

Lights, Camera, Action

About Intergenerational Transmission and Joint Construction of Knowledge in the CINAGE Project

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Abstract

In this paper Dušana Findeisen focuses on active ageing, film, intergenerational learning and relationships. She further discusses intergenerational transmission and construction of knowledge within the project CINAGE, European Cinema for Active Ageing. Supported by European Commission, the project was about active ageing, visual culture and production of featured short films by those who know what ageing is all about: older people and much younger film makers. The author argues that art; creative processes and cooperation with younger generations are essential for fostering and maintaining active ageing, as they are essential for intergenerational relationships, transmission and construction of knowledge.

Key words: active ageing, transmission of knowledge, and ageing, intergenerational relationship.

Introduction

Today I will be talking to you on behalf of two organisations. Slovenian Third Age University which is a network of 52 universities with 21 000 students more than 1000 mentors and 2000 volunteers of which I am one of the two founders, and the Danube networkers for Europe, DANET, a European association, based in Ulm. Both organisations are concerned with education of older people, social participation and intergenerational dialogue. I will be focusing on active ageing, film and intergenerational relationships as well as intergenerational transmission and joint construction of knowledge.

What is active ageing?

There is an on-going discussion about active ageing. What is active ageing? Is it about working longer? Is it about voluntary work, accidental, serious or project volunteering? Is active ageing about learning? Is active ageing having open social networks (older and younger people), about being in relationship with other generations?

Now to go back to the European Commission's introductory conference to the European year of Active Ageing and Intergenerational Solidarity 2012.¹ Each of the

¹ Copenhagen, 19-20- February 2012

distinguished speakers argued that active ageing was about education needed in their own field of activity (energy, environment, social work etc.) Again later, in Copenhagen, Lazslo Andor, the European commissioner, said that ageing actively means that older people are more satisfied at work, have a greater power to take decisions, are better active citizens. Notwithstanding one's age, one has to be able to use one's abilities to the best of one's potentials. *Thus active ageing is about work, social participation of all, and autonomy of all.* Engagement matters.

About film and the CINAGE project

CINAGE, European Cinema for Active Ageing was a Grundtvig project supported by European Commission and one of the four partners was Slovenian Third Age University. CINAGE was meant to enable older people to visually express themselves, use their abilities and their competencies as much as possible. CINAGE enabled them to get the tools to convey their own image of active ageing against the prevailing old age negative or positive stereotypes.

Activities were basically focused on two topics: active ageing and film production (developing an idea into a story, script writing, shooting, acting, editing etc.) The course on the two topics was followed by a filmmaking workshop leading to the final outcome: a total of twelve short-featured films produced in four European countries. The short film stories were based on older people's stories and/or real life situations. Six selected competencies for active ageing were featured (emotional, learning, civic and community engagement, economic-financial, technological and leading healthy life style competencies).

Stages of the project

The project started with the screening of European featured films about old age and older people to identify the old age images they vehicle. It has been found that older people are mostly pictured in an entertaining way. They are rebellious with little power to produce changes. When in institutional care they seemingly comply with the requirements or they file complaints, are rejected, and disappointed. They are told what to eat, what life style to adopt. Or, alternatively they are pictured as dying. But there is some kind of trust and generational solidarity among them. To sum up, in European films, older people are attributed dilemmas and feelings of younger generations not theirs. Films are directed by much younger film directors who do not know how older people feel and think. Therefore the films convey stereotypes and even consolidate them.

Then a research was done into different competencies older people need and the support given to the use of these competencies by national legislation.

The project continued with focus groups on films and active ageing, uniting adult education and active ageing experts and other professionals. One of the members of the Slovenian focus group argued that *active ageing is about being able and being supported and above all being expected to take a transformational, decisive role in society in different communities and in one's individual life.* He kept asking himself *how can one be active in later life (or to relate this sentence to the topic of this*

conference, how one can transmit knowledge) if society and culture are implicitly or overtly against one's activity? Shouldn't we better try to produce a strong and constant impact on society, pushing it to change and dismantle its stereotypes about old age? If we succeeded in this task, intergenerational transmission of knowledge would be possible in both spontaneous and organised ways.

The next step of the CINAGE project was designing a course manual for older learners, a guide for teachers and delivering a pilot course. The pilot was a wonderful occasion for older learners and their much younger course facilitators to go (back) to the roots of film. »There is something you see, there is something you feel, there is something you understand and you want to say. This is what film is all about«, said one of the facilitators, a young master student of film directing. »This pilot brought me back to the film essentials (...) Because of the learners who were sincere and who wanted to say something, to convey a message and to convey it with a lot of energy«.

