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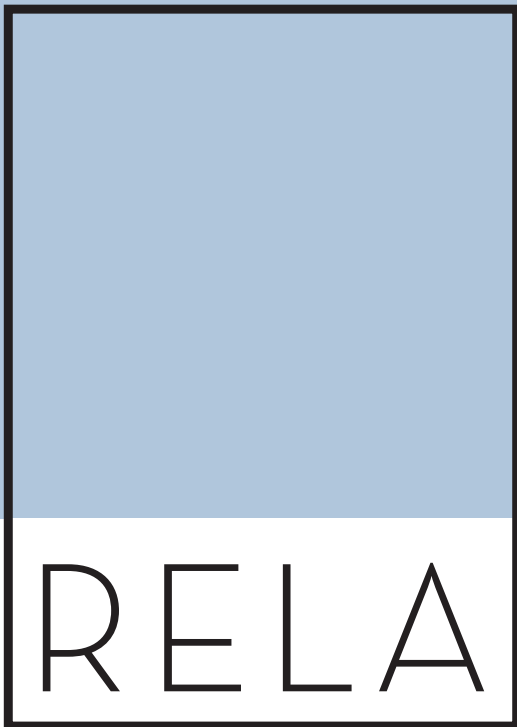
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Editorial: RELAs 10-year anniversary: What have we accomplished?

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Introduction

The first issue of RELA was published in 2010, so with this issue we enter the 10-year anniversary. In this editorial, we will firstly elaborate on what we as editors find that RELA has accomplished. Secondly, we introduce changes that are taking place while entering 2019, and lastly, we introduce the papers which are included in this issue.

What has RELA accomplished?

RELA was created with a mission to complement journals already available in the field, by on the one hand, providing a space for critical debates on issues at stake for adult education in Europe and beyond, and on the other hand, provide a space that encourages

publication by authors from countries in Europe who do not appear as frequent in the journals that were already available in the English language. As we argued in the first editorial of RELA (Fejes & Salling Olesen, 2010, p. 12).

> The most important reason for launching RELA, however, and the reason why there is a need for this kind of journal, is related to the geographical and cultural bias of those international journals already available. They are all based in, mainly publish articles from and have their main readership in the Anglophone world. This is no surprise. English has become the lingua franca of academic discussions and debates today, and this means that the publishing industry in the UK, the Commonwealth and North America has expanded from local to global, or has taken the challenge to provide publishing channels for the emerging global community. Something reinforced by governments and university boards across many countries, where performance appraisals are based on the number of publications, and to some extent citations, in "international" academic peer-review journals. We can observe a situation where the Anglophone communities dominate while all the other local and national academic communities and the practical and cultural experience they refer to, are becoming more and more marginal. In the light of this, we felt there was a need for a truly international, European journal, which actively embraces non-Anglophone (as well as Anglophone) contributions, and thereby broadens the academic discussion in the field.

Empirical research has indicated that there is a great over representation of authors from the UK, US, Australia and Canada in the adult education and learning journals that publish in English, in terms of authorship as well as in terms of citations (see e.g. Fejes & Nylander, 2019; Nylander, Österlund & Fejes, 2018). As Fejes and Nylander (2014) illustrate, authors from the four mentioned countries have authored 66% of all articles published in four of the main adult education journals during a ten-year period. At the same time, authors from these countries represent 88% of all citations in all articles published in these journals during the same period of time. As recently argued in a paper on 'decolonizing writing in academic journals' (Trahar, Juntrasook, Burford, von Kotze & Wildemeersch, 2019), the effect of such tendencies can be considered, in line with de Sousa Santos (2016), as a kind of epistemicide, or the annulling of a wide variety of forms of knowledge. These combined developments tend to install 'a hegemony that spreads not through coercion but by using culture to disseminate a particular worldview, until its premises, which are inevitably partial and contingent, appear natural, obvious and incontestable' (Bennett, 2013, p. 188).

We as editors of RELA believe that this imbalance is problematic as it ignores much research in the field that would be beneficial for furthering and nuancing the debates going on in the English-speaking journals. Thus, we have worked actively to attract contributions from countries where English is not the first language. Part of such a strategy has been to have an open access language policy. On the one hand, we allow submissions in languages that any of the seven editors can handle. Such a paper is reviewed in the original language, and if accepted, authors need to provide a translated version that is further checked by editors in order not to lose meaning as compared to the original accepted manuscript. On the other hand, we do not reject papers due to minor flaws in English, although we require that accepted manuscripts are professionally edited (responsibility of authors) for language before publication. Finally, the ability to attract authors from various countries and languages also rests in ESREA dynamics, namely in the fact that its twelve networks meet regularly in a vast number of countries, and the networks convenors disseminate the journal themselves widely.

With such a policy, encouraging a wider diversity in what is being published, we look back here at the result. In accordance to the approach taken by Fejes and Nylander

(2014) we have focused on the geographical locations of the first authors in all published articles (excluding editorials and book reviews) in RELA since 2009 and up until this issue. In total there have been 108 articles published.

Table 1: Number of articles published in RELA 2009-2019 (issue 1) with first author located in a specific country

Country	Articles	Country	Articles
Germany	17	Poland	3
UK	15	Australia	2
Canada	11	Austria	2
Sweden	10	Slovenia	2
Portugal	7	Netherlands	2
Denmark	5	USA	2
Belgium	5	Norway	1
Italy	4	Switzerland	1
Spain	4	Greece	1
France	4	Estonia	1
Finland	4	South Africa	1
Ireland	3	Brasil	1

In table 1 we can firstly see how there is a quite wide distribution of first authors, representing 24 countries, mainly in Europe. Secondly, we can see how Germany represents the highest share of all published articles (16%), closely followed by the UK (14%). If adding up all articles by authors located in the UK, US, Canada and Australia these four countries represent 28% of all published articles. This is substantially different as compared to the result provided by Fejes and Nylander (2014). In their sample, these four countries represented 66% of all published articles. So, in terms of authorship, RELA seems to have come quite far, even though an imbalance still exists.

There is however, also an imbalance in terms of representation from different parts of Europe. Germany is dominating, as well as the Nordic countries. The latter group of countries are represented by 20 articles (18,5%). There is also representation from the "south" (Portugal, Spain, Italy and Greece). These countries together are represented by 15% of all articles published. However, Portugal stands for half of these articles. Representation of authors from Eastern Europe is however, low. Authors from Poland are represented as well as Estonia. But no authors located in, for example, Hungary, Bulgaria or Romania. Even though France is represented by 2 papers, this is however, low if considering the size of the country and the academic community in adult education located there. In sum, there is still much to do for RELA in terms of attracting submissions and publishing papers from different parts of Europe and beyond.

Introducing changes

Entering 2019, RELA has introduced a few changes. Firstly, RELA will as of this year, start publishing three issues per year. Publication dates are mid-February, mid-June and mid-October. In order to further broaden the work of RELA, and thus potentially the

inflow of articles, one issue per year is expected to be co-edited together with conveners of one of the RELA networks. Each call for papers will address a key topic in adult education in Europe today, and be distributed openly and widely.

The second change is that we have, replaced the advisory board with a board of consulting editors. These have been appointed among researchers who have, by acting as reviewers for RELA, made important contributions through the years. The board of consulting editors will be reviewed every three years.

A third, and final change, has been that we have closed the book review section. This is due to our ambition to be whole heartedly focused on the work to attract, review and publish research articles of high quality from across Europe and beyond.

The papers

This open issue of RELA includes six articles. In the first article, Malgorzata Zielinka from Poland reflects on the learning experiences of Polish migrants in Iceland. The author has been a migrant in that country herself and on the basis of autobiographical notes and the data collected in extensive, qualitative interviews with compatriots in the country of arrival, she interestingly pictures how the (non-)learning took place. Theoretically speaking, the author draws on notions of critical pedagogy of place, geographical theory of place and translocal learning. In her findings, the author emphasizes that for the Polish migrants in Iceland, learning to engage in the culture of the country of arrival is not only an individual process. It also has an important collective dimension. Through these dialectics of individual and collective learning, migrants changed the concept of self, developed emotional response patterns and questioned stereotypes. They said that they had become more open to other people, they changed their pre-conceived notions about homosexuals, foreigners or people of different race.

In the second article, Lourdes Jiménez-Taracido, Ana Isabel Manzanal Martinez and Daniela Baridón Chauvie from Spain present an empirical study about the relationship between metacognitive skills use during reading and the reading comprehension improvement. The sample was constituted by 143 adult students from secondary education. The results showed that reading competences were lower than expected, with significant differences between courses and average use of metacognitive strategies, influenced by gender and age. A significant, linear and low-moderate degree relationship was found between two of the metacognitive strategies under evaluation. The authors, in consequence, built a predictive model where age, course, use of problem-solving strategies, and support reading strategies are predictive variables regrading reading skills. This study allowed the authors to recommend changes regarding adult teaching and learning in Spain.

The third article is authored by Chiara Biasin from Italy and Karen Evans from the UK. The reader is here offered an interesting comparative study of women aged fifty in the UK and Italy and focuses on the role of agency, identity and learning at turning point moments in the women's lives. The authors have chosen the age of fifty as a point in the women's lives as an appropriate time and age when they can reflect back upon their past learning and life experiences and the transitions they have experienced in their lives within the context of relational, cultural and institutional aspects. Methodologically and theoretically the study draws on Narrative Learning Theory in order to gain a rich insight into the women's lives and stories. In analysing the narratives four 'profile combinations' are identified which apply to both the UK and Italian women: Contained; Reactive; Testing; and Consciously Reflective. The four different 'profile combinations' are

explored in relation to how the women are able to use their agency to shape and change their identity through learning at critical turning point moments in their lives. While some similarities are identified between the UK and Italian women, such as gender inequality in patriarchal societies differences were also recognised in the way that the women used their agency in relation to learning - both formal and informal. The narratives also reveal that using agency in times of transition and turning points can facilitate a learning experience which enables women to move their lives forward while for some it may limit them.

In the fourth article, Elisabeth Hofmann from France takes us to two unique feminist movements in France which challenge, through feminist activism, male dominance and sexism in society. The first activist group – La Barbe (beard) confronts male domination in private and public decision-making institutions and key public events which address primarily political and financial issues by storming meetings wearing a false 'barbe' and interrupting the meetings by making speeches, issuing leaflets and videoing the proceedings. The second activist group – Femen, is a radical women's group, based in Paris, but originally from the Ukraine, who organise topless protests against sexism, sex tourism, religious institutions and other key issues. The article discusses how participation in such movements has a transformational effect on participants by engaging them in informal learning which has the potential to be empowering. Both activist groups critique gender inequalities in society by focusing on different aspects and acting in diverse ways. The author argues that the contrasting 'imaged performance' of the two groups of one group choosing to use beards and the other exposing their breasts empowers the two groups of women. The article argues that the transformative learning which results from participation in either La Barbe or Femen are experienced in different ways arguing that the more aggressive approach used by Femen and its use of training courses leads to a more transformative learning experience than participation in La Barbe.

In the fifth article, by Catarina Sales Oliveira, Alcides Monteiro and Sílvia Pinto Ferreira from Portugal, the core premise is 'can theatre raise consciousness and empowerment in the context of gender equality' through the use of Empowerment Labs in Portugal by focusing on two groups of young women: university students and unemployed women. The project is firmly based in adult education but with a feminist focus. The project drew on the pedagogical work of Paulo Freire, Peter Jarvis, Jack Mezirow and Leona English. The aim of the project was to raise critical awareness through theatre and encourage both personal and social engagement with a focus on the labour market. To empower young women the use of performance arts and social intervention were employed through applied theatre workshops. For the author the application of applied theatre allows 'for the conditions for this fruitful but delicate combination biographical and the dialogical dimensions of transformation and consciousness-raising of different actors'. The aim was to allow and enable the voices of individuals and communities who are underrepresented to be heard. Methodologically the Empowerment Labs combined action research with social intervention. Such an approach involves regular commitment from participants and this was recognised as a constraint as some did not always attend. The author argues that the experience of participating in an Empowerment Lab facilitates critical consciousness and reflexivity through the exercises involved in participating in an applied theatre. While recognising the power of applied theatre to transform women's lives the author also recognises that the concept of empowerment needs to be looked at from a critical perspective.

In sixth and final article, Inga Specht and Franziska Stodolka from Germany, draw on a program analysis approach analysing 709 program offerings to adults at museums in five cities in Germany. Focus is directed towards determining and differentiating between

different participation pathways to cultural education. Participation portals, i.e. pathways for participation in cultural education, act as starting point for their analysis which results in four main categories: systematic-receptive; systematic-receptive AND autonomous-creative; autonomous-creative; empathetic-communicative; and one undecided.

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Migration and translocal learning: Poles in Reykjavik

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Abstract

The paper analyses learning from the perspective of migration. It is based on a qualitative study of Polish first-generation migrants in Iceland. The theoretical framework adopted is translocal learning and learning from places – which joins the perspective of social learning with learning from the environment. The empirical material was used to construct eight categories showing translocal learning outcomes: practical skills, communicative competences, analytic competence, assimilation of values, self-confidence, independence, living with uncertainty and mobility skills. The findings show that translocal learning has a critical potential of challenging the dominant ideology. Some of the learning outcomes help migrants in further migration Finally, I suggest a new concept for future research – translocal pedagogy.

Keywords: Iceland; migration; place; translocal learning

Introduction

Iceland, has seen a relatively big migration inflow since 2006, which has changed its demographic structure – from 1,9% of foreign citizens in 1950 and 1990, to 4,6% in 2006, 7,6% in 2009, 6,7% in 2013 and 8,9% in 2017 (Statistics Iceland, 2018). The arrival of so many migrants, most of whom have not decided yet if they wish to stay there, poses new questions to researchers studying adult learning and education. An important one seems to be – what do migrants learn in the process of migration?

Theoretical framework

The research project[1] was based on the theoretical framework of critical pedagogy of place, especially on David Gruenewald's work (2003b). He advocates for making education place-based, that is, becoming more conscious of places in education in order to 'extend our notions of pedagogy and accountability outward toward places' (Gruenewald, 2003a, p. 620). He does not explicitly write about adult learners, but his ideas can be translated to other fields of education. He joins the place-based education with critical pedagogy, relating to Dewey's and Freire's works, arguing that both traditions do not exclude each other, but rather – complement one another. Also, Maria Mendel (2006) emphasized the mutual relation of influence between people and places. She argued that places are by themselves pedagogical, they teach people something, they can be emancipatory or socialise people to collective norms. With this framework I was intrigued to study adult learning and education of migrants as place-based. Although studying learning from the perspective of mobility and place together may seem contradictory, both concepts are interrelated (Cresswell, 2006). Mobility does not exist without places, and places are increasingly influenced by the mobility of people, goods, money and ideas (see e.g Greiner & Sakdapolrak, 2013). Places are seen here as dynamic (Massey, 2005), being in constant movement, place is the "situatedness during mobility" (Brickel & Datta, 2011, as cited in Greiner & Sakdapolrak, 2013).

I also refer to the translocal approach in social sciences. It joins the focus on place and locality with mobility and movement. Greiner and Sakdapolrak (2013) argue that translocality is a promising approach, which emerges from the transnational theory but overcomes its limitations (such as methodological nationalism). The difference between transnational and translocal theories is the importance of particular places rather than countries.

Colin McFarlane (2011) used the notion of translocal learning, although in a different context – related to "learning the city" through translocal networks and comparison with other cities. His idea seems to be perfectly suited for the learning that migrants engage in, as it emphasizes the role of informal learning and learning through experiencing the city. He sees learning as '...a distributed assemblage of people, materials and space that is often neither formal nor simply individual' (McFarlane, 2011, p. 3). This definition stresses the importance of learning through relations rather than individually.

In line with this, migrants not only learn by themselves – they also carry knowledge and share it with others, for example with their families and friends at home. Each migrant is a 'learner, knowledge carrier and knowledge creator' (Williams, 2006, p. 596). What migrants learn has consequence for what others learn – in their places of origin, and in the places where they move. The translocal learning happens both between people and places they inhabit, and between those who move and those who don't. Moreover, with social media's growing popularity, migrants constantly share their knowledge with people who live in other places. In this study, I was interested in how people learn in places and what educational potential places have for migrants.

Design of the study

The research was designed as an ethnographic field study in the Icelandic capital district including semi-structured in-depth interviews with 16 women and 18 men who came from Poland, informal conversations with both migrant and non-migrant inhabitants of the city, interviews with representatives of NGOs and public institutions working with Polish migrants, as well as taking field notes from observations of various cultural events or

Polish-community meetings. I also took authoethnographic notes from my own life as a Polish migrant in Iceland. I studied courses offered in adult education institutions, interviewed their representatives, used information provided on their websites, as well as printed booklets. Here, I will focus on findings from the interviews, conducted in 2010 with Polish migrants living in the capital district. One respondent came to Iceland as early as in the 1980's, five came in 1990's and the rest arrived after year 2000 (most after 2006). The youngest was 19 and the oldest was around 60. Some respondents were unemployed, others worked as bus drivers, building constructors, shop assistants, cleaners, kitchen assistants, teachers (mainly kindergarten teachers) and in other jobs, while two were students.

I will especially focus on the participants' answer to my question about what they feel they have learned from living in Iceland. I did not define learning for them, so they used their own understanding of the word. They understood it in different ways, as will be shown below. They also struggled with the concept of "life in Iceland", sometimes discussing if the concept of "life" includes people around. Mostly, because of the question's content, they talked about informal learning, but in some cases they associated learning with intentional learning and education, as one woman who said she had learned some English, although she had never actually *learned* it, that is, she had not taken courses in it.

Although learning from life is a process and should be analysed as such, the nature of the question I asked inclined the participants to talk about the outcomes of this process, self-assessed at the specific time of the interview. Some participants noted that they were in the process of learning something, while others could already see the results of this learning – new abilities and competences, which is why I will use the language of "learning outcomes" further in the paper. It is important to remember that these "outcomes" are seen here as moments in the process, not as its end; they are evaluated, using Doreen Massey's words, in the given "here and now", in "a moment within power-geometries" and just like place itself, they are an "unfinished business" (Massey, 2005, p. 131).

The answers were coded using a QDA programme, which produced 53 different categories under a general code "learning from life in Iceland". Moreover, there were 13 additional categories coded as "personal change", where I collected cases where respondents talked about how they changed their attitude or character due to the migration. All these categories were grouped thematically, and later categorized. Struggling to find relevant names for the categories emerging from the data (which formed clear groups but did not necessarily include any common keyword), I decided to use some concepts from the literature. I found the concept of "transnational competences" described by Koehn and Rossenau (2002) particularly relevant. Although these authors' work was mostly focused on transnational elites and workers of NGOs or transnational organisations, they also address the broader issue of transnational migration and do not exclude other migrants from their analysis. The transnational competences they described are: analytic competence, emotional competence, creative/imaginative competence and behavioral competence. Although their study has different focus and scope, and it might emphasize more cognitive dimensions rather than broader learning from life, some of these categories still describe well the data found in my research.

Basing on the interviews, I created following categories showing migrants' learning outcomes:

1. Practical skills
2. Communicative competences
3. Analytic competence
4. Assimilation of values
5. Self-confidence
6. Independence
7. Living with uncertainty
8. Mobility skills

Below I will describe these learning outcomes in detail.

Practical skills

Two respondents mentioned learning such practical skills as fishing and paragliding. They both said they learned it by themselves, but later explained that they learned it from other people. Two women mentioned practical skills they learned at a course (knitting), but they did not treat them as something important, this information was given by the way, while trying to recall if they had taken any course.

As it comes out from some interviews with migrants and with labour union representatives, Poles often passed a driving license test in Iceland. Some learned the skill of driving a car, while others might have known how to drive before, but had problems with passing the exam in Poland. In Iceland the exam was easier and cheaper – some costs were refunded by a labour union. A supermarket assistant said: 'It [Iceland] has given me this, that I got my driving license (…) because in Poland it is difficult to get, and here you could say that even dummies have it.'

Interestingly, all these practical skills have an additional meaning, which is probably why respondents considered them worth mentioning. In the first two cases the skills were related to a hobby, as well as to nature, which shows the importance of taking nature into consideration, while analysing learning from places. For M4[2] the skill (paragliding) had a huge importance for his lifestyle, he said that it was for him like a drug – he could not stop doing it and was thinking about paragliding all the time. Even driving does not simply mean another skill. As John Urry (2000) argues, driving a car is a part of a certain culture, where it means freedom, flexibility, privacy of being at home even during mobility. Several respondents either learned to drive or finally bought a car in Iceland – for some it was a tool helping them travelling around the island, for others it meant freedom ('We didn't have a car before and one could survive. Now we can't imagine life here without a car [...] it would be as if you were closed in a cage' [M13]). Others treated it as a major progress in their life ('I have become more self-confident, because I achieved something [...] In Poland I couldn't pass the driving license, while here I did it in a month and I bought a car after two months.' [M14]).

As in the case of the driving license – learning new skills was something people could finally afford to do after financial hardship in Poland – one respondent said that her willingness to learn new practical skills was stronger due to migration and the improvement of her economic situation:

> I got my driving license. (…) Maybe because you earn some money and in some way it is easier to invest that money in your own pleasures. For example, I started knitting recently.

> It's just easier to pursue your dreams, because you have a financial backup. (…) In Poland people earn less, so they realise themselves less. And if you don't realise yourself, then you are less happy. (W11)

Communicative competences

Koehn and Rosenau treat language skills as an important part of the communicative facility, which involves 'proficiency in and use of counterparts' spoken/written language', as well as skills of good communication – such as engaging in a meaningful dialogue or understanding nonverbal cues and codes, which one does not necessarily have even if one speaks the foreign language fluently (Koehn & Rosenau, 2002, p. 110).

When it comes to language courses in Reykjavik – the main reason for participation was learning to communicate at work and develop professionally, but more educated migrants seemed to like language learning as such. The most common reasons for non-participation in such courses were lack of success at first attempts of learning the language, as well as working long hours. Some migrants considered language courses to be useless, either because they did not believe in their own ability to learn, or because they were dissatisfied with teaching methods. These were often evaluated as inadequate and boring – with too much focus on grammar, too few chances to speak, too few tests and too little homework. They pointed to some teachers' lack of experience and teaching competences. Thus, some chose learning Icelandic informally, from colleagues or other social contacts. Those who did not stop at one course saw a bigger variety of teachers and teaching methods and often valued those who were more demanding and who motivated the students.

Interestingly, although learning Icelandic was the respondents' main intentional educational activity, none of them mentioned learning the language as a crucial learning outcome of their stay, apart from a 23-year old woman, who stated:

> First of all, I've overcome this language barrier. This for sure, because although I learned English at school and even in some college, I came here [to Iceland] and there was this fear, I couldn't say a word... But I've overcome this barrier. And... I got to know their language, their culture, there are many things I will remember from Iceland. (W5)

Surprisingly, the most important learning outcome for her related to English. She did learn some Icelandic – from a course and her colleagues, but she did not consider it important for her future:

> I generally try not to speak Icelandic too much. Because it won't be useful anymore for me, so I try to improve my English and I speak English more. […] I just wanted to get to know it [Icelandic], to be able to say something. Just a kind of curiosity. (W5)

None of the respondents could see how they could use Icelandic skills when they return to Poland or move somewhere else. They did, however, imagine using English or, as M1 – Chinese. M1 wanted to study it at a university in Poland, but failed at an entrance exam, and applied to an Icelandic university after two years of working in Reykjavik. He was determined to learn Chinese and stopped learning Icelandic to have more time for his studies. Before, he lived in Ireland and learned English there, which helped him study Chinese in English. But the language he learned in Ireland was mostly spoken, resulting in severe difficulties with writing essays and passing exams. This reminds us that language competences developed abroad may be incomplete – covering only some skills. This case proves that migrants will often learn a language considered more universal,

useful (English, Chinese) or important for their future – some said they wanted to learn Norwegian or French, as they planned to move to other countries.

Analytic competence

One transnational competence listed by Koehn and Rosenau is the analytic competence. It means 'Understanding of the central beliefs, values, practices, and paradoxes of counterpart culture(s) and society(ies) – including political and ethnic awareness', and the 'ability to link counterpart-country conditions to one's own circumstances and *vice versa*' (Koehn & Rosenau, 2002, p. 110).

The analytic competence, based on cognitive learning and analysing the reality was probably easiest to develop, comparing to other translocal learning outcomes of migration. Many migrants developed this competence – they talked extensively about differences between Iceland, Poland and other countries they visited. Their analysis regarded culture, society, but also nature – weather and landscape. They talked about the Icelandic financial and political situation, and about their own situation in the crisis – unemployment, closing of the building projects, the impact of the currency exchange rate on their plans (more in: 'deleted for anonymity'). While describing Iceland, they compared it to Poland and, thus, learned about their own country from this comparison and from the distance.

Some differences pointed by migrants included:

- better social security in Iceland ('The subsistence level is secured for everyone, the basic needs, that you won't be hungry or cold, or thirsty, the necessities, so it's OK', M4),
- less stress in the society ('they don't worry about tomorrow', W8; 'they have time for everything, we are [on the contrary] stressed all the time', W10; 'life is somehow slower here', M6),
- more safety and ability to be who you are ('What I like most is this peacefulness, this safety. […] I go for a walk and there are no people [...] nobody bothers you in this freedom of movement. […] You can be yourself, of course without breaking any rules.', M2; '[In Poland] there is this view that you cannot be different, otherwise people would talk about you, they would point their fingers at you', M4),
- cleanliness of air and water,
- smaller social inequalities ('[the life in Iceland] has taught me to appreciate that […] it's a very fair and social society.', W8; 'there is no upper class and lowest class, in Poland there are both. Here everybody goes together, the president and I, we buy in the same shop', W7),
- the way people are treated in Iceland regardless of their job or origin ('they are Protestants and they respect people who work well […] it doesn't matter if one is a manager or a cleaner', W9; 'It doesn't matter what your job is [you are still respected]', W15; 'I've met many people who have loads of money, education, they are lawyers, bankers, but when you get in touch with them, all of this is unimportant', M4; 'people are very nice, I've noticed it right away, they are helpful and it doesn't matter if you are an Icelander or a foreigner', M1).

Sometimes, they were critical towards Iceland, e.g. saying that people rarely cook on their own, cannot fix things at home, are not spontaneous, work more slowly and cannot cope

in conflict situations. Some migrants faced a difference and did not know what to think about it. One kindergarten teacher did not know what to think about the fact that children call adults by first names:

> Their idea of upbringing... [...] I've only seen one danger... I don't know if it is all right... that they say "you" [instead of Sir/Madam]... if on the child level... or maybe I'm narrow-minded? Maybe I'm old-fashioned? Should it be this way... how much.... when to allow them call you "you"? Doesn't it blur, you know, the question of mutual respect to the older person? But on the other hand, it's in a way... like friends, right? While in Poland you hear about various aggressive behaviours or lack of respect towards teachers. (W1)

Here we can clearly see an analytical thinking process.

When it comes to nature, there were some negative opinions, especially about the weather ('It seems to me sometimes that it's our second country, but I wouldn't like to be here, because the weather scares me. I prefer my Poland.', W16; 'I don't see my future here in this country, absolutely not. [...] First of all because of the weather. [...] Most of the year it's dark, it rains, I feel bad, I have awful headaches.', W8) and a few positive ones about the summer or the landscape ('The sights are fantastic here, especially in the summer', M13; 'the landscape is rough [...] you feel you get more in touch with nature. [...] there are places here untouched by human feet', M4; 'When it comes to the climate and the landscape, it's a very different and original country. So interesting. Beautiful on the one hand and, on the other hand, scary sometimes', M6)

What do these opinions mean for learning? They suggest that migrants not only observe people and society, but also nature, which is an important element of a place. Doreen Massey wrote that '"nature", and the "natural landscape", are classic foundations for the appreciation of place' (Massey, 2005, p. 137), while for David Gruenewald ecology and the natural environment are some of the "dimensions of places" (Gruenewald, 2003a). When migrants assess nature (the climate, weather or landscape), they learn something about themselves, about their own preferences – where they would be able and willing to live, and where they would not – and about the importance it has for their lives. Before migrating they probably knew something about the climate, but they might not have expected that it would matter so much for them, as they had not experienced it physically.

