Puente

The Puente project is looking for better ways to promote lifelong learning, ways that foster active collaborating citizens across boundaries of age and social class. This is intergenerational learning. We seek to involve people in new, engaging activities in public places such as museums, galleries, community centres and the natural environment. We are investigating the contribution of information and communication technology (ICT).

Puente is a European Union Minerva Project whose purpose is to explore:

• new ways of designing learning activities in public spaces, using ICT, which foster meaningful social interactions and rewarding learning experiences both for adults and young people;
• incorporating similar informal learning contexts into mainstream education.

We are doing this as fieldwork activities in six public spaces in five European countries. Puente aims to disseminate good practice in intergenerational learning. We will publish our case studies, guidelines for designing intergenerational learning activities, and a booklet that explains the conceptual basis.

Outline

Puente stands for bridge and, in this case, the bridge connects the young and the old to a place or a community: Puente identifies conditions that may draw folks who wouldn’t otherwise meet to do things they couldn’t otherwise dream of (learn from each other, respect one another, broaden their views). Combining different approaches, such as case studies and participatory design techniques, we imagine events and activities, supported by ICT, that enable participants to unveil aspects of their “personae” otherwise untapped, and we create settings and places reflective of the changing identities and dreams of its members. Puente explores and analyses the dynamics between intergenerational learners, the space they inhabit and the technologies they access.

We also want to see if taking this design approach in intergenerational learning can be applied in schools.

Case Studies

Each site is adopting methodologies that draw on ethnographic approaches within a socio-cultural framework for analyzing the cases. The analysis will be used to elaborate a rich model of technology, place and intergenerational learning. It will form the basis of the design guidelines.
The University of Liège case study includes participants of different cultures and ages and explores visual art as mediator of territory discovery and participants’ interactions. We grounded our observations in activities involving artistic expression; pinholes and narration. Through more than 10 workshops, we worked with people aged from 7 to 77 to study the role of low technology artifacts in the development of psychosocial competences, their affordances in developing an understanding of the territory and their contribution to the building of a community.

The University of Bucharest case study is based on work of the University’s open and distance learning department with the community of Calarasi, in classrooms and the courtyard of a school. Children, parents and grandparents are put together in the learning process. The main goal was to put together children and parents with grandparents in mixed teams and learn together; English, Acting, Sciences and Arts. There was a special class of chemistry and physics computer simulation experiments to encourage communication and mutual learning between adults and youngsters.

The University of Siena case study focuses on learning astronomical concepts in intergenerational groups. We used the well-defined neighbourhood groups that the city of Siena offers for our activities. Two astronomical design workshops involved people aged from 4 to 65. We hope these workshops will inform the design of a new museum for Siena.

The University of Barcelona case study focuses on twentieth century historical events in Spain through the participation of elder people, who lived the events, and young people. They are called "The Council of the Wise", and are coordinated by the Museum of History of Catalonia. A team of 60 to 85 year-old people visit history classrooms in schools and answer the questions posed by students. They also guide visitors to the Museum's exhibitions. ICT plays the role of facilitating interpersonal communication among the students, the elder and the museum’s participants, as well as facilitating access to the Museum's resources.

Futurelab has involved a community city farm that is used by people of different ages. The farm is approaching its thirtieth birthday and wanted to capture the diversity of activity that takes place there. Futurelab worked with a workshop of people from the local community aged from 7 to 83 to develop a mobile multimedia experience that reflects each generation’s understanding, memories and perceptions of the place.

Centre for European Research (Wales) is working with the statutory bodies responsible for the natural environment and local communities. Here the aim is to develop tools and activities for communities - young and old - to develop their own agenda for their local environment and to develop a shared appreciation of their local environment that is accessible to all. This involves both visualisation and mobile technologies.

Project Partners
CampoRosso sprl, BE
Canolfan Ymchwil Ewrop (Cymru), UK
Futurelab, UK
Universitat de Barcelona, ES
Universitatea Din Bucuresti, RO
Université de Liège, BE
Università degli studi di Siena, IT

Contact
Giulio Toccafondi
Università degli studi di Siena
toccafondi@unisi.it
www.saul.unisi.it/puente