

Activity: The culture laboratory

Time

Recommended minimum of 2 hours, but it can go on for at least a full day

Resources:

- ☐ paper, pens, flip charts
- ☐ watches
- ☐ other equipment left to your own imagination
- ☐ This method should be used after participants have been together at least for a few days and have explored some of the concepts of “culture”

Group Size:

Recommended minimum of 6

Procedure:

1 The facilitator introduces the method by explaining that everyone in the room is a cultural scientist or anthropologist – and their task: to study the cultural behaviour of everybody.

2 Discuss which elements the participants want to consider. The following is a list of suggested topics:

- space – what ways have we found to share this building? Do we have any personal space?
 - time – how do we divide work time and free time? (is a coffee break a real break or a “coffee work”?) what does punctuality mean to each person?
 - relationships – how do we approach each other? What types of friendships have formed and why?
 - shared meanings and assumptions – what types of jokes do we all find funny? What brings us together here?
 - approaches to problem-solving – how do we find solutions to the challenges we face in living together?
 - community and individualism – “all for one and one for all”, or “me, me, me”?
 - communication and information – what are the different forms of how we communicate with each other? How is information transferred? Who searches for it? Who waits for it to come to them?
 - men and women – what are the differences and similarities? What is allowed for women and what for men?
- 3 Divide the participants into groups of 4 – 6 people, each group to have different topics to research.

4 The groups decide how they want to work, for example, using observation or questionnaires AND how they wish to present the results of their work. A time limit should be set for the presentations.

5 Depending on the time available, allow 50% for research, 25% for presentation of the results and 25% for evaluation.

Discussion:

Discussions can look into the following questions (and others)

- How was it to be a “cultural scientist”?
- What challenges did you encounter in your research group?
- What did we learn?
- How did we split personality from culture?
- How valid is it to talk of a culture if we only know each other for a few days? [if you use this method with a group which has already met each other for a long time then clearly this question has to be relativised]
- If we were to extend the period of research, what would we want to look at now?

Source:

<https://pjp-eu.coe.int/documents/42128013/47261236/tkit4.pdf/1e4f2f12-6448-4950-b0fd-5f4c94da38e2>