The analytic competence was something migrants gained by living in Iceland and observing it, as well as by experiencing life in the country. Iceland was seen from a perspective – always in comparison to Poland and sometimes also with other countries. This way, migrants learned to understand and handle their situation in Iceland, but also about differences between places; they learned to expect a difference if they move again, which means that it also prepared them for future migrations.

Assimilation of values

Just like the place-related skills and competences described before, migrants adapted to the new place by observing values, attitudes and behaviours in the Icelandic society and assimilating them. There were many aspects of life in Iceland, which impressed my respondents and were considered to be better than the relevant characteristics of Poland – social security, safety, cleanliness, etc. They were related to certain values in the Icelandic society. Altogether my respondents named over 50 values which they observed in Icelanders' behaviour or in the functioning of the state system, which could be summarised as: respect, trust, helpfulness, openness and politeness towards other people

regardless of their origin or socio-economic status; justice, equality, social security for all; freedom, lack of control from the state or other people; peacefulness, distance to life events; honesty of the simple people (but dishonesty of the ones who had power and caused the crisis).

Subsequently, some migrants claimed that they changed and assimilated these values. They described learning in Iceland as changing some parts of their character, their personality. This is an important element of learning, emphasized by Wenger: 'learning [...] is not just an accumulation of skills and information, but also a process of becoming – to become a certain person or, conversely, to avoid becoming a certain person' (in: Williams, 2006, p. 598). These new personality traits were related to values found in the Icelandic society and to the idealised vision of Iceland. Migrants felt they learned patience (since Icelanders "don't hurry", M1), and decency (understood as "being OK" towards other people, M6). One young man compared his learning to what he had learned in England before:

> I calmed down here […]. In England [...] I got more courage. Before... I wasn't able to stand up to people. Now I know that if somebody wants to mess with me, I'd confront him right away. […] So I was loaded with courage and then I came here and – maybe it hasn't disappeared – but it got balanced. I started thinking that I don't want any trouble. (M2)

Koehn and Rosenau mentioned an "emotional competence", including 'Motivation and ability to open oneself up continuously to divergent cultural influences and experiences' as well as 'sense of transnational efficacy' (Koehn & Rosenau, 2002, p. 110). It is important, they say, to 'avoid judgmental attributions based on perceived cultural difference' (p. 112). Similarly, life in Iceland not only taught migrants that things can be different, but it also influenced their attitude towards others and themselves, e.g. on the axis of closed/opened attitude. Some said that life in Iceland taught them more tolerance towards others, such as to people of other origin, or that they got rid of some pre-conceived notions:

> It [life in Iceland] has taught me a different attitude to life, it has made me get rid of some pre-conceived notions, for example, my colleague is gay […], there is right to abortion, what else... in-vitro and so on... and nothing bad happens. They have the highest population growth in Europe, everybody is happy, and in Poland they are trying to scare us that people will stop procreating, they will kill all the children, but nothing like that happens. (…) There is a lot of diversity here. (M3)

Another man, a bus driver, described how he first learned more racist and xenophobic views from a drunken passenger and only later, after four years he started seeing black people in a less stereotypical way. Initially, stereotyping others might have been used to feel better in a situation where one could be stereotyped by Icelanders because of one's nationality.

Although some learned openness towards others, there were also accounts of learning the contrary – to be more cautious. All of them were related to the vulnerability of migrant life, when one can be cheated, not knowing who to trust. This was related in two situations to lending money to someone untrustworthy. One respondent said:

> One learns throughout the whole life, that's what people say. What has it [the life here] taught me? Maybe not life... although people around me are also my life, right? I think I'm more cautious towards other people. [...] I know that I will never lend money to anybody. Not a chance. (M2)

One woman learned cautiousness towards men, after being harassed by another migrant – a Polish criminal trying to escape justice in a small town in Iceland, where she had lived before. Such "negative" learning, making one more cautious and less willing to act (as in "deleted for anonymity") can be a powerful experience related to migration – since migrants are vulnerable, they often cannot rely on their friends and family and can become victims of abuse. This respondent moved to Reykjavik and said that she was trying to "unlearn" what her previous experiences had taught her, that is, that she should not trust people She said that she stopped being afraid later, learned "unbelievable openness", and started feeling there like home. 'There are very few things I'm afraid of right now' – she said (W4). Also one couple remembered being treated badly by other Poles ("with psychological disorders", M4) – their landlords. This experience did not, however, cause important changes in the respondents' attitude (according to them), and with time they said they learned to be more friendly towards others:

> W11: I think I also [learned] that it is good to be nice to others. M4: Yeah! I think I had noticed that before. It's worth it... No matter how people behave towards you, it is worthwhile to have a positive attitude and to be nice. (…) In Poland I also tried to be nice, but it was more difficult, because you would meet more negative attitudes everywhere.

It would be interesting to see if the new attitude is transferable to other countries, or if the respondents would have to "unlearn" it, when/if they return to Poland. Research shows that return migrants often feel lost and experience culture shock again (e.g. Niedźwiedzki, 2010).

The respondents above said that people were nicer and more open in Iceland, and they related it to general lack of stress and smaller inequalities between people in Iceland. Together with other migrants they have created a powerful vision of an island of peacefulness, where there is equality, everybody is respected, people are open, friendly and helpful (although lazy, some claimed) and where one does not need to be overly ambitious, because it does not really matter what one does. This ideal vision of Iceland seen through the eyes of Polish migrants was not shared by the Icelanders I talked to and who considered themselves to be hard-working and stressed. It was a translation of reality, in the sense described by Czarniawska, who discussed travelling ideas (in: Williams, 2006, p. 593). Migrants were translating the reality, creating knowledge about Iceland and sharing it with others, also back home. This translation sometimes included factual mistakes, but migrants were not aware of the distortions. When they described Iceland to others– in Iceland or Poland, the translation became an unreal vision of the country. Their learning was more than individual, they shared stories and experiences, through which they were learning the city (see McFarlane, 2011).

In some cases, we can talk about a perceived change of one's attitude towards oneself. Sometimes it was related to the described relaxed atmosphere, especially at work:

> I think... I learned... maybe I don't know if I learned it or I got used to it. To more calm and peace, to respecting myself, my working time. Icelanders have taught me that. They said that a break is a holy thing. How can you not want to have a break? I wouldn't say that I learned laziness, because some say that they have become more lazy because of all these breaks, because Icelanders do something more slowly... […] sometimes I just relax, I have it imprinted that I never fool around, just the opposite. (W1)

Comparing Icelandic and Polish attitude towards work was a common thread in the interviews. The difference influenced some migrants' behavior, although others used it to show the superiority of their approach (see more in: deleted for anonymity).

Self-confidence

Changing one's attitude meant becoming more self-confident or believing more in one's abilities. It was possible because of what one achieved thanks to migration (getting a driving license, a car, or finally getting a job).

Two migrants said that they had become less shy or more courageous, which can be interpreted as gaining confidence. A kindergarten teacher claimed:

> Life in Iceland has changed me a lot. Maybe... frankly speaking, the work has changed me. [...] when I started work, I was very quiet and... very shy. The job has taught me here. Not life so much, but the work, the people. (W10)

In Koehn and Rosenau's words 'The self-confidence, or a sense of personal transnational efficacy, constitutes the culminating emotional skill.' They quote Conolly and Bruner, who say that transnational self-confidence 'involves learning that one can do things with a certain likelihood of success and, moreover, with a fair likelihood of being able to run the course again should one fail' (in Koehn & Rosenau, 2002, p. 112). Migration –often giving people hope that they can achieve something in life – is, thus, a way of achieving the emotional competence.

Independence

Becoming more courageous can be linked to personal development and "maturing" – the respondents who talked about gaining courage were in their twenties when they moved to Iceland. Some participants who left Poland at this age mentioned learning independence. Moving to Iceland served the same purpose as simply moving out of home – they became more independent, had to take care of their finances, started their first full-time. One 23-year old woman said: '[Life here taught me] independence for sure. Thriftiness maybe as well, managing my own funds.' (W5). Another answered: 'Responsibility. I've grown up here. My whole family is in Poland, so I had to take care of everything by myself.' (W6). Even though this change could have happened elsewhere, it would be more difficult in Poland to find a job allowing the respondents to move to their own place quickly, because of high unemployment at that time and relatively low wages. One man said:

> It's not about money, but maybe when I say it, it will seem like it's about money. There is generally no work for me in Poland as a teacher [...] The teachers' salary is such, that I could not work as a teacher. [...] My mum says that my room is always there for me, but she's... how to put it... she's crazy, right? Now after 2,5 years of managing my life by myself, I just do whatever I want.... When I wanted to go to a concert to London, I did.[...] I've travelled the world a bit and now she says I could go to my old room and work as a teacher for 800 PLN [appr. 200 Euro]?! (M3)

He exaggerated the difference in salaries to prove he could not live independently in Poland. He stated that it is impossible for a single person to work and rent an apartment, so one would have to live with their parents. Migration helped him become independent and learn to live alone. Two other migrants (aged 19 and 23) stated they learned something about themselves – about their talents and what they wanted to do in life, and decided to move elsewhere in order to study. They had come to Iceland either because of their family or friends who were also moving, but in Iceland they grew more independent

and self-directed, and decided to move again – now because of their own educational needs.

Living with uncertainty

While some migrants felt they became more independent, others said they lost control over their lives. It usually started with changing one's initial migration plan – those who wanted to come for limited time, stayed longer and could not decide when to leave. The uncertainty grew stronger with the events that were beyond their control. The most important one was the onset of the economic crisis, which changed the economic foundations of their stay (they started earning less, when calculated in Polish zloty, sometimes lost half of their savings and were for some time unable to transfer money to Poland). But also nature, especially the Eyjafjallajökull's eruption in 2010 increased their instability and led them to a feeling that they cannot control their life. Asked about his plans for the future, one building constructor answered:

> Well, I don't know what the situation is now after the crisis with all the loans... A lot of people, a lot of Poles lost money [...] I don't know, maybe the volcano will change something. [laughter] It will change everybody's plans in the whole Iceland. I have heard that Americans said they could evacuate the whole island. [...] If Katla erupts... [M18]

He analysed the change in the currency value, the situation in case other volcanoes erupt, but could not answer the question about his plans. Some other respondents said that they could not plan anything, because it never turned out the way they had planned. W1, who first worked as a cleaner and then slowly progressed to work in a kindergarten, said:

> ... when my situation had just normalised and I changed my job [...] then suddenly came the crisis. [...] I started feeling a bit insecure. [...] What will happen next? Nobody knows [...] Will I end up homeless? I have such visions and I am afraid myself [...]. I can't answer the question about what will happen and how it is now. I am here now [...] We'll see... (W1)

She decided to focus on what is now rather than be bound with any plans. Similarly, another teacher said that the crisis had a role in changing the way one looks at life:

> Since the crisis... suddenly people stopped throwing away everything, they started respecting [things]. Maybe it's very sad, but I think that [the crisis] was necessary. Not only for them [Icelanders], but also for us. For everybody, in a way, in order to really wake up. We have today and we'll see what will happen tomorrow. (W4)

The experience of the crisis, when people learned that their money can just disappear – changed some people's attitude. As W4 claimed – if you cannot be sure of the future, you start respecting things, and stop throwing them away. Interestingly, those who saved money for a couple of years, spending as little as possible (e.g. never going to restaurants) and lost much of their savings (as M13 and W15), decided to quit saving. The crisis had, thus, a powerful effect on one's attitude to life and to the part of life spent in Iceland. Nevertheless, the effects of the crisis or other unforeseen events were not mentioned while answering the question about learning in Iceland – they appeared in other parts of the interview, suggesting that learning may have been regarded as something positive and not associated with difficult events in life.

Mobility skills

All the learning outcomes described so far could be useful both in one's life in Iceland, and elsewhere, if one moved again. Some respondents talked explicitly about the effects of their learning on their future mobility. Especially in relation to learning new languages ('If I were to change the country of my stay for a longer time now, I would be able to learn this country's language in a year' [M3]), becoming less afraid of moving when one had learned some English; learning to fight for one's rights in a foreign environment, and learning to cope abroad ('For sure it [life in Iceland] has taught me something – how to live among foreigners, how to cope' [M16]). One man talked about learning to cope in a local perspective – he had to learn 'how to live, how to function in their climate, in their so to say everyday life, going to the office...' (M6) – this was something needed for adaptation in Iceland, but learning to cope abroad could also be used later, if he decided to move.

Learning because of the change

As described above, learning changed my respondents in some way. But they also stated it was change as such that facilitated learning. One woman who studied in Poland and worked there for some years said that change brings more self-confidence:

> [I learned] to fight for myself and I feel more self-confident. And I got more... When I took the decision to leave, I had to resign from my job. And [I had to] come here, start everything anew, I do it all the time. I'm a mobile person, so I say to myself jokingly that I don't know how long I will stay here, what it will look like. I like changes and sometimes after living for a couple of years in one place I say that I'm bored... […] the first time is most difficult, when you have to resign, make the choice, start something anew. Then it gets better. And it was a kind of a lesson. That the world doesn't end at one thing, the one in which you are at the moment. [It teaches] The easiness of making decisions, cutting something off. Taking challenges, making changes... (W1)

Some said they were bored with their old job and needed something new, where they would learn more, instead of getting bored ('I wanted change. […] Not just in my work, but I wanted to change something in my life. I needed new stimuli, new impetuses.' [M4]). One bus driver quoted a known phrase that travelling broadens the mind, saying that he couldn't travel during the communist times, even though he wanted to. Change and migration were seen as learning opportunities in one's life. They changed the perspective – said one young woman:

> Now I look differently at going abroad, I think that every journey teaches, it opens perspectives, I look at many things now from a totally different perspective... I'm somehow still the same person, I make the same mistakes all the time, but it's a totally different point of view. (W4)

Migration was also a challenge – after copying with it, it might be easier to cope with other challenges. Another respondent said:

> It's a huge challenge to move somewhere, to find yourself in a country where no one understands you, where you don't understand... I've noticed one thing, that if you don't understand, it also has positive sides, because you are left alone with your thoughts and you don't get involved with these people's emotions, you relax. […] For me it's relaxing, I talk to somebody, only as much as I need to get an answer, but I don't get involved too much. (W11)

This suggests that migration may lead to more reflexivity, and can serve as a refuge, as time to think over one's life. For some, Iceland was, however, just a moment in life, preceding other changes:

> I'm getting bored a bit. Although there happens something all the time in terms of cultural life. But I've been to every museum (…) I've seen all Icelandic bands, nobody comes here. I got bored a bit and there really is nothing to do on weekends. (M2)

The man planned to move to another country, and he actually did it later. He had been living in England before and it seems that he had a strategy of learning intensively in one place, participating in the cultural life there and then moving further like a nomad. He used a network of his friends in order to take part in concerts all around Europe. Learning through constant travelling bears reminiscence of the concept of nomadic learning, described e.g. by Piotr Kowzan (2008), although it lacks the political and anti-systemic consciousness described in Kowzan's research.

Translocal learning – discussion

Although in my initial question I asked what the respondents learned by living in the new place, most answers indicated that people not only learn about places, but also through comparisons of places, such as their hometowns or other places which they had visited. The findings show a kind of translocal learning – that is, learning from many places simultaneously, learning from changing places. The prefix "trans-" comes from Latin and means "through". Likewise, I would argue that migrants learn by going through places – they learn in the movement. My respondents' learning was translocal when we look at the totality of their life – spent in several places. Many did not plan to stay in Iceland and some actually moved after the interview – mostly to Norway.

In my research I asked about Iceland, which is probably why I got many answers comparing Iceland and Poland. Still, some participants said they learned something else in Reykjavik than in another Icelandic town they had lived in (e.g. trusting people in Reykjavik but not in another). Moreover, another man clearly limited his experiences to certain places, saying that he felt safe in Reykjavik, but very unsafe in his hometown. He did not want to talk about Poland as a whole, saying that he had never lived in other places in Poland than his hometown, so his remarks are limited to this place. He described his experiences in England as specific to the particular city. Therefore, the learning was translocal rather than transnational, which proves that the concept of translocal learning could be more useful than looking at learning from a transnational perspective.

McFarlane's (2011) definition of translocal learning stressed the importance of collective learning. Contrariwise, my respondents talked about their individual learning outcomes and what living in Iceland meant for their individual lives. While learning was considered an individual process, migrants had a shared view on Iceland and its values. Their migration stories were similar and formed patterns, e.g. there were many similarities between migration stories of five female respondents who came to Iceland in the 1990's. Some of the most common perspectives in migration studies analyse migration from a perspective of waves, networks and chains – that is, collectives of people. This study shows that many migrants learned by assimilating similarly perceived Icelandic values, which suggests that we can look at migrants' translocal learning as a collective process. In McFarlane's (2011) definition, people learn not only from social contacts, but also from contacts with materials, systems, rhythms and routines. My respondents talked, however, mostly about learning from other people and from work – the latter including not only

other people or "communities of practice"[3] (Wenger, 2009), but also routines or the rhythm of work, such as breaks. Arguably, migrants learned something from such events as the onset of the economic crisis or the volcano eruption. The crisis – although caused by humans, cannot only be attributed to certain people, but rather to financial systems and global financial markets, whereas the volcano eruption was a natural catastrophe. Thus, migrants' learning was not only social, but related to other dimensions of place, such as nature, the political and financial system and ideology, which are important in place-conscious education, especially in the concept of "critical pedagogy of place" (Gruenewald, 2003b). The study shows that migrants' translocal learning can actually be critical, in terms of challenging the dominant ideology. This could be seen in the extract from the interview with M3, who said that he learned that what he was told about homosexuals or abortion was not true. One could say that he empirically verified opinions about alternative social models and became more conscious of misleading ideologies.

The translocal learning was powerful – migrants changed the concept of self (from seeing oneself as shy, to being self-confident, willing to undertake new challenges), emotional response patterns (being more patient, tolerant and calm), as well as schema and stereotypes. They said e.g. that they had become more open to other people, they changed their pre-conceived notions about homosexuals, foreigners or people of different race. Their personality traits might have changed, too – they felt that they had become more independent or more decent.

Translocal pedagogy – suggestion of a new approach

The translocal perspective in studies of adult education and learning could be an interesting approach showing the educational potential of place rather than just time (as in theories related to learning in certain life stages). Apart from the concept of translocal learning, I would like to propose here a concept of translocal pedagogy – pedagogy understood here as a scientific discipline, studying educational processesand educational discourse. The translocal pedagogy, unlike the concept of translocal learning could study not only educational processes happening between places and "through" places, but also educational discourse related to translocal learning, as well as the policies related to such learning. It could also study specific educational programmes and their local and translocal aspects (as I tried to do in 'deleted for anonymity'). It would be, e.g., interesting for future research to see if any educational initiatives could enhance the translocal learning and produce something that migrants would remember as a significant learning outcome of their stay. In other words, studying the relation between place, mobility and education promises interesting results and is needed in the contemporary world, where places are not fixed and bound anymore, and neither are their inhabitants. Apart from learning, also teaching needs to be taken into account, as well as relations between formal, non-formal and informal education conscious of places and mobility. Thus, the concept of translocal pedagogy can prove useful for future research.

Notes

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[2] Transcripts are coded with M/W for man/woman and a subsequent number.

[3] Østerlund and Carlile criticised Wenger's theory as static and too much focused on interactions within one community rather than between various communities. There are other studies, emphasizing cross-communal relations, but mostly focused on the managerial perspective (2003). It seems, thus, that more focus on space and translocal relations could benefit the practice theory.

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Reading literacy and metacognition in a Spanish Adult Education centre

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Abstract

In recent years, Spain's adult population has been characterised by high unemployment rates, particularly among peopled aged over 18 who do not have the Compulsory Secondary Education certificate. Their training in key competences, such as reading comprehension, would provide them with fundamental learning, empowerment, and better employment opportunities. This empirical study examines the relationship between the use of metacognitive skills while reading and improved reading comprehension – previously shown in other studies – evaluating both constructs and attempting to establish whether there is a relationship between them in a sample of 143 adult secondary education students. Research outcomes in reading competence were lower than expected, with significant differences between stages and average use of metacognitive strategies, influenced by gender and age. A significant, linear, and low to moderate degree relationship was found between two of the metacognitive strategies evaluated and so a predictive model was constructed in which age, level, and use of strategies for problem-solving and reading-support are predictive variables explaining 23.4% of the variance in reading skills. We also suggest some changes regarding teacher practice, prioritising active and self-regulating reading.

Keywords: adult education; literacy skills; low educational level; metacognition strategies; reading comprehension

Introduction

Europe currently has an alarming situation in which over 65 million people have not developed the basic reading, writing, arithmetic and digital skills, and have not reached ISCED (CINE in Spanish) level 2[1] (Bachmann & Holdsworth, 2016), something that has an impact on their social position (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2010). The 2016 Panorama de la Educación report notes that command of reading comprehension and maths skills among adults are essential explanatory factors for the social results obtained, suggesting that high competence levels play a vital role in achieving better social results (Ministerio de Educación, Cultura y Deporte [MECD], 2016b, p. 39). In other words, empowering this social group largely depends on their acquisition of reading competence, as this is vital if people are to be able to do well in society, and it is a key component in intellectual enrichment, acquiring knowledge, and accessing culture.

This issue, which affects a section of society, has not gone unnoticed by institutions, and interest in this group has increased in recent years. Accordingly, the European Association for the Education of Adults (EAEA) proposed that 2017 should be the year of Adult Secondary Education (ASE), to raise awareness of the impact and benefits of ASE in the lives of individuals and in society in general (EAEA, 2017). This initiative ties in with the New Skills Agenda for Europe, developed by the European Commission, which emphasises the need to promote the empowerment of this group through education (Bachmann & Holdsworth, 2016).

In Spain, the economic crisis of the last decade has created high rates of unemployment among poorly trained adults (Feito, 2015), leading to an increase in the number of adults returning to the educational system to seek a second chance to join the job market (Rujas, 2015). This group's main motivation is to achieve an intermediate level of training and so have more and better opportunities to access the world of work (Salva-Mut, Quintana-Murci, & Desmarais, 2015). This education corresponds with the Compulsory Secondary Education certificate (ESO), which is the usual minimum requirement for entering the job market (Eurydice, 2011).

Official figures from 2015 on adult education in Spain indicate that 42.6% of the population aged between 25 and 64 had not completed Compulsory Secondary Education. If this is compared with the same year in the European Union, 77% of this age group has a secondary or higher level of education. In other words, Spain is 20 points below the European mean (MECD, 2016a). These figures agree with the latest results from the Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC), in which Spain obtained a score 'significantly lower than those of the other countries and the mean of countries from the OECD and the European Union' (MECD, 2013, p. 30). This gap is the reason why increasing rates of academic success in adults should become a priority target (Feito, 2015).

However, despite the individual and social motivations that drive this group, the percentage of adults who manage to complete secondary education has progressively fallen from 76% in 1995 to 42% at present (MECD, 2016a). According to Arreaza (2017), it is the system itself that imposes barriers that foster failure: a disconnected and incoherent curriculum in which the accumulation of theoretical content is prioritised over skills, a lack of interdisciplinarity, an uneven distribution of time across the different areas and evaluation based on a traditional system of knowledge-accumulation that does not consider the acquisition of skills. This situation has not improved with the implementation

of the most recent education act (Organic Law for Improving Educational Quality [LOMCE], 2013), in which explicit references to key skills have been eliminated from the curriculum. Furthermore, cuts made to education policies particularly affect the most vulnerable groups (Salva-Mut et al., 2015).

Therefore, it is very interesting to combine forces from all areas to promote an all-round education at the same time as the personal development of the adults (Sarrate-Capdevila & Pérez de Guzmán, 2005), redirecting them towards completing their education and achieving the diploma, focussing on the fact that improving people's education increases their chances of a second chance in the world of work (OECD, 2010). Research into reading competence in adults with low levels of education has increased in recent years, especially in the English-speaking world (Sabatini, Sawaki, Shore, & Scarborough, 2010), although the Spanish-speaking world still requires further studies involving this population that explore questions relating to what difficulties they encounter while reading, how often they use learning strategies, and how using them has an impact on the improvement in their reading process. This study which considers these questions has been performed starting from the knowledge that formal adult education is a second chance to develop and perfect the skills needed for the world of work and also for life in society.

Adult secondary education in Spain

In Spain, adult secondary education (ESPA) is offered to post-school age people who, for a variety of reasons, left the educational system during the obligatory stage and who are or should be working, as well as to young people and retired people. One of the objectives of this stage is to promote the acquisition of knowledge and skills not previously obtained, in the framework of the all-round training needed to join the world of work (Sárrate-Capdevila & Pérez de Guzmán, 2005). This sector has a diverse profile, with the shared characteristic of having limited education and coming from a background of academic failure (Feito, 2013; Sárrate-Capdevila & Pérez de Guzmán, 2005). As a result, any new setback at this stage has a high cost, both personally and socially (Fernández-Enguita, Mena & Riviere, 2010).

ESPA allows people to obtain the secondary education qualification and it is structured in levels I and II, of one year's length each, divided into four progressively ordered stages (stages 1 to 4 of ASE) corresponding to years 1 to 4 of compulsory secondary education (ESO). People aged over 18 who have completed primary education or its equivalent for adults (Enseñanza Básica – Basic Education) are accepted as ASE students. Over 16s who can show they are in work are also accepted. The curriculum does not differ from the one used in standard secondary education, although the subjects are grouped into areas (communication, social, and science-technology). According to Feito (2013), this group's distinguishing features include: a wide range of ages (students who have only recently become adults alongside others who are fully mature), a low cultural level, lack of study habits, and being on the lower rungs of the employment ladder.

Reading competence and metacognition

The information society we inhabit demands people be able to process written information in varying contexts and apply it successfully to different real-world situations to allow personal and work goals to be achieved (UNESCO, 2016). Reading competence

not only includes decoding and understanding what one reads, but also reflecting on and evaluating information, to be able to build knowledge and so enable individuals to participate in society and integrate successfully.

Factors affecting the development of this skill include the type of text and the strategies the reader uses while reading (Cerchiaro, Paba, & Sánchez, 2011; Serrano, Vidal-Abarca, & Ferrer, 2017). Regarding the text type, reading texts of the *continuous type*, which are characterised by a linear narrative contained in several paragraphs, is not the same as reading *non-continuous or discontinuous texts*, which feature graphs and charts, diagrams, tables, images, and so on. These are often associated with academic contexts and are the main medium for knowledge transfer. Studies indicate that there is a difference in the level of processing between one type and the other, with discontinuous texts presenting greater difficulties than continuous ones (Serrano et al., 2017).

Regarding the types of strategies applied during reading, there are cognitive and metacognitive ones (Cornford, 2002; Solé, 2012). Three aspects in which a reader should be competent are distinguished in cognitive strategies: *retrieval* and *identification*, which involve being locating information in a text; *integration* and *interpretation*, which involve understanding the relationships between the different parts of a text and inferring non-textual information to piece together the meaning; and *evaluation* and *reflection* which require the reader to be able to relate to prior knowledge (Llorens, Vidal-Abarca, Martínez, Mañá, & Gilabert, 2011; OECD, 2016). In other words, in terms of reading competence, at the lowest stage, readers extract meaning literally, at the second stage they interpret this information, and finally, at the highest stage, they activate their prior knowledge, and by linking it to the information and combining it in their cognitive structure they create new knowledge. The PIACC results for Spain describe a reader with problems identifying, interpreting, and/or evaluating one or more fragments of information, as well as making inferences of different levels and relating them to their prior knowledge (MECD, 2013).

Metacognitive strategies refer to being aware of and controlling the cognitive strategies used and self-regulating them when reading (Cerchicaro et al., 2011; Fernández, Jiménez, Alvarado, & Puente, 2010; Flavell, 1987; Griffith & Ruan, 2005; Kolić-Vehovec Rončević, & Pahljina-Reinić, 2014). Three types of metacognitive skills are distinguished: *global reading strategies*, which include, among others, activating prior knowledge, or deciding to focus on a particular part of the text; *problem-solving strategies*, which include decisions such as re-reading parts that have not been understood or pausing to reflect; and finally *support strategies* which include taking notes while reading, paraphrasing parts of the text, and underlining (Griffith & Ruan, 2005; Mokhtari & Reichard, 2002). In much of the literature, metacognition is shown to be part of the self-regulatory processes necessary to develop reading competence (Llorens et al., 2011; Schreiber, 2005; Zimmerman, 1998), and it is understood that 'the essential nature of metacognition and-self regulation in reading literacy exists in the ability of an individual to detect and correct errors in comprehension' (Schreiber, 2005, p. 219). Previous studies also show that these processes have a positive influence on academic performance (Cornford, 2002; Zimmerman, 1998; Zimmerman, Kitsantas, & Campillo, 2005).

