

“ADULT LEARNING & COMMUNITIES IN A WORLD ON THE MOVE: BETWEEN NATIONAL TENSIONS AND TRANSNATIONAL CHALLENGES”

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Transformative Learning in the Light of Older People Cooperation in the International Project “Personal TownTours”

The central theme of this paper is transformative learning of older people in project group. Here we introduce the theories of transformative learning, cooperative learning, experiential learning, situated learning, and lastly, biographical learning. We explore active ageing as a political construct and a broader definition of active ageing researching several levels of older people's activity. Furthermore, we wonder what the concept of ageing in place means to older people and to their inclusion to the society.

The empirical part of the paper explores the process of learning and education of older people in the international project “Personal TownTours” by the means of a case study, qualitative method. We were interested in the learning and education processes in the project group and in the way the members regarded the processes of learning, cooperation, and exchange of views within the group. Besides this, we wanted to find out three things. First, we wanted to know whether the involvement in the project provided the foundation for group members' transformative learning. Second, we wanted to observe the different ways in which the project encouraged the engagement of older people in their local environment and affected the conceptualization of active old age. And third, we were interested in the way the fact that the project and the research itself were conducted in living quarters of older people affected the course and the results of the research. We have found that older people positively valued the cooperation, views and experiences exchange among members of the project group. Learning takes place anywhere, anytime and in different ways, has been stressed. Furthermore, we have found that the project encouraged older learners to be more involved in the local and international environment. Finally, we have found that transformative learning based on new knowledge, critical thinking and assessment of previous findings took place in the project group.

This paper concludes with a reflection on forms of learning as observed in the project group, on the impact this process had on the participants, on active old age, on the participation of older people in their local environment, and on the attachment of older people to a place.