

# From grass-root change agents and academics to design thinkers preventing radicalization: a learner's journey

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## Abstract

In recent years more and more youngsters and other vulnerable citizens tend to radicalise either through political (right wing, left wing), religious, or single-issue movements such as animal rights or ecological concerns. The CommUnity consortium set out to prevent this decision to radicalise through arts-based community-building via design thinking approaches.

In this paper, how UCLL and IDP developed the design thinking course through design thinking, the Covid-19 adaptations, the bridge between different fields of knowledge and practice, and the innovative approaches in the prevention narrative are highlighted.

Finally, the monitoring reports are analysed to define the community-builders design thinking learning trajectory following the phases of newcomer, adapter, leader, and grandmaster.

**Keywords:** non-formal learning, design thinking, prevention of radicalisation, gender, artsbased community.

## Od základních činitelů změny a akademiků po designéry myšlení: cesta učedníka v prevenci radikalizace

### Abstrakt

V posledních letech se stále více mladých lidí a dalších zranitelných občanů radikalizuje buď prostřednictvím politických (pravicových, levicových), náboženských, nebo jednoúčelových hnutí, jako jsou například hnutí za práva zvířat nebo hnutí ekologická. Cílem konsorcia CommUnity je pokusit se zabránit jejich rozhodnutí k této formě radikalizace pomocí přístupů určených k budování na umění založené komunity, a to prostřednictvím designového myšlení.

V tomto článku se věnujeme procesu koncipování kurzu designového myšlení s využitím právě tohoto přístupu (designového myšlení) na UCLL a IDP. Je zde patrné, jak byl kurz přizpůsobován podmínkám v období pandemie onemocnění covid-19, stejně tak jako propojení oblastí znalostí a praxe a také narativ prevence.

V závěru jsou analyzovány monitorovací zprávy a jsou popsány jednotlivé fáze učení se designovému myšlení, kterými prochází tvůrce komunity, tedy: nováček, adaptátor, vůdce a velmistr.

**Klíčová slova:** neformální vzdělávání, designové myšlení, prevence radikalizace, gender, komunita založená na umění.

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## The need to prevent radicalisation

The attacks in Paris, Brussels, Berlin, Madrid, Manchester, Barcelona, London, Nice, Istanbul, Copenhagen and in many other places in and outside Europe all shocked us into questioning why young people opt for radical and violent activism.

The Centre for Prevention of Radicalisation<sup>1</sup> leading to violence discerns four types of radicalisation, right-wing radicalisation, politico-religious radicalisation, left-wing radicalisation, and single-issue radicalisation. The focus in CommUnity (Horizon 2020 ISFP, 2019–2021) is on the prevention of radicalisation in migrants and refugees with a Muslim background.

CommUnity aims to intervene before people become influenced by radical narratives and groomers through arts-based community engagement. The CommUnity consortium consists of eleven partners from seven European countries: IKC, Arco Forum,

<sup>1</sup> Center for the Prevention of Radicalization Leading to Violence. Retrieved from <https://info-radical.org/en/types-of-radicalization/>

Foyer, Fedactio, Dialogue Platform (IDP), Plateforme de Paris, Università Firenze, Forum Dialog, Udruga Prizma, Mitra France and UCLL.

Furthermore, the CommUnity consortium connects to external stakeholders through two conferences, five campaigns and the CommUnity Summer Days Festival. The conferences were held in Florence (“Women’s role in enhancing community cohesion and preventing radicalization”, 2020) and Leuven (“Building bridges to prevent radicalisation”, 2021).

Cine CommUnity, Women’s CommUnity, Men’s CommUnity, Youth Creative CommUnity and Harmony CommUnity are the five campaigns that CommUnity designed to reach out to and involve the local communities through music ensembles, painting, digital animation, graffiti or photography, cinema sessions and book readings. The communities showcased their creations in the CommUnity Summer Days Festival<sup>2</sup>.

## 1 Arts-based community engagement through Design Thinking

In “Wicked Problems in Design Thinking”, Buchanan argues that design thinking always starts from wicked problems, reintegrates the knowledge dispersed in specialised studies and connects practice to theory (1992). Design thinking is a human-centered approach starting from why people act in the way they do and how this is linked to their needs and worldview.