Given what is stated above, it should be noted that the students themselves should know and dominate cognitive and metacognitive strategies, because for them to be able to comprehend a text, there should be an intention to construct its meaning (Karbalaei, 2010; Kolić-Vehovec et al., 2014; Solé, 2012). Similarly, as well as the characteristics mentioned above regarding the ASE population, it should be noted that older adults gradually lose flexibility and motivation in the use of metacognitive strategies (Fernández et al., 2010). These are aspects that demand knowledge of the students' particular

situation in this matter, in order then to be able to act in a way directed at achieving the objectives of the stage.

Therefore, starting from the premise that text type and structure have an effect on the reading comprehension process, as do the individual characteristics of the reader and the strategies the reader uses to comprehend texts, and that we found only a small number of studies in the ASE population, the aims of this study are: to identify the total degree of reading competence, to establish which aspects of the reading process are especially difficult, to describe the metacognitive strategies students use to comprehend what they are reading, and to develop an explanatory model combining all of these variables.

Participants

The participants in this study were 143 students (64 men and 79 women) from an ASE centre in the Spanish Autonomous Region of Castilla-La Mancha, aged between 17 and 57 with an average age of 24.5. Purposive or convenience sampling was used, including all of the students registered with the centre.

Materials

Prueba de Competencia Lectora para Educación Secundaria (Reading competence test for secondary education – CompLEC) (Llorens et al., 2011). This is an instrument for evaluating individual reading competence using reading situations focussing on tasks that require students in compulsory secondary education to answer questions based on texts similar to the ones they encounter in their everyday lives. It comprises five texts – three continuous and two discontinuous – and a total of 20 questions, which are divided into three categories in accordance with the three basic aspects considered in the PISA and PIACC framework: retrieval, integration, and reflection-evaluation of information. The CompLEC scale has shown that its own psychometric properties are adequate and satisfactory, both for diagnosis of reading competence and as a research instrument (Vidal-Abarca, Mañá & Gil, 2010). The study by Llorens et al. (2011) provided the normative sample with which the results presented here are compared, as we do not have tests previously performed in the ASE population with which to compare them. In addition, the level required and the curriculum are the same as the ones for which the CompLEC is intended, compulsory secondary education (ESO).

Inventario de Conciencia Metacognitiva de las Estrategias de Lectura, originally called *Metacognitive Awareness of Reading Strategies Inventory* (MARSI) (Mokhtari & Reichard, 2002). This is a self-evaluation instrument, designed to measure the level of awareness (knowledge) and perception of the use of metacognitive strategies when reading texts for academic purposes. The inventory comprises 30 items, that analyse three groups of metacognitive strategies (global reading, problem solving, and support reading) and makes it possible to account for three processes associated with regulation (planning, monitoring, and evaluation). MARSI was originally designed to be applied to English-speaking adolescents and adults with an educational level higher than fifth grade (Mokhtari & Reichard, 2002; Mokhtari & Sheorey, 2002) and its Spanish version has been validated with adolescents by Alvarado, Puente, Jiménez, and Arrebillaga (2011) who tested its internal validity (Cronbach's alpha 0.86) and confirmed the three-factor model proposed by the authors. It is used in this study because of its great potential as it makes it possible to increase awareness of the strategies used when reading, both among the students themselves and among the teachers (Mokhtari & Reichard, 2002). All of this

is relevant when considering the population of the educational centre being studied, which has the characteristics mentioned above in the introduction to this research. Table 1 shows a summary of the processes and strategies measured by both instruments.

Table 1. Description of the study instruments.

			Nº Questions /Items	Description
CompLEC	Type of questions (reading process)	Retrieval	5	Report on the reader's retrieval of explicit and implicit information from the text.
		Integration	10	Analyze the reader's comprehension of general ideas of the text, its relations and inferences.
		Reflection-evaluation	5	Report the reader's prior knowledge use and the evaluation of quality and relevance of the text.
	Text type	Continuous	3	Classical texts that require a sequential order for reading.
		Discontinuous	2	Texts that require no linear reading, like texts with maps, charts, diagrams, etc.
MARSI	Metacognitive strategies	Global reading	13	The use of strategies such as setting the purpose of reading, activating previous knowledge, making decisions about the necessary focus of parts of the text, etc.
		Problem-solving	8	Strategies used to solve problems during reading, like read with attention, reread for better comprehension, stop to think about the text, etc.
		Support reading	9	The use of support techniques such as taking notes while reading, underlining, consulting the dictionary or re-reading extracts of text.

The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences program (SPSS) 20.0.1 (IBM®) was used to perform hypothesis tests and analysis of variance for parametric and non-parametric samples, testing the correlations of ordinal and quantitative variables, and multilinear linear regression statistical tests. The study variables were *type of question*, where it is necessary to consider the influence on performance of the reading process proposed (retrieval, integration, and reflection-evaluation), *text type*, which relates to influence of the structure of the text (continuous-discontinuous), the metacognitive strategies the subjects report using (*global*, *problem solving*, and *support*), *age* (grouped in four bands: ≤18, 19–25, 26–35, and 36–60 years), *gender* and *stage* (1–4 ESPA).

Results

The reliability of both instruments was analysed using Cronbach's alpha for the study sample, which with CompLEC gave values of .814 and with MARSI values of .876 for global strategies, .793 for problem-solving strategies, and .729 for support strategies, indicating the high levels of internal consistency of the scale and subscales used.

The results show a sample with an overall reading performance below the mean found by Llorens et al. (2011) for a reference sample of 798 students in Compulsory Secondary Education (Table 2). Comparison by centiles indicates that as the individuals progress through the stages, their reading competence improves like in the normative sample. In the case of stage 3 of ESPA, discrepancies were observed in the data with mean and centile values below what might be expected.

Table 2. Comparison between percentiles of reading competence in Compulsory Secondary Education (ESO) students (Llorens et al., 2011) and adult secondary education (ESPA) students.

CompLEC Normative sample	Centiles											Statistics	
	01	10	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	90	99	M	SD
1º ESO	2.5	4.4	6.0	7.0	8.0	9.0	11	12	14	15	17	9,7	4,1
2º ESO	2.5	5.1	7.1	9.0	11	12	13	14	16	17	20	11,7	4,3
3º ESO	5.7	9.0	10	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	2	13,7	3,6
ESPA	Centiles											Statistics	
	01	10	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	90	99	M	SD
1º ESO	.00	2.0	3.2	5.0	5.0	7.0	8.6	9.7	11.0	11.9	14.8	7,03	3,9
2º ESO	.00	4.0	5.0	6.4	7.2	10.0	12.6	14.0	14.4	17.4	19.0	10,1	5,2
3º ESO	1	2.0	4.0	5.0	7.0	8.0	9.0	11.6	14.0	16.0	17.7	8,5	4,7
4º ESO	.00	5.0	8.0	9.0	10.0	12.0	13.0	15.0	16.0	17.0	19.00	11,6	4,7

The percentage of correct answers across the different types of questions and text types was calculated and compared with the normative sample (Table 3). The results, in all of the subdimensions of the instrument, indicate that the test sample displays lower percentages of correct answers than the normative sample. These differences, according to Cohen's *d*, are around 0.5, suggesting medium effect sizes, except in the case of integration type questions where the effect size is small.

Regarding the results in the sample itself, depending on the type of question, the data show that the mean performance of the sample is lower when solving the question requires readers to integrate the information they read (47.3%), followed by reflecting on it (52.2%), and they perform best with retrieval (53.8%). These differences are significant in the percentages of correct answers to retrieval questions compared with integration questions ($Z = -8.963$; $p<.001$) and integration-reflection ($Z = -8,580$; $p<.001$), according to the Wilcoxon non-parametric signed rank test.

Regarding the text type, and using the same statistic as before, the success rate is higher in continuous texts (52.2%) than in discontinuous ones (46.3%). This difference is statistically significant ($Z = -9.583$; $p<.001$). In addition, the coefficient of variation [CV] was calculated, providing information about the variance of correct answers in the sample, with the continuous texts variable having the lowest dispersion (50.8%) and the retrieval question type variable having the highest (59.4%).

Table 3. Comparison of percentage of correct answers and effect size (Cohen's *d*) between the adult education sample and the normative sample using the CompLEC instrument (Llorens et al., 2011).

		Correct Answers (%) ESPA		Correct Answers (%) ESO		*d* Cohen
		Media	SD	Media	SD	
	TotalCompLEC	47,7	24,7	58,0	13,5	0,52
Type of questions	Retrieval	53,8	32,1	65,2	20,7	0,42
	Integration	47,3	25,1	51,7	13,1	0,22
	Reflection evaluation	52,2	30,8	63,0	8,9	0,48
Text type	Continuous	52,2	26,6	59,8	12,9	0,36
	Discontinuous	46,3	26,3	54,7	14,7	0,39

SD= standard deviation

Non-parametric contrast tests were used to investigate these differences by independent variables (gender, stage, and age), as the assumptions of normality were not met.

The Mann-Whitney U test was used to analyse whether gender affects performance in the test depending on the type of question and the type of text, while the Kruskal-Wallis test was used to analyse the relationship with stage and age.

The analysis does not revel significant differences that can be attributed to gender or age. However, with regards to the stage, the non-parametric tests show significant differences in the questions on integration and reflection and for continuous and discontinuous texts (Table 4).

Table 4. Analysis of differences by gender, stage, and age for the CompLEC instrument.

			Gender		Stage				Age			
			M	F	1º	2º	3º	4º	<=18	19-25	26-35	36-60
		N	64	79	30	27	37	49	46	52	25	19
	Total CompLEC		Z=-0,407 p=,684		X=17,666**; p=,001				X=5,79; p=,122			
		R	73,5	70,5	51,6	75,7	63,1	89,2	60,9	75,6	79,2	84,1
Type of questions	Retrieval		Z=-0,144; p=,885		X=5,122; p=,163				X=2,786; p=,426			
		R	71,4	72,4	61,2	75,8	66,7	80,5	63,5	75,0	73,9	78,1
	Integration		Z=-0,521-; p=,602		X=11,005*; p=,012				X=3,025; p=,388			
		R	73,9	70,3	54,4	78,2	66,7	83,4	62,4	69,0	80,7	88,2
	Reflection evaluation		Z=-0,825; p=,409		X=10,390*; p=,008				X=3,025; p=,388			
		R	75,1	69,5	50,4	77,5	72,2	82,1	63,9	72,2	79,4	77,6
Text type	Continuous		Z=-0,279; p=780		X=10,390**; p=,016				X=3,785; p=, 286			
		R	70,9	72,9	54,4	78,2	66,7	83,4	63,0	72,0	79,1	80,6
	Discontinuous		Z=-1,375; p=,169		X=10,734*; p=,013				X=5,941; p=,114			
		R	72,3	67,8	55,5	69,8	68,7	85,8	62,7	70,6	76,8	88,5

*means difference is significant at p< ,05 level
**means difference is significant al p< ,01 level.
M=Male
F=Female
R=Average ranges

A mixed ANOVA was performed, making it possible to analyse the significance of the interaction between stage and each dimension on the CompLEC questionnaire. In the case question type, lower bound estimated was used as two of the assumptions are not met (the Kolgomorov-Smirnof test for normality and Mauchly's sphericity test). In the case of text type, Pillai's trace was used as the assumption of normality was not met.

The main effects of stage replicate those already described in the Kruskal-Wallis test. Regarding within-subjects effects, pairwise comparisons indicate that there are significant differences for integration and reflection-type questions depending on whether the students are at stage 1 or 4 (U = -29.911; p = .010, and U = -3.721; p = .005 respectively), with the range being favourable for students at ESPA stage 4. This pattern is repeated with text type. There are significant differences with continuous texts and discontinuous ones, and in both cases they are found between stages 1 and 4 of ESPA (U = -28.947; p = .015 and U = -30.249; p = .009, respectively).

The results show that there is no cross effect between question type or text type and the stage. In other words, the differences found are maintained across the courses.

For the MARSI instrument, the descriptors were calculated for the sample as a whole, as well as the valid percentage for the three levels proposed by Mokhtari and Reichard (2002): high (mean of 3.5 or above), medium (mean of 2.5 to 3.4), and low (2.4 or lower). The results in Table 5 show a medium level of declared use of metacognitive strategies during the reading process. Similarly, the distribution by percentages makes it possible to refine the behaviour of the sample, so that most subjects report a high level of use of

strategies aimed at solving problems while for global and support strategies they report a low level.

Table 5. Descriptive statistics and levels of frequency of use of reading strategies.

	N	Maximun scale	Media	SD	% high	% medium	% low
Global reading	114	5	3,13	0,83	31,50	47,37	21,05
Problem-solving	125	5	3,66	0,76	64,80	29,60	5,60
Support reading	117	5	2,73	0,78	14,53	54,70	30,77

As in the reading comprehension test, possible gender, stage, and age differences in the use of metacognitive strategies have been investigated. To do this, after testing the parametric assumptions, the procedure described above was used (Table 6).

Table 6. Analysis of differences by gender, stage, and age for the MARSI instrument.

		Gender		Stage				Age			
		M	F	1°	2°	3°	4°	<=18	19-25	26-35	36-60
Global reading		t=-0,609; p=,544		F=0,610; p=,610				F=3,340*; p=,022			
	N	52	62	22	18	31	43	37	40	19	17
	M	39,94	41,19	39,77	42,83	41,77	39,20	38,27	39,37	41,36	47,7
	SD	10,8	11,1	11,1	11,1	9,8	11,6	9,7	10,6	12	11,1
Problem-solving		t=-2,376*; p=,019		F=1,350; p=,262				F=3,011*; p=,033			
	N	58	67	26	19	35	45	42	44	21	17
	M	27,9	30,5	29,1	31,8	29,2	28,5	27,5	29,4	29,8	32,5
	SD	6,5	5,5	6,6	4,7	4,9	7,1	5,8	6,1	7,4	3,6
Support reading		t=-1,445; p=,151		F=0,839; p=,475				F=8,618**; p=,000			
	N	54	63	26	18	30	43	37	44	19	17
	M	23,6	25,4	24,4	26,8	24,7	23,7	22,6	23,6	24,4	31,8
	SD	6,4	7,5	7,3	7,9	6,3	7,1	6,2	6,3	7,1	6,7

* means difference is significant at p< ,05 level
** means difference is significant al p< ,01 level.

Significant differences regarding gender and age were found. In the case of gender, female subjects report greater use problem-solving strategies than male subjects. This difference is significant (t = -2.376; p = .019). In the case of age, significant differences were present in all of the strategies evaluated. The ANOVA analysis by age group was expanded upon with a post hoc analysis. The 36 to 60 age group reported greater use of global strategies than the other age groups, and these differences were statistically significant with the first two groups (≤18 and 19 to 25). With problem-solving strategies, the oldest group again reported the highest use, although in this case the differences were only statistically significant with regards to the lowest age group (≤18). Finally, following

the same pattern, for support reading strategies, significant differences were found between the oldest group and all other age groups.

As in the analysis of reading competence, a mixed ANOVA was performed with stage as the variable and strategy type with three levels as the within-subjects factor to establish whether the adoption of metacognitive strategies (three types) develops differently over the levels. After meeting the assumptions of normality, sphericity, and homogeneity of variance, Pillai's trace shows a significant effect for the strategy type factor but not for the strategy type*stage interaction, as a crossed effect of this type is not present. The pairwise comparisons between all levels for the strategy type within-subjects factor show significant differences in all combinations. As for the stage as a within-subject factor, no significant differences were found between use of metacognitive strategies and stage (replicating the previous results).

Next, to establish whether there is a relationship between the two constructs, a bivariate correlation between the total CompLEC dependent variable and each of the MARSI strategies was performed. This showed a weak to moderate statistically significant positive relationship for global strategies, moderate for problem-solving strategies, and non-significant for support strategies. A bivariate correlation was also performed with the remaining ordinary independent variables: age, gender, and stage. The results of both correlations were the basis for selecting the significant variables to prepare an explanatory model for variance in reading competence through multiple linear regression. Table 7 shows the Pearson coefficients for the quantitative variables and Spearman's rho for the ordinary variables, as well as their significance.

Table 7. Bivariate correlation between the independent variables and the CompLEC dependent variable.

	N	Pearson correlation	Spearman correlation	Sig. (bilateral)
Age	142	-	,236**	,005
Stage	143	-	,299**	,000
Gender	143	,024		,772
Global reading	114	,234**	-	,012
Problem-solving	125	,350**	-	,000
Support reading	117	,059	-	,525

The data show positive correlations in all cases, except for gender and the support reading metacognitive strategy and so these variables were not taken into account when preparing the model. Regarding the *age* variable, it should be noted that this displays an upward trend that gives a significant result for the correlation, even though it was not significant in the previous contrast test. This is because the differences are not large enough for the contrast test to be significant.

The stepwise regression procedure is the best predictive model of reading competence (F = 12.208, p<.001), with an explanatory capacity for the model of 23.4%. The predictor variables that form part of the equation are: metacognitive strategy, problem

solving (t = 4.059, p<.001), stage (t = 3.609, p<.001), and age (t = 2.460, p<.05), showing that experience and progress through the stages improve reading competence and that it is important to train students in metacognitive strategies such as reading slowly, rereading, visualizing what is being read, and/or reading aloud. Table 8 shows the data for the confidence levels and limits.

Table 8. Coefficients in the multiple linear regression model (stepwise method).

	B	Standard error	Beta	t	Sig.	CI 95%(B)	
						Lower limit	Upper limit
Constant	-3,705	2,300		-1,611	,110	-8,259	0,849
PROB_MARSI	0,261	0,064	0,333	4,059	,000	0,134	0,388
Stage	1,122	0,339	0,292	3,609	,000	0,552	1,892
Age	0,105	0,043	0,204	2,460	,015	0,020	0,190

Finally, the assumptions of multicollinearity were tested (variance inflation factor, VIF, between 1.027 and 1.074), independence of errors (Durbin-Watson test = 1.737), as well as normality and linearity (evaluation of residuals), which were met in all cases. It is important to note that while the global strategies variable is automatically eliminated by the stepwise method owing to the collinearity effect, when performing the regression with this single variable it is found that it explains 12% of the variance in the dependent variable (F = 7.585, p = .001), which is included in the accepted model.

Discussion of results

In current society with its imbalance between the employee profiles available and what employers demand, evaluating key competences in adults is of great interest for establishing policies to boost the successful integration of members of this group into the job market (OECD, 2016). The PIACC evaluations, which are run by the OECD, and similarly PISA which is carried out in the European framework, are proof of this effort. The valuable information that these institutions provide must be complemented by empirical studies in the classroom to identify behaviour and aspects that help redirect teaching practice. Nonetheless, and insofar as we have been able to establish, the great majority of works on reading comprehension and metacognition focus on other academic levels and there are practically none regarding adult education (ASE).

Reading competence

This study has found that the participating adults have a lower level of reading competence in all of the subdimensions and at all of the stages sampled when compared with the sample of adolescents, also secondary education students, used as a yardstick. Similarly, the discrepancy found (albeit not a statistically significant one) in the reading

progress of subjects at stage 3 of ASE seems to be evidence of a feature of the sample, or rather a consequence of automatic progression to the next stage, even with low reading competence. These aspects will be taken into account in future research.

A more detailed analysis of the performance shown by the participating adults in the situations proposed in CompLEC, based on the percentage of correct answers obtained, it is statistically significant and noticeable that the questions of the integration type and the discontinuous texts show the highest percentage of errors, a finding in accordance with other research carried out with adolescent secondary-education students (Serrano et al., 2017). The hypothesis tests showed significant differences in performance of tasks, text type, and question type in the course variable only. Therefore, final-stage students show a higher level of reading competence, regardless of their gender and age. This suggests that reading competence is a skill that is acquired gradually in accordance with the training received.

The result of the interaction between stage, question type, and text type was not significant, suggesting that the differences between the reading dimensions are maintained throughout the course, suggesting that the teaching model does not contribute to the acquisition of competences but instead prolongs initial differences.

Metacognitive strategies used and reading competence

For the type and number of metacognitive strategies used when reading, the participants report a higher frequency of use for problem solving, something that coincides with the research of Hong-Nam and Leavell (2011) with a sample of university students.

The results suggests that the use of metacognitive strategies is positively related to age and gender. Women and individuals in the 36–60 age range report the highest use of metacognitive strategies. In contrast with what was expected, no relationship was found between higher reported use of strategies and better performance in tests to evaluate reading competence. These results are in line with other research (Jiménez-Taracido & Manzanal, 2018; Ruffing, Wach, Spinath, Brünken, & Karbach, 2015). This could be because of a difference between what is reported and real behaviour, or to misuse of the metacognitive strategies by the subjects (Winnie & Jamieson-Noel, 2003). As for stage, it has been observed that there are no significant differences linked to the adoption of one strategy or another depending on the stage the students are at, and the pattern of application of strategies does not change over the stages.

In general, a positive linear relationship was observed between the reading competence shown by participating adults and the use of metacognitive strategies during the task, with the problem-solving strategies standing out particularly whose has made it possible to develop an explanatory model. Metacognitive skills' contribution to reading comprehension is a productive field in the social sciences, where results from empirical evidence have been varied. Examples of this are the research by Flórez, Torrado, Mondragón, and Pérez (2003) and Flórez, Torrado, Arévalo, Mesa, Mondragón, and Pérez (2005) who respectively found high (r = .877) and medium-high (r = .677) correlations in primary-school pupils. Similarly, Mañá, Vidal-Abarca, Domínguez, Gil, and Cerdán (2009) showed in compulsory secondary education that the metacognitive strategies used when performing a task explain 30% of reading comprehension. However, other studies did not show a significant relationship between these two constructs, such as Paba and González (2014) with students from compulsory secondary education, or Cerchiaro, Sánchez, Herrera, Arbeláez, and Gil (2011) with university students, which confirms the interest and importance of continued research in this area of knowledge.

Limitations of the study

With regards to the limitations of the study, several aspects must be considered. On the one hand, and considering the context of the area of study described above, although both constructs were measured using instruments that are endorsed and recognised in educational research, we must be prudent as reading comprehension and metacognitive activity are dynamic and complex processes, and the relationships between them and their various components are still a matter of debate, comprising one of the most important areas in cognitive psychology (Cerchiaro et al., 2011). Furthermore, it is important to note that the sample was not picked randomly, and while it does comprise all of the students from a particular centre, it is relatively small. Therefore, it is advisable to expand the number of participants in future to examine in greater depth whether the results found are specific to adult secondary education students or if they are due to the variety in the reading level. Furthermore, we believe it is necessary to underline the lack of previous research in this topic in populations like the study sample. This meant we had to use as a reference other studies carried out with students who, while studying at the same stage, have limited similarities in their social characteristics, concerns, etc. This reveals a gap in the literature in this type of study which we see as an opportunity to start new research. Finally, it is important to reiterate the peculiarity of this type of sample (social and cultural aspects, etc.). Analysis of this, while it does fall outside the aims of our study, could have led to a limitation in the study by affecting people's predisposition to participate in the study, especially during the application of the self-report questionnaire, since as some subjects commented to us, these questions were ones they had never asked themselves and it seemed like a waste of time to them. Nonetheless, these were isolated cases and we do not believe affect the overall results. The variables relating to the social reality of this population will be considered in future work.

Ultimately, it is necessary to continue with research, including in future designs a broader spectrum of reading competences, not just higher aspects, and monitoring all of the phases in the process to examine the influence other variables or factors might have, as well as individual variations and variations caused by the social and cultural context of adult secondary educations students.

Conclusions

Following this empirical study carried out in a centre in Spain, it can be concluded that:

- The students who participated displayed a lower level of reading competence than the normative sample from compulsory secondary education, with medium differences observed in the effect size.
- The reading processes that show the highest level of difficulty are those that require understanding the general meaning of the text, connecting the ideas set out in it (cause-effect), and making inferences that make it possible to establish a coherent representation of the situation described in the text, as well as the comprehension of discontinuous texts, which do not present information in a progressive sequence or have a linear structure (graphs, tables, etc.).
- Significant differences were found between the reading behaviour of students in the first and final stages, with students from stage 4 of ESPA having a better reading profile. The differences found relating to the reading process (retrieval, integration, reflection-evaluation) are maintained across the stages.

- The strategies employed by the subjects do not differ significantly according to the stage they are at and the pattern of behaviour does not change throughout the stages, in other words, there is no cross effect between stage and type of strategy. However, women reported greater use of problem-solving strategies than men, as did the oldest group. In both of these cases the differences are statistically significant. Habitual use of these strategies does not result in better performance in the reading test for these groups, where no significant differences were found between men and women or between the oldest age group and the other ones.
- There is an increasing linear association between age (not grouped), stage, strategies in general, and problem solving with the performance on the reading test. After the linear regression analysis, these were identified as predictors of reading competence.

Implications for teaching

We believe that the results shown here suggest a need to involve teachers in the use of strategies that direct students towards acquiring and perfecting reading competence. Instruction in tasks that favour active reading, especially in discontinuous texts, in which it is necessary to synthesise the main ideas, separate the relevant parts form the irrelevant ones, and infer and relate to prior knowledge, is predicted to be key to improving the reading process in adults with low educational levels. All through this process of improvement, it is also vital to instruct students in metacognitive strategies that help them to recognise their own learning process and make them capable of evaluating what they know and identifying difficulties that prevent them from progressing. Therefore, techniques like self-evaluation, rereading, paraphrasing, or consulting support materials when gaps in comprehension are detected are regarded as appropriate for this purpose and consequently for encouraging academic success. Accordingly, we propose, in future research identifying what influence the degree of reading competence and use of metacognitive strategies has on the academic performance of this target group.

Finally, we feel that the inequality in opportunities commonly linked with this social group and the high rates of adults with a low level of education (below ISCED 2) in Spain and other countries in southern Europe (Eurydice, 2011), should be the primary motivation to increase investment and research in the classroom in formal adult education centres. This could provide us with empirical results that would function as our starting point and provide the necessary arguments to improve an academic curriculum that favours real acquisition of competences and entails satisfactory entry into the world of work, whether it be at the first or second opportunity.

Acknowledgements

Notes

[1] International Standard Classification of Education

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Agency, identity and learning at turning points in women's lives: A comparative UK-Italian analysis

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Abstract

This paper discusses the ways in which women aged 50, in two different cultural contexts (United Kingdom and Italy) narrate and portray turning points in their life course. Particular emphasis is put on the relationships between identity, learning and agency that emerge through work, family and life experiences. The reference paradigm is adopted from Narrative Learning Theory and the approach is qualitative and comparative in analysing the participant's voice. For the UK sample, the data sources are 16 semi-structured interviews, including drawings representing the life course, selected from the study deposited in the UK Archives Data under the "Social Participation and Identity" project; for the Italian sample, the data sources are 28 semi-structured interviews and drawings, based on the same selected items of the UK interviews and provided by women living in the North-East of Italy. This study will show how women's representations of their life course and of turning points in their lives reveal different propensities to reflect on and learn from their own lives. The comparative perspective highlights, through two-level analysis (micro and macro) and by contrasting cultural, relational and social contexts, variations in ways these women are enabled or restricted in moving their lives forward. The research also contributes to methodological insight into the use of drawings in elucidating life course narratives.

Keywords: adult learning; agency; narrative learning; turning points; women's life course

Introduction

The concept of trajectories is typically used in work on transitions of young adults into the labour market, providing ideal type, segmented routes that can be used to understand a variety of personal histories (Evans & Heinz, 1994). In adult life, routes diverge, experiences diversify still further and multiplicities of new contingencies come into play (Alheit & Dausien, 2002; Biasin, 2012; Ecclestone, Biesta & Hughes, 2009). In researching adults' life and work experiences, initial career trajectories take on historical significance.

