

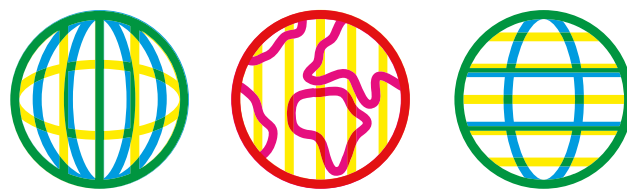
Report on the assessment of the Cross Talks

Michel Debruyne



opportunities

for a fair narrative on migration



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Report on the assessment of the Cross Talks

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1. Introduction

OPPORTUNITIES is a scientific research project funded by Europe under the Horizon 2020 program. It seeks how to develop an inclusive society. This requires a level playing field for persons with migrant backgrounds and others: instead of talking about them, let them have their say and talk to them. We call this a Level Telling Field.

A Level Telling Field presupposes a knowledge of the ecology of narratives, the role of the media, the attitudes of Europeans and a method to achieve a more equal telling field. To this end, OPPORTUNITIES developed an experimental method to establish an honest dialogue between migrants and stakeholders. We call this the Cross Talks (CT). The basis of the method is the story of the other: the migrant or the stakeholder. Each story is read aloud and invites a search for common ground.

The Cross Talk method is a roadmap that leads to a possible fair dialogue. A fair dialogue does not just happen: it presupposes a will to dialogue, to listen and to step into someone else's shoes. It also assumes that all partners in this dialogue are more or less “equal.” This means that power differences must be clear, that they are not used during and after the dialogue, and that all present have the same opportunities to engage in the conversation. Especially for individuals who are less empowered, or are in dependent relationships, this is not an easy task. Therefore, there is a need to empower precisely those individuals or to use spokespeople. All these elements are elaborated in the method.

5 The Cross Talk method was experimented in 9 countries: in six European and three African countries: Africa: Ghana, Mauritania, Senegal. Europe: Austria, Belgium, France, Italy, Portugal, Romania.

The method was positively received by all participants (migrants, stakeholders and public). At the same time, it was possible to evaluate these experiments and to develop an assessment. All organizing partners were invited to fill in a questionnaire with their experiences. The questionnaire is very broad: from the support for the organizers to their cultural translation.

Based on this evaluation, we can give some recommendations for those who want to organize their own Cross Talk. This method was used to experiment with persons of immigrant background. Individuals who rarely have a voice in social debate. More is talked about them than with them, their voices are rarely heard. This method gives them a voice, an equal voice. The method asks the “other” to really listen to their voice, look for what is common and from there look for opportunities. This method was not developed exclusively for people from migrant backgrounds; in any situation where groups cannot make their voices heard, where they are not listened to, this method can be useful. We hope this report allows future users of the Cross Talks method to get inspiration and to build further on the Opportunities experience.

We begin with a brief description of the method. Then we discuss the assessment. This consists of 40 questions asked after two years of working with the CT. This obviously gives a good picture of the implementation and where adjustments are needed. Attached you will find the 40 questions.

You will also find some photos of the CTs that took place and the cultural translation. These give a nice picture of the diversity in unity.



2. The Cross Talk methodology in a nutshell.

The Cross Talk methodology consists of several steps: (1) building trust for confidential storytelling – (2) migrants tell their life stories (either in oral or written form); – (3) the migrants re-tell their stories, thus ‘re-living’ what has been told; (4) public re-enactment – migrants and stakeholders tell each other’s stories in front of a public audience; (5) dialogue, public re-enactment, leads to a fair conversation on migration.

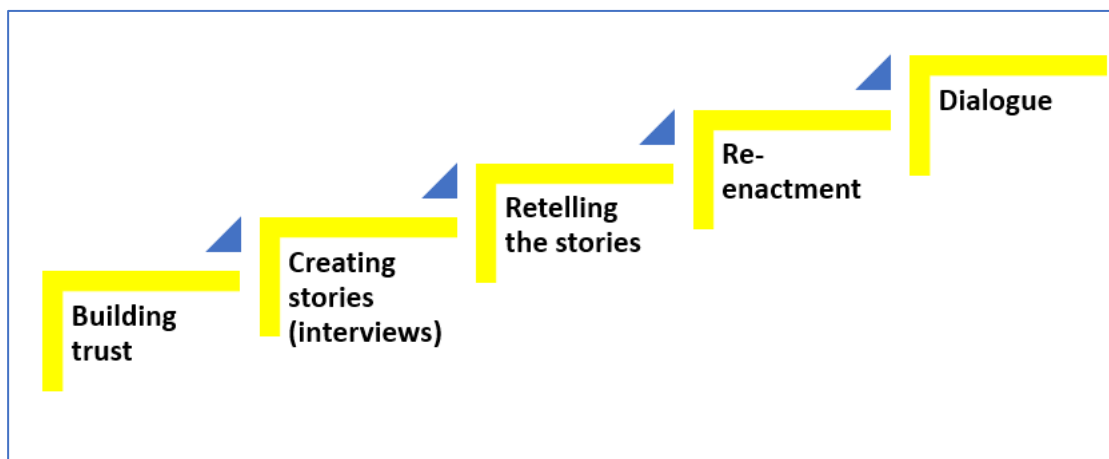


Figure 1 The ladder of the Cross Talk methodology

Although the Cross Talk methodology provides a five-step framework, there is no set methodology for each of these steps. For example, a World Café method may be used in the dialogue step, or visual methods may be used during the confidence step. Note that writing or storytelling can be inspired by the use of artistic methods such as drama or dance. This thus offers the possibility of adapting the framework to the local context and the capacities of the participants.