That is why CommUnity opted to introduce design thinking to bring together the expertise and insights both from grass-root change agents, community builders, artists as well as academics in models of prevention.

During the kick-off meeting the five phases of design thinking as devised by Tim Brown, CEO of IDEO, were introduced: empathise, define, ideate, prototype, test. Next all consortium partners and their key members were asked to participate in the upcoming training sessions. These key members became the trainers of the local teams applying design thinking to the organisation of arts-based community building activities for fathers, mothers, youngsters as allies preventing radicalisation.

A core team of UCLL and IDP<sup>3</sup> created a prototype training session of three days linking design expertise with insights about the community work of the partners. The design expertise from previous projects together with the dschool bootleg deck (2018)<sup>4</sup> and Michael Shanks’ “Introduction to design thinking process guide”<sup>5</sup> were inspirations

<sup>2</sup> The CommUnity project website: <https://www.thecommunityproject.eu>

<sup>3</sup> Ludmila Malai and Eva Cijis

<sup>4</sup> <https://dschool.stanford.edu/resources/design-thinking-bootleg>

<sup>5</sup> <https://web.stanford.edu/~mshanks/MichaelShanks/files/509554.pdf>

for the first training session. While creating the activities special attention was paid to the transition between the different phases and unpacking workshops were added. To introduce arts-based activities building community engagement, theoretical research defining the core concepts was included: radicalisation and its push and pull factors; arts-based community building, ethno-psychiatry, and meaningful conversations.

Based on the discussions during the training sessions vignettes, cultural awareness, cultural intelligence, emotional intelligence, and identity building were added. In the next phase female and male perspectives were discussed.

A common format for the activities was created linking the what – role of facilitator, instructions, description, duration, space, and materials – to the why: link to prevention, design thinking, arts-based community-building. Thus, every practitioner can select his/her activities to create a tailor-made design thinking trajectory.

Furthermore, the activities were grouped in the phases of design thinking:

Phase	Activity
Empathise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Cross the line</li><li>• Common glossary</li><li>• World Café</li><li>• My famous mis-take</li><li>• Mirroring effect</li><li>• Vignette &amp; Roleplay</li></ul>
Define	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The planet of belonging</li><li>• A good point of view</li></ul>
Ideate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The guilty community builder</li><li>• The six thinking hats</li><li>• Land of the future, the land of now and the no-go zone</li><li>• Between ideate and prototype</li></ul>
Prototype	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Storyboarding as a conceptualising tool</li><li>• Personas</li></ul>
Test	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Testing the effects of the arts-based community building</li><li>• Campaignia</li></ul>

These theoretical concepts and activities were gathered in the CommUnity Methodological Guide (Huion et al., 2021) which served as a 'menu' from which the training days were created. Each training session was presented to the Board of Coordinators and started with a feedback session. During each session the colleagues from UCLL and IDP engaged in creative listening on the lines of shallow to deep insight and small to big step.

For the last training sessions, the consortium and then the local communities could devise a design thinking programme of their own.

### 3 Description of the training sessions

Four trainings sessions were developed: “Tentative model” (T1), “Training days for the Consortium, Part 1” (T2), “Training days for Consortium, Part 2” (T3), “Training days for youth workers, practitioners and teachers” (T4).

#### 3.1 T1: The mother programme

The CommUnity team wanted to try out all activities interwoven with theoretical models, reflections of consortium members and feedback rounds, all in three days.

Phase	Activity
Empathise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cross the line</li> <li>• <i>Design thinking &amp; wicked problems</i></li> <li>• Common glossary</li> <li>• World Café</li> <li>• <i>Ethno-psychiatry</i></li> <li>• <i>Cultural awareness</i></li> <li>• My famous mis-take</li> <li>• Mirroring effect</li> <li>• Vignette &amp; roleplay</li> </ul>
Define	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meaningful conversations</li> <li>• The planet of belonging</li> <li>• A good point of view</li> </ul>
Ideate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The guilty community builder</li> <li>• The six thinking hats</li> <li>• Land of the future, the land of now and the no-go zone</li> <li>• <i>Partners IKC &amp; Foyer share</i></li> <li>• Between ideate and prototype</li> </ul>
Prototype	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Storyboarding as a conceptualising tool</li> <li>• Personas</li> </ul>
Test	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Testing the effects of the arts-based community building</li> <li>• Campaignia</li> <li>• <i>Feedback</i></li> <li>• <i>Talk with EU representative</i></li> </ul>

T1 is the model that serves as the basis for the following training sessions which are adapted to the different target groups and needs with the help of feedback from the consortium partners.