Trajectories start, in early life, with family relationships, with educational achievement, moving onto occupational choices, applying for and taking up jobs and the processes of establishing independent personal and family lives. These processes continue in adult life with activities undertaken with the aims of maintaining employment, changing employment, balancing work and family life, taking risks, seeking stability, finding personal fulfilment. They often involve changes in the adult's orientations to learning, work and family. This paper discusses the ways in which women aged 50, in contrasting cultural contexts, narrate and portray turning points in their life course, with particular reference to the relationships between identity, agency and learning, including opportunities to learn through work and life experiences. These accounts reflect identity in the articulation of dimensions of self and in the adults' motivations, beliefs and attitudes towards learning and their own capabilities to achieve in and through learning (Kirpal, 2011). Their orientations can also change according to specific experiences of success or failure, opportunities or setbacks at any stage. Orientations towards work and career, similarly, comprise complex sets of motivations, beliefs and attitudes rooted in actual life experiences and social structuring of the life course.

In the conceptual framework for exploration of women's representations of turning points in their lives, we draw on theories of life course (Heinz & Krüger, 2001) and, in particular, approaches with relevance to the study of women at the age of fifty.
According to the literature in life-span development (Kittrell, 1998; Stewart, Ostrove, & Helson, 2001; Sugarman, 1986), we consider biographical transitions and turning points from a gender perspective and from a midlife perspective.
Transitions – normative, non-normative, silent – involve individual changes, social roles modifications, social and historical factors that define transformation in the life course (Perrig-Chiello & Perren, 2005). Turning points refer to heterogenous experiences and important life events that are personally significant in promoting a change in an individual's life trajectory (Rönka, Oravala & Pulkkinen, 2003). Middle age is a period of life associated with many and multifaceted transitions (age-, time-, event-, duration- and emotion-dependent) that impact on the life course of individuals. Turning points can be viewed as important developmental crises that require some reorientation in values and goals priority or demand a search for a new meaning in adults' lives.
Studies agree in emphasising that gender differences and age grouped timing patterns are relevant factors in transitions within a life-span context. Reports from the National Child Development Study (Brown & Dodgeon, 2010) point out that surveys of adults at age 50 can serve as a special baseline in order to investigate life-histories (series of transitions, turning points, number of life events and psycho-social experiences, crisis and identity development paths). From a chronological and longitudinal perspective, women aged 50 offer a special lens on their life course.

The exercise of agency, the ability to give direction to one's life, is understood as a bounded and reflexive process that is exercised through environments, drawing on Evans

(2006, 2007, 2009; Evans & Waite, 2013) and Biesta, Field, Hodkinson, Macleod, & Goodson (2011).

The concept of biographical learning (Alheit & Dausien, 2002) refers to a close link between learning and biography. The elaboration of this link concerns the ways in which people learn from their lives, and the significance of such learning processes (Tedder & Biesta, 2007b). Biography is one's life. The focus of a biographical learning approach is on making sense of one's life course, faced by challenges and transitions (Hallqvist & Hydén, 2013).

Furthermore, biographical learning perspectives (Goodson, 2013; Tedder & Biesta, 2007a, 2009) reveal aspects of the narrative-in-action which permit people to reflect, to negotiate and to make claims about different life events and about life course. These are dominant perspectives in European scholarship and research in adult learning (Fox, 2006). The life experiences and women's representations of them also reflect cultural norms and expectations about the adult life course, particularly with respect to gender roles and relationships. Three dimensions associated with structuration, internal-external control and reproduction-transformation are connected in the conceptualisation of bounded agency as a socially embedded, active and potentially transformative process. Expressions of bounded agency are as representative of the distal effects of socioeconomic environments and cultural landscapes as they are reflective of individual capabilities and the proximal influences of workplace, family and community.

Agency in adult life operates through engagements in and through the social world; it is exercised through the environments and institutional practices of everyday life in changing social, landscapes. Understanding, from the perspective of adults themselves, the role of activating events and activating relationships in the life-course shapes not only theoretical conceptions of the life-course but also the adult education practices that seek to engage adults in learning in mid-life and the older years. This exploration of the connections between expressions of identity, agency and learning in the narratives of women aged 50 aims not only to gain contextualised insights into how women use the dynamics of events, experiences and relationships to move their lives forward, but also to support the case for approaches that facilitate biographical learning to become integral to adult education practices.

Research and methods

The methodology is designed to explore the narrative and symbolic representations of turning points in the narratives of the research participants. This approach is informed by Mattingly (2007), with the aim of understanding the implicit meaning (tacit and naive theory-in-use) of the ideas of turning points and movements "up and down" as expressed in the narratives and sketches. Also we aim to show the relationship between agency, learning and identity embedded in these narratives, elucidating how different cultural roles and expectations are reflected in women's representations.

The first data source is the set of 220 interviews conducted with respondents in England, Scotland and Wales at the age of 50, from the study deposited in the UK Archives Data under the "Social Participation and Identity" project. From this study, that is a sub-sample of the wider longitudinal research National Child Development Study investigating the biographies of people born in one specific week on 1958, we have chosen the female sub-sample of 110 semi-standardized interviews, covering five main topics: neighbourhood and belonging, cultural participation, friendship and family, life

stories and identities. Respondents were also asked either to choose, from eight life course diagrams, the drawing best picturing their life trajectories or to sketch their own representation. We have focused on the last two main topics of the interview, and we have selected the 31 interviews in which women have drawn a diagram representing their life course. From these, we have further selected 16 interviews in which the turning points were represented as up and down lines.

The second data source is a set of 28 interviews, based on the same items of the UK interviews, and correspondent 28 life course drawings provided by Italian women of fifty years old, living in the North East of Italy, in the Veneto shire, an area with important cities like Venice, Padua, Treviso and Vicenza. Twenty four of these diagrams were with undulations indicative of turning points.

According to a comparative approach (Fairbrother, 2014), in this paper we compare eight narratives and drawings, by four Italian women and by four British women. The cases are not selected for representativeness but according to the predispositions of the women to share their stories and have a personal engagement in the narrative interview process. In the UK sample, this inclination was signalled by the desire of women in the wider NDCS interview sample to draw their own representation rather than select from given examples. In Italian sample, this predisposition was indicated by the willingness of participants approached through the networks of the researcher to participate in sharing their stories, with their own drawn representations. Both approaches to selection produced samples which were found to be distributed in socio-economic background, occupational status and years of schooling. A further selection was then made according to the classification of the narratives and representations. We have chosen, for this paper, 4 UK-Italian pairs of cases to illustrate each type of outcome. An emic perspective (Bray, Adamson & Mason, 2007) was thus implicit in the selection of this set of eight cases for deeper analysis and comparative exploration.

The research questions are: How do women's representations of the life course reflect the relationship between agency, identity and learning? To what extent do representations of the life course of women who have grown up and lived their lives in Italy suggest shared features or differences from those of the women in the UK NCDS sample? How might these shared and contrasting features be explored further to elucidate the intertwining of identity, agency and learning with cultural norms and expectations?

The qualitative methodological approach is based on thematic, linguistic and narrative analysis of the transcriptions, using Nvivo as a tool. An adaptation of the framework of Tedder and Biesta (2007a, 2007b) has guided the analysis. The validity of the results is constantly verified by a continuous process of discussion and by a comparative analysis conducted by the two authors (UK and Italian) both separately and together. As Cortazzi and Jin (2007) underline, particular attention is given to how the analysis represents the participant's voice and how the researcher analysis is appropriate to what the teller means, in the context of relationship between the teller, the story, the audience and the researcher. This issue is more evident when the story is related to a socio-cultural context not shared by the teller and the researcher (Andrews, Squire & Tamboukou, 2008; Webster & Mertova, 2007). According to Barrett (2006, p. 113), similarities between narrative and comparative research facilitate the emergence and the respect of the tellers' stories and the elicitation of the meaning in them by the researchers.

The purpose of comparing English and Italian women' stories in this research is to illustrate how women in mid-life represent and evaluate their lives, providing meaning as they consider key events of their life course. The comparison allows an elicitation of the meanings of the ups and the downs represented by the women's narratives and sketches.

It illustrates how identities are shaped and revealed in expressions of learning and agency in participants from two different countries.

Findings

Turning point and trajectories: Similarities and differences in representations

As the images[1] show, in the sample considered (16 British and 24 Italian cases selected), British and Italian diagrams show a range of features and images used by women to express their life course: a curve, a spiral, steps (Fig.1). A recurrent visualisation of the life course is a wave, floating in the paper sheet without a preferred direction rather than an arrow, a ladder or other figures.

Figure 1: Shapes of life course

6UK   41U   1IT   180UK

Some pairs of diagrams seem to show similar trends (Fig.2). In particular, one English woman (n.18UK) represents her life course as a zig-zag line, making a sketch in which the ups and downs are very pronounced, the amplitude, deepness marking important changes in the last part of the life course and the final arrow an orientation to a future beyond her present situation.. This woman is a nurse and represents herself as an isolated child; one of the downs of her life was the death of the father during her final exams in university. Other important key events coupled to the ups and downs of her life are: becoming a Christian Church member, have a baby (a 'killer milestone'), the mother's death, the faith: 'I would say my life journey is very much interacted with my faith, if it hadn't got a faith on it: it would be a different shape all together [...] if you could say, probably that's a Christian journey'.

The Italian diagram (n.6IT) shows a similar trend with ups and downs less marked but with two deep depressions, located at six years ('a very sad infancy… when my sister was born I was having to be a baby sitter') and at the age of 45 ('problems with my partner and with job'). This woman marks the specific time of key events of the life course: she has obtained a university degree and has given birth to one child; she declares that her mother was the most important person of her life, the basis on which she builds and shapes her life.

Figure 2: Similar shapes in diagrams

18UK   6IT
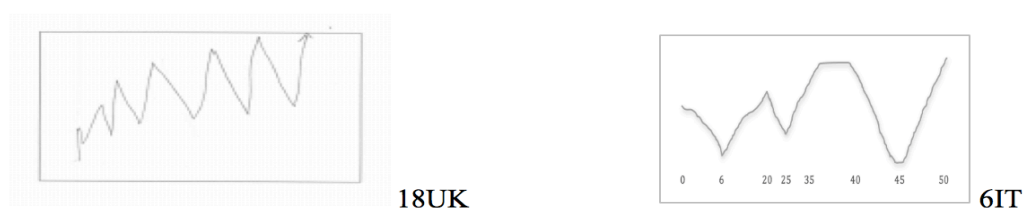
Another remarkable similarity is in the next two sketches (Fig.3). In the first, the English woman depicts her life course as a heart monitor, explaining in the interview the association between life and heart (n.58UK). She put in evidence the idea of the crisis as a moment of renewal strictly tied to important key events of her life: childhood, marriage, the end of marriage. This woman reveals a great awareness of herself:

> But, hmmm, probably a key point this year would be just turning 50 and, hmmm, and where my life goes to next. I'm probably, for the first time I'm probably in control of that, not necessarily of the people. You know, I've been a wife, a mother, a friend, a worker, a lover and now it's like time for me really.

Her sketch insists on equivalence between her life and her heart as a result from a 'horrific childhood', a husband 'with demons of his childhood inside him', a higher degree, two babies, a job as nurse, and an important illness overcome.

The Italian woman (n.5IT) offers a very similar sketch to UK n.58, using the same image of a heart line. This woman, who also has a university degree, has two babies from two different partners from which she is separated. She talks about her move to another city. She defines herself as a solitary person, who spends her life day by day, without projects, passive and a disbeliever because of her illness: 'I'm a fatalist, open to all is new[…] I live in present'. The arrows indicate a few positive moments that have been free of troubling or upsetting events.

The two sketches present the same turning points (marriage, academic degree, two children, illness, end of marriage) but the meaning of crisis or absence of crisis were interpreted in different way in the narratives.

Figure 3: Similar diagrams

58UK   5IT
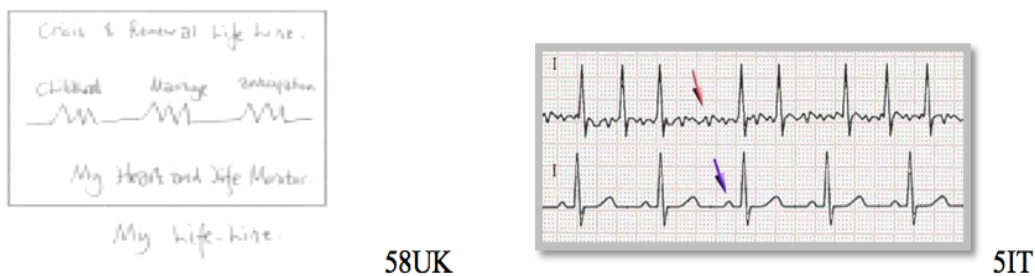
These images, sketched as a visual synthesis of a life course, are associated with very different meanings in the narrative accounts. The drawings are not symbolic representations of identity, but pictorial descriptions of the life lived.

In the wider sample, a recurrent series of key events emerges from analysis with Nvivo and reveals a pattern of nine turning points (Table 1). With a limited number of milestones, different "life palettes" are composed. These nine events are markers used to describe the life course.

All the women interviewed in the two countries realize that key events are life turning points; nevertheless this observation is not necessarily directly associated to the awareness of what these events mean or imply.

Table 1: Turning points

BABIES	To have a baby; to lose a baby
EDUCATION	To have an education; to go to/leave school; to go to a particular type of school, eg grammar school, Catholic primary school; to go to college or university; to have a good teacher, to have a degree; to gain new work-related qualification.
FAITH	To have a faith; to go to Church; to change Church
FAMILY	Mum, dad, stepmother, sister, brother, daughter, son
HEALTH	Personal illness; illness of relatives (daughter, husband, parents);
JOB	Work problems; work changes; work dissatisfaction; personal realization in work; to have job-related competence/qualification.
LOVE AFFAIRS	To meet husband; to have a partner; to change partner/boyfriend
MARRIAGE	To be married; to be divorced
SOCIAL LIFE	To take holidays with; to be part of a social or religious association

However, narratives help English and Italian women to reflect on their life history giving, by the acts of drawing and talking, a kind of sequence or an order in composing the narratives. Furthermore, some differences can be highlighted in the two countries.

These nine key-events feature centrally in the accounts of the British women because of the impetus that is attributed to them in changing direction and shaping the life course. Family influences feature strongly, in ambivalent ways. Often the relationship with the father is referred to as more complicated and awkward than the relationship with the mother, frequently split between supportive and competitive.

The basic British pattern is typically composed of five elements: EDUCATION, BABIES, FAMILY, JOB, LOVE AFFAIRS.

We can observe a recurrent sequence occurring before the age of 25 in which education is the component playing an evident role in shaping life. Women who left school early are employed in jobs that did not require specific qualification. The take-up of opportunities for different forms of learning after 25 years of age could transform this condition, introducing dynamic factors for change of situation. The search for a new job, as we will see in Italian cases, does not imply an obvious connection between LEARNING and JOB, but the first could have a role in stimulating the second. So, the search for new qualifications in work is often linked with take-up of learning opportunities in adult life

Differently from the Italians, in British cases, the changes in life course trajectories are usually recognised and connected to a specific event in the narratives; facing this event, the search for new directions or meaning can be considered as an indicator of AGENCY. The transformative effects of some 'negative' situations (e.g. walked out on job, walked out on husband) are sometimes used to explain changes in personal life story. The sense of agency can be connected to the search for a new shape in the life course. So the life event is used to explain how and why the women made a 'right' or a 'new' choice.

The shape of life trajectory is an open construction, and the agency is a subjective ability to search for a personal setting, to be able to cope with life and its events.

The recurrent Italian pattern comprises four main elements: FAMILY, MARRIAGE, LOVE AFFAIRS, BABIES.

Family figures play a fundamental role in the life courses narrated. The influence of family is very pronounced in all stories. This happens in a negative way, as a form of control, but also in a positive way, as a form of reinforcement and support for the life choices of these women.

In the Italian patterns, the sequence appears more linked to the family factor, in particular to a specific internal milestone: the parents' life and their death. Differently from British cases, education and learning play a secondary role in Italian visualisations and stories. The ability of the women to give direction to their life course is not associated to these two factors and does not work in a personal dimension ("per se"). Rather, agency seems to correspond to a social ability or a social performance: managing family situations (new born, parents, parent's death, husband). The principal change in the Italian life course seems to correspond to a role passage from being a daughter to being a mother. If in British cases agency is a personal searching for an individual development, in Italian ones the emphasis is a specific searching for stability, for a social continuity. The Italian sense of agency seems to correspond to avoiding the 'wrong' choices; it is associated to a specific life event and to its potential for disruption, trouble, change. The Italian women's life trajectories seem to be the result of threats avoided than constructed by life events. The life courses described and illustrated by Italian women are shaped by the relationships with social and family groups during the half century of their lives while the English life courses seem to be fashioned and represented through memorable events and actions that are traced through fifty years of life

Expressions of identity, agency and learning: Patterns and relationships

Different patterns of relationship between expressions of identity, agency and learning emerge from the personal accounts. We found in the stories four profiles of identity according to the weak or strong presence of expressions of agency or learning in the women's narratives. These configurations are not considered as a moral labelling or judging of the persons, but are used to indicate the recurrent pattern of responses in the interviews.

 A map can be constructed considering, respectively, agency as the longitudinal dimension and as learning as the latitudinal dimension. In this way it is possible to visualize, on a Cartesian plane, the common conceptual space between the two dimensions considered above.
This space is based on the four combinations, according to the low and the high levels of presence of expressions of agency and learning.This is not a scale with statistical correlation value, but a simple representation of a conceptual space imagined as a physical space, delimited by the two dimensions. These dimensions, considered as interpretative indicators, have been used as explanatory criteria in analysing the selected stories of women

Table 2 summarizes the four combinations.The space is delimited by high and low presence of expressions of agency and of learning, for each dimension. Narratives presented in this article can be placed in the four quadrants, according to the interpretations of expressions of agency, learning and their combination, as considered in the discussion.

Table 2: Agency and Learning in a cartesian space

High Agency

High Agency Low Learning	High Agency High Learning

Low Learning   **High Learning**

Low Agency Low Learning	Low Agency High Learning

Low Agency
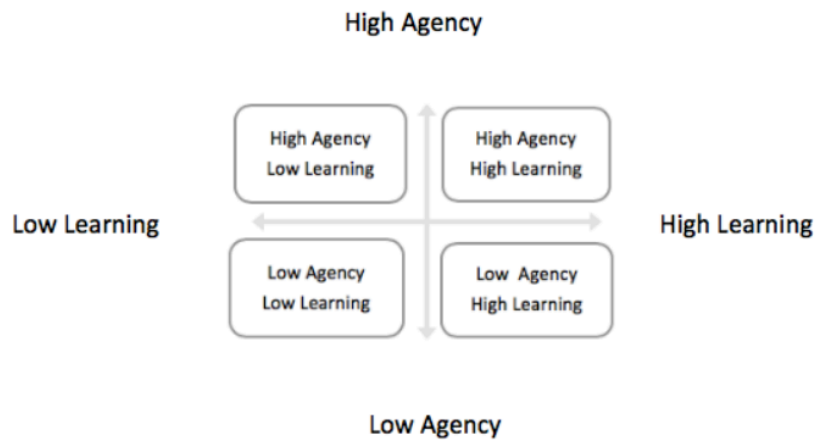
Narratives are highly differentiated. Some narratives use few expressions of agency or learning; women see themselves as having few options or as restricted in their life choices. The narratives are marked by expressions of learning, but with a little occurrence of passages of agency or personal beliefs in ability to change aspects of life situations by personal action. Some women express much action-taking in their lives, but they talk about these actions without references to learning or self-insight, while in other cases expressions of identity are frequent in personal accounts of women who talk explicitly about self insight gained from their life trajectories, developing a form of acknowledgment regarding their lives and their relationships.

The following analysis aims, in a comparative perspective, to explain how learning and agency are strictly embedded in the identity expressions of these women aged fifty, as the accounts reveal. Combinations of learning and agency can produce various modes in managing and in leading the life course; 8 illustrative cases (4 Italian; 4 UK) will be analysed.

Comparing cases that contain low expressions of agency and low espression of learning (located in the bottom left quadrant of the table 2), we have selected the British case n.14UK and the Italian case n.20IT Women use few expressions of agency or learning; they see themselves as having few options or as restricted in their life choices. The British woman describes her life as very happy until 42 when her mother died suddenly:

> I thought my life was perfect, I thought I had everything, yeah. Yes, I didn't want for anything, I was happy, everything was rosy in the garden and then I'd say after 42, then I'd say my life just went downhill […]didn't have to worry about anything. It was lovely, and then it all just collapses.

During the narrative, she explains she left school at 16 because education was not important for her then. Looking back from the vantage point of 50 years, she says she now wishes that she had tried harder in her schooling because she has come to realise that education is important for opportunities, but she has not participated in further forms of education in adult life: 'I always said the best day of my life was when I left. Because from the time I was about nine, I always wanted to do hairdressing'. At 17 she met her future husband in a 'blind date', organised by others, and no other key event is mentioned

as important. This interview made almost ten years after the turning point of the mother's death reveals continuing difficulties in coping and she expresses only a vague hope for the future and a sense of insecurity. 'I'm hoping things will move on a little bit now, you know? […] But just wait to see, I don't say anything because you never know what's round the corner again, you know?'.

The Italian woman presents herself as a 'normal child': she mentions specific events of her childhood (she woke early in the morning to prepare breakfast for the family, she helps mum in housework, in particular she irons all family clothes). She did not like school and she left school at 13 when she was hired as a worker. Her wage was held by the mother: she worked 10/12 hours a day and every Sundays she was employed in a pizzeria as a waitress.

During adolescence the relationship with the severe father was perceived as a 'prison': many rules in home, many restrictions in social activities and in new friendships, no leisure time. She tells about the ways she escaped from the father's control and the consequences in punishment, sometimes beating: 'I was terrified because the rules and schedules to be met… otherwise I was in trouble!'. A recurrent theme of her narrative are the limits in her life, laid down by her parents. She met, during a local fair, her husband, defined as a 'very jealous guy': she tells the tricks to avoid her father's control and punishment. She got married at 20 and at 26 she was the mother of two. She left her job to become a housewife, devoted to her sick daughter.

> It was a very awful period of my life: eight maybe ten years I spent in hospital to cure my daughter up to the time of the transplantation… It hurts so much to remember, but now it is over[2].

After this event, her life seems to be 'easier', but financial difficulties (the money and the commitment in building the new house) and the husband's job ('he worked in a factory and he didn't like to have vacations') marked her life course. She seems to be passive, facing the events of her life. She draws her lifeline as a series of continuous segments that move upward slowly.

She doesn't seem to be reactive towards her life and she needs peace and rest rather than to be active. 'At 50, I feel freer than in the past. My husband now is retired, and kids are grown up. Now on Sunday, we go for a "little ride" and I finally can have a short break'[3].

The British case n.18UK and the Italian case n.5IT are characterized by a low level in agency and by a high level in learning. This common feature is located in the table 2 in the bottom right corner and distinguishes the narratives by a form of reaction to the life events. This British woman talks about learning quite a lot in her narrative; she is a social worker, with a nursing degree, she learnt some languages, she has job changes and she travelled and she appreciates exotic foods and different cultures. She explains that her life journey interacts with her faith ('a Christian journey'). This is expressed as an organising framework and externalised future projection – going to a place beyond her present reach, defined by the Christian faith, to which her faith 'sort of' leads. Her faith is described as giving some kind of meaning an otherwise repetitive pattern in her life: 'That would be just me bumbling along, some good days, some bad days, not particularly going anywhere'. She perceived herself as dependent on people that "pulled" her through problems. She uses a lot of labels to define herself (hopeless in some situations, confident in other situations, reflector, confronter, follower through, dogged person, selfish, sociologist, nurse, systemiser and rationaliser, 'not a brave person but people think that I am') on a fragmented and sometimes contradictory expressions of identity. Many key

events compose her life trajectory and she said that the ups and downs in her drawing correspond to her periods of growth and sliding back in her faith.

> The peaks would be times when I've really learned and grown in my faith […]And the troughs would be times when I've fallen back […]Yeah, family events, yeah, family events or work situations that have knocked me back. Where I've had to work through deaths.

The Italian case shows a woman that has taken important choices in her life: to have a baby, to divorce twice, to move to another town. She introduces her life as a series of impulsive decisions she regretted afterwards. She explains that to have a date with her first partner and to be pregnant were (re-)actions used to get away from her family. She left her husband and she moved to the city where the new partner was living. She enrolled at the university degree, she had a new baby and she describes many conflicts with the adolescent daughter. 'I started a lot of things, but few things I've finished. Some things didn't end well but, maybe, they're helped me to develop'.

The role of the parents in her life is ambivalent: in the first period of her life course, she wants to get away from them and she wishes to travel far from home; in the second part of her life, she confesses that her parents' role has been fundamental in financial help and in emotional support. She started a reflection about her life but fighting cancer is becoming now, when she's 50, her new challenge. She calls herself a 'fatalist, a peaceful person, open to new things: I don't make plans for the future, I live for today'. She does not convey a sense of taking her own direction and she considers her choices as reactions to somebody (husbands, parents, friends) or to something (living in a town, having/missing work). Her representation of the life course is negative (a sequence of unfavorable and adverse turning points) and depicted as 'constantly moving from up to down: the peaks represent crisis moments, the wave symbolizes time of calm and peacefulness, the line downward are the moment of deep crisis'.

The pattern high agency / low learning, that is located in the table 2 upper left quadrant, is well captured by the British case n.54UK and by the Italian case n.3IT; women express much action-taking in their lives, but they talk about these actions without references to learning or self-insight. The British woman talks about happy childhood against a background being bullied at school and being ashamed of her untidy and disorganised mother. In adult life she reacted to a bad job experience by going to the place next door and asking them for a job. She takes lot of actions, apparently spontaneously and without planning, with big consequences for her life.

> I was in charge of the shop, and me and him, just before we got married, fell out, and I went away down to [PLACE10, England] and left him. We had a big fall out and I chucked my job and jumped on a train down to [PLACE10, England]. Don't ask me why, just a silly wee lassie. Got myself a job, got myself somewhere to live, stayed there six months, and then got mugged.

She describes herself as 'happy wee girl', as a child; as an adult, smart, cheery, confident, passionate, nice person; she told that people said that they find her an intimidating person. She is very active in taking her life decisions: she had a child with a cancer and she describes how she decided to have another baby to try to save her ill daughter, and how her tenacity and confidence in the rightness of decisions surprised the medical professionals.

The Italian woman refers to a happy childhood: the youngest child with three brothers, she was an active and petulant child. A disease marked her life and prevented

her from attending pre-school and partially primary school. During adolescence she had many friends and the belief that she could change the world. Her father directly influenced her choices because he decided the secondary school and the faculty she was to attend. She wanted to study tropical diseases and she wanted to work in Africa, but she enrolled in biology. In the narrative, she claims that, after her first job in a blood donation centre and after the first child she gave up her career to promote her husband's job. She explains that this condition pushed her to have a new baby and to have a new job. Being a teacher allowed her to combine work and family. This woman said that the kids have the priority in her choices because 'my well-being corresponds to their well-being' or because 'my life has been set on them'.

> When I was 40, I was happier than when I was 30 because I felt a 'complete woman': not too young (as at 20) and not too old. At 40 years, I was teacher, I had two children, a new house, and I could go on vacations to the beach and to the mountains.

Her parents, her brother, her husbands and her children are the most important people in her life. She calls herself 'quite happy, quite complete and comfortable at 50'. The lifeline is depicted as a line upward (not as an uphill path but as an ascension) until the turning point represented by the loss of parents and the sudden death of the loved brother. She thinks that her lifeline can go higher, but she cannot decide its direction: 'I really feel travelling, I really want to do something, even something special, but I don't know well how to do it'.

She is able to cope with life events, but she is not able to learn from her own story or turning points.

The pattern that corresponds to the upper right quadrant, marked by high expressions of both agency and learning is found in the narratives of women who talk explicitly about self insight gained from their life trajectories, developing a form of acknowledgment regarding their lives and their relationships.