On the OPPORTUNITIES website you will find a manual, also on the website you will find more about the theoretical background, especially about vicarious storytelling¹.

¹ <https://www.opportunitiesproject.eu/resources/manual>; [Papers, Reports, Policy Briefs & Policy Statements](#)

3. The assessment of the Cross Talk method

OPPORTUNITIES' partners have worked more than 3 years with this method. During this long period, they were guided and supported. Several webinars, introducing the method, breaking down components, getting a state of the art, addressing questions and concerns, were held. In addition, there was an almost permanent help desk for questions. All this ended up in a Q&A for reference.

After two years of work, we organized an assessment of the method. We can now use this questionnaire to evaluate the method and the guidance and especially to show the possibilities of the method.

We carefully follow the order of the questions here. Depending on the answers, we sometimes group the questions.

When we use the word “participants”, we always mean persons of immigrant background participating in CT. We always use the “Cross Talk method” when talking about all five steps, we use “Cross Talk” when talking about the last two steps (re-enactment and dialogue).

a. Guidance and support.

Developing and implementing a pilot requires a lot of guidance and support from the implementers. We provided webinars, a help desk and a Q&A. From the responses, we learn the limited role of webinars: while they are good for general introductions, they are less interesting for answering questions or concerns. The limited time and multitude of answers hinder a more in-depth response.

The manual on the website and the Q&A were appreciated as background tools. “The manual was a very important tool because it described the various steps of the methodology, which allowed us to design the strategy for carrying out the CT” (PT). The Q&A section anticipated many of the questions that arose during the project, serving as a quick reference to troubleshoot issues effectively. But these tools are always lagging behind. Implementation always encounters new obstacles or concerns that require an immediate response.

Therefore, the help desk was highly appreciated. Customized guidance is indeed needed: you have to follow up with the different partners individually and assist them immediately.

But all of our joint meetings (online and physical) created a collaborative environment that fostered creative solutions and mutual understanding for our project.

A shared observation was that there was not only a clear framework, but also plenty of room to adapt the CT to the local context.

An important observation is that the guidance, besides the general introduction, worked too much per step. The goal was lost sight of because of the many questions at the different steps. As a result, it was sometimes unclear why a particular step was taken.

b. Dissemination, communication and exploitation (DCE) activities

DCE activities have been strongly encouraged over the past few years. In addition to newsletter articles and policy letters, partners were free to choose how to communicate the project. All partners use the



communication tools of the participants, of the NGOs they work with and even of the stakeholders. Social media was used frequently. In some countries, the partners worked with a communication team to spread the project as widely as possible.

In most countries, participants were partner in the dissemination strategy; they considered themselves ambassadors of the results.

Several partners worked with what they called ‘informal moments of coming together’ with participants and others. The partners always made sure that the participants had an enjoyable moment. Examples were a shared meal or a feast, as well as a musical performance. These more informal moments are important, they create a stronger bond between the participants and the researchers, a stronger connection to the project itself. This shows that we value them and their expertise. On the other hand, there are the formal moments like conferences or being present at meetings organized by municipalities.

Both forms are important: they create visibility and commitment.



Figure 2 Cross Talks in Belgium

c. Involvement of the participants

Participant involvement varies by step.

During the trust phase, there are conversations and other rather creative methods of building trust. During this phase, participants are given the opportunity to question the project and find their own role. In Belgium, the project was strongly questioned: “what would it bring them and the migrants/refugees”, was one of the comments. In Portugal “the participants hope that the project will be able to bring their concerns and recommendations to decision-making bodies, but they also know the difficulties that exist in this lobbying work”.

During the story creation phase, involvement is very high. After all, they are masters of their own story. From then on, the participants gained more control over the project and made their own demands.

In all countries, the timings and places of the many preparatory meetings were adapted to the wishes of the participants; similarly, the interview settings were structured according to their needs in terms of locations, timing, availability and included the use of language mediators where necessary.

In Austria, for example, during the retelling, the phase in which participants read their stories to select afterwards, participants asked not to have to read their own stories aloud. This would have been too emotionally demanding.

All participants could autonomously decide in which way they wanted to participate in the CT phase.

The cultural translation was also entirely in their own hands. All partners provided the necessary resources. What the cultural translation would look like was their own choice.

Involvement is necessary for such a long-term project. It becomes their project at some point. This creates limitations, in most countries fewer participants were willing to participate actively (with reading

aloud and participating in dialogue) in the dialogue session. Passive participation (being present in the audience) was easier for them.

d. Empowerment of the participants

Empowerment of participants is a goal of the project, but not easy to achieve. Especially in the first phase (interviews) the distance to the project was still big. But in the next steps, participation and confidence grew and enthusiasm for the Cross Talks was high. In Portugal the participants expressed that they feel that all the activities are in first moment for them, to give them voice, share their stories and dialogue with other stakeholders. In France, informal meetings with representatives of local authorities gave participants more confidence in the project. In other countries, such as Austria, there remained a distance, which may have had to do with the language barrier, the location (a hotel for meetings) and the large presence of Austrians.



Figure 3 The Cross Talks in Italy

Cultural translation was in the hands of the participants in all countries.