## 3.2 T2: Covid-19: Empathise

Due to Covid-19 the programme had to be changed drastically. Rather than three full-day training sessions covering all five phases, the training was reduced to five sessions of ninety minutes each, spread over three days. At least two participants per consortium member convened in these zoom sessions discussing design thinking and wicked problems, cultural awareness and the insights of Foyer and IKC about why young people choose to radicalise. “Common glossary” and “vignette writing” were tried out. So, the “Training days for the consortium part 1” predominantly focused on empathising with vulnerable young people.

## 3.3 T3: Covid-19: Storytelling as red thread

Based on the need of the participants to grasp design thinking as a coherent concept on the one hand and on their expertise in storytelling – discovered in the vignette workshop – on the other, a knowledge clip on storytelling connecting the phases of design thinking to the activities was created. On top of that two other knowledge clips – one on cultural intelligence and another on meaningful conversations – were created as the CommUnity consortium members expressed their need for concise communication about the core of these theoretical frameworks.

The third training session was organised in two days comprising six workshops:

Phase	Activity
Empathise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Knowledge clips and feedback on training curriculum</li><li>• <i>Cultural intelligence &amp; emotional literacy</i></li></ul>
Define	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• A good point of view</li></ul>
Ideate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>Storytelling to prevent radicalisation (Tamara Park)</i></li><li>• The guilty community builder</li></ul>
Prototype	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Storyboarding as a conceptualising tool</li></ul>
Test	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Campaignia</li></ul>

## 3.4 T4: On-site, tailor-made programmes

The consortium members were asked to create a programme that would suit the needs of their community. They were offered options based on preliminary conversations about their preferences from the Methodological Guide and partners’ requests in their monitoring reports about their arts-based community-building activities.

The training teams from UCLL-IDP then travelled to Zagreb, Nice, Paris, Rotterdam and Brussels for a one-day training programme (Zagreb booked two days).

The training options for youth workers and teachers (T4) look as follows:

*2-hour programmes (Belgium, Brussels; the Netherlands, Rotterdam)*

<p><b>Option 1</b> (Mapping daily life dynamics of European youth and finding opportunities and places to interact and cooperate)</p> <p>0–15: Icebreaker          15–30: Short introduction to meaningful conversations + knowledge clip          30–90: Youth entrepreneurship ecosystem to prevent radicalisation          90–120: POV (which is actually the takeaway of the whole session)</p>	<p><b>Option 2</b> (Enlarging the understanding of the complexity of the radicalization process in youth and increasing empathy with youngsters)</p> <p>0–15: Icebreaker          15–30: Short introduction to Identity + knowledge clip          30–75: World Cafe (asks us to step into the shoes of the radicalized people)          75–120: Push and Pull/Cross the line (empathize)</p>
	<p><b>Option 3</b> (Increasing the understanding of emotional intelligence, boosting openness and increasing empathy)</p> <p>0–15: Icebreaker          15–30: Short introduction to emotional</p>

### 3-hour programmes (France, Nice; Paris)

**Option 1 (Mapping daily life dynamics of European youth and finding opportunities and places to interact and cooperate, and enlarging the understanding of the complexity of the radicalisation process in youth and increasing empathy with youngsters)**

**Session 1**

- 0–15: Icebreaker
- 15–25: Short introduction to meaningful conversations + knowledge clip
- 25–75: Youth entrepreneurship ecosystem to prevent radicalisation
- 75–90: POV (which is actually the takeaway of the session)

**Session 2**

- 0–45: World Cafe (asks us to step into the shoes of the radicalized people)
- 45–90: Push and Pull/Cross the line (empathise)