The British case n.193UK experienced a dramatic break-up of family as a child; when mother left home she describes the fear for her father. She left school at 16, she also left home before she was 17 and she describes herself as a rebellious. She continued to study at a further education college, gaining qualifications that enabled her eventually to obtain a place in university to train as a teacher after a period working as a secretary. She graduated as a teacher. In parallel she had become very involved in a drama group, which became her passion and through further studies at a drama school she became an actor. She talks about combining her teaching abilities with her love of acting to become an actor in Children's Theatre. She talks about projects in other aspects of her life too: for example, buying a house in the country with her boyfriend and 'doing it up', an activity that encountered financial and legal problems. Her narrative is balanced between the problems encountered and the solutions found. She refers to the role of education throughout, emphasising her experience as the first person in her family to graduate at university level:

> Education has been a major (turning point) […] I've tended always to really go with my instincts, very foolishly some of the time, without a doubt […] I always felt, that you do have one life and that it is nice to kind of take chances and stretch yourself and things, although it is a bit, it can be scary.

She also states that she consciously does not react to the mother's influences. Her mother is not a role model for her because 'she [her mother] has not done an awful lot with her life [..] she tended to live her life around other people's need'.

In the Italian case n.28IT, the woman doesn't quite remember her childhood: she recalls some episodes: the catholic pre-school when she was four years old: the nuns, the swing set, the afternoon nap, holydays spent to the grandmother's house. She remembers well her friends during primary and secondary schools and her interest in people rather than in studying. She considers very important the driver license that she gained at 18 because of the liberty in choosing a trip destination, the possibility to travel with friends, the autonomy from the family. She gets married at 23 and becomes a mum at 27; the first part of her life is represented as a 'normal life' dedicated to relatives: family life, mother's life, social life. She defines herself 'mature and adult' at 40. In this age:

> I matured to an inner tranquility, a peace of mind; I conquer a personal philosophy of life and my own style of life. When you're young, you see all things black or white, after this age you see all the colors and the nuances… I learned to be tolerant.

Her life course seems not to be apparently marked by important transitions or by disruptive events. The mother's death is explained as a grief that needs to be faced. When she was 36, she decided to start working:

> At 36, I was sufficiently mature to stay out of home with different people in different situations: it has enabled me to be more responsible. I have acquired a greater confidence in myself, social conscience toward the world and respect for the others. I seem to be able to face life in a soft and easy way, with more trust and less fear toward the future.

Considering the female figures of her life, she says that as a child she started to understand that women can have their role and their personal realization also outside the family, in the civic society. The female teachers, the mother, the grandmother are for her examples of life style. Therefore, she understood the importance of reflecting on choices, decisions, personal responsibilities. At 50 she perceives the aging changes, but she welcomes the gain in emotions and in consciousness that matured with age.

Discussion

The narrative accounts are elicited as research participants are asked to reflect on their life experiences and in particular on their own representations of their life course and on turning points in their lives. Initial exploration of the full set of personal accounts of adult learning shows how some women portray specific experiences as "activating events" that have the potential to not only trigger new learning orientations (values, attitudes towards learning) but may also change horizons. These changes can entail greater confidence and willingness on the part of women to develop themselves in new ways. The reverse can also be true: individuals can become trapped by events and locked into their own stories. However, the impact of these shifting orientations on life trajectories, and the degree to which such changes are sustained over time, depend on cultural and systemic factors.

The role of learning is connected to agency in different ways. In English life courses it emerges like an exploration for a personal development built from family and social situations and stimulated by life course events. The women describe formal episodes of learning in adult life that have enabled them either to build directly on school achievements or to follow new job-related paths. But they also indicate other ways in which they have developed new capabilities, often through meeting job challenges and changes. Life course trajectories are shaped through expressions of "bounded agency" (Evans, 2006, 2007), which are often acknowledged to depend upon the enabling

activities of others. For example, the supportive partner or the boss who encourages. In Italian women's narratives, the role of learning is remarked upon only in the first part of the women's life course accounts, and associated to the school periods (infancy, adolescence or young adulthood) as formal learning. Other forms of learning (further, recurrent, incidental, informal and non formal) are not evident in the stories or in the graphic visualisations. Agency and learning do not appear explicitly connected. The idea of agency is framed and contextualized according to the ability to deal with ups and downs, events or non-events, that shape the life course.

Where "activating events" are described that have triggered new attitudes and motivations to learn, it is sometimes apparent that pivotal points have been reached in and through significant relationships that have nudged some women towards broadening of their horizons and taking on more challenging roles. In others, recurrent patterns of crisis and the search for stability characterise the ups and downs and turning points of the life course, in culturally-specific ways.

Complex interplay can be recognised in the extent of each woman's capabilities to analyse her life and to push her life a little bit ahead. These self-development capabilities appear most pronounced in cases that are characterised by consciously reflective expressions of identity development. Moreover, the combination of strong expressions of learning and agency (high learning and high agency) is evident in accounts which also show capabilities to reflect on and learn from their own lives. The retrospective accounts show how the women's expressions of agency in a life course perspective can be understood as temporal (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998), reflecting the ways in which habit and routines of the past and what people believe is possible for them in the future are brought together in decisions and action-taking in the contingencies of the present moment.

This temporally embedded agency can be individual or collective and is not structurally determined, in the senses offered by Bourdieu (1990), since horizons and imagined futures can be reflectively reformulated and re-imagined through a process of self-learning. Where this is the essence of narrative accounts of "turning points", the identity development that takes place through agency and learning is not that of the self-propelled autonomous individual but, rather, relational and consciously reflective. Action and further learning potential are generated through the process of *becoming* consciously and reflectively engaged in self-development. But the narratives also reveal aspects of the conditions and relationships through which women come to express contained, reactive and testing identity profiles. These representations of the environments and relationships are equally telling for an evaluation of the pre-conditions for learning in adult life. Such insights are often missing in assumptions that are made about the self - determination and readiness for learning projects in adult life.

Our analysis of these narratives thus connects identity development with temporal understandings of agency and self-learning through the life course, and allows us to identify how self-representations reflect variations in how women can learn to cope with and move on from conditions and relationships that reflexively shape their lives. Some narratives reflect the gendered relations that transcend national boundaries; the IT-UK comparison however reveals how particular historically and culturally-embedded gender regimes (Connell, 2002) are embedded in expressions of agency, learning and identity development.

Differences in access to resources - personal, relational or material - can further influence patterns which are part of an existing "gender regime", rooted as a network of norms, regulations and principles in the structure of social practices (Connell, 2002, p.

139). This applies particularly in the distinctions between and value ascribed to, learning gained through paid and unpaid forms of work, and different types of institution or occupation. A reflexive approach that sees gender regimes as dynamic rather than static emphasises the compound mix of inner abilities of the person which are not clearly visible but can be made effective when the situation stimulates the person to act or choose differently (Evans, Behrens & Kaluza, 2000). These inner capabilities, are developed reflexively through experiences in a range of life and work environments. There is potential for learning partners of various types (mentors, counsellors, adult tutors, critical friends) to support people towards the achievement of "critical insight" (Roth, 1971; Stromquist, 2006) into themselves and into the limits and possibilities afforded by their everyday situations and relationships.

Conclusions

Women's representations of their life course and of turning points in their lives reveal different propensities to reflect on and learn from their own lives and, in comparative perspective, contrasting relational, cultural and institutional affordances that can enable or limit them in moving their lives forward. All comparative analysis has a macro-causal dimension (Ragin, 2008) as the macro can be seen in different ways through the lens of the micro: yet the micro examples of biographical negotiation are more than examples of macro forces in action. Some of the women's accounts reflect gendered relations that transcend national boundaries, others are embedded in the prevalent societal conditions and gender regimes of Italy and UK, respectively, with variations according to region (Evans, 2006; Singh, 1998).

Comparative reflections on these temporally embedded, retrospective accounts of lives shaped over the course of half a century also potentially contribute to the debate on individualisation and the extent to which the "traditional" social structures of class, gender, religion and family are weakening, as biographical negotiation confronts pre-given life worlds. Variations in the ways in which women narrate the ways in which they move their lives forward reveal inner capabilities that are developed reflexively through experiences and relationships in a range of life and work environments. They also reveal the potential for adult education to incorporate practices that facilitate the telling of life experiences in ways that can better support people towards the achievement of critical insight into these experiences and in learning from their lives. We have shown how the stories people tell about their lives not only reflect what they have learned from their lives but also that the process of telling itself is often indicative of a growing self-awareness and insight, as the construction and narration of their stories becomes part of the learning process (Biesta & Tedder, 2008, p. 2).

Adult educators often hold preconceptions about the starting points for the activation of self-managed learning in adult life. This article has shown the variety of ways in which some women bring consciously reflective habits of mind to their experiences and opportunities; others are pre-reflexively feeling their way. Understanding, from the perspective of the women themselves, the role of activating events and activating relationships in the life-course indicates the importance, for adult education practitioners, of sensitivity to these variations and to the cultural embeddedness of the women's experiences, as they navigate the expectations of particular gender regimes. The research thus supports the case for approaches that facilitate biographical learning to become integral to adult education practices and to the development of adult education

practitioners. The use of drawings also yield some methodological insights into tools that can be used, in both research and practice, in facilitating, elucidating and comparing life course narratives.

Acknowledgements

Notes

[1] The images are coded by country (UK= British cases; IT = Italian cases) and by case number in the wider sample.
[2] Italian quotes are translated into English from the original transcripts by the authors.
[3] This is the Italian translation of the idiomatic expression "ora, respiro un po".

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Staging bodies: learning through feminist activism. Analysis of points emerging from actions by La Barbe and Femen in France

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Abstract

Women do not engage in feminist activism with an educational objective. However, activism has a transformatory effect on the participants, through forms of informal learning that are mainly recognized by the concerned in retrospect. Our research tries to identify which elements of the activist process have the highest informal learning potential in terms of empowerment. We analyse and compare the learning effect of activism in two feminist movements—« La Barbe » and FEMEN—based on the transformative learning concept. « La Barbe » is a French network of women seeking to denounce male domination in official institutions, private and public decision making bodies or important public events (conferences, etc.) concerning the political, financial and other "high level" spheres. FEMEN is a radical feminist protest group founded in Ukraine in 2008, now based in Paris. The organization is highly mediatised for organizing controversial topless protests against sex tourism, religious institutions, sexism, homophobia and other social, national and international topics. This research analyses the informal learning effect of these forms of activism, according to the activists' own perception, taking into account the ways in which the networks, the public appearances and their preparatory processes are organised.

Keywords: empowerment; feminist activism; performative activism; staging bodies; transformative learning

Introduction

Women do not engage in feminist activism with an educational objective in mind, but to advance a cause. However, the hypothesis that activism has a transformative effect on female activists has been validated in other research studies (English & Peters, 2012) and this is in line with a broader movement towards recognizing learning which emerges from volunteering in non-profit organizations[2]. The learning effects of feminist militancy are mainly detected retrospectively by those concerned and the (formal or informal) learning mechanisms at work have still not been much elucidated. Our study has sought to identify those factors within the activist process which have potential for female activists' learning, particularly in terms of empowerment (Williams, 1994; Oxaal and Baden, 1997). More specifically, we emphasize the effect of the staging of physical and bodily aspects which are central to the activist processes of our two chosen organizations, La Barbe and FEMEN.

La Barbe is a French network of (exclusively women) activists seeking to denounce male domination in private and public organizations, within official decision-making bodies or during important public events (conferences, etc.) in "high level" political, economic, university, artistic or other spheres. La Barbe members burst into these public events wearing false beards; they make ironic speeches, backed up by leaflets and banners. They record their appearances on camera and disseminate the videos on line.

FEMEN is a radical feminist protest group (also made up entirely of women) founded in Ukraine in 2008 and now based in Paris. Their controversial protests have great media impact. These take the form of appearances by FEMEN activists with their breasts exposed and covered with slogans during public events or in symbolic places. FEMEN attempts in this way to combat patriarchy, dictatorship, the influence of religions, prostitution and other social, national and international issues of concern.

In both cases, there is a certain form of "imaging" the critique of gender inequalities, sexist discrimination, or other forms of social relations of dominance directed against women. These stagings of female bodies—more hidden in the case of La Barbe, more exposed in that of FEMEN—very clearly seek to obtain media coverage which plays a key role in terms of the contribution these forms of activism make towards learning. Our investigation aims to analyze and compare the learning effects of activism through imaging and staging within these two feminist performative movements[3]—La Barbe and FEMEN—drawing on the concept of transformative learning developed by Mezirow (1997, p. 5). For him:

> Transformative learning is the process of effecting change in a frame of reference. Adults have acquired a coherent body of experience—associations, concepts, values, feelings, conditioned responses—frames of reference that define their life world. Frames of reference are the structures of assumptions through which we understand our experiences. They selectively shape and delimit expectations, perceptions, cognition, and feelings. They set our "line of action." Once set, we automatically move from one specific activity (mental or behavioural) to another. We have a strong tendency to reject ideas that fail to fit our preconceptions, labelling those ideas as unworthy of consideration—aberrations, nonsense, irrelevant, weird, or mistaken. When circumstances permit, transformative learners move toward a frame of reference that is more inclusive, discriminating, self-reflective, and integrative of experience.

The educational effect of feminist activism through staging—how can we detect its impact on women activists?

The UNESCO Chair in Training of Sustainable Development Professionals which supports this study is intended to address the issues involved in training people to operationalize the much praised and equally much disparaged notion of sustainable development. On the one hand, our task is to educate in a cross-disciplinary way and at different levels, fostering the capacity to grasp complexity and to master processes favoring participation and inclusion of very different populations. "Traditional" university or other training courses, classroom- or lecture-based and delivered over a short, more or less intense period, have their limits as a means of training future professionals to combine their expertise and social skills operationally. Moreover, the Chair seeks to explore and raise awareness of other forms of learning suitable for training individuals in how to initiate, support and strengthen societal changes at various levels. Our studies concern processes of supervised action-training, coaching, training methods inspired by community education, as well as informal and transformative learning arising from participation in collective processes and various forms of activism. This is the background to our research on the effects of activism in terms of the learning acquired by activists. Feminist activism has a special place here, since the cause it defends is clearly linked to the personal, professional, or even private life of female activists, in contrast to other types of activism (for example Europeans fighting hunger or poverty in countries of the Global South) which may aim more at the rights of third parties linked less directly to the life of the activists.

This work is inspired and driven by the feminist activism of the author and her collaborator and their personal experiences of the impact of their activities in terms of transformative learning. Their awareness of this impact positions them emphatically in a posture of situated knowledge as conceptualized by Donna Harraway (1988): this questioning has emerged from their personal experience and their research draws upon their activist networks. The author collaborated throughout the research with one of the founder members of the La Barbe group in Bordeaux, which facilitated contacts for carrying out a survey and made it possible to include some elements of participant observation in this study. All the data collection took place between 2013 and 2015.

The choice of these two organizations, La Barbe and FEMEN, was based on various factors: firstly, both organizations are relatively recent, and are part of a certain renewal of feminist modes of action in Europe. Indeed, the caricatural aspect of the false beards combined with a skilful use of irony is as innovatory as the style of FEMEN's appearances: bare breasts, slogans written on the body, and a deliberately aggressive appearance which contrasts sharply with their wearing a garland of flowers in typically Ukrainian style. Secondly, in both cases, use is made of a staging of physical attributes characteristic of one of the two sexes and the social constructions which surround them - beards for masculinity, breasts for feminity. Our supposition is that this performative characteristic of imaging or translating into pictures makes a significant difference compared with activism based solely on spoken or written discourse. Thirdly, in the public appearances which characterize the modes of action employed by both associations, it is only women who are staged (even if men may also have a certain role behind the scenes[4]).

The central hypothesis of this paper is that the 'imaged performance' component of the protests potentially strengthens their effects in terms of the empowerment of the activists involved. This empowerment is supposed to be the impact of a learning process triggered by these forms of staged activism. Analysis of the learning has been based on

the available literature and other journalistic and video sources[5]. For La Barbe, in 2013 we could undertake an online survey[6] of members of La Barbe, mainly in Bordeaux. When it came to the perceptions of FEMEN members, attempts to make contact were inconclusive and it was not possible to carry out a survey. Echoing the widespread media cover of FEMEN, a significant corpus of literature has emerged about them, with additional video reports and press articles. The internet sites of both movements[7] are also very rich sources of material, with archives which include photos and videos as well as diverse written material. Based on this, we have analyzed various stages in the action process: the way the networks are organized, public appearances with their preparatory stages, and how they are accounted for and evaluated. This research process has been inspired by feminist research methods, theorized by Harding (1987) among others, and we have devoted significant attention to reflexivity, particularly in the exchanges with members of La Barbe.

Caricatural and ironic staging: the Bearded Ladies

Created in reaction to the sexist character of media coverage of Ségolène Royal's campaign in the French Presidential Elections, La Barbe was set up in 2008. The point of departure is women conspicuously wearing beards to denounce male domination exercised through persistent inequalities in power.

The survey of La Barbe members aimed to detect traces of informal, transformative learning associated with the notion of empowerment related to four types of power (Williams, 1994; Oxaal, Baden, 1997): During the activist process, which types of power are most often acquired or strengthened for the activists? Do the collective dimension and organizational modes of governance promote individual empowerment? In order to understand as well as possible the learning effect in terms of the empowerment of La Barbe movement activists, it is first necessary to unravel the process through which the movement acts as well as its structure. Secondly, analysis will focus on those elements of the activist process which are favourable to empowerment. This part will draw upon, among other aspects, an analysis of the results of the survey mentioned above.

The process by which La Barbe engages in action has three phases, to look at it schematically: Once the choice and decision to take action have been made collegially, the first stage begins. This is the time for writing a pamphlet which "is one of the key points in La Barbe actions: in 1,500 signs, the sexist nature of the event 'to be bearded'[8] should be pointed out and denounced in an entirely ironic way" (La Barbe, 2014, p.17). Drafting the pamphlet is organized collectively in a back and forth way between group members, starting from a first draft written after an information search about the event to be bearded in order to denounce a manifestly unjust situation. Several versions succeed one another until the tract designed to justify intervention by the group is finalised. Next, during the event and after activists have slipped into the venue, it is time to get up on stage and read out the pamphlet: "one woman, two women, or several women stand up, emerge from the attentively passive audience and approach the rostrum" (La Barbe 2014, p.16). This is when the activists move into action, rapidly putting on their beards, crossing an invisible obstacle, that of moving into the space where women are "invisibilized", this space where they take their place without anyone offering it to them. This is meant to be a symbolic allocation of power by taking a stand physically within the space and through the play of bodily posture. At this point one of the bearded activists, designated in advance, takes the role of reading out loud the pamphlet in order to bring the contents before her "peers" (the majority of men in the venue) with or without a microphone before

an audience more or less "receptive" to the ironic denunciation[9] of inequalities. The pamphlet may be handed out during or after the reading inside the premises where the event takes place or somewhere close by outside. Finally, the action and its purpose is given a high profile through a video clip, a press release (media outlets will have previously been alerted to ensure that the actions are covered) and through social networks[10]. In addition, the actions are publicized through video clips on the La Barbe site as well as films by the director Harriet Hirshorn, which can be seen on YouTube.

In these video clips, the form of narration through images and sound appropriate to the ironic denunciation is important: The aesthetic is that of the silent movies: silent scenes of action accompanied by pompous or dated music, and shown alternating with white caption cards against a black background which echo the ironic congratulations and hurrahs in the action. This reference to the early years of cinema expand on the 'very 19th century' aspect of the false beard (Vernet, 2011).

Through the diversity of the activities, and the various aspects of the approach to the process described, we supposed that every phase of the actions may potentially be a catalyst for learning and transformation.

La Barbe deliberately seeks to favor the inclusion of each activist through horizontally-structured organization of activities. The purpose is that each person can take part throughout the links in the chain of action: from monitoring events to be potentially bearded to making the most of the actions and drawing upon the informal networking, bearing in mind that the pamphlet is the core of the activists' action, and that it requires a humorous handling of discourse.

The limits of this democratic involvement of activists are stressed by Alix Béranger:

> […] our activist tools, the written and spoken work, are instruments of domination which we turn around to our benefit. Pamphlets are central to our activity: we write them collectively, but we are very aware that it is always the same women who make the first draft. Some activists step back, "letting others do the writing". What needs to be done, what do we want to pass on? These reflections take place internally, there are no simple answers. (Bard, Béranger & Carbunar, 2013, p.78).

As regards the staged aspect, "false beards" may give an impression of disguise, as if the idea of the feminist purpose of the action would be difficult to acknowledge openly. In fact, beards are above all the

> […] ultimate virile attribute, (they) can be used by us to get rid of the feminine within us [...]. Worn during our actions, they are intended to bring out the outdated and reactionary nature of these homogenous assemblies of men in gray suits. The idea is to make sexism and male coopting look naff and outdated. (Bard, Béranger & Carbunar, 2013, p.70).

Wearing a false beard is a founding act of group belonging and is explicitly presented as such by some of La Barbes' core group. They claim that it generates learning potential in terms of strengthening empowerment:

> La Barbe is a catalyst for the empowerment of the women who take part in it. By getting up on stage without being invited, by grabbing a mike which has not been offered to them, by reading out loud a text denouncing a flagrant injustice, they also change the relationship with their voice and their power over reality and their own life. (La Barbe, 2014, p.26).

These elements drawn from publications by La Barbe and literature about them also find support from the results of the survey carried out amongst the La Barbe members in Bordeaux. Of the fourteen respondents, thirteen clearly stated that their activities with La

Barbe have caused them to learn things. Responses to the open question which asked them to describe the nature of this learning vary greatly. To highlight various types of learning described in the responses, we mobilized the four types of "power" in the breakdown of empowerment (Rowlands, 1995; Oxaal and Baden, 1997): power over, power to, power within, and power with.

Eleven of the thirteen respondents mentioned points linked to "power within": self-confidence, self-assurance, assertiveness, awareness (in the sense of "coming to realize that", triggering off a turning point).

The same number of responses concern various forms of "power to", above all regarding activities within the public space: speaking out, positioning within the public space, the ability to stand up for one's ideas and one's rights, motivational skills, quick-wittedness, and stress management. According to some responses, this learning subsequently had some impact on respondents' professional life. Other items in this "power to" category are linked more to technical skills, such as communication, media relations, social networking, and logistics. Various other responses linked to "power to" concern awareness (driven by increased knowledge), capacity for analysis and for structuring thinking, information monitoring, vigilance, and a sense of realism.

As regards the collective dimension of empowerment, "power with", there were also several significant responses: practising collective action, co-construction, solidarity/sorority, and circulating information.

In connection with "power over", survey respondents mentioned learning referring to efforts to free oneself from the power of male domination: interrupting older men, resisting security personnel, taking the floor without authorization, continuing to read out a pamphlet despite hostile reactions. The term empowerment was also specifically mentioned on one occasion.

Only one female activist out of fourteen said she did not feel she had learned anything significant while campaigning with La Barbe. She explained this by her large amount of previous experience of community activism using similar mechanisms as La Barbe.

Since the focus of this research study was on identifying those components of the activism process which might have the greatest potential for informal learning in terms of empowerment, one of the survey questions aimed to discover the activists' perception of which phase of involvement with La Barbe might be the most productive in terms of learning:

- Ten respondents out of fourteen mentioned the phase of the action within the public space, nine of which in combination with preparation and/or meetings and the phase following the event (communication afterwards); among these responses, five particularly mentioned reading the pamphlet out loud during the action.
- In addition to the importance attributed to the process as a whole (combination of "meetings + actions"), we note several positive remarks about the contribution made specifically by preparation meetings and post-action debriefings.
- The exchanges by mail and social networks and certain additional activities ("punk dinners" in Paris) were also mentioned as being formative.

If we consider the results of the survey and the literature, the formative effect of campaigning with La Barbe is indisputable. This informal learning through activist campaigning can be explained by two factors: one one hand, La Barbe's very participatory mode of action throughout the process of "public appearances" enables each

member involved to take ownership of this process, giving them more confidence in themselves as well as organizational, logistical and technical learning. On the other hand, the aspect represented by women's physically imposing themselves uninvited within a public space, and even more their speaking out in this very unwelcoming if not hostile context, strengthens these women's power within, the more so if they are novices at this type of provocative activism.

Bare breasts, slogans and garlands of flowers: FEMEN's protesting nudity

In the absence of any direct contact with the members of FEMEN, this part of the study is based on a number of articles responding to this "new form of feminism", together with the Femen manifesto and a several hundred-page long account published with the help of a journalist (FEMEN, 2013) as well as a number of videos and films. It nevertheless remains difficult to analyze their actions stage by stage from the perspective of their effects in terms of learning and empowerment, which limits the comparability of our results with those for La Barbe. We shall concentrate on three aspects: FEMEN's mode of action taken overall, the training which is offered to new members and the mode of governance within the movement.

The mode of action adopted by FEMEN women is known through the large amount of media coverage which their public appearances have generated, as well as from the literature mentioned here. In their manifesto, FEMEN members term themselves "an international movement of courageous topless activists with bodies covered with slogans and heads garlanded with flowers" (FEMEN, 2015, p.24). Founded in 2008 in Ukraine, it is now an international movement with a "headquarter" which also serves as a "training center" in Paris. The small group of Ukrainian activists originally emerged from a reading and political debate circle. According to the accounts given, the desire for activism at that point took precedence over clear and precise ideas of the problems to be denounced:

> They were trying to find themselves. Against what should they protest? How should they find targets? During one of their brainstorming sessions, they found their first major subject: Ukraine is not a brothel. They spoke out against both the flourishing sex industry within the country, overseen by the authorities, and against the perception that Westerners have of Ukrainian women, "Natashas" ready to fall into the arms of a Prince Charming for a scrap of bread or the promise of a dolce vita abroad (FEMEN, 2013 p. 18).

Media impact was a key objective which they learned to achieve through "shows" or spectacle. (FEMEN, 2013 p. 59). Baring breasts was not tried out until 2009 when it was immediately effective in achieving broad media coverage.

From one action to the next, the FEMEN developed a mode of operation which they termed "sextremism" and which drew upon the resources of theatrical performance. Their actions, costumed and picturesque with an "innocent and childlike" look (FEMEN, 2013 p. 59) to begin with, gradually evolved towards public appearances which deliberately played on a certain apparent contradiction in the representations they offered: the bare breasts which might evoke objectified women were covered with punchy, radical slogans, the garland of flowers taken from Ukrainian folklore in contrast to the deliberate aggressiveness manifested by yelling slogans and a bodily attitude (for example the raised fist) with combative face pulling, described by leading members as "warlike".

Marie-Joseph Bertini (2014, p.22) analyses FEMEN's socio-technical communication devices in these terms:

> Femen does not respond to the alienation of women's bodies by the Women's Liberation Movement's body-for-oneself or the body-for-enjoyment, but the body-for-war, hardened and toughened, in a sacrificial gesture very much present as a background to their discourse. Except that this body is paradoxically naked, and how could nudity be a weapon when it gestures towards what is most vulnerable in each human being?

For FEMEN members, there is no contradiction, but nudity is seen as the only way to get the attention of the agents of male domination, of provoking them[11]. Bertini interprets this apparent tension not as a desexualization of the female body, but as an instrumentalization of female sexuality in the service of women's liberation:

> Opposing the controlling forces of the economy, the market and the social order which underlies and legitimizes them is the compound effect of the uncontrolled forces of competent, connected individuals, ready to reject what they are, in the Foucauldian sense of the term, in other words ready to escape the pitfalls of their condition. (Bertini 2014, p.34)

There has been much questioning and even criticism of the nature of "Femen-style" feminism (e.g. Mona Chollet in her article "FEMEN everywhere, Feminism nowhere" ("Femen partout, féminisme nulle part") published in Le monde diplomatique in March 2013), on the grounds of "first degree naivety" and a lack of political culture. There is also a noticeably essentialist posture ("…women are stronger and tougher, because they have the maternal instinct and a sense of duty", FEMEN, 2013, p. 76) which does not command unanimity amongst feminists. The founding members also claim to be above all "practitioners" (Ibid, p. 141). Bertini stresses the absence of any political culture and draws attention to the nature of their political lexicon, partly taken from pre-Soviet discourse ("propaganda for the new female sexuality" should act in favor of "its great [international] revolutionary mission" to "inoculate modern women with a culture of active resistance"...), or even resembling that of Islamic jihad: "creating the most influential and combat-ready community in the world", a claim for the need for a "female jihad against male domination", reference to a "topless jihad", defining the mode of action as a form of "peaceful terrorism". These terms form part of a register of heroics or even of the sacrificial gesture (Bertini, 2014, p.22). For this same author, FEMEN's texts (particularly the Manifesto and the FEMEN book) are halfway between parody and sincere conviction and the question of irony or sarcasm in FEMEN's rhetoric remains an open one, if we also take account of their liking for the culture of performance and for stunts, (Bertini, 2014, p. 26-27) reminiscent of a skillful marketing strategy[12].