The implementation of this phase was inscribed from the beginning. This ensured great involvement and gave the participants the feeling of being masters of (part of) the project.

Overall, most participants felt empowered because they had the opportunity to share their personal experiences and views in an equal context.

e. Self-evaluation by the participants

In several countries the evaluation of the project and their involvement and mastery of the project was discussed with the participants. In Belgium, for example, participants appreciated that they were given high levels of involvement within the outlines of the pilot. In Italy, it was rated very positively by those who completed all the activities, including the final cultural translation. In Portugal, one of participants also said that it was the first time that someone had asked her about the difficulties that she faced when arriving to Portugal. In Romania, participants were asked to measure their level of empowerment².

² See also chapter Recommendations, point 7

f. The steps of the CT method

Most partners followed the steps closely, but adapted each step according to the participants' questions and comments. Austria adapted the re-telling phase at the request of the participants. Italy and Romania modified the interview guide a bit: interviews were conducted using a set of questions tailored to the interviewee. Portugal changed the setting of the CT. The project guidelines suggested putting the three types of participants in a triangular setting. In Portugal, a circle was used to get out of figurative polarization. In France, they simultaneously organized three tables with a different topic each time, a topic determined by the participants. In the African countries, partners used a two-step method: first a CT with participants and then a larger CT with stakeholders.

g. and h. The cooperation with the NGO

Not all partners worked intensively with an NGO, as they already work themselves as NGO on migration (FR, MR, GH, RO). Others sought support from one or more NGOs. And the French partner did engage with black communities to best adapt the project to the local context.

NGOs were important to create or further develop a network or to get to know the key players. For several partners, they also helped recruit participants (BE, AT, IT, PT). The Italian partner worked even with three NGOs. Only in one country, the NGO was only involved at the start, but the involvement did not continue (AT).

The Senegalese partner (GERM) also worked with a school, and in particular, a drawing class for young adults (>14 years old), among others. This class was further involved in the CT and in its follow-up. Among other things, their stories fuelled a press conference (September 2024).

i. up to and including k. Evaluation of the cooperation with a NGO

Cooperation with NGOs was evaluated interesting or very important. In those countries where NGOs were heavily involved, shared ownership was sought. The NGO in Belgium, for example, took also responsibility for cultural translation. They wanted to use this cultural product in other settings later on. In Ghana, the NGOs were further involved in the workings of the partner: they are invited to translate and perform the theatre production of the KVS in Ghana.

Even in countries where cooperation was weaker, limited cooperation was still viewed positively. Sometimes ties were forged between the NGO and the partner, even if they were not strongly involved.

All in all, the collaboration was extremely important for all partners. Collaboration strengthened the ability to network among organizations operating in the same area and sharing the same cultural and value horizons. More, like in Portugal, the NGOs said that their work is more “social work” and the OPPORTUNITIES project focuses in a more active and participative methodology, which is new and not very known by them.

The Romanian partner suggested that NGOs need to invest in cultural sensitive competencies so that they can help support the growing diversity in society. In doing so, a broad network, not only with NGOs, has become necessary.

The Belgian and Italian NGO suggested to be involved from the very beginning. That way, the NGO would have streamlined its operation from the beginning. Now this streamlining happened only later and sometimes in fits and starts. The possibility of similar project experiences can further strengthen these organizations and increase the impact of their actions on the territory, and serve as a model for replicability in other areas.

1. Building trust

In general, it is critical to approach the process gradually, with sufficient time to recruit, inform, get to know and adapt participants to their needs in terms of timing, location, languages and in a way that gives them the space and confidence to actively participate. They all invested in permanent communication with the participants (for example, creating a WhatsApp group).

All partners paid attention to create an inviting atmosphere, organizing meetings in a cozy social space, offering refreshments and encouraging networking among participants. “We strived to communicate on a personal level, not as representatives of scientists but of individuals with a genuine interest in the participants and their stories” (IT).

The Austrian partner made sure the participants could speak in their language. This provided a low threshold and quickly created trust. The Belgian partner also used the language the participants used the most. This did result in longer meetings because of the necessary translations.

The Italian partners worked mainly with methods from the performing arts: playing in space, physical exercises, storytelling practices in pairs and in groups. These methods facilitated the basis of a common experiential background and contributed to the rapid linguistic improvement of the participants' average.

The Portuguese partner benefited of another project that was being developed in Lisbon with migrants. They had opportunity to present the project directly to NGOs, associations and their public/groups. In the beginning, they have participated in activities of these NGOs in order to improve the knowledge of each other. So, when they started to organize the group, they already knew the participants.

In France, participants were already with the partner because they used the partner's social and professional services.

11

m. Difficult moments in conversations with participants

Because the stories are based on very personal and intimate experiences, there were often emotional moments during the interviews in each country. Through the trust created and by making participants feel that their needs and their story were central, it was “easier” for participants to cope with difficult moments during their stories.

In these difficult moments, a time-out was used. The participant could stop permanently or could continue talking after some time. Usually there was a desire to continue. Everyone who continued was relieved afterwards. This strengthened trust and mutual empathy. In some cases, recording was stopped or even erased (PT).

From the beginning of the project, we've always paid attention to sensitive information, information that could get participants into trouble. During interviews and story creation, all partners discussed with participants how to handle this. This included not only anonymizing locations and organizations, but also omitting events. This way of working also increased mutual trust.