**Option 2 (Mappings the strengths and opportunities for improvement of the local social change ecosystem and boosting openness and emotional intelligence through common humanity and empathy)**

**Session 1**

- 0–15: Icebreaker
- 15–25: Short introduction to emotional intelligence
- 25–75: Social change ecosystem
- 75–90: POV (which is the takeaway of the session)

**Session 2**

- 0–45: World Caffe (emotional intelligence)
- 45–90: The mask you live in

**Option 3 (Emphasizing the common humanity between youth workers and youngsters and enlarging the understanding of the complexity of the radicalisation process in youth and increasing empathy with youngsters)**

**Session 1**

- 0–15: Icebreaker
- 15–30: Short introduction to Identity + knowledge clip + cultural intelligence CQ knowledge clip
- 30–90: New planet

**Session 2**

- 0–45: World Cafe (asks us to step into the shoes of the radicalized people)
- 45–90: Push and Pull/Cross the line (empathise)



### 4-hour programmes (2<sup>nd</sup> day, Croatia, Zadar)

<p><b>Option 1</b> (Mapping daily life dynamics of European youth and finding opportunities and places to interact and cooperate, and enlarging the understanding of the complexity of the radicalisation process in youth and increasing empathy with youngsters)</p>	<p><b>Option 2</b> (Mappings the strengths and opportunities for improvement of the local social change ecosystem and boosting openness and emotional intelligence through common humanity and empathy)</p>
<p><b>Session 1</b> 0–15: Icebreaker 15–25: Short introduction to meaningful conversations + knowledge clip 25–75: Youth entrepreneurship ecosystem to prevent radicalisation 75–90: POV (which is actually the takeaway of the session)</p>	<p><b>Session 1</b> 0–15: Icebreaker 15–30: Short introduction to Identity + knowledge clip 30–90: Social change ecosystem 90–120: POV</p>
<p><b>Session 2</b> 0–45: World Cafe (emotional intelligence) 45–90: The mask you live in</p>	<p><b>Session 2</b> 0–60: World Cafe (emotional intelligence) 60–120: The mask you live in</p>

Paris, Nice chose option 1; Rotterdam option 2; Brussels combined option 2 with option 1 of two hours options, Zagreb chose option 2.

## 4 Critical reflection

### 4.1 Covid-19 as a creativity enhancer

Both virtual training sessions were an enormous success and generated intense debates in the chat as well as in the break-out rooms. We link this to what Murray discussed in *Hamlet on the holodeck* (1997). Participants are willing to engage in a virtual environment so long as their escape route remains visible. It is our hypothesis that working in the safe home environment, their escape room, allowed participants to engage more easily in the virtual debate.

Furthermore, the women's community monitoring report casts design thinking as *"a way to strategise an alternative way of organising the foreseen activities"*.

The Harmony community's report also agrees *"that the iterative nature of the Design Thinking method proved to be ideal for dealing with the complexities of organising activities during a global pandemic."*

## 4.2 Design thinking links theory to practice

In all sessions participants asked for more in-depth knowledge to be able to empathise, define, ideate. For instance, the Common Glossary spawned a debate about integration versus inclusion and why migrants and refugees prefer inclusion. This created a need to know more about the difference between the two which led to the chapter on meaningful interactions in the Methodological Guide.

Meaningful interactions were introduced in T2, highlighted in a knowledge clip, and discussed through Padlet and a Zoom Poll. There are four categories of meaningful interactions: grounding, banal, opportunity and growth interactions.

Grounding interactions happen among people who share a common history consolidating the identity and shared values of the same group, which are helpful in sustaining individual selfconfidence.

Banal interactions take place among people living in the same community and they are rather superficial such as saying hello in the street to each other and exchanging chit-chat between people who share a community. They help to consolidate one's external environment and they are crucial in developing a sense of belonging and in creating good community relations.

Opportunity interactions emerge between people who share potential benefits, helping to broaden the external environment. Networking events, self-help groups, campaigns and committees are examples of opportunity interactions.