Frequently, their public appearances end with interventions by the police or security guards who attempt to cover the naked torsos and extract the 'sextremists' (as they term themselves) from the public places where they stage their protests. These interventions are often quite violent, amongst others also in reaction to the acts of resistance which the activists deploy deliberately. Videos of these appearances as well as the broader media coverage include these often spectacular scenes of evacuation. Marie-Jospeph Bertini terms this mode of action *high-tension socio-technical communication operations* (Bertini, 2014, p. 26-27*)*.

In contrast to La Barbe, FEMEN members offer training and 'training camps' to new members in order to transmit the skills required for the FEMEN mode of action, which the self-taught founders have acquired through experience[13]. For them, training is a central aspect: "the number of recruits is an indicator of our professionalism" (FEMEN, 2013, p. 174). The narrative of these training courses is characterized by quasi-military language: experienced members try to toughen up new activists, training them in "close-

quarter confrontation techniques", seeking to rid them of their inhibitions and transform them into "warriors for the revolution" (FEMEN, 2013, p. 254-256):

> I ask the girls to yell out loud ... it's rare for them to manage this at the first go. Most of them are not capable of yelling out loud, they snigger and look away. This means they are not sure about what they are doing, that they haven't got the charge of aggressiveness and hatred of our enemies like we have in Ukraine. For some of them, it's a game (FEMEN, 2013, p.243).

FEMEN members set out to train activists physically and psychologically to make them "ready to carry out humanist tasks of any degree of complexity and provocation" (FEMEN, 2013, p.8). Central themes of training are: postures, aggressive appearance, self-defence, physical fitness, reactions to intimidation, physical aggression or questioning or arrest by the police[14]. The contribution in terms of learning activism is thus explicitly thought of as a preliminary to active militancy (which is to say participation in public appearances). The skills judged necessary are thus acquired in a formal, specific setting and not "by doing" as within La Barbe.

In addition to this formal learning, we can assume that informal learning takes place: The effect in terms of empowerment of the act of stripping off in public is very much linked to the perception the individual has of her body and her "beauty" (understood as the degree of perceived conformity with the type of female body which is most often given media coverage)[15]. Activists learn to overcome inhibition, fear and sometimes also complexes about their body. This empowerment—the result of stretching beyond an "internal struggle"—is produced as an outcome of formal training but also through the experience of participating in performances. The transformative effect of an act of this nature is also linked to its consequences: one of the founders declares that her first topless appearance was "a decisive moment in her internal liberation, but also of breaking with a part of her family" (FEMEN; 2013, p. 115).

The mode of governance within FEMEN is another central aspect of the formative effects of this militancy. Their organizational mode is little discussed in the publications. In the Manifesto, the hard core of FEMEN (the Ukrainian founders who set up the movement in Paris and a few others) talk of the "essential respect for the democratic process which we impose on ourselves" (FEMEN, 2015, p 54). But more implicitly, between the lines of the accounts given in the publications, there emerges a somewhat vertical form of organization within this movement. It is directed by a coordinating council comprising the movement's founders and its most experienced activists (FEMEN, 2013, p. 12): "each group will carry out actions to respond to local situations, but the general impetus will come from Paris" (FEMEN, 2013, p. 258). The language used is also an indicator: there is talk of training "female soldiers" or "legionaries" of feminism who must comply with "discipline". Certain potentially formative tasks remain strongly centralized or at least carried out by only a small number of members: all the practical and logistical preparation of public appearances, which are minutely planned, the conception of slogans and press releases, media relations, the distribution of the various roles within the group during actions, etc. Since these tasks are very much concentrated among a few, learning the corresponding skills is supposedly largely confined within this small group.

To summarize this analyses based solely on secondary data, there is no doubt that FEMEN's mode of action as such requires learning and has significant learning effects. This evidence is confirmed by the existence of a training center for new members. The concurring testimonies available in videos and articles are highlighting the empowering effect of participating in FEMEN's actions. According to the four types of power, we can

assume that the power within is most enhanced. As FEMEN's actions are potentially risky, physically and regarding other consequences (police arrest, media coverage of ones' exposed body, etc.), to sum up ones' courage to participate seems clearly related to this form of interior power. Prepared by the formal learning during the training, we can assume that the members experience the participation as such a process of informal learning as well. Given the mode of governance within the movement and the centralization of the organization of actions, the skills deployed are concentrated in a few hands and not largely transmitted, leaving supposedly relatively lower impact in terms of "power to". However, the efficiency of this vertical organization can potentially strengthen the learning effect in terms of "power with", as far as the consciousness of and confidence in collective action is concerned. Future collection of primary data amongst FEMEN members will allow to refine these findings and deepen the understanding of the underlying learning mechanisms and their empowering effects.

Conclusion

To conclude this comparison of two feminist movements which make use of gendered image representations, very significant learning effects can be claimed for the activists in both movements, especially for novices and for less experienced activists. The transformative learning which may be produced by these experiences of activism and the empowerment which may result are generated in different ways, as can be seen from the contrast between the irony used by La Barbe which makes use of a humorous register to ridicule opponents and the aggressiveness advocated by FEMEN ("we are a radical movement, not funny at all", FEMEN, 2013, p.243). In both cases, the staging at the heart of the mode of action requires a certain going beyond one's limits with significant potential for transformation: while putting on a false beard seems relatively less daring that showing oneself with bared breasts, the point these have in common is the need to assert oneself, and to move into a public space a priori hostile to the presence of these activists. Most evidently, the potential consequences for the activists' professional and private spheres are much more considerable for FEMEN members and their mode of action by all appearances gives rise to more violent opposition. It may be supposed that the extent of the learning effect depends on the actual risks taken: The potential for formal learning from the FEMEN training courses combined with the informal learning which derives from the experience of public appearances seems more transformative than the Barbues' informal learning, even if the latter remains clearly significant.

However, activism with La Barbe takes place within horizontal structures where co-construction, the sharing of responsibilities and collective reflection are common practice. In contrast to the organizational mode of the FEMEN group, this horizontal mode of governance within La Barbe is a source of additional informal learning which is at the heart of the notion of empowerment: the linkage between the collective and individual dimensions, between "power with" and "power to" and "power within". The transformative effect of this learning within La Barbe (of which its members are not always aware) is doubtless more subtle and may be slower than for FEMEN activists. For FEMEN members, the empowerment which is the effect of their (formal and informal) learning is supposedly more rapid and—just like the FEMEN movement—more radical. The question of how activists in both movements might carry over more empowerment into the other areas of their life—whether professional, private, or intimate—remains open and deserves to be explored further.

Notes

[1] Catherine André co-conducted the research about La Barbe and is the co-author of the publication presenting the results: André, Catherine, Hofmann, Elisabeth, "Bearded women: feminist activism in 'La Barbe' as a form of informal adult learning", in: Joanna Ostrouch-Kamińska, Cristina C. Vieira, "Private World(s). Gender and Informal Learning of Adults", ESREA Series "Research on the Education and Learning of Adults", Sense Publishers, Pays Bas, 2015. She has contributed to this article in revisiting the La Barbe research in view of the comparison with Femen.

[2] In France, the validation for certification purposes of experiential learning acquired from the experience of volunteering (for example in procedures for obtaining a university degree on the basis of validation of experiential learning) has been formally acknowledged since the start of the 2000s (http://www.vae.gouv.fr/IMG/pdf/d15.pdf (in French: accessed 12/9/16). Translations from French sources are our own unless stated otherwise).

[3] Using the term "movement" to describe these two feminist groups is questionable. Bereni and Revillard (2012, p.5) define feminist movements "as collective movements led mainly by women, based on their gender (women's movements) and/or challenging the socially-established gender hierarchy between sexes (feminist movements)". According to Goertz and Mazur (2008, p. 226), the term "women's movement" refers to "collective action by women explicitly organized as women presenting claims in public life based on women's gendered identities". In a reedition of an AWID publication about feminist movements (Batliwala 2013, p. 6) a list of criteria characterizing a feminist movement is proposed, including that of a critical mass of members. This criterion is not met by La Barbe and FEMEN. The two organizations have just a few hundred members in France. The criterion of "'feminist' governance and modes of operation (inclusiveness, transparency, problematization of distribution of power, etc.,)" may also prove to be difficult to verify for FEMEN, as will be noted in the final part of this paper. In the absence of a more accurate term, we shall nevertheless use the term "movement" to designate La Barbe and Femen, interchangeably with that of association, which here designates a *de facto* rather than a *de jure* association, since in both cases the activists are not acting on behalf of an association formally created under the terms of the 1901 law regulating associations in France.

[4] The La Barbe association has no formal existence with a view to avoiding legal proceedings, but we may consider that the activists form a *de facto* association which is not gender-mixed. There is a second association, the "Friends of La Barbe" ("Les ami-e-s de la Barbe"), which has been formalized with statutes in accordance with the 1901 law and where men are members. In the literature on Femen, the significant impact of a male 'mentor' during the first years of the movement's existence is frequently mentioned in Femen's publications, as well as collaboration with men and women 'allies' to meet the logistical demands of the activists' appearances.

[5] The analyses considered documents or other sources available up until September 2015. More recent publications have not been taken into account.

[6] The form of an online survey has been chosen in order to take into account on the one hand, the personal and reflexive nature of the questions and on the other hand, the personal interconnection through the collaborator, herself a member of the group. The anonymous online form seemed the best compromise to strike the balance between motivating the La Barbe members to answer the complex questions (through an e-mail of their co-member) and at the same time keeping a certain distance through the online form.
The main questions were of qualitative nature and the members took on average half an hour to fill in the form.

[7] http://www.labarbelabarbe.org/La_Barbe/Accueil.html (see also the La Barbe Facebook page which is more up to date); http://femen.org/fr.

[8] This neologism is used within La Barbe to designate the fact of appearing with false beards at a given event.

[9] For example, by "congratulating" the obvious resistance against gender equality.

[10] Facebook: 8612 likes; Twitter account: 6577 followers (August 2015).

[11] Aitkenhead Decca, "Femen leader Inna Shevchenko: 'I'm for any form of feminism'". Interview with Inna Shevchenko. *The Guardian,* Friday 8 November 2013. Cited by Mona Chollet, "Femen partout, féminisme nulle part", *Le monde diplomatique*, 12 March 2013.

[12] It is also noteworthy that FEMEN members have developed a series of products (especially clothing) for sale to promote their actions. On their site (September 2015) at the top of the screen, and very prominent, could be seen the words "Support your ideology – buy riot clothing on FEMEN shop" (NB: they refer to the ideology of the potential buyer, not their own!).

[13] Their own histories as activists (described in the publication FEMEN, 2013, op. cit.) are convincing testimony of transformative learning and empowerment in the course of preparing for activism.

[14] There have already been arrests and convictions, not only in Ukraine but also in France and Germany, for "sexual exhibition". The Ukrainian historical members of Femen remark that French activists are not ready to go to prison, that they are not "professional revolutionaries like us" (FEMEN, 2013, op. cit., p. 243.)

[15] This aspect is described in the account given by one of the founders (FEMEN, 2013, op. cit., p. 114): *"I was telling myself, My God, I'm going to shame our organization. I have the chest of a boy... How horrible!"* It is in fact noticeable that most FEMEN members in the available photos and videos are young and have bodies similar to those of models in the media, which strengthens the idea that undressing in public is an act which requires great effort on the part of women, linked amongst other factors to the relationship with their body and to its subjectively "perceived conformity". In their book, Femen activists explain: *"We are criticized for practicing inverse sexism. This isn't completely true. Our girls must be fit enough to endure difficult tests and beautiful in order to make good use of their body. To sum up, Femen embodies the image of a new woman: beautiful, active and totally free."* (FEMEN, 2013, op. cit., p. 266)

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Gender consciousness through applied theatre

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Abstract

This paper describes an experience of the use of applied theatre for the promotion of gender equality. The fact that women continue to face multiple forms of discrimination as human beings, citizens and professionals justified the search of alternative training models. The Empowerment Labs focused on the amplification of power, freedom and action of two groups of women: university students and unemployed women. The core of the approach followed was guided by a fundamental question: 'can theatre raise consciousness and empowerment in the context of gender equality?' The results obtained through different internal assessment tools provide evidence of change in what feminist awareness and personal empowerment are concerned. We present and discuss the process and results of this experience including the advantages and limitations of applied theatre in certain types of outcomes.

Keywords: applied theatre; consciousness; empowerment; gender (in)equalities; transformative learning

Introduction

Access to employment is strongly affected by the political, economic and social context of a country. As in many other European countries, unemployment rates have progressively rose in Portugal during the recent financial crisis. In 2013, 16,4 % of the Portuguese population was unemployed (Eurostat, 2016). Young people and women were particularly affected. The population aged under 25 experienced one of the highest unemployment rates in Europe in 2013: 38,1 % (Eurostat, 2016). Whereas Portugal has

noticed an increasing female emancipation in the labour market since the late seventies (Coelho & Ferreira-Valente, 2014), the crisis appears to have reversed the integration of women in the workforce mainly due to the unemployment escalation (Sales Oliveira, Villas-Boas & Las Heras, 2013). As highlighted in a report from the European Commission (Bettio, Corsi, D'Ippoliti, Lyberaki, Lodovici, & Verashchagina, 2012), one of the consequences of the crisis was the situation of 'discouraged workers', i.e. people that do not look for a job because they think they will not find it. The same report also recognised an increasing number of women working part-time as an effect of the crisis. Both phenomena seem to have contributed to a silent exclusion of women from the labour market (Sales Oliveira, Villas-Boas & Las Heras, 2013).

In 2013, women counted for 50,2% of the unemployment rate in Portugal (Employment and Vocational Training Institute [IEFP], 2013). Unemployment rates were significantly higher in the inner country of Portugal. Covilhã, known as the city of wool and snow, is one of the main urban centres of the region of Beira Interior with a university (with seven thousand students). This municipality is, however, characterised by an ageing population and where young people experience serious difficulties to put down their roots. Based on these data, it was imperative to change the alarming feminised unemployment and related gender inequalities in Covilhã. The aim of the project *Empowerment Labs* (whose definition and process are presented in detail below) developed in 2014 was to contribute to this change. Performance arts and social intervention were brought together to empower young women (who would soon initiate their professional lives) as well as unemployed women.

The lack of awareness regarding gender inequalities in the labour market is a concerning reality. This was clearly evidenced when one of the youngest participants asked at the very beginning of the theatre workshops: 'why do these Labs *only* target women if they aim at raising awareness about equal opportunities between women and men?'(C., 22, Lab1). The *Empowerment Labs* were conceived as mechanisms of affirmative action (International Labour Organization [ILO], 2007; Portuguese Network of Young Women for Equal Opportunities between Women and Men [REDE], 2010) important to reverse unequal situations as those evidenced above. They were oriented to promote emancipatory knowledge (Amâncio, 2003), and aimed at amplifying women's power, freedom and action. At the same time, by generating 'critical meanings or even new meanings' (Pollock, 2002, p. 205), the *Labs* were intended to boost individual and collective strategies to denounce and overcome multiple forms of discrimination that women are still confronted with as human beings, citizens and professionals.

Being an adult learning project with a feminist focus, the challenge of this experience was how to operationalise these objectives (Manicom & Walters, 2012) without falling into simplistic views (English, 2006). The methodological approach followed to facilitate the *Empowerment Labs* combines pedagogical influences of authors such as Paulo Freire, Peter Jarvis, Jack Mezirow and Leona English. Freire's pedagogy is among the roots of theatre practices aimed at raising critical awareness and encouraging personal and social engagement as it catalyses a creative basis of discussion, analysis and action on political and social problems (like gender inequality). On the other hand, and adopting the perspective that "personal is political", the *Empowerment Labs* also invested in the "transformative" nature of learning. That is, the belief that the experiential learning gives way to the construction of self (Jarvis, 1999, 2007) and also the critical consciousness, by the individual, about her/himself and about the surrounding reality (Mezirow, 1997, 2006). Critical and self-reflective thought on the process and position of the educator(s) was done all through the project (English, 2006) which identifies itself

with the spirit of the second wave feminism informed by the concerns with diversity and inclusion of the third wave.

Personal is political

> (...) gender equality doesn't touch people the same way. I think this laboratory should be done with all kind of people and not only unemployed or university women [because] the issues worked here lead to a different perspective (...) of what is (...) gender equality, or rather inequality that still exists in society and that few people are aware of. (H., 34, Lab 2)[1]

Despite some significant advances in reducing inequalities between women and men, the still lingering *male domination* remains as a "difficult issue" in the words of Pierre Bourdieu (1998). Today, women have a growing participation in economic and political life, and they see recognised their equal status in institutional and legal terms. However, in the twenty first century, women from different social classes, ethnicities, ages and nationalities continue to be the main victims of discrimination and inequality. Discrimination is characterised as a behaviour influenced by prejudice or attitudes (generally negative) not justified by personal experience but by stereotypes assimilated through different means (Macedo & Amaral, 2005).

Feminist movements have been focusing their efforts on both the fight for equality and the deconstruction of the category of "woman". This last objective has been carefully worked because all gender stereotypes and ideologies tend to imprison both men and women even if in different ways (Nogueira, 2005). It is possible to distinguish here two tendencies: equality approaches that mainly fight the masculine domination and establish this fight as a political priority; on the other side, approaches more focused on strengthening women's social role and women's specificities (while also considering their diversity), as well as different ways to see and act upon the world.

Within this project, we are particularly interested in this "second wave" of feminism(s) aimed at creating new "significant places" and the affirmation of new notions of self, gender and sexual difference, allied to creativity, art and performance (Pollock, 2002). These new "significant places" have changed the relationship between the individual and the social, between the public and the private. The slogan "personal is political" works here as a key expression of these movements in the sense of Simone de Beauvoir´s *The Second Sex* (2009) that establishes women's individual experiences as a social and political process. One of the ways to express the concerns of the feminist demands has been artistic and social activism with theatre representing a major role. Since the seventies of the last century feminist theatre and performance have been important in expressing cultural and aesthetical concerns of the feminist movement (Carlson, 1997). Many of the plays created by feminist companies in the late seventies for example, were collaboratively devised rather than scripted by a playwright. This offered women the opportunity to practise theatre collaboratively and democratically (Aston, 2005).

The use of theatre in social and political causes has its roots both in the political theatre of the XX century (for example the epic theatre, the *agitprop* and the radical street theatre) and in the pedagogies oriented to the democratisation of the teaching-learning process (Butterwick & Roy, 2016; Nicholson, 2005). Among these we can highlight the relation between the writings of Paulo Freire in his *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (Freire 1970, 1972) with the theatre method of the director Augusto Boal named *Theatre of the Oppressed* (Boal, 1985; Denis, 2009; Picher, 2007).

The concepts of *applied theatre* (AT) (Prendergast & Saxton, 2009) or *applied drama/theatre* (Nicholson, 2005) appear as a "portmanteau term" that includes educational drama, theatre in health education, development theatre, theatre in prisons, community theatre and memory theatre, among others. Such typologies of applied theatre share an engaged, social and artistic phenomenon whose practices do not fall within the institutional theatre models, happen in non-conventional places and are organised to specific communities or social groups. With "applied theatre" and "community performance" models, the artistic practice moves away from an institutional approach and spreads into unconventional contexts 'facilitating creative expression as a means to newly analyse and understand life situations, and to empower people to value themselves and shape a more egalitarian and diverse future' (Kuppers, 2007, p. 5-6).

The AT raises pedagogic issues like where the knowledge is located, what kind of knowledge we value and how to share the knowledge. From Nicholson's perspective, AT knowledge is 'embodied, culturally located and socially distributed' (2005, p. 39). The AT process asks for the physical and emotional involvement of participants and therefore enhance the physical embodiment of learning ("embodied pedagogies") (Davids & Willemse, 2014; Lund, 2013; Nicholson, 2005). At the same time, it shares meanings and powers, and exposes new forms of social and cultural capital. AT is frequently used by feminist educators for engendering critical consciousness (Manicom & Walters, 2012). To understand the relation between AT and pedagogy it is important to be aware of the concept of psychosomatic learning. In this context, AT is a cyclic model of learning that frames new questions and perspectives in the course of the theatre practice and drives the participants to possible new meanings (Nicholson, 2005).

Applied theatre, learning, empowerment and consciousness-raising

> At the end of each session, I felt a growing strength inside me because of the great environment of the laboratory and the union between us, women, who felt able to do everything! (C., 22, Lab1)

> We have developed our senses and sensibilities for a more conscious life in community/society. (A., 25, Lab1)

> [The lab] made us look "inside" and see who's there. Sometimes it's not who you think about, and it turns out it's so much better. (H., 34, Lab2)

The alignment between the pedagogical vision of applied theatre presented by those who practised and theorised it (Kuppers, 2007; Nicholson, 2005; Prendergast & Saxton, 2009; Thompson, 2009) and perspectives on adult education transmitted by authors like Paulo Freire, Jack Mezirow, Peter Jarvis and Peter Alheit, is very noticeable. Specifically mentioned is its valuation as empowerment tools, particularly with regard to women, and the presence of common concerns around the perspective transformation and consciousness-raising. It is also very close to feminist pedagogy as this has much in common with Freire's perspective but also has a critical perspective of his work (Crabtree, Sapp, & Licona, 2009). Specifically, the feminist perspective is particularly attentive to power issues claiming that education and training is always power-ridden and even when we are genuinely aiming to promote empowerment still we are guiding participants (English, 2006). Leona English argues that adult education didn't keep pace with the third wave feminism and tend to still treat women learners in a paternalist manner.

In fact, empowerment is a complex process that requires a delicate balance between the role of the educator and the learner, being essential that the educator become a co-learner (English, 2006). During the seventies, the term *empowerment* was adopted by the civil and human rights' movement and by the feminist movement. This term was used to explain that people who are discriminated, aggressed or oppressed need alternative forms of power that are not limited to formal and legislative instruments in order to overcome such situations. These alternative forms of power are crucial for personal capacitation (Catalá, 2009). Ideologically, the concept of empowerment is connected to minority rights, particularly the fight for civil rights of Afro-Americans, the feminist movement, as well as the pedagogic methodologies of Paulo Freire (Catalá, 2009; Sadan, 2004).

The connection between the personal and politics that characterises the feminist approach was vividly adopted by the empowerment theory: feminism is valid not only for women but for all who are oppressed and marginalised. Catalá, (2009) argues that if the lack of power is culturally and politically learnt, so empowerment can and should be. This rationale supports and guides the empowerment workshops for women that follow feminist principles such as the elimination of power relations based on dominance, the fight for freedom and the respect for human diversity. According to this author, these kinds of workshops are aimed at developing the sense of power which is understood as power for life and not power for dominance, so it is very important to be attentive to how power flows in the relationships (English, 2006). The empowerment process is then understood as an appropriation, access and acquisition of the following resources:

- Psychological (understanding the dimensions that are related to gender, ability to deconstruct myths and stereotypes)
- Material (basic resources such as housing, food and clothing; money; access to technology)
- Intellectual (knowledge, ideas, access to information)
- Ideological (capacity to create and defend values, attitudes and behaviours).

It is essential that women are aware of the importance of these resources in their lives because, as argued by the feminist movement, the formalisation of women's rights is not enough to ensure its realisation (English, 2006).

On the other side, feminists have learned that efforts to empower adult women must include not only literacy training but also transformative education content through non-formal and informal learning (Stromquist, 2014). And that the gain of control over one's own life demands a previous critical consciousness about the sources and nature of inequalities and exploitation. As Joe Curnow (2013) suggests, marginalised groups may establish sub-communities of practice and learning, wherein they experience consciousness-raising that reshapes their understandings of gender and hierarchy, motivating their resistance to gender-based discrimination. Freire defines it as the experience of conscientization.

> Often learners are unaware of being oppressed; they internalise the values of the oppressors. Freire has shown how to help them understand how they have traditionally misread their situation so that some kind of appropriate social action is possible. This 'deconstruction' of reified frames of reference often must precede action on one's own behalf. (Mezirow, 1997, p. 62).

According to Freire (1972) (a key reference for non-formal education), people are capable of critically analyse the world as long as they have tools to allow its perception and action towards reality. The educational activities that Freire undertook in Latin America –

"capacitation courses" – were supported by the idea that "conscientization" is a liberating learning process that guides people beyond the acceptance of the existing systems and motivates their intervention skills in the world by fostering critical consciousness and agency (Manicom & Walters, 2012). Already quoted, Jack Mezirow, also advocates that transformative learning begins with a critical reflection or critical self-reflection on assumptions (critical assessment of the sources, nature and consequences of our habits of mind), our own and those of the others. This subjective approach becomes a priority since we are increasingly facing "ill-structured problems" (Merriënboer & Stoyanov, 2008) which are determined by the new societal challenges and defy our ability to understand the world: the dynamics of uncertainty and the combination of multi-contextual influences; the existence of alternative and often conflicting approaches; the lack of a clear-cut problem solving procedure; no agreement on what can be accepted as an appropriate solution, and a solution that may not always be recognisable as such.

In this process, the authors insist on an important condition: lifelong learning cannot be limited to its "psychological" dimension, the one that 'is concerned with people's inner subjective world of thought and feeling, combined with sensitivity to their outer world of social relationships set in a context of wider structural relationships set in a context of wider structural inequalities' (West, 2006, p. 39). It should also consider a collective and dialogical dimension, the one that connects personal troubles with public issues (Sutherland & Crowther, 2006) and feeds the intersubjective knowledge production (van Stapele, 2014). According to Alheit and Dausien (2006) reflexive learning processes (or biographical learning) do not exclusively take place "inside" the individual, but also comprise biographical setting up of networks and social processes, of collective knowledge and collective practices. When reflection happens together, shared insights deepen and extend that experience.

Feminist pedagogy involves teaching/training methods, strategies and even and an ideology (Crabtree, Sapp, & Licona, 2009). In this sense, the position and perspective of educators is essential as their voice and position is also part of the process. Applied theatre provides the conditions for this fruitful but delicate combination biographical and the dialogical dimensions of transformation and consciousness-raising of different actors:

> [T]he arts enable the kind of distance and viewpoints that help participants to understand where they have positioned ourselves, the potential for change and perhaps, transformation will only occur through reflecting on what has happened in the safety of a metaphoric world that the theatre experience has created. (...) Within the richness created through reflection can always be found new ways of thinking about ourselves and the world (...) through the act of theatre. (Prendergast & Saxton, 2009, p. 204-205).

As mentioned, one of the strengths of a reflective approach in the theatre lies in the way it favours the interaction between the learner and the environment, hence incorporating the opportunity to experiment a wide range of possibilities. By rehearsing different viewing possibilities, the individual is challenged to establish a critical relationship between the way he/she reads the world (from different points of view) and becomes aware of his/her own weaknesses and opportunities. Greene (in Butterwick & Roy, 2016) draws attention to the ability of art based adult education to engagement and community building by stimulating imagination and creating the conditions for empathy. Still, attention to diversity is essential. As English (2006) points out, not all learners want the same things, the educator must pay attention to resistance and be comfortable with some degree of uncertainty.

Objectives and Methodology

The *Empowerment Labs* were part of of NÓS (meaning "we" in portuguese), a project of social and artistic intervention developed by Quarta Parede (a civil society organisation of performative arts) in collaboration with Beira Interior University and with the support of the IEFP - Portuguese Employment and Professional Training Institute. The project was funded by the Active Citizenship Program/EEA Grants 2013/14 and managed by Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation. The framework context was the difficult social and economic situation that Portugal has been living in recent years and the way it has worsen women's situation, particularly in the labour market. Inequalities, discrimination and injustice experienced by women in the labour market are especially concerning in the inner country were employment opportunities are scarce. The proposed approach for this project was innovative because it was based on the collaboration of performance arts and social sciences focusing on the challenges experienced by young women who would (try to) enter the labour market in a near future and those who were unemployed for a certain period of time. As a whole, the project aimed to i) empower and improve the participants' resilience, ii) promote innovative forms of minimising the impact of women's unemployment and iii) raise gender equality awareness among the project's participants and the general population.