Figure 4 The cultural translation in Romania

n. How to deal with trust building

All partners have invested in informal joint activities to build personal relationships with the participants and develop a group feeling.

Using their native language or the language they use most often is also helpful when there is an opportunity to exchange ideas and thus lowers the threshold for speaking.

The prerequisite for building trust, whatever method one wants to use, is an attitude of openness and deep listening to each of the participants, however, with a view to building a collective dimension. It's also very important not to judge (one of the things that participants said was that they always felt very judged by other persons (PT)) and respect their opinions and wishes (ex: the participant that wanted to delete the recording).

o. and p. The ethics of the project

In all countries the ethics were discussed with the participants and recurred repeatedly in the discussions. In the countries where the NGO was involved throughout the project the ethical issues were also discussed with the NGO. In one country, participants asked that the stories could be formatted more collective so as not to emphasize individual and specific characteristics (FR).

The issue of anonymization was explicitly discussed with all participants during the interview round and while writing the stories. Despite anonymization, still not all invitees wanted to participate in the CT (AT).



Figure 5 Cross Talk in France

The ethical plan and anonymization method were accepted by both NGOs and participants without changes.

q. and r. Storytelling

For the Italian partners, this phase flowed organically from the interview round; the participants wanted to deepen their stories and disseminate the results, but not all participants were able to apply creative writing techniques. Most participants had only basic knowledge of Italian. Oral storytelling techniques were therefore used; repeating and rephrasing directed by one of the intercultural mediators.

Some partners organized writing sessions (BE, PT, FR) where the interviews were rewritten into stories. The researchers discussed the interview with the interviewee about what they thought was important for the CT. With this they started the work. Sometimes collaboration was necessary, if things went not so smoothly.

A storytelling platform was used in Romania: ABLE (<https://a-betterlife.eu/course/>). This learning platform allows a participant to understand the process of writing a story in an extremely simple way.

In some countries, the researchers wrote the stories based on the interviews. The stories were then sent to the participants for corrections/additions/changes. Because of language barriers, lack of education, and the limited time of some participants, this proved to be the best method for these partners.

The Senegalese partner invited to three different cities people who either want to migrate, have returned or have in their family persons who have migrated. They were interviewed by the researchers and their interviews were turned into stories. In CT, the stories were read aloud by the staff members. The CTs dealt with the real causes of migration.



Figure 6 Cross Talk in Senegal

s. Selecting stories

All partners held one or two meetings with the participants where all the stories were read together. Everyone individually voted yes or no for each story (AT), or points were given to each story (BE), or discussed the stories (PT, GH). In some countries, the choice was made based on willingness to participate in the CT itself (RO).

Based on the interviews, two partners (FR, MR) created a “universal” story that took into account all the topics they had previously discussed. The stories that came closest to this universal story were chosen.

t. Stakeholders

Not in all countries were the foreseen stakeholders willing to cooperate with the project. Nevertheless, all partners brought together a range of stakeholders. The African partners could easily bring their stakeholders together, indeed they were able to mobilize many more institutions and organizations.

u. Involvement of the stakeholders

Unlike those with a history of migration, stakeholders had no input into the process. They mainly wanted to be informed about timing, amount of work, objectives and anonymization.

In Romania, the invitation to participate in the project on migration from the Republic of Moldova was received with incomprehension because at that time there was a huge wave of refugees from Ukraine in Romania. The authorities did not understand the choice of working with Moldovans.

v. and w. The stories of stakeholders

Some partners (AT) conducted interviews with stakeholders, wrote stories based on these, and asked for their feedback again.

Other partners (BE, PT) asked stakeholders to write stories immediately. Limited time of stakeholders was the main reason for this.

Sometimes stakeholders said they are more used to writing reports based on data (PT).

One problem was that stakeholders sometimes wrote their stories more from a professional point of view than a personal one. Although the request was put in this way, it was for the stakeholders to step out of their professionalism. More so, government stakeholders stuck to an official discourse.

African partners skipped this step because the stakeholders had the same experiences as the participants; after all, the stories would be the same.

x. The Cross Talks: the animator

Most partners invited an animator to lead the CT. In some countries (BE, GH, PT, IT) this was someone from outside their own organization, in others (AT, FR, SE, MR) someone from within their own organization. All animators were experienced individuals.

The Senegalese partner animated the CT itself.

In Italy, a playwright experienced in working with migrants was present from the beginning of the project to the final cultural translation. The playwright followed the working groups and animated the CT. This is so as not to violate the trust already built up and also to ensure stylistic and content continuity throughout.

In Belgium, the animator was someone with a migration history. This made the persons with a migration history feel more comfortable.

In Portugal, the animator began the CT with a dynamic presentation

with the participants to create an environment of trust between all participants.



Figure 7 Cross Talk in Portugal

y. Selection of the public

In most countries, audiences were recruited through the network of NGOs and intercultural organizations and institutions that the partners had previously built. In most countries, personal networks were also used to select the audience.

In Italy, emphasis was placed on balancing the audience between teachers, practitioners and other migrant stakeholders.

In Belgium, the audience was limited to persons the participants trusted. In addition, the audience consisted of participants from the earlier phases, but they did not want to actively participate in the CT.

In Senegal, Ghana and Mauritania there was no specific audience, but because the number of stakeholders was large, they became both audience and participant.

z. Adjustment of the Cross Talk phase

Most partners adhered to the CT's developed a roadmap.