Growth interactions happen among people who share curiosity. They help to broaden people's identities and values by changing the way people see themselves and other people from different backgrounds<sup>6</sup>. Although all kinds of meaningful interactions are necessary, the group agreed we need these growth interactions to create a sense of belonging in a multicultural society.

## 4.3 Design thinking as reintegrating dispersed knowledge

Throughout the training, and specifically in the 'Writing Vignette' workshop, it has become clear that participants are great storytellers, and that as community-builders, experts, practitioners, and youth trainers, they can rely on storytelling to invite youth participants to share their stories, share pieces of their identities through storytelling, and become more resilient, feel a greater sense of belonging and mutual understanding through storytelling.

Here are a few examples shared through the zoom chat box:

*Adem was a self-giving literature teacher who thinks that education is the most powerful tool to solve the problems of his society. In a winter day, when he was giving a lecture*

<sup>6</sup> CRE (2007), Promoting interaction between people from different ethnic backgrounds. Retrieved from <http://83.137.212.42/sitearchive/cre/research/promotinginteraction.html>, on 02.01.2020.

*to his students most of them about 16 years old, the director entered the class and told him he was dismissed from his profession by a decree from the government. He felt like his wings were ruptured, his raison d'être was taken away from him. At that point, he realized that he could not live in his own country, he must flee away to another country to develop new wings.*

*Most likely, Scylla was an unwanted and accidental child in difficult times for the former Yugoslavia. A busy mother's career had neither the desire nor the strength to deal with this crumb. Due to the frequent absence of her mother in childhood, and to a lesser extent her father (she often calls her parents by name), she seeks substitution in other people, from whom she expects care, love, tenderness and understanding, and especially the opportunity to avoid being alone.*

These Vignettes and the session on Cultural Awareness sparked a lot of attention, interest, and debate in the Zoom chat box, and left the consortium asking for more information and knowledge on Cultural Awareness and Cultural Intelligence. Responding to the request, in the second part of the training sessions for the consortium, a workshop was held on Cultural Intelligence and Emotional Literacy, explaining both concepts, the importance of both, but also the importance of acknowledging the differences between the two.

This quest for knowledge continued into a chapter on identity and identity-building: to allow youngsters the freedom to build their own identity is understood as essential tool for the prevention of radicalisation. Young individuals, whose identity and values are not yet outlined, and to which they are not yet committed, are more likely to fall prey to radical recruiters who try to persuade them to adopt a radical identity. Especially for young people, whose identity has far from crystalized and whose identity can still be partly "void", this lack of identity building can leave room for radical voices and convictions. It is therefore important to provide youngsters with the opportunity to "fill" this "void" with positive identity creation through the process of storytelling and the self-expression that comes with participating in arts-based activities.

#### **4.4 Design thinking generates innovative approaches**

Gender plays an important role in the prevention of radicalization, hence the separate men's and women's CommUnities. In this chapter we discuss the discovery of new female roles and how design thinking guided this mindshift.

The project's arts-based community building activities for women and girls included inspirational meetings with female writers (Fedactio, Belgium), music-inspired conversations (Forum Dialogue, Germany), conversations and debates through intercultural activities (Islam Kennis Centrum, Netherlands) and employment coaching activities (Arco Forum, Spain). Several problem definitions or Points of View (POVs) were formulated:

- Women are the key stakeholders in families, communities, networks. They can also be the mothers of radicalized sons. They need support to become the change agents both in their private lives as well as in the public realm, to be able to predict, identify, and respond to vulnerable young people prior to radicalization.
- Women are vulnerable because of their displacement and not yet having found their place in the host society. They need empathy from peers to reduce stress and to be able to escape from everyday life.
- Women are vulnerable because of their displacement and not yet having found their place in the host society. They need coaching in female leadership, job opportunities and the roles of women in Spain so they can create their own inclusion strategy.
- Women as *intercultural dialogue-creator* need intercultural dialogue groups to explore cultural differences such as “Islam and homosexuality”, “the position of Muslims in Christmas celebration”.

