential aspects and difficulties when systematising.

All the organisations are pleased with the process implemented, even though it has involved a great effort for the people involved. The great wealth of the experiences could be rooted in such a way that each responsible group assumed the activities aimed at motivating the participation of the collectives, reconstructing the memory of the experiences and analysing and interpreting the significant topics. Therefore, work meetings, workshops and far-reaching events were held. Nonetheless, like any good adventure, it had its ups and downs, and we share them here knowing that any adventure is worth while.

a. Difficulties

The motivation and participation were not equal throughout the process. The collective reconstruction of the history generated greater participation for various reasons; for the creative methodology that is used in all the cases and as it is more enjoyable and the emphasis was on oral skills. The partial returns allowed us to reach more people, to gather different approaches to the experience, assess the path travelled and interiorise the processes. During the critical interpretation and analytical phase, a small group remained and, finally, only the people responsible for drafting of the final document.

The time dedicated to each of the steps was likewise imbalanced. We spent a great deal of time on memory recall and the collective reconstruction, mainly due to the high motivation. And the critical interpretation and the preparing of the document had to be done more quickly and we were not able to dedicate a great deal of time to comparing it with the people who had actively taken part in the memory recall.

With respect to the information, the first thing was to check the precariousness, disorganisation and, in some cases, loss of iconographic and written information (photos, videos...) and the importance of recording the experience and of assessing the archives.

In some cases, it was difficult to contact key persons. In other cases, the difficulty lay in the mythification of the past or in the idea that there could only be a single version.

As far as the conditions, both in the case of the organisations that acted in an advisory role or facilitators of the process and in the experiences, the systematization was assumed as part of the dynamics and the work

commitment that they already had and, even though the proposal had institutional backing, the previously assumed responsibilities could not be abandoned. Time was always scarce and the personal conditions were not the best at some times.

Reading and writing. As this is a research study, reading and writing took on a particular importance. In the organisational and institutional culture, the research was not part of the work, which meant that relating the theoretical texts with the information collected and move from the narrative text to the analytical text, and from the document resulting from the systematization to the document to be published were the greatest difficulties.

b. Potentialities

Among the aspects most appreciated by the participants were: training and the meeting space. The systematization process generated an attitude of confidence in the very possibilities and gave elements to carry out research in and for action. It offered elements to analyse information, to collectively build an approach, to re-read the texts and the writing of the experience itself, in order to mediate between the general methodological proposal and the specific implementation of the work inside the experience itself. Therefore, the role of the external facilitators resulted in significant contribution to go beyond self-complacency.

The systematization as a meeting space and intersubjective dialogue allowed people with the same daily experience to meet. In this space, satisfactory and difficulty moments were relived: significant people were recalled and the practice converted into reflection. In some case, generational differences were perceived that had an impact on the way of understanding the present, of assessing the process, of recognising errors.

The meeting with different experiences was another of the aspects assessed in this process. In this space, it was possible the explanation of the very experience, contrasting and the disorientating where questions can be raised, become aware of what has been learnt and provide feedback on the process itself. The space was always a place of informal dialogue, humour, the opportune note, anecdotes...

On the one hand, systematization enabled the differences to recognise the deficiencies in the research training, the lack of reflection about the practice and importance of including systematization in the projects and, on the other hand, to generate the possibility of finding and re-finding themselves in the affection, in the convictions, in the commitments and in the dreams.

The flexibility that can have a systematization process is one of its potentialities. Even though all the experiences and organisations try to follow a similar outline, creativity of the organisations, previous experiences, the time available, the very dynamics and the public with which they are working required different adaptations. This wealth and creativity helped to ensure that the sharing and learning between the experiences were greater.

Addresses of the organizations taking part in the adventure

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Hegoa

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Available complementary material

Systematization Guide

ALBOAN, Instituto de Derechos Humanos Pedro Arrupe, Hegoa. *Systematization a new look at our practices. Guide to the systematization of social transformation experiences*, Bilbao, 2007.

Experience systematizations:

Asociación Regional de Mujeres del Oriente (AMOR), *Una fuerza multicolor. Organización y participación de las mujeres*. Editorial Alberdania, Zarauz, 2006.

Asociación Bidegintza Elkarte, *Sistematización Umeak Klean*. Editorial Alberdania, Zarauz, 2006.

Caritas Bizkaia, *¿Dónde está la llave?* Editorial Alberdania, Zarauz, 2006.

CEP-Alforja, *Sistematización de experiencias de participación ciudadana y empoderamiento de las mujeres*. Editorial Alberdania, Zarauz, 2006.

CEP- Alforja, *Sistematización de experiencias de participación ciudadana en Costa Rica*. Editorial Alberdania, Zarauz, 2006.

Colectivos del Parke, *La cooperativa que marca la historia*. Editorial Alberdania, Zarauz, 2006.

Cooperativa Copevisa, *Sistematización de la experiencia de participación de la cooperativa Copevisa en la localidad de Usaquéen*. Editorial Alberdania, Zarauz, 2006.

Elhuyar Aholkularitza, *Euskara Planak: Nondik gatz, non gaude eta nora goaz*. Editorial Alberdania, Zarauz, 2006.

Escuela popular claretiana, *Pedagogía de la participación en la escuela*. Editorial Alberdania, Zarauz, 2006.

Mujeres del Mundo - Munduko Emakumeak Babel, *Abanico de colores. Mujeres del Mundo: sistematizando aprendemos*. Editorial Alberdania, Zarauz, 2006.

Other publications:

AAVV, *Participación ciudadana y sistematización de experiencias*. Bilbao, 2006.

Further information:

www.alboan.org/sistematización