The Italian partner organized two CTs. The first at the request of the region to organize the CT during the World Refugee Week. This not only changed the location, there was a much larger audience, the number of stories was limited, and there was less opportunity for dialogue. The second CT, in a more private setting, closely followed project guidelines.

The French partner simultaneously organized three dialogue sessions after the re-enactment: These sessions each revolved around a different topic, chosen by the participants. Stakeholders were then chosen based on these topics.



Figure 8 Cross Talk in Ghana

In some countries it was difficult to find both stakeholders, people with a history of migration and audiences for the CT. In one country (AT) very few of the invited migrants showed up for the session, here the main problem was the fear of losing their residence permit.

One partner used only the stories of the absent participants, and this at their general request. After all, the stories were too emotional and listening to them again would take too much out of the participants in question.

In France, participants were involved in determining the topics of the three round tables during the CT.

African partners took a freer approach to the roadmap. Senegalese partner organized several local CT's. The stories were read aloud by the partner's staff members. The CTs dealt with the real causes of migration. Next to these CT's, the partner organized a national CT with a wide range of stakeholders and used video as a method to start the conversation. The Ghanaese partner did almost the same with several local CT's and in addition organized a conference with more than 100 participants actively participating in a World Café. A theatrical performance was the method to start the conversation. In Mauritania, community leaders and intermediary associations that support and fight for the rights of sub-regional immigrants were asked to play the role of spokespersons during the CT. All the stories were compiled into a documentary. This film will be presented to media, institutions, municipalities, NGOs, the cultural world, etc.

aa. The re-enactment phase

In the countries that followed the script, the re-enactment was rated as moving and appreciated by all participants. The performance (video or theatre) was also appreciated in the African countries. This phase was the most important phase for most European partners: "Listening to the stories made me feel sad" was frequently said (PT, BE, AT, FR). "There were those who said that it was one thing to hear the story, but another one to read it." (PT)

In Belgium, both English and French were used during the re-enactment. Those involved and most attendees understood the two languages; for those who only understood one language, there was translation. In Italy and Austria, the stories were read aloud in the original language and in the language of the host country.

In Portugal, they organized two CTs, one in Portuguese and one in English, each with different stakeholders.

The Portuguese partner used theatrical means to introduce the CT: the stories were presented to the group in a small suitcase. The suitcase was a metaphor for the journey and the memories.

For those with a history of migration, it was sometimes difficult to read or understand a text in a language other than their native language. The emphasis on the use of language in a European context is certainly a barrier for asylum seekers and for others less fluent in the language. Therefore, other means such as theatre or video were used in the African context.

In Italy, some stakeholders suggested shortening the re-enactment phase to allow more time for discussion. In other countries (AT, BE, PT) participants wanted more emphasis just on this phase.

bb. The dialogue session

The CT participants enjoyed the debate after the re-enactment and everyone felt it was important to talk about the stories. In all countries, the debate was quite emotional because the stories had quite an impact on the participants.



Figure 9 Cultural translation, Italy

In Romania the institutional stakeholders fell out of character by challenging the stories. This created strong emotional discussions. A timeout was called to get everyone back on the same page.

One suggestion is that the CT should focus more on the re-enactment and subsequent joint reflection on the stories, rather than moving on to discussion and developing policy recommendations.

cc. The audience

In countries with audiences, the public was also impressed and appreciated the method. In some countries where the public actively participated, the division of roles between participants, stakeholders and public even blurred. The audience in some countries was like a referee guaranteeing equal dialogue.

In several countries, one of the evaluations was that communication channels needed to be found to communicate the results of the CTs to a wider audience so that the insights from the CTs would not be lost.

In one country, it was noted that there was not enough socioeconomic diversity among the participants. There was also a discussion about whether political representatives should participate in the CTs. After all, there is the possibility that the CT could be reduced to a partisan political discussion. The suggestion was to create a special forum for political actors without an audience.



Figure 10 Cultural translation from Senegal

dd. ee. and ff. The dialogue sessions and common ground

In all but one country, it was quite easy to find common ground based on the stories. The limited number of participants, the animator and the willingness of all participants to work together also fostered rapport.

African partners did not need to find common ground; after all, migration experiences are a daily reality. The emphasis here was more on seeking answers.

Participants must be well prepared for dialogue sessions. Taken together, they must engage in dialogue with stakeholders who are used to discussing. If not, they may experience the situation as a reproduction of oppression.

gg. Methods used during the dialogue sessions

Most partners used methods based on dynamic facilitation through flipchart-based moderation. In Ghana, the World Café method was used.

The suggestion is to explore more creative methods less rooted in the world of “scientific” workshop/teaching methods. Certainly less language-savvy individuals can be more involved this way, which could produce a more supported outcome.

hh. and ii. Was the dialogue a fair one?

In all but one country, attendees felt that an fair conversation had taken place. There was a sense that this was a way to overcome contradictions, to come closer together. Some partners emphasized the importance of intensive preparation of the participants (the long duration of preparation was a bonus), the presence of an audience as referees, the animator and the willingness of stakeholders to step outside their official role.