Divided in two editions according to the two different groups of participants, the *Empowerment Labs* were an initiative of non-formal education consisting of a multidisciplinary process aimed at developing knowledge and transversal soft skills for the participants' future involvement in the public realm and labour market with a higher gender awareness. From a (feminist) adult education perspective our aim was to 'enable the voices of underrepresented individuals and communities to take shape and form' (Butterwick & Roy, 2016 p. ix).

The Labs included non-formal activities and theatre workshops. The Labs were conceived as a place of creation, training and change, where artistic expression and creativity emerge as tools to promote meaningful relationships (within the self and with others) and opportunities for participation and empowerment (Johnston, 2005). Each Lab was composed of three conceptual chorus: Theatre, Gender Equality and Employability. The three components were designed by a team of specialists from performance arts, psychology and sociology. The driving idea of the laboratories was to establish a dialogic relationship among these three components (Sales Oliveira, 2014).

The methodological approach of the *Empowerment Labs* was a process of action research with an applied participatory laboratorial practice, using theatre as privileged pedagogical instrument (FIA, 2010). Two characteristics are associated with this methodology that combines research with social intervention (Monteiro, 1995): on the one hand, action-research approach reflects a collective process that involves both the researchers and the social groups as subjects of investigation and intervention; on the other hand, it is a process that aims to simultaneously fulfil three articulated objectives, namely, the production of new knowledge through research procedures, the modification of social reality as a result of innovative practices and the promotion of "social learning" through the involvement of different stakeholders in dynamic skills training.

The design of the theatre workshops was envisaged to allow for the compilation of a documented research-action portfolio, including: the sessions' planning, photos, videos, trainer's field diary, participants' texts, evaluation instruments and materials produced in the sessions. All these materials represented vital methodological tools for the workshops as they contributed to the reflection process with the participants and also provided

valuable input to the project's dissemination instruments (such as the documentary and the blog).

From Labs experiences to the stage

Procedure and dynamics

> When I started the project I had no idea what it was going to be. When I started to realise, I was motivated enough to look forward to the lab day. I take some lessons for my life (...) such as "breathing and realising why something went wrong" or "accepting and correcting my failures" or "respecting the mistakes of others without judging". (...) These are important situations both in the personal and professional fields. (H., 34, Lab2)

In both Labs, the in-person sessions lasted four months and happened once a week. The approximate duration of each session was two hours and thirty minutes. Each laboratory began with a presentation session followed by two gender equality awareness-raising sessions led by a sociologist and a psychologist (both gender experts). The theatre workshop trainer was responsible for the theoretical research and practical frameworks to guide the artistic processes of group involvement while considering labour issues, empowerment and feminisms. The trainer together with the sociologist revised the syllabus outlined for the theatre workshops, taking into account the first contacts with the group of participants and the gender equality sessions. An additional gender equality session was organised after 8 weeks to reinforce the conceptual and theoretical background. This session was used to approach the specific discrimination problems, while the first two sessions were an introduction to gender issues. The Labs also included two sessions aimed at providing information about the Portuguese labour market and discuss strategies to search work. These sessions were led by employability professionals from IEFP, the local employment and training office.

The Lab1 targeted young women. The group was composed of 13 women aged between 19 and 29 years from different study fields and levels (bachelor and master) offered by the University of Beira Interior: Sociology, Pharmaceutical Sciences, Entrepreneurship and Social Work, Psychology, Communication Sciences, and Fashion Design. The group of Lab2 was made up of 9 women aged between 27 and 48 years, with education levels between secondary school and master, who were unemployed for a certain period of time (i.e. between three months and four years).

In both Labs, the theatre workshops were facilitated in an open environment focusing both on the participants' characteristics and the group dynamics. Whereas the topics 'work' and 'employment' were addressed through a gender perspective, the theatre practice was used as a tool to develop critical thought and transversal soft skills. This approach allowed promoting an association between learnings, theatre symbolic languages and the experiences of sensitivity, emotion and corporeality, in the sense of *embodied pedagogies* (Lund, 2013; Nicholson, 2005). The expected impact was to exercise the bodily responses, sensations and aesthetical pleasure in order to generate a sense of aliveness that prompts the participants' desire to connect and engage with others or ideas (Thompson 2009). For this purpose, the theatre workshops were organised in four different units: i) self-presentation ii) collective corporeality iii) dramaturgy of gender equality and iv) collective creation process. Each unit corresponded to three workshop sessions. In each session there was a theme that created a topical coherence to all practices, from the warm-up exercises to the core exercises of expression, creativity and *improvisational* theatre (Sales Oliveira, 2014). Some examples of the themes

discussed in the sessions include: "Gender stereotypes", "Power inequalities", "Power and participation of women and men", "Work-family balance", "Future perspectives" (Lab1) and "From me to the world" (Lab2). The themes were initially presented to the participants through the use of literary works (novels and poetry), newspaper articles and scientific papers. The same subjects were posteriorly transformed into theatrical exercises and symbolic performances. With these resources and practices, we were able to promote critical reflection and the development of personal and thoughtful visions of the world among the participants. This approach also created the conditions for the final step of each lab which was the collective creation of a performance to be presented to the community.

Collective creation process and public presentations

> The most significant moment for me was (...) to feel the union of us all, as well as the collaboration so that everything went the best way, from the rehearsals to the shows. But I will never forget how I have wandered around the room at the sound of music and to draw with the elbow. (E., 20, Lab1)

> [The most significant moments of the laboratory]: The contact with some theatre techniques, the discipline that theatre demands, the final presentation (which I thought I wouldn't be able to do!). (H., 34, Lab2)

> All sessions were important but no doubt that the final rehearsals and the public presentation were the highest moments of the entire laboratory. (...) It was fantastic, the spirit that united us. (J., 48, Lab2)

It is worth noting that this was the first theatre experience for most of the participants, in which they got acquainted with the different steps of artistic conception and production (e.g. contact with the stage, adaptation to the sound and lights, organisation of the scenic space, rehearsals, or the confrontation with the public). The participants were empowered to decide together on the objectives of the final presentations, on the topics to be covered, and on how and which messages would be conveyed in relation to gender (in)equality and the labour market. These aspects differed between the two participant groups. For instance, whereas object theatre, choreographies and theatrical role plays were used to convey the individual and collective messages from the Lab1, the participants from the Lab2 decided to perform shadow theatre, choreographies and read written texts by themselves or retrieved from relevant feminist books from national and international authors.

The final presentations raised some anxiety among the participants. As mentioned above, the participation in this project was the first experience with performative exercises for most women involved. The trainer had to manage the participants' expectations in relation to the final presentation. It was clarified that the intention was not to create a theatre play, but to challenge themselves to expose their experiences and learnings resulting from the workshop. This obviously created discomfort. The team made sure that each participant felt comfortable with her role in the process and in the stage. The participants also played a crucial role in creating a safe space for all, by showing one another that this performative exercise would be beneficial for them (to build a higher self-confidence, self-esteem). The awareness-raising benefits of the final presentations were also highlighted by the team and by the participants themselves (Sales Oliveira, 2014). These actions were essential to the final outcomes. The participants showed a strong commitment during the rehearsals and in stage. They were happy with

the end-result and proud of themselves for accomplishing this "mission". To sum up, the final presentations were fundamental to consolidate the knowledge about gender (in)equality, to strengthen the participants' self-confidence, to promote creativity, and to build communication skills.

Both public presentations took place in the spring of 2014 in the auditorium of Teatro das Beiras in Covilhã. These presentations represented crucial moments that allowed the participants to show all the personal and mutual achievements of the Labs. Each public presentation was a collective sharing of the most significant insights and experiences of the participants. The public presentations created community spaces of gender equality debate. The audience's feedback was empowering to the process of developing the participants' self-esteem and confidence.

As tangible results from this process, the public presentations mediated the laboratorial practice and its dissemination, creating a moment where the voices of the participants were heard (Butterwick & Roy, 2016). Allowing the audience to participate, these presentations increased the pedagogic, artistic and social impact of the project (Ferreira, 2015) making use of the empathy mechanism (Butterwick & Roy, 2016).

Achievements and challenges

> At the beginning of the laboratory, I felt many doubts about my performance and my contribution to the group but through the sessions (...) I was able to overcome many fears, especially some shyness, and to have more confidence in me. (K., 22, Lab1)

Throughout the duration of the project, the team met regularly in order to share and discuss the progress, achievements and challenges faced. At the same time and from a feminist education perspective (English, 2006) the educators self-reflected on their role and participation and later shared these reflections not only with the team but also with the participants. There are pertinent lessons to be drawn from this experience.

Although the overarching theme guiding the project was on gender (in)equality in the labour market, the focus and approaches followed had to be tailored to the particularities of each group. In the group of young women, we decided to explore more in-depth their gender consciousness in relation to their academic life and professional future, to raise awareness on their rights as workers and citizens, to develop creative skills, and to facilitate a proactive socio-political participation (Ferreira, 2015). In the group of unemployed women, we opted to promote a critical reflection about the current gender inequalities in the labour market, their role in promoting change at personal and professional level, and to build new attitudes towards unemployment (Ferreira, 2015).

The initial gender equality sessions constituted important moments to deconstruct gender stereotypes and to raise awareness about gender inequalities in society and, more specifically, in the labour market. During these sessions, participants realised that some of their choices and behaviours may have been influenced by gender roles. This realisation/confrontation is part of the process, but creates, nevertheless, some internal, external, passive and active resistances towards the facilitator, the discussions and the activities. The facilitator needs to be well-prepared to respond to the questions of the participants, as well as to provide daily life examples that are close to the realities of the participants in order to overcome resistance.

In our approach theatre was used as a mean to transmit and produce gender equality awareness and knowledge among the participants and in the community in general (Sales Oliveira, 2014). In this sense it was the core of each Lab a state of permanent research in which the theatre practice facilitate the questioning and the experimentation of ideas. As

a result the participants explored new possibilities of meanings construction in Gender Equality themes.

In this pedagogical process focused in the performance the concept of praxis – meaning the synthesis of theory, method and practice – guided the team in the planning process. For this goal the theatre trainer promoted the creation of "now and here" experiences that favours reflexivity through exercises that demanded the use of sensibility, emotions and corporality of the participants. This option has improved the collective discussion and the critical capacity of the participants. It is important is to highlight that performance was essential for the conscientization work, by using theatre techniques and tools like work on the presence, the look, the listening, the touch, the movement and the oral expression.

In what concerns the educators, the reflective process about their place and participation allowed them to understand that the project also have empowered them. The main trainer was the person that was responsible for the theatre component. With a background in Theatre and doing a master degree in Theatre and Community at the time of the project, this woman felt that the project requested her total involvement – as woman-artist-researcher-educator - demanding her to 'to deepen and share in my artistic-pedagogical context and y involvement with the feminist cause' (S., 32, artist, educator). The intersection between her artistic work and the political social dimension of the project forced her to position herself outside her "comfort zone". This displacement led to new approaches in her artistic and pedagogical practice and also to a greater awareness of the permanence of *glass ceilings* to women artists.

The Social Sciences educator, teacher at UBI, felt some difficulty in making the groups forgetting she is a university teacher. This was particularly notorious with those participants who were her students at university, felling a clear tension between social roles (Villagante, 2016). Her participation in the labs was supposed to be the conduction of two sessions on gender equality. She is also a trainer in gender equality so she used her expertise in training to streamline those sessions. Having scarce experience in theatre contexts, she felt amazed with 'the power of AT to embody gender issues' (C., 40, feminist and sociologist) and the process was also revealing for her as a woman, contributing to raise her consciousness and improve her sensibility. For that reason her participation enlarged during the project and she was present at some more sessions, including final rehearsals.

Results and Evaluations

The dissemination products of the *Empowerment Labs* were a blog, the final presentations and related videos, as well as a documentary (video link: https://vimeo.com/112373112). Both public presentations took place in the spring of 2014 in the auditorium of a theatre company in Covilhã (Teatro das Beiras).

The Labs were subjected to internal monitoring and evaluation exercises (such as individual open and closed answer surveys and group discussions). This process aimed at collecting insights about the personal experiences of participating in the project, the perceived impacts, the participants' self-assessment in relation to the knowledge and skills gained, as well as their viewpoints about the whole project.
Based on the perceptions gathered, it is possible to see that the participants recognised the contribution of the project to their self-knowledge and personal development, strengthening their well-being by developing critical thinking, expressive capabilities and creativity:

> I think the laboratory contributes to open up horizons and to accept me better as I am, despite being fully aware of my faults and failures. This loose and amusing way of exposing ourselves and discussing such key issues has contributed so much to my resilience because I always leave here with the spirit that change is possible. (C., 22, Lab1**)**

> [The project] was an added-value for my personal life as the Empowerment Lab2 allowed to "open" myself to the world and be more confident in what I do and say, and, of course, gave me more personal and intellectual stability, I would say, more peace of mind. (D., age 27, Lab2**)**

In terms of acquired knowledge and skills, the participants considered that the project contributed to develop gender equality knowledge, communication skills (expression and perception), creative capacities, team work skills and to build social participation skills:

> By making us more aware of this reality, this training has made us more critical, more analytical, more thoughtful and more conscious of these issues that we are confronted with on a daily basis. I believe that when I enter the labour market, I will often remember of the contents we have explored and discussed, and then ... I will be a person with more potential to demonstrate an active attitude towards moral and social ethics change . (F., 19, Lab1**)**

> (...) I learned about the subject [Gender Equality], and I'm now more aware to the various events that arise around us constantly (...) because they are so common (...). Now it's impossible to look at these situations indifferently, and I can instead have a better critical judgement and confidence to defend what we call rights. (I., 19, Lab1**)**

> Now I can see with greater awareness the problems of women in society and I feel much more prepared to face any challenge that society presents me with regard to gender inequality. (J., 48, Lab2**)**

Concluding remarks

Confronting the experience of the Empowerment Labs with the theory of transformative learning, our critical analysis supported by the testimonies of the women involved, is that the AT offers privileged circumstances for the development and maximisation of what Mezirow considers to be the:

> optimal conditions for adult learning and education: a) to have accurate and complete information; b) to be free of coercion, distorting self-deception or immobilising anxiety; c) to be open to alternative points of view; d) to be able to understand, to weight evidence and to assess arguments objectively; e) to be able to become aware of the context and critically reflect on assumptions, including their own; f) to have equal opportunity to participate in the various roles of the discourse; g) to have a test of validity until new perspectives, evidence or argument are encountered and validated through discourse as yielding a better judgment (Mezirow, 2006, p. 25-26).

Besides being able to facilitate access to information, as well as a critical understanding of reality and active participation, this learning approach particularly favours the absence of coercion because the theatrical practice results from a collaborative work in which dialogue is horizontal and each participant explores the right to creative freedom. Even if, when facing the demands of embodied language and public expression, women have occasionally faced emotional states of immobilising anxiety. With regard to the openness to alternative points of view, theatre (as an exercise of gesture and word par excellence) emerges as a privileged universe to feel 'the power of artistic practice to imagine new

ways of seeing our places in the world' (Kuppers & Robertson, 2007, p. 152) and also to create new places in the world.

The experience gained through the implementation of Empowerment Labs leads us to the conclusion that AT works as a first-rate method of promoting reflexivity and critical consciousness, adding to it a collective and dialogical dimension, provided by performative exercises where corporal and vocal consciousness are trained. During the Labs sessions, each participant learnt how to look into herself (in terms of corporality and expressivity) and to decentralise from herself through the interaction with the other participants (and with the public). As Freire (1972) argues, action without reflection is unproductive. The goal of the participatory component of applied theatre practice is one in which all those engaged with the performance (sources, players and audiences) are moved to become simultaneously active and reflective (Prendergast & Saxton, 2009).

However, our critical analysis also leads to two constraint findings. A first and very practical finding is connected with the attendance and punctuality of participants. It was notorious the difficulty of these women to maintain their commitment to the complete process of the *Empowerment Labs*. University students justified nonattendances with academic obligations or illness. Unemployed women justified their absences with the demand for employment and family responsibilities. There have also been some withdrawals of participants because they started academic internships, found employment or initiated vocational training programmes. In a society that greatly values the direct and immediate link between action and results, it is not easy to ensure long term commitments that do not translate into immediate and/or visible results. Also because this was a project that favoured logics of communicative learning that are far from the mainstream, which is directed to employability and the acquisition of key competencies valued by the market. As English (2006) claims, it is important to be attentive to resistance as it is the mean by which learners express themselves and exercise power. In that sense the project's team addressed the problem of attendance and tried to find alternatives to overcome such constraints in the future (e.g. in these discussions we concluded that the free participation in the project, outside from any professional or academic obligation introduces a vulnerability element because both groups of women were living a demanding life moment shaped by strong transitions: the students from academia to labour market and the unemployed women to reintegration in labour market).

The second constraint is connected with the limits of the transformative approach. Several authors have highlighted these limits (Imel, 1998; Kitchenham, 2008; Purcell, 2006) on the grounds that it does not adequately contemplate a dimension of individual and collective action facing social transformation. Other authors use the dichotomy empowerment *versus* emancipation (Inglis, 1997; Wildemeersch & Olesen, 2012) as argument to advocate that 'an individualist attitude towards empowerment and freedom' (Shor & Freire, 1987, p. 109) is not enough by itself to move from personal transformation to social and political transformation.

Those critical analyses point out that transformative theories of learning are unsatisfactory because they only can help in the first step of political or social change. But, at the same time, they neglect the part of emancipatory education which leads to personal transformation. We claim that personal conscience is a vital part for social action. Educational practices must beware of placing learners in a vacuum by making them aware of the need for collective change, but without helping them to acquire the information and skills needed to take part of it (Mezirow, 1997). Such an option and priority appear to be in line with the most important features of the AT as alternative learning and training instruments.

Second, the concept of empowerment is multidimensional, demanding not only raising one's awareness of exploitation, but also the development of skills and strategies to engage in political action (Curnow, 2013; Stromquist, 2014). It is in this sense that feminist movements have advocated empowerment, while 'female investment in access to and exercise of power' (Macedo & Amaral, 2005, p. 154) aimed at eliminating power relations based on male dominance, the defence of freedom and the respect for human diversity (Catalá, 2009).

Finally, the association between applied theatre, embodied pedagogies and transformative learning promotes a 'shift in focus from *effects* to *affects*' (Thompson, 2009, p. 7) by which some limitations may be introduced, but from other point of view it also (re)opens new potentialities. 'By failing to recognise affect – bodily responses, sensations and aesthetic pleasure – much of the power of performance can be missed' (Thompson, 2009, p. 7). Beyond social utility and social impact, '[a]rtistic experience and practice are here best understood for their capacity to agitate at the level of sensation, and it is this force that propels a demand to know more.' (Thompson, 2009, p. 121). The stimulation of affect can be envisaged as an asset that predisposes the participant to think and to be engaged, to resist and be committed to change.

Notes

[1] Translation by the authors.

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An analysis of educational programmes for adults accompanying museum exhibitions: the typology of portals

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Abstract

This paper discusses the many educational programmes offered to adults in parallel with museum exhibitions. These were systematically examined using programme analysis, a research method developed in adult education research in Germany, with the goal of determining and differentiating between learning/participation pathways to cultural education—the so-called portals to arts education. An analytical approach to cultural adult education developed in 2005 was used for the first time to identify these various portals in museum offerings. This approach defines portals as specific pathways to arts education. The process described in this paper resulted in a refined and relatively stable set of categories that differentiates between educational programmes accompanying museum exhibits; it also resulted in a better understanding of the range of cultural education offerings for adults in Germany today. Within this framework, the method of programme analysis, research results, limitations, implications, and possible implementation are discussed.

Introduction[1]

Nowadays, museums not only view themselves as cultural institutions or exhibition spaces, but are also very aware of their mandate as learning places. In this sense, they

play an important role in lifelong learning (German Museums Association & ICOM Germany, 2006; Taylor, McKinley Parrish, & Banz, 2010). To better understand their contribution to lifelong learning and their role as sites for education and learning from the standpoint of adult education studies, it is of interest to examine how these services are structured—that is, what educational programmes are offered specifically to adults at museums, what these programmes encompass, and what sorts of learning approaches/pathways and cultural content they provide. These questions, which have not yet received much attention in adult education research, were the subject of a programme analysis conducted for different museums at the German Institute for Adult Education – Leibniz Centre for Lifelong Learning in Bonn (Specht & Fleige, 2016; Specht & Semrau, 2016).

Program analysis is not a particularly well-known method internationally. It was developed within the German adult and further education research community and refers (partly) to discourse analysis (van Dijk, 2011) and content analysis (Mayring, 2010). It 'is a non-reactive method, which means that the material is analysed by a coding scientist or a coding team of scientists … based on a code plan which was deductively and inductively developed' (Käpplinger, 2015, p. 143). The material are *programmes*, which are defined as 'texts presented in the form of brochures, leaflets, or announcement texts [of educational offerings] printed or retrievable from the internet' (Nolda, 2003, p. 212 [trans.][2]) from adult education institutions. Programmes provide information about the content and conditions (e.g., time, place, topic, and fee) of educational offerings and the educational provider itself. Thus, they constitute 'the materialized contemporary expression of … the social interpretation of education, influenced by the framework conditions of educational policy and by the participants and their demands, and filtered through professional agents' (Gieseke, 2017, p. 31).

In the present study, we examined and categorised adult educational programmes[3] accompanying exhibitions in Germany with the aim of taking inventory and describing the diversity in the types of programme formats. In addition, the analysis identified learning pathways to arts education by applying the typology of *portals to arts education* developed by Gieseke and Opelt (2005), in this case provided by museums.

This study therefore contributes to theory and to the practice of educational offerings for adults in the field of arts and culture (not only in museums). The study also has implications for adult education research (e.g., comparative research) and for (programme planning) practice. Even although programme planning—the underlying process of creating and establishing a programme (Robak & Fleige, 2017)—is internationally seen as a core activity of professional practice in adult education (Käpplinger, Robak, Fleige, von Hippel, & Gieseke, 2017; Lattke & Jütte, 2014), programme analysis as a research method is less known in non-German speaking countries. Thus, this method could provide some new opportunities for (international) research and develop the field of adult education research, as called for by Rubenson and Elfert (2014).

As basis for the analysis, we will first present the theoretical background for learning pathways, the *portals to arts education* within the framework of adult educational programmes accompanying museum exhibitions. Then, we will describe the methodological approach used to identify the portals to arts education in museums via programme analysis and the results of this study. Subsequently, we will describe portals and their theoretical underpinnings in more detail. Finally, we will discuss the results and implications of the study in broader terms.

Portals to art education

One theoretical starting point of the present analysis and categorisation of museum offerings was the original empirical work of Gieseke and Opelt (2005). In the course of a comprehensive programme analysis of advertising texts of cultural adult education offered in 1996 and 2001 by organised public and adjunctive[4] institutions in Berlin and Brandenburg in Germany as well as in neighbouring regions in Poland (17,277 offerings), Gieseke and Opelt inductively reconstructed three nonhierarchical, mutually exclusive *(participation) portals* implemented by institutions of adult (arts) education for the first time. They defined a *portal* as a learning/participation pathway to cultural/arts adult education. A portal is understood as a specific theoretical criterion by which educational programmes in arts and culture can be described through their approaches to and didactically prepared ways of appropriation and reception of art and culture (Gieseke, 2014). The three genuine portals are 1) *systematic-receptive*, 2) *autonomous-creative*, and 3) *empathetic-communicative (intercultural)*. They were originally defined[5] as follows:

- Portal 1 – 'Programmes of the systematic-receptive type deal with the history of culture, art, and literature' (Gieseke & Opelt, 2005, p. 53 [trans.]). These include lectures, readings, talks, seminars, and the like, which are offered in 12 different categories or fields such as literature, visual art, and music/singing.[6] The participant typically has a receptive role in arts education.
- Portal 2 – 'Characteristic for programmes of the autonomous-creative type is the participant's own activity in producing art. The participant creates a product, learns a technique, or expresses him- or herself in some fashion' (ibid., p. 53 [trans.]). Examples are a painting course, an arts and crafts course, or some other type of autonomous-creative activity or practical work in one of 12 different categories (e.g., drawing/painting, sculptural design, creative computer work, photography, or writing). All offerings in which the participants are actively and autonomously practising or producing something tangible or material (e.g., picture or clay sculpture) or visible/audible (e.g., dance movement or song) are therefore categorised under this portal.
- Portal 3 – The empathetic-communicative portal in the intercultural sense focuses on 'intercultural exchange, encounters, and identity-forming activities' (ibid., p. 53 [trans.]). Only programmes with a markedly intercultural approach, such as intercultural communication or training, are assigned to this category. This portal is therefore also referred to as *intercultural-communicative*. The participants may be either receptive or active. 'Exchange', 'discussion', and 'communication' imply both receptive intake (of other opinions and interpretations) as well as 'active' debate (e.g., comparison with one's own interpretations). Examples are 'programmes to promote intercultural dialogue or intercultural competence as well as intercultural sensitivity' (Robak & Petter, 2014, p. 12 [trans.]).

Developed in the context of programme analysis portals are categories through which researchers can distinguish between the different offerings available based on substantiated interpretation, classification, and categorisation of written text (texts advertising educational programmes) and not based on educational practice during an offering.

Each type of initial portal demarcates a specific approach to learning, a kind of entryway that only participants themselves can proceed through as avenues to specific learning paths to participate in culture/art education. However, the assignment of a

category to a written text does not necessarily mean that the participants in the actual offering can obtain cultural/art knowledge in the specified manner only, or that individual participants are limited to this approach. Instead, visitors can gain individual experiences from cultural/art offerings or use individual learning approaches (Falk & Dierking, 2000; Heine, 1998; Kade, 2010).

Ten years later, the third portal (*intercultural/empathetic-communicative*) was examined in detail with a programme analysis by Robak and Petter (2014), using the example of intercultural education in Lower Saxony (1,574 offerings). They demonstrated a thematic differentiation within the intercultural-communicative portal. Building on the three initial portals to cultural education from 2005, they supplemented the intercultural/empathetic-communicative portal with five additional alternative portals (ibid., p. 12f.): empathetic-communicative in a transcultural context (Portal 4), discursive-reflexive (Portal 5), programmes especially for migrants (Portal 6), interreligious dialogue (Portal 7), and qualification of staff in intercultural capacities (Portal 8).

In addition to the aforementioned initial portals, an exploratory review of current (German) research literature as well as various handbooks and dictionaries was done in the present study, revealing theoretical discussions about differentiating educational offerings in cultural institutions, particularly in museums. The *Beltz Lexikon Pädagogik*, for example, defined cultural adult education as an element of general continuing education that includes 'offerings for the theoretical reflection on art and culture as well as the artistic creative process itself' (Tenorth & Tippelt, 2007, p. 433 [trans.]). Stang (2010) also mentioned contemplative and artistic/aesthetic engagement in the *Wörterbuch Erwachsenenbildung* (see also Stang, 2001). In addition, the most recent infrastructure survey of educational programmes in German cultural institutions differentiated between offerings 'that teach [a specific target group] about art and culture through artistic-creative and/or receptive-analytical methods' (Keuchel & Weil, 2010, p. 12 [trans.]). The former includes theatre workshops and creative courses such as arts and crafts or drawing, and the latter refers to readings, lectures, or guided tours. Keuchel and Weil (2010) also stated that before the 1980s, most arts education programmes offered in museums were of the receptive variety. Gradually, more and more artistic-creative formats/offering types were added. Keuchel and Weil (2010, p. 65) also showed that the educational offerings at museums increasingly use not just one of the two teaching methods but instead often combine receptive (analytical) programmes with artistic-creative methods. They concluded that there are arts educational offerings for adults in museums that are both receptive (analytical) and artistic-creative (e.g., a guided tour followed by a creative hands-on activity). Such mixed offerings have also been developed in the course of professional trainings for artists, according to a recent empirical study by Robak and colleagues. Here, systematic-receptive offerings embed the practice of creative aspects (see Robak, Fleige, Sterzik, Seifert, Teichmann, & Krueger, 2015).