Today the visual culture is the culture of majority

Ours is a visual society and younger generations were born into it. Today, at a very early age, one starts amusing oneself producing films. One is not formally educated to this end, of course not, but due to the fact that one has been in touch with hundreds or thousands of visual presentations, one can tell the difference between what is beautiful and what is not. What is more, the quantity of visual images younger people have been touch with, may enable them to develop aesthetic criteria. This is not the case of older people who quite often are not that much included in this visual culture and society, or at least are less included than younger people. Older adults have well developed cognitive abilities, therefore they can be taught about the visual images and their power of expression. The CINAGE case made it possible for them.

Intergenerational learning and relationships

The CINAGE course was intergenerational. The participants and facilitators spent 80 hours together in the lecture room and more than 40 hours on location shooting, directing, producing, post-producing films. It was a completely new experience for the young facilitators to be asked to design and deliver a training programme to older participants.

Older participants and young facilitators were involved in a common creative process. It soon became clear that art, creativity and compatible, yet different generational culture, knowledge and skills are fundamental for intergenerational cooperation. Older people can learn together with younger people if they all assume interchangeable roles of teachers and students. Through mutual, reciprocal and co-operative learning they exchange knowledge and create new knowledge together.

A group of young students from the *Academy of Theatre, Film and Television, University of Ljubljana* joined older students at *Slovenian Third Age University*. For them "teaching" and , moreover, teaching older people over sixty is a unique and prime experience, whereas for older students filmmaking is a more or less totally new experience as well. What happens when different groups of "beginners" meet? The older students have brought into this course their experience with teaching creative writing, journalism, adult education, didactics, piloting a plane, being a TV script girl,

being a researcher in social sciences, being a university teacher, being a cinema goer and lover etc. Some of them manage French or Italian and have reported about Deleuze's lecture on creative act and cinema, about different rather specific film directors or script writers and their techniques, etc. Some had not one or two professional educational films.....On the other hand young students from the Academy of Theatre, Film and Television have offered their professional knowledge guiding the group in their reflection on the structure and the message of short films....

Conclusion

The CINAGE project affected all who took part in it. It became clear that in visual society it is not enough to talk about active ageing. It is necessary to convey messages using films and other visual media. The course enabled the participants to live as film viewers or film makers. They learned about film tools and the contents and how they are related.

The process of the pilot course was creative, and creative processes foster active ageing. Relationships particularly intergenerational relationships were created around the *common* project, intergenerational transmission and joint construction of knowledge.

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References

CINAGE backstage film pictures working relationships and learning of older course participants and young facilitators. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H56tOGSiPgA>

LEMON DANCE short film on economic, emotional, health and learning competencies of older people
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M4nwMGoX65I>

Evaluation of the pilot course - facilitators and learners

Looking back, now that we have accomplished the majority of our tasks, I am confident that this project has been/ and will remain in the future/ essentially a very

nice experience for me. It was not about teaching how to produce films, but more about making three films *together* and at the same time about getting familiar with active ageing and filmmaking. As I view it, these films are valuable precisely because the process of producing them has been so special.

The CINAGE project has been a remarkably pleasant experience and above all, my very first experience with facilitating scenario writing. I was happy to be able to work with older people, older participants. Personally, I am very respectful of those who are more experienced than I am. I do think we have done a wonderful job together. It has been very interesting to see the participants getting ever more able and qualified, reaching a high level of autonomy in shooting films. I felt most rewarded listening to them, when they were talking how they shared newly acquired knowledge with their family friends and by their being proud of their accomplishments.

I think, participating in the CINAGE project was a rather specific challenge, for I had not been working as a facilitator or lecturer before. The participants surprised me. I was surprised by their commitment and knowledge. Many did not have any relevant knowledge about film production. Those were my biggest challenge and I wanted them to be a part of the film crew.

We had a very good contact with our facilitators and colleagues. We appreciated small snacks as well. I didn't like some colleagues jumping in and not taking care of the others. These were bad manners.

Above all, we had wonderful facilitators and facilitators who took us safely through all phases of the process. I admired their ability to communicate and knowledge they were passing on us. Therefore, we were enthusiastic about all the jobs and invisible ties among us were created. I really felt privileged to be in a position to experience this course.

Our cooperation was remarkably good. We were listening to each other and what is more hearing each other!

The workshop was excellent, a unique experience I would be happy to repeat. Many thanks to our young facilitators for their commitment and enthusiasm, professional attitude, empathy and help, for socialising and being witty

I was not satisfied with interpersonal relationships between students and also between students and facilitators. The rules should have been clear at the very beginning, we should have known there would be group work and that individual contribution would be taken into account only on condition it were accepted by everybody in the group, students and facilitators.