The Romanian partner noted that the CT method is not easy to implement in a society where state institutions do not offer institutional transparency and where the institutional representatives participating in the CT method only offer a politically correct institutional point of view.

jj. kk. and ll. The cultural translation

All partners collaborated with a cultural organization where they received artistic support. This collaboration was positively received by the partners and participants. In all countries, however, the main responsibility remained with the participants themselves, allowing them to realize their stories in their own way. The cultural product is almost different in each country, ranging from video, TikTok-style performances, theatre, documentary, exhibition, installations, action painting, ... All of these were enthusiastically received where they were shown. In the countries where the cultural product has already been shown, the response was more than positive, so there were requests to show it in other municipalities.



Figure 11 Interviews in Mauritania

The French and Mauritanian partner worked together on a joint documentary about the stories of migrants in France and returning migrants in Mauritania. This documentary will be screened in both France and Mauritania.

The Ghanaian partner worked with an artistic centre and the Ghanaian broadcaster to create a documentary around the stories that were artistically translated into dance, music and theatre.

The Senegalese partner worked with the Plastic Arts Education Club of the Collège d'Enseignement Moyen André Henry Louis Guillabert in Saint-Louis. Workshops on artistic expression and migration were organized with these young people. The children transformed their thoughts and feelings about migration into images without relying solely on words. These images were shown during the CTs.

The Romanian partner worked with the National Theatre of Iasi to create a play based on the stories that was well received. The play was recorded so it can be shown at other events.

The Portuguese partner organized an exhibition titled “20 Paths in the Voice of Migrants,” presenting 20 stories of the project participants, highlighting their journeys, challenges and aspirations. They also made a documentary “Mohsin,” which tells the life story of one of the project participants.

The Italian partner made two videos. On the one hand, they had the task of making an official documentary. The video was produced by Zalab, an association of filmmakers and social workers specialized in participatory video making. The video “A Certain Freedom” was presented at the Laguna Sud festival

in Chioggia (Venezia). In addition, the partner organized a cultural event together with the cultural association Malte, specialized in theatre and performing arts and experienced in participatory cultural events, also with migrants. The cultural event “The Cards of Memory. For a new narrative of migration” was recorded and will be used during the events.

The Belgian partner worked with Kuumba vzw who collaborated with a theatre producer and a filmmaker to create a video consisting of several clips based on the stories and featuring the people who collaborated on the CT.

The Austrian partner organized an exhibition Opportunities - Integration Stories in Word and Writing. Numerous women artists who had to leave their homeland and found a new home in Austria tell their personal stories through photographs. In addition, together with ARGE-kultur, they created a performance not about, but told by migrants, written and performed by an Iranian woman and an Afghan man.



Figure 12 Cultural translation in Austria

4. Recommendations

a. The Cross Talk consists of five steps, isn't cultural translation a sixth step?

In itself, cultural translation is not a necessary step.

We introduced it for the sake of dissemination of the project on the one hand, how do we bring the experiments to a wider audience? and on the other hand in the interest of the project itself. After all, the participants participated for about 2 to 3 years, this is extremely long. The question, then, is how do they stay motivated to participate? The cultural translation of the project is therefore a way to keep them involved in the longer term, it also creates a good atmosphere among the participants and is also an important part in empowering them.

b. Preparing for a CT takes time.

The application of CT can never be short. There are several reasons for this. The first two steps take up a lot of space: the interviews and their processing must be able to be carried by the participants; and writing the stories requires a lot from the participants. The next steps can be faster, provided the participants are ready. This is the most important reason: participants, because of language barriers, cultural barriers, education and possible negative experiences and traumas, are the “weakest” in a dialogue. In other words, if we bring them into a dialogue with stakeholders, they must be sufficiently strong in their positions.

Consequently, in some experiments, participants dropped out: the dialogue sessions and re-enactment were too challenging, too heavy for them. Confidence in oneself does not come overnight. In all experiments, therefore, investments were made in empowering migrants. Cultural translation is also an interesting tool for this.

All this shows that a Cross Talk requires time, space and resources.

c. Creating trust is a necessity

Trust is the foundation, this is true not only for the participants but also for the stakeholders. Both must have trust in the method but also in the facilitators and researchers.

In the description of the method we put a lot of emphasis on building trust. After all, participants have to cooperate for a long time, they have to tell and use their life stories, aspirations and expectations in a narrative, and they have to dare to engage in dialogue.

The experiments used several inputs for this purpose: working with NGOs that already work with migrants, with cultural mediators and experienced facilitators, in addition to creating a welcoming atmosphere. The attitude is listening, never judging, just respecting. We take them as they are, people with expectations. Even if participants drop out partially, there must be respect for this decision. This creates a working together on an equal footing.

Stakeholders must also trust the method: after all, they need to get beyond their, mostly, institutional position and cooperate. After all, the dialogue sessions are not about official positions, but about how can we live and work together for a common future. This did not always succeed in the experiments; after all, it is and remains difficult for those in charge of services and governments to go beyond their official position. Therefore, investing in trust is needed.

One of the ways is to ensure anonymity. This applies not only to the interviews and stories, but also to the dialogue session. The dialogue sessions were mostly private, with a limited and selected audience.

Trust is the basis for a successful Cross Talk: taking time and space for this is necessary.

d. Tailoring the Cross Talk

The Cross Talk is a five-step framework. How these steps are taken is not fixed, only the content and the order. This provides many opportunities for the implementer to get creative with it. How trust is created, how interviews are conducted, how stories are written, how dialogue sessions are conducted, ..., all this is in the hands of the implementer.