All these POVs see women as naturally harmless human beings who are unlikely to perpetrate violence (OSCE, 2019). In this sense, most activities are developed considering women as passive, subordinate and helpless followers, victims or concerned family members. However, women can also take active roles such as suicide bombers, active fighters, leaders, propagandists, recruiters, and fundraisers (Banks, 2019; EPRS, 2018). Women are being recruited by terrorist organisations because female terrorists might draw less attention from control organisations due to the stereotyped acceptance that attributes violence only to men. Violent groups can recruit women to attract more publicity because a female terrorist's attack generates a shock effect. Female fighters can also be recruited to shame men into fighting for their ideology.

This blind spot about female radicalization resulted into the introduction of a game-changing POV at the conference in Florence:

- Would it be game-changing to hold the space for the stories of radicalised women (rightwing, left-wing, single-issue and politico-religious) to acknowledge their societal grievances and thus decrease the opportunities for radicalised actions?

Next, we raised awareness among the CommUnity partners as we included female radicalisation in the “Common Glossary”. Next we organised a workshop, CampaignIA as a testing activity, in our second staff training in which we asked our participants to create their problem definitions and campaigns around the subjects we gave them. One subject was ‘women's roles in (preventing) radicalisation’ and the other one was ‘female radicalisation’. The first group's discussions around ‘women's roles in preventing radicalisation’ were about the roles of mothers and their capacity to protect their children and family from being radicalised. The second group dealing with ‘female

radicalisation’ grasped the subject in a similar way as the first group and began to discuss how mothers can be important to protect their kids from radicalisation. Only after the moderator’s questions and reflections, the second group realised that the subject was not about women as mothers but about the active involvement of women in radical groups. They then created their campaign around it and presented it to the large group causing further discussions. Finally, we devoted a separate chapter on female radicalisation in our CommUnity Methodological Guide.

## 5 “How did you link your practice to design thinking?”

The CommUnity project envisioned design thinking as a systemic way to gather tacit knowledge in a coherent approach on the one hand and to share a methodological approach with experts in preventing radicalisation, with community-builders of youth movements, women groups, men groups, parents’ associations on the other.

From the previous chapters we can already conclude that CommUnity achieved to unify experiential and empirical findings from different fields of expertise.

In this final chapter, we focus on the adoption of the methodological approach by the CommUnity consortium.

For this we rely on the fourth question of the monitoring reports, self-assessments the community groups filled in after having organized their arts-based community activities and before co-organising the tailor-made final training sessions: “How did you link your practice to design thinking?”

We will discuss their reflections through the four phases of the maturity model of learning design thinking: newcomer, adopter, leader and grandmaster (Gibbons, 2021). We will first define the four phases and then argue that all partners have moved from newcomers to adopters, while the trainers from UCLL and IDP grew into leaders and the communities our partners work with have started as newcomers.

*Newcomers* have read about design thinking or taken a course. They have not practised it. They know the definition and why it might be useful, but they do not know their ‘design thinking incompetence’ yet.

*Adopters* have worked with design thinking. They have already defined their ‘design thinking incompetence’. They learn through courses, collaboration with experienced design thinkers and through failure.

*Leaders* can explain design thinking in a clear way. They can adapt design thinking for a specific purpose. They can facilitate, initiate, and promote design thinking approaches. Finally, they can teach design thinking.

*Grandmasters* have an intuitive, in-depth knowledge of design thinking. They not only adapt and combine it with other approaches but are also able to critically review

a challenge and decide whether design thinking should be applied or not. Grandmasters can also pick out the winning idea out of all novelties generated.

All five communities – Ciné (CC), women (WC), men (MC), youth creative (YCC) and harmony (HC) – started by describing the five phases of design thinking and its purpose to deal with wicked problems: “there was not a clear and unambiguous solution” to the problem but simply/merely different possible levels of interpretation of a problem and stimuli for reflection, which enhances empathy towards people with other opinions and points of view but also awakens student’s critical thinking skills” (CC). They linked to the iterativeness and non-linearity of the approach: “as continuously modifying and adequately improving the project activities” (HC). The Harmony and the Youth Creative Community are the only ones who link to innovation.

They also grasped the fundamental mindset of the design thinker. They explored “questions instead of focusing on answers or explanations” (CC); “it made them aware of the importance of giving the project participants credit for their contributions and ideas” (MC); “Fedactio actively tried to let go of their world views and open their minds to the life and perspectives of the participants during the sessions” (YCC).