To sum up, a differentiation between offerings taking a more systematic-receptive (receptive-analytical, theoretical-reflexive) approach and those that are more practical and autonomous-creative (artistic-creative, artistic-aesthetic) is made in the fields of both adult education and cultural studies. A similar differentiation between the first two initial portals (systematic-receptive vs. autonomous-creative) was also found in the works of Keuchel and Weil (2010), Stang (2001), as well as Tenorth and Tippelt (2007). However, in keeping with the findings of Keuchel and Weil (2010), no such exclusivity is assumed in the present analysis, partly due to a recent adult education survey of nonformal arts education (see Robak et al., 2015; Robak & Fleige, 2017), which also identified the hybrid form *(systematic-)receptive AND artistic (autonomous-)creative.*

Building on these theoretical considerations, the goal of the present analysis was to identify for the first time different *portals* leading to arts education *in the context of museums* based on texts advertising adult education programmes accompanying exhibitions. The specific approach taken in this analysis is outlined in the following section.

Methodology

The present analysis is part of a more extensive study of texts advertising adult educational programmes accompanying museum exhibitions.[7] This analysis examines 709 programme offerings from the first half of 2014 by museum education centres/services in five different cities and (non-)affiliated individual museums in Germany (see Specht & Fleige, 2016; Specht & Semrau, 2015, 2017). Table 1 provides an overview of the total sample and allocates the offerings to nine possible museum types (Institut für Museumsforschung [IfM], 2014).

Table 1. Overview of the total sample (*N* = 709) of analysed offerings categorised according to nine possible museum types

Museum type	*n*	*%*
Art museums	272	38.4
Historical and/or archaeological museums	193	27.2
Museums focusing on folklore or national or regional history	113	15.9
Specialised museums of cultural history	52	7.3
Science and/or technology museums	44	6.2
Natural history museums	17	2.4
Palace and castle museums	7	1.0
General museums with complex holdings	-	-
Museum complexes	-	-
Missing	11	1.5
Total	709	100.0

Note: Analysed programmes are from Hamburg, Berlin, Cologne, Nuremberg, and Munich (involved museum education centres/services: Museumsdienst Köln, Museumsdienst Hamburg, Kunst- und Kulturpädagogisches Zentrum der Museen in Nürnberg, Kulturprojekt Berlin GmbH, and Museumspädagogisches Zentrum München).

With regard to the root category *portals*, this analysis incorporates the three initial portals previously illustrated theoretically, along with the category 'undecided', and introduces into the code system an additional category in accordance with Keuchel and Weil (2010) and Fleige, Gieseke and Robak (2015): the '(systematic-) receptive AND artistic-(autonomous) creative' portal.[8]

Keeping in mind the complexity and variety of the available programmes for adults in museums (Sachatello-Sawyer et al., 2002) as well as the fact that 'experiences and research traditions from general educational institutions [are not necessarily] transferable to museums' (Wadhwa, 1996, p. 214 [trans.], as cited in Lewalter & Noschka-Roos, 2010, p. 530), this analysis aims to apply the typology of portals as reflectively as possible to validate the concepts of portals to arts education in a new context, namely museums.

Thus, the code system accounts for every possible hybrid portal form, and multiple encodings can be made. But it still realises the objective of adhering as closely as possible to the given material when identifying portals to arts education in museums, without allowing the theoretical background to cause an excessive focus from the outset on selected categories. Furthermore, for the purposes of this analysis, not only the title of each offering but also all available descriptive information in both the advertising text and the foreword to the programme brochure were brought to bear on the classification.

The findings of this exploratory coding of portals then served as a starting point for an in-depth analysis of advertising texts. Moreover, it served as a classification (coding) of these texts using the typology of portals, investigating the specific sample for possibilities of differentiating between arts education portals. However, discursive exchanges and close textual analyses, particularly the offerings by museum education services that were categorised as 'undecided' ($n = 217$, 30.6% of 709), brought to light certain weak points of the basic coding system for the museum sample. For example, the exploratory coding showed that the 'empathetic-communicative' category with its more content-driven, intercultural purpose proved to be highly problematic for this sample; therefore, it has to be conceived in a more differentiated way. It also became evident that much more could be said about the learning pathways than the four existing categories (systematic-receptive, autonomous-creative, empathetic-communicative/intercultural, and systematic-receptive AND autonomous-creative portals) allowed for.

For these reasons, and as a result of the first exploratory coding and considering the selectivity desired for the potential portals, the continuation of our specific analysis necessitated a more precise and slightly different interpretation of the concept of 'portal' for the underlying museum sample. This had a particular effect on the third portal. In terms of the empathetic-communicative portal, the programme content or theme is by no means the decisive criterion for its classification. In cases such as these, the new (second) analysis of the museum programmes places less importance on the intercultural nature of the topics or themes treated—the content of the museum offering is thus no longer emphasised—and instead focuses primarily on the ways in which the (intercultural) topic is taught. Consequently, in the following decision for a specific portal, the specific characteristics of the adult educational offering accompanying museum exhibitions (e.g., specified teaching methods, social form, learning objectives [content], form of event, didactical intention, and the forms of knowledge acquisition they open up for participants) received more emphasis. These characteristics were manifested in the texts advertising educational offerings and enabled different (learning) pathways to arts education or, more specifically, participation in arts education. In this way, we tried to make the portals as categories more selective in an empirical-methodical sense for the specific sample.

Additionally, we developed some subcategories (facets) for the first portal, the systematic-receptive portal, to exploit all the information on an offering that was not previously shown in the initial portals but could contribute to a more selective differentiation. These facets identified in the inductive extension or further elaboration (see Mayring, 2010, p. 83ff.) of the main categories of (participation) portals were tested by two independent, trained reviewers using two randomised samples ($n = 34$) drawn with the aid of *Research Randomizer Form v4.0* from the underlying sample. Only offerings

featuring advertising texts (containing information beyond simple facts stating what, where, and when) were included in the samples. The Cohen's kappa coefficient for these two tests (k_A = .859; k_B = .786) as well as the percentage consistency among reviewers (A: 94.1%; B: 85.3%) can be considered good or excellent (see Wirtz & Caspar, 2002).

Final results: portals to arts education provided by museums

As a result of this step in our specific analysis—in addition to a slightly different interpretation of the typology of portals—we now have an inductively adjusted system of four main categories and one residual for the educational offerings of museums. We have also expanded five subcategories (facets) within the systematic-receptive (participation) portals. The following portals and facets can be distinguished:

- *Systematic-receptive (receptive-analytical)*: The systematic receptive portal is characterised by the systematic presentation and mediation of knowledge (see above). Participants receive information without contributing anything, while an expert may act as a mediator between them and the exhibits or content. Examples of this portal are lectures, film screenings, and traditional guided tours within or outside museums (city walks). The educational programme may offer a *purely* systematic-receptive approach, or it may augment the systematic-receptive aspects with the following possible facets (subcategories) of this portal:

  - *Discursive-reflexive:* Programmes of this type provide the participants with the opportunity to actively expand their own perspectives or models of interpretation either in their own thoughts or through communicating with others. This inspires reflection on one's own values and standards, leads to developing or changing one's point of view, or involves an active appraisal of and reflection on artistic/cultural content/objects, while allowing this information to be related to a socio-critical context. An announcement from the sample can be cited as an example: 'Guided tour on the subject … We will critically assess our own views on … based on cultural representations by others.'
  - *Dialogical-interactive:* These programmes offer an opportunity for participants to actively contribute content and ideas. The participants are thus no longer a purely receptive audience but take an active part in learning. Examples are museum talks, moderated events, or guided tours where dialogue is encouraged.
  - *Autonomous-interactive:* Systematic-receptive programmes with this facet offer opportunities for inquisitive discovery without the direct guidance of educational staff. In this approach, participants bring their physical presence as well as their personal traits and skills into play, as opposed to the purely verbal participation in the dialogical-interactive model. Examples of this type of programme include museum rallies, work/activity sheets, as well as activities such as a goal-shooting contest following an otherwise systemic-receptive tour of a soccer ball museum.
  - *Imaginative-conceptual, interpretational:* In this approach, participants use costumes and performances to mentally travel to other worlds, immerse themselves in the topic, or stage something. The visitors participate actively in the events, but not in an outwardly productive sense,

in contrast to the autonomous-creative portal. Examples include a programme offering a guided hike along an archaeological footpath during which the participants may wear clothing and jewellery and carry weaponry from the period in question, and programmes in which visitors are actively involved in a fantastic voyage or role play.

   o *With a sensory-haptic component:* These programmes involve learning opportunities that are not purely cognitive but occur through sensory-haptic perception (touching and feeling). Generally, this approach affords access for specific target groups (e.g., people with cognitive disabilities, those with hearing or visual impairments, or sufferers of dementia). Examples of such programmes include touch tours, taste and smell tests, as well as suitcases provided by the museum containing materials appealing to all the senses.

- *Systematic-receptive AND autonomous-creative*: In these cases, systematic-receptive and autonomous-creative/artistic-productive phases can be clearly distinguished within a programme (see Fleige et al., 2015; Keuchel & Weil, 2010). Both learning pathways shape the overall character of this type of programme. In addition to a purely systematic presentation of knowledge during which the participants receptively take in information, they may also be active in a practical sense, applying or enhancing their own artistic abilities and talents. In this portal, the systematic-receptive aspects may include all the previously mentioned facets, from 'pure' approaches to those 'with a sensory-haptic component'. As an example, an activity in a museum workshop or creative workshop may be offered following a guided tour.

- *Autonomous-creative (artistic-creative) (through outward action):* This portal is characterised by active participation in artistic-productive activities, according to the initial description. Visitors can actively contribute by practising a skill as well as by applying or enhancing their artistic abilities and talents. Examples of this type of programme include drawing or dance classes as well as learning to play an instrument.

- *Empathetic-communicative (in an intercultural sense):* The empathetic-communicative portal is characterised by *intercultural* exchanges, encounters, and identity formation processes based on communicative engagement with different cultures and cultural practices (see above).

- *Undecided:* These are programmes that cannot be clearly assigned to any of the portals (and facets) outlined.

The inductively differentiated facets (subcategories) of the systematic-receptive portal may be understood as possible, but not necessarily compulsory, particular aspects. A pathway to arts education that is opened up by a specific offering may be purely along systematic-receptive lines. However, receptive-analytical offerings may also provide participants with the opportunity to take part in some way. This analysis provides points of reference for this purpose. Furthermore, the portal in which systematic-receptive and autonomous-creative approaches are combined may contain any of the subcategories (facets) delineated in the systematic-receptive type of programme; these differentiations were deliberately omitted in the coding. The empathetic-communicative portal as

described by Gieseke and Opelt (2005) as well as Robak and Petter (2014; see also Robak et al., 2015) could not be conclusively identified in the evaluation process of the current sample. While 'discursive-reflexive' and 'dialogical-interactive' facets might have certain similarities to individual aspects of the 'empathetic-communicative' portal, the thematic exclusivity of content is not a decisive criterion in these facets.

To test and quantify the newly delineated facets (subcategories) for the overall sample, all offerings ($N = 709$) were recoded based on their learning pathways. The results are shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Frequency and percentage of the portals and their newly defined facets in the sample ($N = 709$)

Portal(s) and facets	*n*	%
Systematic-receptive (receptive-analytical)		
~ pure	462	65.2
~ dialogical-interactive	108	15.2
~ with a sensory-haptic component	15	2.1
~ autonomous-interactive	14	2.0
~ discursive-reflexive	7	1.0
~ imaginative-conceptual, interpretational	4	0.6
(Systematic-)receptive* AND artistic-(self-acting-)creative	26	3.7
Autonomous-creative (artistic-creative)	28	3.9
Empathetic-communicative (in an intercultural sense)	-	-
Undecided	45	6.3
Total	709	100.0

Note: All aforementioned facets from 'pure' to 'with a sensory-haptic component' can be included in the systematic-receptive portion of this portal. For reasons of clarity, subcategories were deliberately omitted in coding this hybrid form. A breakdown can be provided (retrospectively) depending on the question at hand.

Examples of the advertising texts are given for each facet below (each translated by the authors):

- 'Within a museum talk, a museum theme or collection area are presented in detail. The event has a dialogical character; it is time to respond to the questions and requests of visitors.' (dialogic-interactive)
- 'Speaking hands— – the sculptures of Käthe Kollwitz. Sculptures are the focus of a tactical guided tour. … Until the smallest angle, the affecting figures can be explored in order to detect the emotional design language of the artist.' (sensory-haptic component)
- 'Stadium tour [in a football stadium with a museum] and goal-shooting contest where visitors could prove their skills.' (autonomous-interactive)

- 'Guided tour on the history of Black Africa. … Knowing the history helps us to better understand the present political, economic, social, and cultural realities of Africa as well as to question the stereotypes and prejudices about Africa.' (discursive-reflexive)
- 'Immerse yourself in colours [guided tour of the water lilies of Monet] … we explain the museum as our fantasy space in which we let water flow, dip dryly into waves, or swim standing thereof.' (imaginative-conceptual)

Table 3 provides an overview of the portals and their newly defined facets with regard to the main event[9] formats found in the sample.

Table 3. Frequency of the portals and their newly defined facets with regard to (some)

formats of event in the sample ($N = 709$) (percentage in brackets)

Portal(s) and facets	Guided tour	Discussion/ study group	Seminar / workshop	Advanced training	Excursion, study trip	Film	Other
Systematic-receptive (receptive-analytical)							
~ pure	436 (87.2)	4 (4.9)	-	1 (2.6)	-	5 (100.0)	16 (53.3)
~ dialogical-interactive	37 (7.4)	52 (64.2)	4 (8.9)	-	8 (88.9)	-	7 (23.3)
~ with a sensory-haptic component	14 (2.8)	-	1 (2.2)	-	-	-	-
~ autonomous-interactive	6 (1.2)	5 (6.2)	1 (2.2)	-	-	-	2 (6.7)
~ discursive-reflexive	1 (0.2)	4 (4.9)	1 (2.2)	-	-	-	1 (3.3)
~ imaginative-conceptual, interpretational	3 (0.6)	-	-	-	1 (11.1)	-	-
(Systematic-)receptive* AND artistic-(self-acting-)creative	3 (0.6)	14 (17.3)	8 (17.8)				1 (3.3)
Autonomous-creative (artistic-creative)	-	-	28 (62.2)	-	-	-	-
Empathetic-communicative (in an intercultural sense)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Undecided	-	2 (2.5)	2 (4.4)	38 (97.4)	-	-	3 (10.0)
Total	500 (100.0)	81 (100.0)	45 (100.0)	39 (100.0)	9 (100.0)	5 (100.0)	30 (100.0)

Note: All aforementioned facets from 'pure' to 'with a sensory-haptic component' can be included in the systematic-receptive portions of this portal. For reasons of clarity, subcategories were deliberately omitted in coding this hybrid form. A breakdown can be provided (retrospectively) depending on the question at hand.

In the course of recoding the programmes, the autonomous-creative portal encompassed 28 (3.9%) of the offerings (see Table 2), mainly composed of seminars/workshops (see Table 3). Twenty-six offerings (3.7%) were assigned to the systematic-receptive AND artistic-creative hybrid category. Offerings like discussion/study groups and seminars/workshops were mainly categorised under this mixed portal (see Table 3). The empathetic-communicative portal was not identified due to the previously described different interpretation and the specific sample. By contrast, a particularly high proportion (86%) of the offerings was associated with the systematic-receptive portal. Educational offerings under this type of approach are usually guided tours (see also Keuchel & Weil, 2010). This is also shown in Table 3. Guided tours are generally the dominant educational

format for adults in museums (IfM, 1998, 2008; Sachatello-Sawyer et al., 2002). This originally purely monologue-based format has changed in recent years to include more dialogue, with the museum's educational staff acting as moderators (Best, 2012; Czech, 2014; Schrübbers, 2013), since museum education work is often organised to facilitate 'dialogue between the visitors and the objects and content at the museum' (German Museums Association & Federal Association for Museum Education, 2008, p. 8). This is also reflected in the data at hand: In general, 15.2% of the offerings could be allocated to the systematic-receptive portal and subcategorised under the dialogical-interactive facet (see Table 2). Of these 108 offerings, 34.2% are related to guided tours (see Table 3). These offerings accompanying exhibitions, although receptively organised to present knowledge to visitors in a systematic fashion, go beyond the intake of information to give visitors an opportunity to communicate their own thoughts and ideas. The specific offerings classified in this category are described in advertising texts as 'conversations' and 'psychological image appraisal'. Furthermore, for some of these guided tours, the programme brochure explicitly states that there will be an opportunity to participate in a dialogue with the docent (e.g., 'Our experts look forward to engaging in a dialogue with you'; 'where they can converse with our docent team in a casual atmosphere'). These offerings still present knowledge systematically, making the portal systematic-receptive; however, it is different from the *purely* systematic-receptive portal of the kind made available, for example, in the typical guided tour monologue.

In the offerings cited, visitors are already encouraged in the advertising text to actively contribute to the discussion, so allocating these offerings to a *purely* receptive portal would not do justice to the scope of what is being offered. Nevertheless, following the receptive-practical/active differentiation made in the initial description of portals, this form of participation is not an artistic-creative activity either, as with a drawing or dance course, making the assignment to an autonomous-creative portal just as inaccurate for the same reasons. These examples of arts education offerings in museums therefore demonstrate that the variety of educational offerings accompanying museum exhibitions cannot be sufficiently captured by the originally suggested typology.

The facet 'with a sensory-haptic component' encompassed 15 (2.1%) of the offerings. Forty-five offerings (6.3%) of the analysed programmes from the sample were placed in the category 'undecided'. This category contains offerings—particularly advanced training courses (see Table 3)—that deal with the logic of the museums themselves, the creation of exhibitions, or possible educational approaches.

A few of the facets were found in the sample only on a very small scale; this might be due to the specific orientation of educational programmes accompanying exhibitions. It seems that the centres are generally not responsible for all the offerings of a museum (cost-effective offerings are often run by the museums themselves) and/or are not responsible for all museums in their area (e.g., Munich), so some educational offerings might be underrepresented. Another possible explanation could be the analysed advertising texts themselves. Several guided tours were announced only through simple facts (e.g., format, title of the tour, possible group size, where, and when) and were missing a 'real text'. For assigning facets, a more detailed advertising text would be necessary.

The different portals inherent in the texts advertising arts education programmes may also contain an 'experience dimension'. This experience dimension, however, is not considered a portal per se and therefore will not be distinguished in this inductive extension of the portals. In general, any offering or visit taking place in the specific situational context of a museum can be said to provide different 'experiences' (Pekarik, Doering, & Karns, 1999).

Discussion

Our study began by analysing the advertising texts for educational programmes accompanying museum exhibitions, using the method of programme analysis. In the course of this process, *portals to cultural adult education in museums* were identified and differentiated for the first time. The research on (participation) portals by Gieseke and Opelt (2005), who examined arts education in general in Berlin/Brandenburg and Poland, formed the theoretical basis for this analysis. The present analysis focused on a more specific sample, namely educational programmes offered for adults by museum education centres/services, as well as by the affiliated museums, to accompany specific exhibitions. Unlike the original work from 2005, the decision to allocate an offering to a particular portal was determined mainly by the format of the event, the teaching methods used, and the means of knowledge acquisition. For the third portal, the decision was not determined primarily by the content of the offering. This was done so that the allocation would be verifiable and highly selective for the specific sample.

Despite the differences within the sample and in the procedure, it was possible to confirm the differentiation between the systematic-receptive (receptive-analytical) and autonomous-creative (artistic-creative) portals in the context of arts education in museums. The initial descriptions of the portals also indicate that the first two portals can be clearly and sharply distinguished from one another with respect to their focus and teaching methods as well as the way in which knowledge is acquired. For these two portals, as well as for a (systematic-) receptive AND autonomous-creative portal, parallels were found in the theoretical models (Stang, 2010; Tenorth & Tippelt, 2007), in a more recent infrastructure survey (Keuchel & Weil, 2010), and in a current census of nonformal arts education programmes (Robak et al., 2015).

The empathetic-communicative portal could not be identified in the underlying specific sample. Thus, in the context of museum educational offerings, these categories do not meet the criterion of mutual exclusivity in a qualitative research sense (belongs/does not belong; see, for example, Frieberthäuser & Prengel, 2003; Mayring, 2010). A selective allocation to one of the three initial portals from 2005 becomes more difficult.[10] This selectivity problem can also be found in the intercultural portals identified by Robak and Petter (2014): Portals 6 and 8 focus on target groups (programmes for migrants and advanced training for multipliers), and Portals 3, 4, and 7 focus on content/content areas (intercultural, transcultural, and interreligious) as the designation criterion. This highlights how crucial it is to have descriptions of (participation) portals that are as concrete as possible if they are to be used as highly selective and disjunctive categories and if they are to differentiate clearly and meaningfully between museum educational offerings.

In addition, the systematic-receptive portal can be differentiated on the basis of additional facets—in terms of particular and possible aspects of a specific portal (subcategories): pure; discursive-reflexive; dialogical-interactive; autonomous-interactive; imaginative-conceptual, interpretational; and with a sensory-haptic component. Contrary to the findings of Gieseke and Opelt (2005), in the systematic-receptive portal, 'active' elements were identified that did not imply a classification as autonomous-creative in every case. These 'active' elements do not always consist of outward autonomous activity in an artistic-creative sense. Rather, imaginative, dialogical, reflexive, or sensory activity that can be part of a receptive framework was demonstrated. Overall, the offerings for arts education in museums therefore provide more than just a choice between either a purely more passive[11], receptive intake of information or the acquisition of knowledge through the visitor's autonomous artistic activity. Within an

educational offering with a receptive character, such as a guided tour, diverse opportunities present themselves for the participants to become active communicatively or physically.

So what could be derived from the present study and the applied research method for the field of adult (art) education research and practice? First, beyond the format of an event, the typology of (participation) portals to arts education—the developed category system—provides a theoretical and empirical framework for future research, programme planning, and training. With regard to further research, the typology could be used as a theoretical approach to analyse the advertising text of educational offerings in museums/arts education and thereby systematically differentiate, characterise, and illustrate the wide range of learning pathways that are conceptualised in educational programmes. In this context, a comparison with other samples of texts advertising adult education programmes in museums or arts education programmes for adults in other institutions/organisations and in different countries could verify the theoretical model of portals and the developed set of categories, especially since the present study has shown that the initial typology of portals could not be applied one-to-one to other educational settings. Thus, further differentiations for different adult educational settings are needed. Moreover, using the typology of portals in a cross-sectional study, the educational offerings of different institutions could be compared, and areas of focus in cultural/arts education offerings could be discovered. By applying a longitudinal study, historical developments of educational offerings could be further explored.

Second, with regard to planning educational offerings (for museums), the developed category system enables programme planers and docents to reflect on and clarify the role of and the interaction between educators/museum staff and participants. This, in turn, allows them to develop more finely differentiated adult programmes in arts/cultural education, as well as to write the corresponding advertising texts.

However, it should be noted that portals are an inductively developed typology that call for a substantiated interpretive decision by the researcher when categorising written text advertising educational offerings. This means that the learners' knowledge acquisition during the course of these offerings is not necessarily only possible in the specified manner. It is also possible that in designing the offering, other teaching methods and/or means of knowledge acquisition were planned that would not be obvious to the researcher based on the advertising text only. An additional field study could clarify this. Future studies could also try to find out if visitors/participants would interpret the advertising text in the same way and decide to participate in an event particularly because it offers them a specific portal ('entryway') and the associated 'role'. Dealing with this question might consequently contribute to the overarching research question of why people decide to participate in an educational offering.

As programme analysis is almost exclusively used in adult education research in Germany, an internationally (comparable) developed category system for programme analysis is still pending. Using the research method of analysing programmes with an international comparative perspective could provide new opportunities for adult education research. This is applicable to, for instance, questions about planning and creating programmes/courses for adult learners, professionalisation of adult education, and participation or the larger context of educational practice. The strength of programme analysis is that by working closely with the programmes, it explores and obtains precise insights into the educational services and profiles of institutions and the goals, content, and structures of adult education (Robak & Fleige, 2017; Schrader & Ioannidou, 2009), as well as into the theory and practice of the programme planning process (Käpplinger & Sork, 2014).

Notes

[1] Some main parts of this article were published in German as an online document in November 2015 (see Specht & Semrau, 2015, 2017) and revised here. Many thanks to Prof. Dr. W. Jütte for the valuable advice, the museum education centres/services for their programmes, and our colleagues Dr. Alexandra Ioannidou and Prof. Tom Sork for their very helpful feedback.

[2] All quotations in this paper were translated from German by the authors and marked by '[trans.]'.

[3] Educational programmes accompanying exhibitions and guided by museum education staff encompass all forms of social guidance in museums involving either museum staff or media, such as guided tours or organised courses. By contrast, elements integrated into the exhibition, the objects on exhibition themselves, and explanatory media such as texts and pictures are not the subject of the present study (Lewalter & Noschka-Roos, 2010).

[4] These refer to institutions whose main task is not education, such as cultural institutions (e.g., theatres, operas, and museums) as well as initiatives, cultural centres, and associations (see Gieseke, 2005, p. 26).

[5] Gieseke and her colleagues further developed and partly revised the concept of portals with some colleagues after the present analysis was done (for more information, see Fleige et al., 2015).

[6] The original understanding of 'portal' also contains in a second step the assignment of the offering to its content or to a cultural/art section such as literature, music, theatre, or handicrafts. This will be waived in the present study to concentrate on the learning pathways opened up for the participants.

[7] A more methodologically detailed research approach to the analysis of these programmes is elucidated more thoroughly by Specht and Fleige (2016).

[8] An initial pilot test and validation of the portal with these five subcategories ($n = 34$) by two independent reviewers resulted in a percentage reviewer consistency of 88.2%, with a Cohen's kappa coefficient of .656 ($p < .000$). All the available descriptive information from the brochures on the various offerings was incorporated into the coding, which was done using SPSS. Nevertheless, it was not always possible in this pilot test to clearly allocate an offering to one of the inductively derived (participation) portals (categories). To keep the system open for the discovery of other categories, as well as to identify new hybrid forms and borderline cases, both multiple coding (e.g., Portals 1 and 3) and an open root category ('Portal open') were allowed.

[9] In Table E1, the frequencies and percentages of the categorised event formats found in the sample are provided.

Table E1. Frequency and percentage of the formats of event of the sample ($N = 709$)

Format of event	*n*	*%*
Guided tour [German-speaking topic-specific guided tour (*n*=236), German-speaking museum tour (*n*=176), guided tour with an additional offer (*n*=54), inclusion-oriented guided tour (*n*=27), foreign-language guided tour (*n*=7)]	500	70.5
Discussion/study group	81	11.4
Seminar/workshop	45	6.3
Advanced training for multiplier	39	5.5
Excursion, study trip	9	1.3
Film (screening)	5	0.7
Concert, music event	4	0.6

Lecture	3	0.4
Others like demonstration, project, reading, theatre performance, etc.	20	2.8
Undecided	3	0.4
Total	709	100.0

[10] In the original work from 2005, only the titles of two offerings are presented as an example of the assignment to one of the initial portals (p. 54). Further information about these offerings would have been helpful for the assignment and for the reconstruction of the decision. Unfortunately, such information was not available to us.

[11] From a constructivist point of view, 'passive' does not mean 'inactive', as receiving and processing information is always an active process based on the learners' prior knowledge, previous experiences, and perspectives (Heine, 1998).

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Aims & Scope

The European Journal for Research on the Education and Learning of Adults (RELA) is a refereed academic journal creating a forum for the publication of critical research on adult education and learning. It has a particular focus on issues at stake for adult education and learning in Europe, as these emerge in connection with wider international and transnational dynamics and trends. Such a forum is important at a time when local and regional explorations of issues are often difficult to foreground across language barriers. As academic and policy debate is increasingly carried out in the English language, this masks the richness of research knowledge, responses and trends from diverse traditions and foci. The journal thus attempts to be linguistically 'open access'. Whilst creating a forum for international and transnational debate, contributions are particularly welcome from authors in Europe and other locations where English is not the first language.

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