This freedom does not mean that everything is at risk: the interviews, the stories, the re-enactment of the stories by others, the search for common ground, and the dialogue, these are the foundations.

Another foundation are the basic values from which the Cross Talk starts: they are democratic principles like the will to listen, the willingness to take on multiple starting points and perspectives, daring to step into someone's shoes. These ethical principles cannot be questioned.

e. Is collaboration necessary?

The 9 experiments were based on collaboration with NGOs. In some countries, the implementers are also an NGO already working with persons with a migration background. Additional collaborations were also sought in these countries. Of course, collaborations were sought with cultural organizations or individuals for cultural translation. Few partners have this knowledge and practice in-house.

All collaborations began from the start and even before. NGOs are needed to reach the participants, gain and maintain trust, contacts with institutional parties, and also for the dissemination of the project. NGOs can also help support the participants: social and psychological support, skills support, support in getting out into society, ...

Working together yielded a plus for all the experiments.

f. Why is the re-enactment phase so important??

The re-enactment is the foundation on which the dialogue is built. Without a well-executed re-enactment, an interesting dialogue is difficult.

The re-enactment consists of reading aloud a story of another person; the other person is either a stakeholder or a migrant. By reading someone else's story aloud, this story becomes a part of you: you are forced to step into the shoes of the other.

Almost all attendees at the experiments appreciated this moment: it was emotional, moving, shocking, ... "There were those who said that it was one thing to hear the story, but another one to read it." was one of the comments (PT).

The re-enactment is a phase. It lays the foundation for the search for common ground. And the common ground is then the starting point for dialogue.

g. How to measure the empowerment of the participants?

All experiments evaluated participants' participation. A list of possible indicators can be extracted from them:



- Active Participation: A key measure of empowerment is the degree of involvement of participants in project activities (information, participation, promotion, feedback, etc.). This includes their willingness to share personal experiences, contribute to storytelling and thematic discussions, and take responsibility for their role in co-creating stories.
- Self-confidence and voice: voicing their opinions and participating in group discussions; moving from initial hesitation to active engagement.
- Skills development: Participants' ability to acquire and apply new skills.
- Influence on the direction of the project: their input in shaping project activities reflects their growing influence and ability to guide discussions in ways consistent with their own experiences.
- Integration into the community: a proactive desire to become involved in broader societal structures. This shift from self-oriented to community-oriented actions indicates empowerment at the collective level.
- Advocacy and representation: a willingness to act as advocates for their experiences.

h. Ethics of the project

Any experiment needs a code of ethics, this is all the more important when vulnerable individuals are participating and facing stakeholders. Participants should come out of the project enriched and not damaged.

The code of ethics was therefore discussed with the participants themselves, the NGOs who participated and with the stakeholders.

From these discussions, we learned that not only anonymity is important, but also that participants must be able to draw boundaries, that democratic values are necessary, and that trusted figures who can mediate are needed. All of this protects participants.

This code of ethics was regularly brought up again; it is necessary to remind everyone of it.

i. Use creative methods

From the experiments we learned that we need to explore more creative methods that are less rooted in the world of “scientific” workshop/teaching methods. Certainly less language-skilled individuals can be more involved this way, which can produce a more supported outcome.

j. Communicate about the CT

In several countries, one of the evaluations was to find communication channels to make the results of the CTs known to a wider audience so that the insights from the CTs would not be lost.

Thus, a communication strategy is needed to disseminate the results achieved.

Within OPPORTUNITIES, each partner should disseminate at least a policy letter and a newsletter, in addition there is the cultural product that can be used at other times. The partners were also asked to pay attention to the CT through their social media.

5. The questionnaire

Assessment of the Cross Talk

We have been working with the Cross Talk (CT) method for over two years. We now all have an idea of the possibilities and obstacles of the method and the different steps of the CT. This assessment scheme helps us to enrich the method and to answer the possible obstacles. The goal is to realise an usable method that helps societies to overcome not-listening, not-living-together, an unwelcoming culture, and hate speech, ...

This scheme consists of several sections, starting with the experiences with the Participatory Action Research, the CT methodology, and ends with a section on the cultural translation of the project. There are 10 sections and 40 questions. It takes some time to answer all these questions.

One remark: the noun "participants" stands for the "migrant participants". "Stakeholders" are named as such.

1. A few introducing questions

- a. How do you evaluate the support for your work? How do you evaluate the manual, the FAQ, the different PPTs, the different group sessions, the individual support? Please elaborate on your answers.
- b. Evaluate your dissemination and communication activities about your Cross Talks. What can we learn from your expertise. Please, elaborate on your answer.

2. Participative Action Research (PAR)

The Cross Talk method is based on the PAR, more specifically on the PAHRCA developed by the team of RE-InVEST. The first sessions discuss the core elements of the PAR we used in the CT. The core of the PAR is the empowerment of the participants.

During the first phase of the CT you worked with the migrants: you explained the project, you interviewed the participants, you created stories together from those interviews, you discussed the main themes with the group, you had a re-enactment moment. The re-enactment concluded the first phase.

- c. Did the participants have a say in the project, the steps, their participation? What were their global remarks, suggestions, comments?
- d. How do you evaluate their empowerment? Please explain your answer.
- e. How do the participants evaluate their "empowerment"? Please explain your answer.
- f. Did you change any of the steps of the first phase of the CT method? What did you change and for what reason? Please explain your answer.