They applied design thinking either to adapt their activities to the participants’ desires (CC, WC, YCC) or to delve into a topical debate:

*“IKC decided to investigate the Islamic perspective on homosexuality as current debates on homosexuality and its relationship to Islam seem to be problematic and most women had difficulty confronting this topic. It was also noted that most women had difficulties discussing this topic with their children. Then, our partner decided to focus on the question of how these problems cause stress on both mothers and their children and how this can be overcome using the design thinking phases of empathising, designing, and ideating to develop potential sustainable solutions and ways to tackle this topic.”*

They mostly related to the emphasize phase:

- to reach out to the youngsters
- to make sure they understood the seriousness of the film meetings
- to tap into the ‘expectations, personal interests and academic needs’ of their students
- to discover the sensitivities of youngsters
- to empathise with the characters through role-play
- to include shy people in the debate.

The POV proved to be the biggest stumbling block both in the training sessions as well as in the monitoring report. Some formulated different parts of the POV without linking it to the define phase nor to the problem definition. For instance, Ciné community discusses how youngsters have biased views because their main source of information is the internet. They “need a change of perspective for getting a more objective point of

view about the topic". We need to facilitate access to professional information sources to counter false news.

In the men's community an implicit POV is shared as well: *"Several of the men involved in the project are fathers of young people who, due to their profile (living in a disadvantaged urban area, Muslim, problematic school career...), are considered "at risk of radicalisation." (...) "What men clearly need – as they stated – is a sense of action: the feeling that they can make a concrete contribution to their communities. Hence, the title is "Men at Work".*

All but the men's community made an overview linking their activities to the five design phases.

They self-defined their level of design thinking incompetence as follows:

- "It seems that the concept of Design Thinking was not fully grasped and implemented by all partners. Nonetheless, most of the partners vividly point out the importance of the "empathy phase" in their activities" (CC).
- Regarding the Women's CommUnity campaign, it is noticed that our partners have begun to adopt the design thinking method to a large extent.
- Foyer points out "that many aspects of design thinking fit naturally into the project. (...) it is useful to introduce the dialogue method, because the dialogue is a continuous process, and the method aims to move participants away from black and white thinking into the grey areas where dialogue partners can meet. This is a crucial element in generating mutual understanding and new ideas, both in the "ideate" phase but also as a form of campaign output "(MC).
- "Although the partner organisations seemed somewhat hesitant to apply the Design Thinking method at first, both because they did not fully grasp the concepts and have no experience with the approach, Arco Forum, Mitra France and the University of Florence have started implementing the method and/or its parts with success" (HC).
- "Mitra France also promoted intergenerational, intercultural and interfaith dialogue by empathising with the audience" (HC).
- "Although most of the partner organisations were somewhat hesitant to apply the Design Thinking method to the creation and development of the activities in the Youth Creative Campaign and the CommUnity Project at large, both because they did not fully grasp the concepts in the beginning, it has become evident over the course of the CommUnity Project that the partner organisations both understand and see the value of applying the method to their activities" (YCC).

## Conclusion

The CommUnity consortium partners managed to engage with design thinking through four design training sessions that were created through research, testimonials, feedback circles, a methodological guide and their co-created idiosyncratic local training sessions.

Design thinking proved to be a valid method to counter the challenges of Covid-19, to link theory to practice, to unite perspectives of different disciplines and to uncover innovative approaches. Although all participants were unfamiliar with design thinking, except for UCLL, they all understood the value of the approach both to organize the arts-based activities as well as to tackle difficult topics. To “empathise” proved to be the bridging competence between their expertise and the methodological approach. The “problem definition” was a difficult challenge.

During the training we also introduced ways of creative listening as a vital part of design thinking. We also described these manners of listening in the Methodological Guide. Unfortunately, this activity was not adopted.

Finally, we saw that the arts-based community builders mirrored the path the UCLL-IDPteam developed from asking, offering empirical knowledge where requested, offering possibilities, sharing the complete Methodological Guide, attuning to time and place, readjusting, giving maximal choice, starting all-over again.

## References

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