3. Working with an NGO

Just like in the PAR, in the CT method we attach great importance to the cooperation with an NGO.

- g. How was the cooperation with the NGO? Was it fruitful for the CT project? Was it helpful for your work and for the participants? Please explain your answer.



- h. Did this cooperation last throughout the project? Were there any frictions and how were they resolved? Please explain your answer.
- i. How do you evaluate the cooperation? Please explain your answer.
- j. Has the NGO become stronger as a result of this cooperation? In what way have they become stronger? Can you give some examples?
- k. How can the cooperation be improved or how can the cooperation make the NGO stronger? Please give some recommendations.

4. Building trust

We work with vulnerable people. Most of the participants live at the bottom of society, some do not even have papers, and others are still in an asylum procedure. Creating trust is necessary to work together for a long time.

- l. How did you create trust? What are your experiences? Have you used a particular method and can you recommend it? Please explain your answer.
- m. Have you had difficult moments in conversations with participants? How do you handle sensitive information or messages? Evaluate your way of working. Please explain your answer.
- n. Learning from your experiences, can you give advice how to deal with trust building? Please explain your answer.
- o. Have you discussed the ethics of the project with the NGO and with the participants? What were their global remarks, suggestions, comments?
- p. Did you adjust your ethical plan? Please explain your answer.

5. Storytelling

The core of the first phase is the creation of stories for the re-enactment phase. Telling stories about their view of living together demands a lot from the storyteller and the interviewer. This section elaborates on creating stories.

- q. Was it easy for the participants to create stories? Did you use specific methods to encourage them? Please elaborate on your answers.
- r. How did the participants evaluate the session(s) about creative writing? Please elaborate on your answer.
- s. How did you select the stories that you used during the Cross Talks? Did you use a specific method? What can we learn from your experience?

6. Stakeholders

Cross Talks are a search for fair dialogue between migrants and stakeholders. Stakeholders are those persons or representatives of organisations that have an impact on the lives of migrants. They are defined beforehand. They follow a shortened trajectory: information about the project, their roles, the ethics of the project; and they create stories how they view a living together.

- t. Did all stakeholders defined in the grant agreement cooperate within the project? What were the reasons for not cooperating? Can you list the main reasons?
- u. Did the stakeholders have a say in the project, the steps, their participation? What were their global remarks, suggestions, comments?
- v. Was it easy for the stakeholders to create stories? Did you use specific methods to encourage them? Please elaborate on your answers.
- w. How did they evaluate the session(s) about creative writing, e.g. the storytelling? Please elaborate on your answer.

7. The Cross Talk

The Cross Talk is at the heart of our project. During the CT we confront stakeholders and participants with their stories. They have to read the other person's story out loud. A selected public follows this re-enactment phase in silence. The purpose of the CT is to create a listening attitude. After the reading,

a dialogue session starts about the impact of the reading: what does the reading tell you? This forms a basis to create a common ground.

- x. Did you invite an animator to conduct the Cross Talk sessions? What can we learn from your experience?
- y. How did you select the public? Can you elaborate on the selection procedure?
- z. Did you adjust the Cross Talk phase? The number of sessions? The participants and stakeholders? The audience? ... Why did you adjust the CT phase? Please explain your answer.
- aa. Evaluate the re-enactment phase (reading the stories out loud)? What can we learn from your experience? Please explain your answer.
- bb. Evaluate the dialogue session about the impact of the reading? What can we learn from your experience? Please explain your answer.
- cc. What were the evaluations from the audience? What were their most important comments?

8. The dialogue sessions

The aim of the CT is to create a listening attitude and a common ground. The common ground is needed to fairly discuss possible answers to the core question of OPPORTUNITIES: how to live together in a way that both find valuable. These answers must be translated into recommendations for the local, regional or national government.

- dd. Did you invite an animator to hold the dialogue sessions? What can we learn from your experience?
- ee. Was it easy to create a common ground? Where there any obstacles for a common ground? How did the dialogue session overcome these obstacles? Please explain your answer.
- ff. Was the audience an active partner during these dialogue sessions? Evaluate their role and elaborate on your answer.
- gg. Did you use any specific methods during this session? What are your experiences? Can you recommend a particular method? Please elaborate on your answers.
- hh. Was the dialogue a fair one: was there a level telling field? Did everyone listen to each other? Did everyone have an equal amount of time to discuss/talk? Was there a common respect? Please elaborate on your answers.
- ii. Did participants, stakeholders and audience evaluate the dialogue sessions? Which method did you use? What are the main common evaluations? Where do they differ in their evaluations? Please explain your answer;

9. The cultural translation

The purposes of the cultural translation are manifold. First, the cultural translation results in a cultural product with which we effectively go public and want to engage in a broader dialogue. Secondly, it is a way of valuing the participants and involving them in the longer process. Third, it gives them the opportunity to show themselves in a different way.

The cultural translation is part of the process. It starts with the storytelling phase;

- jj. Did you invite an animator with cultural experience to conduct the cultural translation? What can we learn from your experience?
- kk. How did the participants evaluate the cultural translation phase? What are the main common evaluations? Where do they differ in their evaluations? Can you explain these differences? Please elaborate on your answers
- ll. Evaluate the cultural translation phase. What were the obstacles, the difficulties? What were the successes? What can we learn from your experience? Please elaborate on your answers.

10. Miscellaneous



